

Fiction

Group 1



New Tale of Silk Road

Carmel School Of Hong Kong, Mok, Max – 7

My name is Max. I am seven years old.

This is a story about how I got myself teleported back to 630AD – the fourth year of Emperor Taizong in the Tang Dynasty. It was the golden period. It was the blooming time for the Silk Road.

One day in December, I went to bed early. I was not very sleepy. I pulled out my favourite bedtime storybook – Monkey King: Journey to the West. I was reading about Mountains of Flames. Suddenly, I saw golden light rays coming out of the storybook.

POOF! BOOM!

I opened my eyes. I looked around. It felt soft and sandy under my feet. I also felt dry and sweaty. I thought I was on a beach. But I was in a desert. Maybe I was teleported into the story on The Silk Road now.

I was walking and walking. The blisters on my heels were so sore, they hurt me like crazy. Suddenly, I thought I saw a shop, but it was actually a hole – a deep black hole. Oh no! There was a hurricane inside. The hurricane was as fast as a racing car, as fast as 180km per hour. I was staring at it open-mouthed, totally shocked. And then, something shiny caught my eye.

IT WAS A MAGICAL LAMP!

It was the one in the Aladdin movie. I immediately grabbed it. Right away, I wetted my lips, rubbed my hands together, scrubbed and shook them HARD. Suddenly, there was smoke coming out of the lamp.

ABRA-CADABRA!!!!

Nothing happened.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...

A genie came out, floating sloooooowly in front of me. He moved like a sloth. “Thank you for saving me. I was stuck here for years. I’d like to grant you three wishes,” he said.

“Number one, I want to play Monkey King for two hours – finishing The Silk Road trek at top speed. Number two, I want to have all of Monkey King’s magical items, like a golden cudgel and a teleporting “cloud”. Number three, I can bring them back to the present,” I told Genie.

Again, nothing happened.

AFTER ANOTHER FIFTY MINUTES (super long time lag) ...

VVVRRRROOOMMM! VVVRRRROOOMMM!

I felt like I was sitting through the Iron Man fun ride in Disneyland. Everything around me was flying at top speed. I could smell and feel the sand, the camels, the sand cats, the ostriches, and even the Bighorn sheep. But I could not stop touching them. I almost felt the humongous cacti and even the desert bushes.

When I was teleporting, I could hear voices in many languages – Chinese, Persian, Turkic, Tibetan, Mongolian, etc. I felt like I had an AI translator in my brain. I understood what they were saying. They were buying and selling. People on the Silk Road were happy.

POOF! BOOM!

Suddenly, I was back in my bedroom. I was still on the chapter about Mountains of Flames. Only now, I had a golden cudgel and a cloud plushie next to me.

The Powerful Connector

Carmel School Of Hong Kong, Mok, Verity – 7

The Year is 2580.

A sandstorm just stopped. I crawled out of the storm shelter slowly. Then, waves of heat greeted me.

“The climate (along the Silk Road) is much more unstable now compared to our ancestors back then,” Grandma always lamented. I learnt from Grandma how science and technology make a cleaner and more diverse energy future possible.

Both my parents are scientists. We just moved to Almaty city a few months ago. My parents told me they would help uncover a new element like Xenon gas – a powerful fuel for space machines.

Almaty city was so close to the Taklimakan Desert – a historical checkpoint along the Silk Road between Middle Asia and China. “Almaty is rich in natural resources. The challenge for us is to make them sustain,” I recalled my parents’ words when they announced the relocation.

Outside the storm shelter, I was brushing off dust on my shirt and humming my favourite tune. Suddenly, I felt a gentle tap on my back. I sensed a hum in my head, “Excuse me, can you help me?”

I spun around and stood face-to-face with an alien. He was as tall as I was. He had a huge head with two large eyes as dark as the night sky and two teeny-tiny nostrils. He had no mouth. His skin was opaque. It would glow blue and glitter with silver stars whenever I sensed his hum.

“Hi. How can I help?” I silently replied to the hum in my head.

“Hi, my name is Zylos. I come from Star Celeste. My spacecraft broke down when I was flying low during the sandstorm. The propulsion system was clogged and couldn’t be rebooted,” Zylos the alien replied.

I responded to his hum silently again, “Hi Zylos, I am Verity. I can ask my parents to lend you the high-powered, specialized vacuum cleaner. Maybe it can clear up the propulsion system.” Zylos’ long fingers glowed rainbow colours. He seemed happy with my vacuum cleaner idea.

This was the beginning of our human-alien friendship on the Silk Road. Our first encounter was about kindness and helpfulness.

I brought Xylos home and introduced him to Mom and Dad. Then, I scurried off to find the vacuum cleaner. When I was back, my parents and Xylos were getting along. “Xylos’ opaque skin had a blue glow glittering with silver stars. They were “talking” silently about Xenon gas and propulsion. I saw Xylos’ fingers flashing rainbow colours in excitement.

In the next few days, Xylos and I stayed together. We fixed his spacecraft. I shared with Xylos an idea. He could make it come true with his 9D printer.

I shared with Zylos about Earth’s energy issues. Zylos shared Star Celeste’s ways to make energy more renewable.

Though more than 2000 years have passed, the Silk Road is still the “powerful connector”. It is not just a trade route. It connects humans with other life forms in the universe. We can exchange information, work and advance together.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Best Friends in the Modern Silk Road

Creative Primary School, Chan, Harvey – 8

In a little village in Northern China, there lived a little boy who was 8 years old. His name was Tom. Tom dreamed of selling his Chinese Kung Fu comic books to the kids in the West. In 2023, he set off to find the Modern Silk Road. Modern Silk Road is very similar to the Ancient Silk Road but some people can travel by a jeep but not camel.

One day, Tom got lost in a vast and sunny desert. When night came, he felt scared and didn't know what to do like a raft in the ocean. Suddenly, he heard a voice calling from a distance. "Hey! Chinese boy, come over here!" It was a fat friendly boy called Max. Max was from a small village at the other side of the desert.

Max asked Tom in a curious voice, "What are you doing here?"

Tom replied, "I'm trying to find the Silk Road so that I can sell my Chinese Kung Fu comic books to the children in the Western counties."

"Tom, you know that you can't travel anywhere now in the desert because it is too dark and dangerous! You might meet some poisonous animals like rattle snakes, cobras, vipers, Tarantulas and plenty of many other scary deadly creatures!" explained Max.

Therefore, Max led Tom to his village. As they were eating dinner, they talked to each other of what they like, what they do in the daily life and lots of more other silly things they did to their siblings and friends. They also shared their own future dreams when they grow up one day. Tom told Max that his dream was first to sell the Chinese Kung Fu comic books to the West and make it famous in the whole world eventually. Max told Tom that his dream was opening a candy shop in the middle of the desert near his village.

Suddenly, they heard some sounds right behind them. "Hiss, hiss." "Rattle, rattle." "OUCH! It's painful!" "OUCH! BLOOD!" They got bitten by a viper snake. Max's father rushed to their room after hearing their screeches! "Are you both okay? What happened?" Tom and Max screamed at the top of their lungs "WATCH OUT! IT'S BEHIND YOU!" Max's father was quick and he killed the viper snake with his Chinese Kung Fu punches and kicks! He learned that from a Kung Fu Master friend who passed by and stayed in his home in the 70s when he was young! He liked Chinese Kung Fu so much so he practiced all the time even after the Kung Fu master has left. The viper snake was smashed but venoms spilled all over the floor! Tom was astonished and in awe that Max's father was so good in Chinese Kung Fu.

Max's father called the ambulance immediately. They drove Tom and Max to the closest hospital. They were feeling very dizzy already and started losing consciousness! Luckily, they arrived at the hospital on time!

After staying in the hospital for a few days, they both recovered and they resumed their journey searching for the Modern Silk Road. With the help of Max's map of the desert that he got from his grandad, they finally found the Modern Silk Road together! In the end, Tom's Kung Fu comic books became super famous, but most importantly, they found their friendship and created a lot of unforgettable memories along the way!

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Secret Diary of the First Silk Road Trader

Creative Primary School, Cheng, Hang Ming Ellen – 8

In 138 BC, the Silk Road was found by a military officer named Zhang Qian. He did it because it was a time of tension between the Han empire and the Xiongnu nomads to the north, who the first emperor had attempted to take back the Great Wall. Subsequent Han rulers had sought to buy off the steppe warriors with tribute, but that policy proved costly and extremely unsuccessful.

The new Han ruler, Emperor Wu, planned to confront the Xiongnu military, but to do so, he needed help. Zhang Qian's task was to travel westward into territory far beyond China's borders to establish relations with a possible ally – the Yuezhi people, who had fought against, and been defeated by, the Xiongnu some 40 years ago. But Zhang failed to get allies, instead he brought back with him something of great value – reports of previously unknown lands, distant cities, people who grew rice and wheat and cultivated grapes, and of powerful horses that he described as Sweating Blood, perhaps from parasitic infection.

Ten years later, Wu sent Zhang back to the horse breeding Wusun people of the Ili valley, now on the Chinese Kazakh border. Zhang forged an alliance with this group, then returned to an honored position at court. More and more people started trading, and the Silk Road was born.

Not long after, Song and his group set out.

Dear Diary,

I started work as a trader at the Silk Road. We have sold a lot of silk, jewels, and spices. Hang was fussing about going to Beijing again. She fusses a lot. Just crazy.

Song

Dear Diary,

Bad news! A group of outrageous bandits stole our silk and gems! We haven't got anything to trade now! We don't even have shelter now! At least some kind people/villagers took us in for a while.

Song

When they got in, the villagers asked if they needed anything. They said just shelter and food. The villagers also asked what brought them here. Song told them everything that happened. One villager piped up: "Hey, those bandits also stole OUR new silk and gems too! We know where they are are too!" "If you all go, can you please get our things back?" "Ok, it's a deal." said Hang. The bandits' camp was just 2 km away.

Dear Diary,

We finally got our silk and gems back! Along with the villagers' possessions. Hang was fussing about going to Mongolia again, but it was worth it.

Song

Ten years later.....

Song and his group have returned to Beijing. They have sold the rest of the silk. They earned a fortune from selling the camels they used to travel (and probably the other traders used as well).

Epilogue

Song and the traders open a silk stall in Guangdong, where silk was very popular during the use of the Silk Road. Song's family ran the stall until the Silk Road started being unused in the 15th century.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Back to the Ancient Silk Road

Creative Primary School, Cheng, Pok Him – 8

Archeologists Gordon and Judy brought their children, Mike and Lily, to an exhibition of the ancient Silk Road in a museum in town. The family had a great time appreciating the nice handicrafts, paintings and the history of the Silk Road. Among the exhibits, Gordon felt a deep interest in the display of a religious scripture roll. Being an archeologist, he knew some ancient languages. He tried to read out the lines, skipping some unfamiliar words. Suddenly, the Apsara in a painting displayed on the wall behind the scripture roll started to dance and Gordon's family vanished in the museum in the blink of an eye!

The Apsara brought the family with her travelling back to the Tang Dynasty. She spoke sadly to the family, "My necklace was stolen. I always wanted to get it back from the robber. Thanks for reading out the magic spells hidden in the manuscript to release my time-travel power."

Judy was amazed and said, "So, here we are, in the ancient Mogao Cave!" The Apsara showed the family around. Workmen were crafting Buddha sculptures while artists were painting wall pictures. Monks were performing religious rituals and storing up scriptures.

The children were excited to help and asked, "What does your necklace look like?" The Apsara answered, "It is a gold necklace with three red gems." Walking out from the Mogao Cave, they came to a busy market at the edge of the Gobi Desert. Lily pointed to a traveler riding on a camel and asked, "Apsara, is that traveler with a big white hat wearing your necklace?" The Apsara nodded.

The family came up with a plan to tackle the traveler. Mike dropped a bag of marbles on the ground. The camel tripped over and the traveler slipped off from the camel's back. At this time, Judy threw a large pot of spices into the traveler's eyes. The traveler cried in pain. Gordon approached the traveler from his back and got back the necklace. Eventually, the Apsara used magic to tie up the traveler in a carpet. Lily added a final "touch" by squeezing the traveler's head into his big white hat!

The Apsara said, "Thank you very much for your help. I am an Apsara in training. This necklace was given to me by my master and helps me elicit magical power. Without it, spells are required to trigger my magic. It was exactly what Gordon did in the museum."

The family felt happy helping an Apsara get back her magical ornament. Gordon said, "We had a great adventure at the Ancient Silk Road! Would you please send us back to modern Hong Kong now?" The Apsara answered with embarrassment, "I didn't learn how to send others to a future destination yet. Let's seek help from my master!" The family laughed.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Lee, Zit Nathaniel – 8

Who would like to join me on an adventurous trading journey along the Silk Road to showcase the newly invented AI robot that helps elderly people with chores and cooking in everyday life? We also have a revolutionary bright sky-blue silk material that can transform into an amazing heat warming jacket and a cooling T-shirt to suit the change in daily temperature. Are you with me?

A young smart boy named Jack exclaimed, “I would like to join!”

Then a brave middle-aged man named Mike also said, “Count me in too!”

Lastly, an enthusiastic woman named Sally spoke a high-pitched voice, “Why not? Let’s explore together!”

I was excited and shouted, “Everyone, pack your bags! Tomorrow we will set off as Team Resilient! We shall show the others how good and glorious our products are, and we will make a fortune!” Everyone cheered and started to prepare for this amazing journey.

The next day, we started our long journey. The weather was pleasant at first, allowing everything to flow smoothly! Along the way, we rested often since the weather soon turned scorching hot. Even worse, we were struck by a massive sandstorm. We took refuge in a cave and waited it out. When the sandstorm finally stopped, our energy was fully replenished. We moved quickly through the first half, but the second half was hard—VERY hard. There were lots of rattlesnakes and wild dangerous animals that attacked us. We even found some ancient ruins with treasure worth at least 100,000 US dollars, but then a group of cultists showed up with weapons and threatened us. Suddenly, the AI Robot activated. It leapt from the box and scared the cultists away. After many more grueling days under the scorching sun, we finally reached India for the trade.

We exchanged our warm-and-cool transforming silk clothes and AI robots with the Indian traders, and we received 100,000 US dollars for our innovative products that they loved. The Indian partners loved the transforming silk, which adapted to the unpredictable Indian weather. They said it was convenient and comfortable to wear. The AI Robot was great for the elderly, and it could help them cook and clean. Our partners were appreciative and happy about our trade.

After finally returning to China, we held a huge party. Everyone cheered as we celebrated the completion of our great trade journey. I exclaimed to all my team, “Let’s do this! Together we will become the greatest trading group ever, we will never stop!” This journey was never about money, it was about the friends we met, the help we gave to others, and the power of kindness and innovation. Life isn't about the ending or result, it’s about the journey and how it helps you grow.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Yang, Rhea Chung Nga – 8

Two thousand years ago, the Chinese created the Silk Road to the West to sell silk to new customers. Along the Silk Road was a mountainous area called the Tian Shan. Nobody lived there except for a little girl named Huahua.

Huahua was thin and small because there wasn't much to eat in the Tian Shan. She was not strong enough to hunt by herself until one day she found a wounded tiger cub by the river near her cave. The kind girl carried the cub back to her cave and took care of it until it healed.

They played and looked after each other all the time. Soon the tiger grew to love Huahua, and it decided to stay with her to repay her kindness. Huahua named the tiger cub Xiaohua. Xiaohua had soft, fluffy golden-brown fur. The black stripes all over its body matched Huahua's hair colour. Over time, the cub grew into a huge cat. It protected Huahua and hunted for her.

One blistering cold winter afternoon, Xiaohua found a stranger lying by the riverbank. The stranger was a man with dark skin and thick, curly hair. He was unconscious when Xiaohua saw him. His clothes were ragged and torn. Xiaohua also found a small bag beside him.

Xiaohua dragged the man and his bag back to the cave, and the kind Huahua took good care of the man just like she had once cared for Xiaohua. Soon the man recovered and began speaking in broken Chinese. The man introduced himself as Ali, and he was from a place called Arabia. Huahua had never seen anyone with such facial features before – Ali had very long eye lashes and a very tall nose.

Ali said he wanted to find something called "silk" in China, but he got caught in a sandstorm. He lost everything except his small bag, which was filled with beautiful, shiny pearls. Ali took a pearl out from his bag and gave it to Huahua as a thank-you gift.

Huahua and Ali rode all the way to the city of Chang'an on the back of Xiaohua. Ali thanked them both with a smile and a wave, and disappeared into the crowd of people rushing into the greatest city in the world. The little girl and the big cat returned to the Tian Shan happily because they helped someone in need.

A year later, during a quiet warm morning in spring, Huahua was woken up by the sound of trumpets. She stepped out of her cave and saw Ali, the King of China, and what what seemed like a thousand soldiers awaiting her. Huahua thought she was in trouble, but Ali smiled and said, "The King wants to reward you with your own hotel in the Tian Shan, a place to welcome and help travellers along the Silk Road."

Huahua happily agreed, and the legendary Silk Road Hotel remained popular for more than one and a half thousand years.

The Secret Treasure on the Silk Road

Dulwich College Beijing, Bian, Yoyo, Bian – 8

One day, two brave cat brothers, Leo and Yoyo, lived in the great city of Xi'an, the starting point of the Silk Road in China. They heard an old story about a secret treasure hidden on the road to Rome. Leo and Yoyo decided to find it. They packed their bags carefully. In their packages, they had tools for digging, food to eating, and water to drinking. They also packed a big roll of very valuable and beautiful Chinese silk and some precious green tea as gifts for new friends. Then, they started their big adventure to the west.

Unknown to them, a giant snake lived on the Silk Road they were traveling on. They were too excited to notice. They walked on the golden sands, seeing camels and friendly merchants. They were thinking about how valuable the treasure would be while they were eating food from their packs. Suddenly, the giant snake turned toward the cats. It was huge, and it had red eyes and very big fangs.

Leo and Yoyo were very brave. They took their tools to fight. Their tools were sharp, but they didn't know who would win. At that moment, another cat who was walking by made friends with the two cats. Now it was three cats against the giant snake. The new friend was a clever cat named Jaden, who had come all the way from his home to explore the East.

The giant snake used venom, but the cats used teamwork and blocked the venom with their tools. Then the snake shouted, "Stop!" and asked, "Are you here to find the secret treasure?" "Yes," said the cats. "My name is Jan, but people call me Cobra, I am from India. Let's work together and find the secret treasure. Do you want to come?" "Yes!" yelled the cats. "Then let's go!" yelled the snake!

They walked and walked and walked until they found a huge stone. It was half buried in sand, so they pushed the stone away. It was an old, forgotten meeting point for traders. Inside the city, they dug and dug until they found a door. It was a beautiful wooden door. So they opened the door, and guess what was inside? It was the secret treasure! So they saved the secret treasure.

To celebrate their friendship, Leo and Yoyo gave Jaden and Jan beautiful Chinese silk and the green tea. Jaden gave them a beautiful glass cup he had carried from home, and the snake gave them many peppers. They were so happy that they ate a feast together. They celebrated the greatest treasure of all: friendship and sharing between different lands.

The End

Silk Road in my Dream

Dulwich College Beijing, Cai, Cindy – 7

Last evening I had a wonderful dream. I flew back about 2200 years ago and I got to the traditional fabulous city Changan, the capital of Tang dynasty. I saw an old gentleman at a touring good pattern palace, he asked the king to allow him to be the leader of the team and went to the western countries for their support against Hun, one country in the northwest of Tang. The king accepted his request. I pulled the old gentleman's clothes and wished that he could take me to Persia with him. After preparing for a few months, we were ready to go! We walked anxiously all the way to the west, climbed the mountains, crossed the grassland, passed by the big rivers and the big lakes, and went through the hot desert. Finally we got to Persia. I found that it was totally different from us. The things that I have and I like they don't have, the things they have and they like we don't have, they wore Hun clothes so they could shoot while riding on horses. We were so excited to make many friends. I introduced the capital of Tang dynasty and our country. And they also introduced their country to us. I gave them some silk, tea and china, and they gave me some raisins and carrot seeds. When I was going to eat a delicious raisin, the alarm clock was ringing so loudly that I got awake from my favorite dream. I wish it could carry on forever. Now I know the silk road is not only a trade road, but also a cultural road, a peace road, a friendship road and a civilization road.

Potion Adventure Across the Silk Road

ESF Beacon Hill School, Mo, Asher – 6

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Asher who lived in China. One day, Super Wizard asked Asher to bring a healing potion to Europe, because people in the West were very sick. Asher was brave and shouted, “OK!” in a loud voice.

They asked Soldier Peter to protect them. “Let’s go!” said Super Wizard. Then they set off along the Silk Road, which connected China and Europe.

Super Wizard and Asher rode on camels while Soldier Peter walked beside them. It was windy on the Silk Road. They were hungry, but the people they met were kind and gave them food such as manti (dumplings), naan bread, melon, and tea. Their favourite was plov, a delicious dish made of rice, onion, carrots, and meat. The Silk Road people also invited them to rest and sleep in their homes.

The next morning, after eating bread for breakfast, they saw a giant storm rising. It was a sandstorm! The three friends were frightened and ran into the desert, where they spotted a pyramid. Inside stood a powerful pharaoh. They remembered that people on the Silk Road had told them about the pharaoh’s magical diamond, which could control the desert. They asked the pharaoh if they could borrow it, but he said no.

Asher explained, “We need to bring the healing potion to Europe to help the sick people.”

“That is none of my business!” said the pharaoh.

Asher thought carefully, then said, “The Silk Road was not built just for trading food and goods. It helps people share kindness and love across different lands.”

The pharaoh was silent for a moment. Then he smiled and handed Asher the diamond.

Asher raised it high, and it glowed brightly. The wind calmed down, and the sand slowly settled. They continued their journey until they reached Europe and gave the potion to the sick people. Everyone was healed.

With big smiles, Asher, Super Wizard, and Soldier Peter happily returned to China. From that day on, Asher knew that the Silk Road was also a road of friendship and hope.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

ESF Quarry Bay School, Tsang, Jason – 7

Centuries ago, in the year 78 CE, people from faraway countries couldn't just drive or fly to visit each other. Instead, they travelled along a dusty path called the Silk Road. Merchants journeyed for weeks or even months with their camels, trading goods from their own countries with others who didn't have access to them. This is a story about two of the most important merchants from China – General Wang and Explorer Zhang.

General Wang was a serious man. He always followed orders and was very efficient. Explorer Zhang was more carefree. He was wise, creative, and very good at cultures and languages.

Their job was to trade a mysterious black powder—gunpowder. When they lit a little bit of it, it went BOOM! It was perfect for military use and celebrations like the Chinese New Year. Each time, their job was to trade 100 barrels of gunpowder.

One (not so) fine day, when they were selling gunpowder as usual, they suddenly received a letter from their country – it said they were at war! And as you probably know, gunpowder is very important, and the country needed it back. However, they had already sold 50 barrels of the gunpowder they had. General Wang acted immediately and tried to get the gunpowder back, but he never could.

“Oh no, I can't get it back, what should I do?” said Wang.

Zhang thought about it for a little and calmly said, “What if we brought back 100 barrels of improved gunpowder? All we need to do is travel along the Silk Road. We will go to some countries and get some useful stuff.”

“That's obviously not going to work!” shouted Wang. “What do you even mean by improved gunpowder? Gunpowder is gunpowder!”

But given their many years of working together, Wang reluctantly followed the confident Zhang.

They first got to Egypt and bought some papyrus from an Egyptian merchant named Mohammed. Zhang chopped the papyrus into tiny pieces and mixed it with some of the gunpowder. It turned out that mixing papyrus with gunpowder made it useless—the papyrus prevented it from igniting. It was also really stinky.

Then, they left Egypt and went to Iran. This time, they bought some spices from Yasmin, an Iranian merchant. They did the same thing but with the spices, mixing them with the gunpowder. Surprisingly, they created a spicy and smoky version of gunpowder that was far more explosive— and much grosser—than normal gunpowder. It became the strongest explosive material any country had ever invented! Hooray!

They eventually got to 100 barrels of enhanced gunpowder. With General Wang's efficiency, they got back to the country quickly to defend it. They won! When the war was over, Zhang became one of the greatest inventors in the country. Wang learned that he should be more flexible and try new things. And all of this was not possible without the legendary Silk Road – which enhanced trading and allowed countries to work together with each other!

Adventure in the Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Alex – 7

Nico is seven years old boy, who loves video game, especially those games about ancient China. He was in a Chinese history class and felt bored. The teacher was showing them a video about Han dynasty and silk road. Nico saw a camel carrying jade and silk. Nico wished he could jump into his video games and explored the cool place in Han dynasty. Suddenly, Nico was pulled into the screen. “Where am I? Help!” cried Nico.

Fynn and his family was on a long journey. They were looking for someone to trade silk and jade. However, their wagon was stuck in the mud. Fynn’s dad was busy pushing the wagon. “Don’t wander off. It’s easy to get lost,” said Fynn’s dad. Fynn did not listen. “I won’t go too far, then I won’t get lost,” he thought. He went on and on.

When Fynn realized it was time to go back, he found all the trees looked the same. Fynn was frightened. “Oh no! I am lost!” he screamed and started running. But then he fell and got hurt. “Help!!!” shouted Fynn.

Nico walked around the strange place and heard Fynn shouting. Nico ran to Fynn and saw Fynn’s knee was hurt and bleeding. “Don’t worry! I am here to help you,” said Nico kindly. Nico got a bandage from his pocket and put it on his wound softly. “What’s that? I have never seen this sticky thing before,” said Fynn. “It is a bandage to cover and protect wounds.” said Nico.

“I’m Nico. Where is this place?” Nico asked. “I’m Fynn and we are in the Silk Road. I am lost,” said Fynn. Nico and Fynn went to a river and Fynn told Nico to be quiet so he could catch fish for lunch. Fynn quickly caught a big fish. “That’s amazing. I couldn’t do that,” said Nico. “How do we cook the fish without a fire?” asked Nico. Fynn made it with a bow and stick. “OMG! You can light up a fire without matches,” Nico said, clapping his hands. Then they ate the fish and Nico took out some chocolate from his pocket and share with Fynn. “Yum. I never try this before.” Fynn said. Fynn told Nico how the wagon got stuck and how his family was going to trade silk and jade in the silk road.

“Fynn, where did you go?” someone shouted. Fynn heard his father’s voice. “I’m here, dad,” Fynn ran to his dad’s arm. Fynn’s dad led them out from the wood. Nico saw a real wagon and camels. “Cool! Camels can really carry a lot of things,” Nico thought. Fynn’s dad gave Nico clothes made from silk. “Thank you. It’s so soft and smooth,” Nico smiled.

“Pay attention! Don’t dream in the class,” the teacher shouted. Nico woke up and noticed it was just a dream. From now on, Nico is interested in Chinese history and wanted to know more about ancient China.

The Journey of the Vegetable Family to Middle East

ESF Renaissance College, Cai, Miranda – 7

Chapter 1

One morning the vegetable family woke up and mom went to the kitchen to make breakfast. The kids were very excited to go to the silk road. Then mom said “breakfast is ready”, the vegetable kids ate fast, they got ready in no time.

Chapter 2

After they got ready to go to the silk road, they got on the car, and drove away. After they arrived at the silk road, they met some of their friends and some other food types, like tomatoes/potatoes. Then they started their journey to the Middle East and they started by trading some silk, cloths to others for some elephant tusks. Then they continued to the Middle East along the track. But they did not know that it is a bit dangerous, because there are bandits and pirates waiting for them along their journey to Middle East.

Chapter 3

Ten minutes later the vegetable family met a family of bandits and then the vegetable kid said “who are you”? And then the bandit kid said “bro you don’t know you are very stupid” and then they started to argue a lot and the two adults stopped them from fighting. But the bandit family wanted some silk cloths but the vegetable family did not want to give their silk cloths but they knew that the bandits were stronger. So, they ran away because the bandits were very slow at running and managed to escape from the bandits and continued to Middle East. When they were very close to Middle East they stopped and took a breath and then kept going. Twenty minutes later, they finally reached the end of the track and made it to Middle East. There were more people at the end and they found them in a mall and they decided to buy some stuff and lived happily ever after.

Magical Adventure at the China's Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Chan, Elvin – 7

Once upon a time in Venice, there was a family living in a brick house near St. Mark's Square. One night, a group of bandits kidnapped Camilla, the mom. Camilla secretly dropped a note to her family on how to find her back. The next morning, Aria, Camilla's little girl found a note floating on a canal in front of their home and recognized it was mom's handwriting. Aria told dad immediately and they decided to follow the route left by Camilla. They brought valuable jewels, gold bars and antique glassware for their journey and took a gondola to the border of Venice.

After two-month walk, they arrived the Taklamakan Desert. They felt very thirsty. Suddenly, they saw a lake nearby and quickly slurped down ten glasses of water. All of a sudden, they saw a flash of light drifting through the sky and heard eerie howls. Aria was so scared that she cried so loud and woke a wise old man up from his dream. He came out from a tent and asked what happened. Aria told him that her mom was lost and the wise old man promised to help finding her mom if they gave him their jewels. Therefore, they traded their jewels with the best Bactrian camel with the wise old man. "Horray!" exclaimed everyone. Finally, they passed the Taklamakan Desert with the wise old man's caravan and arrived Lanzhou, the first city of China.

At Lanzhou, they saw some Chinese and European making private deals by holding hands under a fabric on a market day. Dad participated by trading their gold bars with silk from the Chinese merchants.

After another week, the wise old man brought them to the Palace of Shangdu, indicated by the note left by Camilla. They met the King and asked him where Camilla was. However, the King spoke in Chinese, which they couldn't understand. Luckily, the wise old man understood and translated for them. The King said Camilla was in her sleeping room. They finally saw Camilla and found that she was actually a Chinese princess. Camilla enthusiastically introduced Aria to her grandfather. She was so proud that they made their way to find her a million miles away. Camilla told her family how dangerous she was from escaping from the bandits with the help from the King. Aria gave the King her antique glassware brought from Venice as a gift for saving her mom.

Aria wanted to show the King and the wise old man her home in Venice, so she invited them for another voyage. The King decided to sail to Venice with his brilliant ship. Aria shouted "yay!!!" for this brilliant idea. On the last day of voyage, they celebrated with the fireworks at the St Mark's Square. They took a gondola back home and had a party with their neighbours. They showed the European with the splendid silk traded from China. Everybody was amazed with the delicate Chinese products.

The Greedy Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Cheung, Carlton – 8

Once upon a time, there was a Silk Road in China that had 4,000 people riding boats, and 35 people riding camels. One day, 15 rich people were giving out money to 4,053 normal people. Each person received 494 Chinese money but they had an argument about what they do with the money, because 500 soldiers were going to steal all of their money to pay 236 soldiers' fees which they owed a week ago. The rich people said, 'just put the money in your safe'. 396 normal people said, 'good idea!', but 90 people (15 families) said, 'I don't have a safe in my home.'

Then the rich people said, 'I will book a flight to another country that is not China for you. Take your money with you.' The normal people asked, 'what about you?' The rich people said, 'oh! I can buy a safe that has a password and cannot break, a door that needs a key and the key is in the safe, and the safe has 3 tries a day and each day has different passwords, security cameras are all over the house and a secret door with food, water, toys, laptop and phone.'

The people boarded the plane, the rich people said, 'the plane is about to depart and bye!' Then the plane flew away but inside the plane they saw the soldiers, bombs and guns from the Silk Road. While the people and soldiers were fighting, the 15 families who did not have a safe on the plane could only take the money with them and remembered that it was a 15 VS 500 battle on the plane. Once the plane reached Japan, they saw the news. The news said that the rich people had killed all 500 soldiers without any scratch or punch on the people.

Right when there were some houses for people to live in, the rich people decided to take all the money in the country by inventing a button that when pressed, all the money would appear to the person who pressed the button. But after 1 day of using the button, the button was broken. So, the rich people got really mad but the rich people were the ones who broke the button because they pressed it 20 times when it was supposed to be pressed 15 times. The person who made the button said, 'there were actually 2 buttons, the first one had unlimited presses,

and the second one had 15 presses only.' The rich person could not find the first button, so they pressed the second button until it was broken.

The rich people became very angry but later they remembered that it does not matter if you are poor or rich. It only matters if you are safe, happy and calm.

The Silk Road Adventure

ESF Renaissance College, Faye, Sophia – 7

Once upon a time in ancient China, there lived a royal family: Queen Isabella, her twin sisters Sophie and Andrea, and their baby sister Emerald. After their parents went to the stars, Isabella declared she would be queen.

One sunny morning, Isabella received a message from villagers. “We need India’s shiny diamonds and yummy spices!” they exclaimed. Meanwhile, in India, Queen Esther heard her people asking for China’s soft silk and delicious rice.

Isabella had an idea! “Let’s create a Silk Road to share our treasures!” she announced, and everyone cheered! But one villager shouted, “We need it done in days!”

Isabella rushed to Sophie and Andrea’s room. “Wake up! We have a lot to do!” she urged. But the twins groaned, “We’re too tired!” Isabella replied, “No time for napping! Our people need us!”

So, they worked hard, stacking bricks to make the road. On the last day, they covered it with bright red silk. “The Silk Road is ready!” Isabella shouted proudly.

Twenty years passed, and the Silk Road helped everyone. But one day, on Emerald’s fourth birthday, something silly happened! A bunch of fluffy, giggling monsters burst out of the jungle! They had rainbow-colored fur and huge googly eyes that wobbled everywhere. Some tripped over their paws while running, rolling and laughing.

These silly monsters were hungry and wanted to taste rice! They bounced toward the Silk Road but accidentally knocked over Emerald’s birthday cake! “Oopsie daisy!” squeaked one monster, its ears flopping.

As monsters reached the road, they caused a big mess, giggling all the way. Suddenly, robotic crabs sent by the wicked witch Elessa scuttled out! These crabs were huge, with shiny shells and googly eyes bobbing on top, making them look silly.

One crab had a karaoke machine and started singing a funny song about dancing crabs. “Clang, clang, clang!” went the crabs as they bumped into each other, playing “Crab Ball” with a giant beach ball, creating a ridiculous scene!

The townspeople were scared, thinking the crabs were mean. But the monsters just wanted food! Sophie then had a great idea. “Let’s help the monsters!” she suggested. So, they planted colorful flowers and cupcakes along the road.

The next day, the monsters munched on flowers while the robotic crabs joined in, singing and dancing. They even formed a conga line down the road!

Isabella and Esther united against Elessa. They went on an adventure, completing challenges like racing the dancing crabs! Finally, they found a magic bag with a flaming fireball and gave it to brave Cathy, who wanted to get back at Elessa for ruining her toy.

Cathy faced Elessa with courage. The villagers held their breath! With a big whoosh, she used the fireball, and poof! The witch vanished!

Everyone cheered and celebrated with a feast. The kingdoms of China and India rebuilt the Silk Road, filled with friendship and laughter.

And so, they lived happily ever after, proving that kindness and sharing are the best treasures!

Among Us Adventure on the Cina Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Hou, Hilbert – 7

One day, a big spaceship soared through space carrying the Among Us crewmates. The crew are in different colours, red, blue, green, yellow, and even pink!

The crew was excited for their super cool trip. The spaceship finally landed on the legendary China Silk Road.

The crewmates eagerly jumped out and said, “Yay! Let’s explore the Silk Road together!” They immediately noticed the vast desert, where golden sand sparkled like treasure under the bright sun.

Camels ambled slowly by, carrying enormous sacks, while the crewmates waved and greeted them: “Hi, camels!” The camels were chewing cactus and looked very funny.

Along the road, traders dressed in long robes and hats were selling silk, dazzling jade, and colourful carpets.

After a long walk, the crewmates felt tired and sat down to rest. Suddenly, magical pets appeared, a dragon with rainbow wings soaring in the sky and a talking panda! The crewmates eagerly invited them to join the adventure, saying, “Let’s go together!” The Dragon and Panda agreed, and together they continued their journey as friends.

They travelled together until they reached Xinjiang, where a big market awaited. The crewmates shopped for silk, jade, swords, and delicious fruits like melons and grapes. They also enjoyed tasty lamb noodles, “YUM!”

As night fell, the group stayed at the Cucu Tree Hotel, which had funny decorations and soft beds. In the morning, they enjoyed a buffet breakfast with Chinese dumplings and tea before climbing a mountain to admire the view.

Suddenly, a giant sandstorm robot with huge arms and scary eyes appeared. The crewmates encouraged each other, “We can survive this!” They worked together to build a sturdy China wall using rocks and wood, keeping the sandstorm away.

After the storm, the crewmates spotted a long bridge spanning a river. As they crossed, zombies and imposters lay in. The crewmates fought bravely with swords and shields and achieved victory. Later, they found a spooky house and spent the night there.

The next morning, an Evil King appeared and challenged them: “Fight me!” The crewmates fought hard, but then remembered the true meaning of the Silk Road, friendship and peace.

They offered the King gifts such as silk and fruits. Touched by their kindness, the King admitted, “Wow! No one was nice to me before.” His heart changed, and he pledged to protect the Silk Road. The crewmates cheered, “Hooray!” Later, the King sent them a letter: “Thank you! Love, the King.” The crewmates replied, “You’re welcome! Kindness is the best!”

The crewmates continued along the Silk Road and finally arrived Chang’an. They found a shop selling Fanta and ice cream near a hotel and bought almost everything. To their surprise, the shop owner was Marco Polo, one of the earliest travellers of China Silk Road. After a fun night at the Sandy Hamey Hotel, they enjoyed egg fried rice as breakfast. Then, it was time to return home in their spaceship.

It truly was an AWESOME trip!

The Silk Road Old Tales

ESF Renaissance College, Kam, Nathanael – 7

A long time ago Chinese people made weapons, grew food and fabricated silk. They use it to trade with people in India, Europe and Africa, and made a road called the Silk Road. The Silk Road is longer than you can see. Marco Polo was the first person in Europe to discover the Silk Road. He died in old age. Chinese and Indian people went to the Silk Road about half way so they started to trade with people that were going through the road. I am from Hong Kong and travelled to Chang'an. One day I notice a village near my house, so I packed some things and then I went to the village, but some local people stopped me from going to the village. "Calm down everyone, he's is not going to attack our village." Another person said "Right?" I then said "Of course not." I said surprisingly "why would I do that?" Then I went past them to the village. I then made my own house in the village, it was a peaceful life, I tamed a horse, read some books, and my life was great. Then I heard a story about a road, it was called the Silk Road. I immediately wanted to know more. So I did some research but I couldn't find out more. So then I got an idea to head to the Silk Road myself. I packed some food and a sword and headed off. I walked for a long time, I then saw someone with a boat. Then I asked the person may I use the boat please and he said yes so I got the boat and I headed off to the Silk Road. Then I saw the very start of the Silk Road in Chang'an of China and I was really excited. So I went to the very start of the Silk Road. I walked and walked and walked until I saw some wandering traders trade tents and food and other stuff I needed. I bought a new sword, a tent, a vine cutter and other food. I spent the rest of the night at Dunhuang sleeping in the tent I bought. Then I continued on the way to the Silk Road but when I arrive India, I saw a lion sleeping so I went really quiet. I was shivering so then I went pass the lion safely, this night I was scared. After that I kept on going so then I walked and walked and walked, the next day I kept going until I reached the end of the Silk Road in the Roman Empire. I felt surprised that I could finish the whole silk road by myself without dying and I should be giving an award to myself. [THE END]

The Very Dangerous Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Lin, Bruce – 7

Once Upon a time, there was a very strange Silk Road. None of the people knew why it was so strange. Many people thought that diggers had been digging on the road for many days. But some other people took a closer look at the road, and they found it was controlled by King Slatatatata. Soon, a lot of people knew it was dangerous. All the people were very scared, but they had to fight back. Everyone got prepared to fight King Slatatatata. They also had a king, who was named King Friend. He was very brave. So the people all agreed to let King Friend know before they went fighting.

They arrived King Friend's kingdom. The door opened, they saw King Friend sitting on his chair. They went to talk to him about their plan. King Friend said it would be very dangerous and challenging but they must do it. The fight would be very hard so they practiced it first. Soon with King Friend's help, the people were perfect and ready to fight. Then King Friend said they could go for it now. Everyone was nervous but they had to go ahead.

At first, they could not find King Slatatatata's kingdom. It took them a long time to find King Slatatatata's kingdom along the way of the Silk Road. There was even a bear, a trace of blood and a snake on the way. They finally arrived, and they needed to get in but the door wouldn't open. So they had to figure out another way. They thought and thought and they finally had an idea. They saw an open window and thought they could use a ladder to climb up to the window to get in. But the problem was they did not have a ladder. So they decided to find it. After a very long time of search, they finally found an old and rusty ladder. They took turns to climb up the ladder, and soon they were all inside King Slatatatata's kingdom. One of the people whose name was Tim took out a map of King Slatatatata's kingdom and said, "We all have to get to the power control room." So all the people walked to there. When they all arrived there, King Slatatatata saw them on CCTV and he went down to investigate. He opened the door of the power control room and saw them inside. The people all took out their weapons and said, "Let's have a fight." And King Slatatatata said "Okay!!!" Then they started fighting. At first, it looked like King Slatatatata would win, but suddenly Tim launched out from nowhere and beat King Slatatatata.

All of a sudden, the very strange road returned to the normal Silk Road. Soon many people from different places came to the Silk Road to open shops, trade goods and sell yummy food there. And all the people lived happily ever after.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Oscar – 7

The year is 821 of the Tang Dynasty in China. Our story begins in Constantinople, where a young boy named Oscar was floating on his flying carpet, looking up at the stars. The stars were bright and he could see the Pegasus constellation. He wondered how the stars might help him on his quest.

Oscar looked at his map that traced the journey from Constantinople to Chang'an along the busy, dangerous paths of the Silk Road. The journey ahead made him feel both excited and terrified. He was pleased to have his horse, Bucephalus along for the journey. Bucephalus would be pulling the cart carrying his precious load; a collection of magical flying carpets. He hoped to present them to the Emperor in exchange for some beautiful silk.

As the sun rose the next morning, Oscar and Bucephalus started their trek, the sun becoming warmer as it climbed in the sky. The days and nights rolled together fast, Oscar lost count of the days. The journey took them up and down the dunes of the sandy deserts and over snow-capped mountains. They met many travelers and shared many tales.

One day as Oscar arrived at the port to cross the yellow river at Jingyuan, he came across another traveler. Her name was Freya. She was also travelling to Chang'an to trade a collection of glistening gems. The two travelers chatted and became friends. Freya rode a camel named Mezit.

Now, as a group of four they boarded a junk boat to cross the Yellow River. It was a short journey, but the current was strong and the boat rocked. Everyone was scared. The rapidly moving water swirled around the boat. Everyone was relieved to reach land and continue on foot. They were in the heart of China now and their final destination grew closer.

As they walked along a narrow, rocky pathway through the Liupan Mountains, suddenly a fierce tiger leaped out and bounded onto the path ahead of them. It growled and snarled at the group. Luckily, Oscar had some spare bones in his backpack and threw them at the tiger to distract him. The tiger, leaped and caught them all, crunching them with his powerful jaws. As he finished munching the bones, the tiger stepped closer to Oscar. Oscar froze, not knowing what to do next. Then the tiger opened its wide mouth, showing its sharp teeth and gave him a giant lick. A friendship had formed.

Finally, they arrived in Chang'an. Oscar and Bucephalus, with Freya, Mezit and Aziz the Tiger. Oscar presented his batch of magnificent flying carpets and Freya presented her stack of glorious gems. The emperor was amazed! "I have never received trades like this before!" he exclaimed. They received lots of soft, colourful silk in exchange. Oscar and Freya were delighted. As evening fell, Oscar looked up at the skies to see the stars and smiled as he watched the emperor flying on his magic carpet. It had been a magical adventure.

Luck Great Adventure

ESF Renaissance College, Xu, Sam – 7

Luck Great lived in a small village next to the Silk Road. The Silk Road was a long road. People used it to trade things like silk, tea, and fruit. Luck Great's family did not use money. They traded things with people who came from far away. Luck Great had a strong horse called the blood-sweat horse. He loved fruit. His favorite fruits were apples, bananas, peaches, and grapes.

One morning, Luck Great went to the kitchen. The fruit bowl was empty. His mom said, "We have no fruit left!" Luck Great felt sad. He wanted fruit very much. He sat outside and watched the Silk Road. He saw traders riding camels and horses. They carried big bags.

His best friend ran up and said, "Don't be sad! I heard there is a place called Fruit Mountain. It is on the Silk Road. It has lots of fruit from many places!" Luck Great smiled. He wanted to bring fruit home for his family and friends.

Luck Great packed his bag with bread, water, and a warm coat. He got on his horse and rode on the Silk Road. The wind blew in his hair. He saw traders and travelers. He saw people selling silk, tea, and shiny things.

On the way, a man blocked the road. There was a new town. The man did not talk, but he stood in Luck Great's way. Luck Great made his horse go fast and zoomed past the man. The man shouted, "Get him!" and started to chase Luck Great. More people joined and ran after him. Luck Great did not know why they chased him, but he kept going.

Luck Great saw a big sign. It said "Fruit Mountain." He was happy and rode even faster. He jumped off his horse and ran to a big wooden door. The people were still chasing him. Luck Great grabbed the door handle and ran inside.

Inside, there were stairs going up the mountain. Luck Great ran up the stairs as fast as he could. Sweat ran down his face. The people ran after him, but he did not stop. He climbed higher and higher until he got to the top.

At the top, Luck Great saw trees with apples, bananas, peaches, and grapes. Some fruit came from far away on the Silk Road. He picked as much fruit as he could and filled his bag. Some people stopped chasing him because they were tired. Others saw the fruit and started picking it too. Soon, Luck Great was alone at the top.

Luck Great ran down the mountain and found his horse. He got on and rode home fast on the Silk Road. His horse galloped and made dust. Luck Great was tired and sweaty, but he was happy.

When he got home, Luck Great shared the fruit with his family and friends. He took a big bite of an apple and smiled. Everyone cheered for Luck Great. It was the best adventure ever on the Silk Road!

A Thief on the Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Yan, Lok Tin Theo – 7

Long ago, the Silk Road was the most important path in the world because it connected the East to the West. It wasn't just a road; it was where people from different countries met to share inventions, spices, and stories. But not everyone there was friendly.

A legendary thief named "Bad Guy Mooshee" had just escaped from jail. He traveled to the Silk Road looking for easy loot. However, he found a mysterious potion dropped by a merchant. The label said, "Drink for Goodness". Being a curious thief who always tries new things, Mooshee drank it. Suddenly, he didn't feel like stealing anymore. He wanted to learn.

He found a bookstore full of knowledge about foreign lands. He checked his inventory and saw he only had four emeralds and ten diamonds, but the book he wanted cost way more! He realized that to get what he wanted, he couldn't just take it—he had to work for it.

Mooshee remembered he had a digger, a gold ingot and some TNT in his inventory. He came up with a plan to mine for resources, just like the hard-working traders on the road. He dug through stone for hours, finding nothing at first. But he didn't give up. Finally, he hit a rich vein of ores and mined enough diamonds and emeralds to buy the book.

The book contained a secret map leading to a shop that sold rare silk. Mooshee bought the silk, but instead of keeping it, he did something special. He found a villager from a distant country who didn't speak his language. Mooshee didn't understand the words, but he smiled and traded the silk to him. The villager smiled back and gave him some cool coins. Mooshee saw that being good felt great!

He checked his inventory and saw he still had enough diamonds to buy fifteen silk outfits. He traded them with even more people. Then, he decided he wanted to be an even better guy. He went back to the bookstore and found a map that led to the Potion Shop. After drinking another potion, he realized it was almost Chinese New Year! So, he bought some tasty tangerines which mean good luck and put coins into red packets to share with villagers. He wanted to share the festival with other travelers. In that moment, Mooshee realized the true magic of the Silk Road: it wasn't just about trading, but about connecting people from worlds different from his own.

Finally, he built a magic portal and teleported straight back to his own house.

The Silk Road Heroes

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Ching, Jan – 7

Two thousand years ago, there was a busy place filled with visitors from all around the world. Here, people from the East and West did business together, selling things such as food, clothes, silk, and paper. This place is called The Silk Road.”

One day, a girl named Wing Yin was out and about. She is a young girl, and she is very friendly. If you don't have enough essentials, she will help you. For example, she likes to help Grandma Wong, who is not her grandma. She is just very old, and she can't walk much. Grandma Wong was alone because her family had died, so Wing Yin felt sad and decided to help her buy food.

On her way to the market, she saw a boy in a big rubbish bin. She rushed over and asked the boy what he was doing. He told her he was poor and was looking for food, so she offered him some. The boy was overjoyed because he hadn't eaten in days. While the boy was eating, he introduced himself as Xiao Wang. He was seven years old, which made Wing Yin happy because she was also seven. They immediately became friends.

Wing Yin still needed to buy food for Grandma Wong, so she invited Xiao Wang to join her. When they reached The Silk Road Market, it was very busy. They finished picking fruits for Grandma Wong and went to the vendor to pay, but when Wing Yin reached into her pocket, her wallet was gone! She felt angry, sad, and anxious because she knew it wasn't an accident. She spotted a man wearing black clothes holding Wing Yin's wallet and walking away. She dropped everything she was holding and dragged Xiao Wang to help her catch the thief.

They followed the bad guy all the way to his base. Inside, they saw lots of children trapped in cages and many stolen jewels. After seeing all this, they immediately ran out and looked for help from a nearby adult. They told him what they had seen, but he didn't believe them, so they decided to handle it themselves.

They went back and sneakily followed the bad guy into his secret room, where the keys to unlock the cages and the stolen jewels were. They waited for him to go to the bathroom before taking the keys and quickly set the children free. They took the stolen jewels and the children to the police station.

At the police station, everyone was shocked. They had been searching for these specific children and jewels for a long time. They used the information from the kids to catch the bad guy, and all the children were sent back to their families. Wing Yin and Xiao Wang's heroic story became the talk of the town. Everyone thanked them for being so brave.

The Silk Road is now safe for everyone again.

The Silk Road

German Swiss International School, Choy, Jaylen –

A long time ago, a silk merchant named Bo overheard villagers talking about the wonderful things of the west. That night, he dreamed of an adventure – a journey to acquire the treasures. The next morning, that's exactly what he did. When he was about to leave, he realised he didn't have enough money to buy things, so he thought, suddenly it hit him, "SILK! That's it." So he packed all his silk and set off.

Bo walked and soon encountered a young horse. He saw the horse had a deep gash on its leg. Bo carefully led the horse to a lake, fed it food and nursed its wound. Soon, the horse's leg healed and they set off together.

The Huns were known for capturing merchants and stealing their goods. They were scouting around and spotted Bo. Frightened, Bo's horse ran away. The Huns chained Bo and locked him in a dark cell. Suddenly, Bo felt the floor shaking, "Earthquake!" he shouted, then he realised it was the stomping of his horse. It majestically reared up its hind legs and smashed the lock, Bo was free! "Thank you, horse. I'm going to call you Fei". Fei whinnied as if he liked it. Bo and his best friend Fei trotted along happily, and soon they reached the next town. It was old and some towers were cracked. Bo took the silk to the market and set a stall. Immediately a huge crowd appeared. "Wow! So soft and glossy. What is it? I'll trade you anything I have for it" one said. "ANYTHING" another exclaimed. "One by one, you first!", Bo shouted over the crowd. Bo traded lots of silk for gold, silver and diamonds. He went to the next village, which was new and vibrant, where he traded rubies, emeralds and sapphires. He traded all his silk then went home.

They walked then a real earthquake struck, it led to a volcanic eruption. "We're done for!" Bo wailed. Fei shook his head as if he doubted, "NEIGH! NEIGH!" Fei hollered. Then they took off. He bolted across fields, dashed through forest, exploded past a grassland, soared over lakes and sailed above rivers. At last, the two caught up with a group of heavenly horses – Fei's friends! Together, they galloped away. Bo took the horses to the Emperor. "Wow, what speedy, agile horses. Nothing like the ones we have here in China," the Emperor said. As soon as he saw the horses, he wanted to buy them all, Bo refused. "You don't have to buy any, I will give you all but I would like to keep one and live in the sparkling palace stable together." Can you guess which one he kept? That's right – Fei. Bo and Fei moved in the palace and lived a happy life, he was content. Bo wasn't rich, he was happy. One day, he decided to write a story of his adventure and that's what you have just finished reading.

The Man Who Crossed the Silk Road

German Swiss International School, Fong, Dylan – 7

Once upon a time, in the city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan, there lived a merchant with a big dream. He wanted to travel to a faraway place called China, use his gold to buy special goods, and bring them home to sell. But there was one big problem: he only had donkey sleighs, and the long desert was hot, dry, and full of danger.

The merchant sent his best people to search for China, but every time they returned with nothing. So he decided to try the journey himself. He walked for weeks under the burning sun. His water was almost gone, and he was very tired, but he did not give up.

One day, he saw a man lying on the sand, weak and dying from thirst. Even though the merchant hardly had any water left, he shared it with the stranger. After drinking a little, the man felt better. He told the merchant he had a map that showed the way to China and wanted to trade it for gold. The merchant was kind and gave him half of his gold. Before both of them fainted from exhaustion, the stranger warned him about ruthless thieves on the road ahead.

When the merchant woke up, the man was gone. But strangely, his water bottle was full again. He didn't understand how, but he continued his journey. Using the map, he finally reached China. There he discovered the soft and shiny fabric silk, which was more beautiful than anything he had ever seen. He traded all his gold for silk.

On his way back home, a group of thieves attacked him. They stole all his silk and left him with nothing. He was sad but thankful to be alive. As he kept walking, he met another group of thieves. They said they had robbed the thieves who took his silk. They returned half of it and said, "We only rob fairly." They also told him that the best way to avoid robbers was to pretend to be one himself.

When the merchant returned to Samarkand, he sold the silk for even more gold than he originally had. On his next trip to China, he brought a large group of people, and they all dressed like thieves. They didn't rob anyone, but no robbers dared to attack them either. He traveled many more times, traded a lot of silk, and became the richest man in all of Uzbekistan.

Years later, on the day of his son's wedding, the merchant received a surprise gift: the rest of the silk stolen from him long ago. The people who brought it revealed the truth. They were not thieves at all. The man the merchant had helped in the desert was actually a wizard. Touched by the merchant's kindness, he had sent them to protect the merchant and his family forever.

The merchant never forgot that kindness is always returned many times over.

A Friend in a Strange Land

German Swiss International School, Geng, Harvey –

Once upon a time, a merchant in Chang'an, China was in a market selling a fresh, glowing batch of silk with the help of his son, Liang, when suddenly a noisy, old truck came. A kid named Kai came out. He had traveled for many months from a far-away kingdom in the West. Kai had never been to China, so Liang offered Kai a rice cake as a welcome gift, but Kai answered, "I thought you only ate bowls of rice!" After some time, they started hanging out with each other while their dads were trading silk. Liang introduced a game called Cuju. At first Kai was not sure what it was or how to play but after Liang taught him the rules, he soon was amazing at it and was having a great time!

Soon, it was time for lunch. Liang's grandmother had made dumplings stuffed with delicious food, including meat, vegetables, corn and shrimp. When Kai saw the dumplings on the table, they reminded him of the stuffed pastries he usually eats at home. Then Liang handed Kai chopsticks, but Kai wasn't sure how to use them. He found them very tricky to use, but Liang helped him. After they ate their meal, Liang's grandma told them a story about a legendary, glowing, kind dragon that people in Chang'an believe has protected their city for thousands of years. After that, Liang's grandma also taught them how to make simple paper cuts. Liang made a small cat, while Kai made a big dog. Kai was very happy and also a little bit surprised because he found out that China wasn't just all about silk.

The next day, Kai said to Liang, "I thought everything in your country would be strange but your games are fun, your food is yummy, and your stories and traditions are super cool. Chang'an is very different from my country, but in a great way. We are more the same than I thought!" Then Liang and Kai swapped gifts to remember each other. Liang gave Kai his own, colorful papercut butterfly and Kai gave Liang a coin from his country that had a lion on it.

Kai and Liang are still very close. Kai tells all of his friends in the West about Liang, and Liang tells all of his friends about Kai, about how they both met and about how they promised to always be friends. Sometimes, they write letters to each other. In his letters, Liang tells Kai his favorite stories about dragons and other legendary Chinese beasts. And Kai often likes to remind Liang about Cuju and thanks him for teaching him how to play.

Kai and Liang's friendship will last forever, and that's because they learned that people should not be scared of the people and things they don't know, that if people share their food, culture and stories with each other, a stranger can become a friend. Kai and Liang now wonder, "maybe the entire world could be like that?"

How the Silk Road Began

German Swiss International School, Lai, Caspar – 8

The cold air pierced his frozen hands; it had been an arduous few days since leaving Wuwei. They had to endure sub-zero temperatures, rain that only stopped to turn to snow and feet that had never recovered from the last round of frostbite; they knew it couldn't be much further.

The emperor had sent Zhang Qian and his men on this expedition to secure a military alliance with the Yuezhi people against the nomadic Xiongnu. He had embarked on this journey with his guide, Ganfu and 99 other men; now just 67 remained.

As they were trudging up a small incline, disaster struck. There was an earthquake. "Ahh!!" screamed Ganfu. He and Zhang leapt aside. That was close. They turned around to see that the others were not so fortunate. Many of the men had been crushed by falling rocks. We have to save them!

He knew he would need his best men and would have to use ropes, pulleys and levers to haul the weightiest of the boulders. But time was not on their side; there was a high risk of an avalanche, rockslide or even a second earthquake. Hurry Hurry! Ganfu thought to himself. As he looked up, he saw that the moon was already starting to rise up on the darkening canvas above. They frantically searched for ropes, logs and stones to carve into pulleys. In lightning quick time, they constructed a frame for the pulley mechanism and got to work.

After several hours of backbreaking work, the reality of the situation came into view. Zhang was mortified; there were many broken bones, bloody wounds and at least 25 men had been totally crushed like tomatoes.

This is a catastrophe he thought to himself. Decisive action was required. "The injured men will remain here whilst we get supplies." They hunted deer, foraged for natural remedies and looked for fresh water. The conditions were brutal and unforgiving yet they persevered and made it back, armed with supplies. This cannot be! To their astonishment the area was deserted. They scoured the area until they found a clue. He immediately recognised it. His father had told him about these Yuezhi headbands.

His thoughts were disturbed by some movements on one of the hilltops. He scanned the area and realised they were surrounded by archers. There was no escape! They all froze and yet after a deathly silence, with time standing still, the Yuezhi people lowered their weapons and approached. They kindly escorted them to their camp where they discovered the injured men receiving care. The Yuezhis only spoke Tocharian thus he had to resort to hand signals; not the easiest way to negotiate the return of his men and a military alliance. It would prove to all be in vain.

Two days later they were already heading home. There would be no military alliance this time yet they had laid the foundation for one of the most important trade routes in human history.

A Magic Map: A Silk Road Story

German Swiss International School, Lu, Abigail – 7

Nicholas is a curious boy that lives in a dense and busy city called Hong Kong. He does not have many toys, but he has a curious mind and a love of books, especially the ones about adventures. One day, he borrowed a very old looking book from the Central Library. It was about the caravans that travelled on the Silk Road hundreds of years ago, in the Tang Dynasty of China. When he took the book home, a map fell out of the book. The map was crisp and yellow, but Nicholas could still make out the names of the towns, cities, rivers and mountains on the map.

At night, after Nicholas had fallen asleep, clutching his book, the map glowed and changed his room into a tent. The kind of tent that people used to sleep in during their journeys on the Silk Road. There were so many people and animals that were travelling along the Silk Road and it was so noisy that Nicholas suddenly woke up. Nicholas was so shocked that he immediately ran out of the tent.

“Where am I?!” he gasped.

An old woman peered down at him and smiled. “You are on road to Cathay, a country far to the east.”

“Cathay?” Nicholas scratched his head. “I’ve heard of Cathay. It is the name of the airline in Hong Kong.” Nicholas muttered to him, being very confused.

The old woman chuckled. “My dear boy, I am not sure what you just said, but Cathay is a large and rich empire where there are many large and magnificent cities, brave warriors, wise scholars, and many things for us to buy to bring back to our home in Persia.”

Nicholas looked up at the old woman. “Can I go with you to Cathay? Perhaps I can find my home and my family there. My home is a large city as well, and we have many people coming to our city to trade and to exchange stories.”

The old woman patted Nicholas’ head. “Sure, you can. We will keep going towards where the sun rises in the morning. We will be spending a lot of time together on the road. You can tell me about your home city, your family, the foods you eat.”

“Yay! Let’s go right now. And my favourite food is called Dim Sum!”

The sun is high in the sky now, and the caravan has started moving. “This is going to be quite an adventure”, Nicholas thought to himself and clutching onto the map that is still in his pocket, “Wait till my teachers hear about my amazing adventure...”

The Silk Road

German Swiss International School, Singh, Anahita – 7

One chilly evening, a poor orphan named Ana was silently sneaking across a sandy desert, near the King's palace.

She was very poor, and she had not even a single penny, though she had a mischievous idea. The horrid and greedy King made his people starve and not have a good life. So, she decided to creep into the king's palace and steal all his precious gold and jewels and give them to worthy people; therefore, she tiptoed joyfully but also a bit cautiously, right into his giant palace.

She crossed the deep dark dungeons, the frosty isles and all the dangerous obstacles and finally reached the King's bedroom door. It budged but still did not open. But she pushed with all her might and finally opened it and happily got inside his bedroom. The shining box was gleaming in the moonlight. She opened it and got out all the jewels into her pockets and fled till she reached the desert.

She needed food more than gold and other people needed gold more than food. She stubbornly decided to walk for miles till she could find someone from afar to trade with. So, she walked and waded, trembled and traded until she surprisingly ended up on a road. She thought there might be some people or merchants who might trade with her, but alas she could not do it today because the sun was setting. Finally, she stopped and lay down, without a tent and without a blanket and in seconds she was snoring.

When she woke up, the sun had risen. She rubbed her eyes, stretched up and started slumping across the road. Suddenly she saw a blurry shape running on the road. Who could it be? At last, it stopped moving and sat down. It was a girl wearing a green tattered sweatshirt and a white torn skirt. She had ugly clothing but her face with here pink glasses made her look beautiful.

"Hello!" said the girl. "Hi!" Said Ana. "What's your name?" she asked. "My name is Ana, how about you?" "My name is Reha." she said. "Can we be best friends forever?" Ana pleaded. "OF COURSE, but I don't have enough gold to trade to get money to pay, to live and be with you!" said Reha. "That's easy, because I've got some riches from the evil King's palace." said Ana. Reha and Ana decided to trade their things, because the only thing Reha had was some old, dry food.

"I forgot to tell you, on this road many people and merchants trade special things that represent their country or place, and this road is called the Silk Road." "OH REALY?" said Ana. "Yes." Said Reha. "Ok, farewell!" sang Ana. "GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK ANA, UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!" shouted Reha.

Across the sea and over the mountains, Ana started spreading the tale of the silk road to everybody she could find.

And that is why you know about the Silk Road.

Chance and his Silk Road Chest

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Fong, Pak Hei Lucas – 7

Bang! Chance fell onto the floor pushed by people in the train station. Later at school, Chance asked his friends Leticia and Raquel if they wanted to go on vacation together, and they agreed. They searched online and found the perfect destination called China's Silk Road. Chance's friends all agreed to go on an adventure there because they were excited to see what and how people used to trade. They also learned there was a chest on a train they had to catch. Inside that chest, there was a map showing the location of China's Silk Road.

The next day, they all met at the railway station but they lost track of time while eating at the railway station restaurant. Chance and his friends ran as fast as they could. The doors began closing with a loud "Dood! Dood!" Just in time, they all leaped inside as the driver said, "All aboard!" After a few hours, crack!—the tracks broke, and the train was about to fall off a cliff! There were only nine parachutes for ninety passengers on the train, so who would get the parachutes? Suddenly, Chance had an idea. All passengers who had a rope or a scarf would be needed for this idea. They tied everything together into one long rope, then tied the rope to the parachutes. Finally, the skydiving professionals would wear the parachutes while the rest held on tightly to the rope. Just before the train fell off the cliff, they successfully survived and landed in a hot desert.

It was too hot to use any phones in the desert. So Chance and his friends walked until they found a camel handler with six camels! They were excited to be rescued and ride camels for the first time. When they rode the camels, it felt very shaky. They used hand signals to ask the camel handler if this was normal. The handler replied, "Yes, camels always sway like this." Suddenly, Leticia yelled, "There is a sandstorm coming!" They needed to get off the camels and run for shelter.

After running to a safe shelter, they spotted the train that carried the chest. They ran as fast as they could towards the train and hopped onboard. They searched carefully until they found a mysterious secret room. They opened the door slowly and saw the chest! They excitedly opened the chest, and found a map with a note that said: "Get off now!" They followed the map after they jumped off the train.

After two days of travel, with very little breaks and sleep, they successfully found China's Silk Road! They were so happy that they finally found China's Silk Road! They spent days exploring the historic route. When it was time to go home, they learned that teamwork is the best. Chance told his friends: "This was the most exciting holiday ever!"

The Great Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Guan, Eli –

Long time ago, there is a Silk Road. It travels through 3 continents. They are Asia, Africa and Europe. The Silk Road started at China and then it went longer to different continents. It trades powerful stuff like swords, shields and armor. If people are very rich, they can even trade for a diamond or a vase! Then the rich people got richer by exchanging goods. The poor got some goods but still very poor. But it adds values to the goods and it helps everyone make more money. Also people trade food, leather, wool, silk, clothes and even some animals.

Do you know camels are really useful? Horses are good, but camels are very useful for the Silk Road. First, they are very strong. Second, they have huge feet so they will not sink in the sand. Third, they can drink up to 150 litres of water so they can survive for a long time. They don't need to drink water for seven months, not weeks!

The Silk Road is dangerous but cool. It is about animals, trading and how to trade the best. I think people are smart and brave.

Lam Lam on the Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Hu, Tutu – 6

Once upon a time there was a girl named Lam Lam, and she loved the silk road so much that she nearly went to the silk road every day. The silk road was very big and red, and Lam Lam's favourite color is red. Then one day when she woke up, she heard a crash. When Lam Lam looked out her windows, she saw some people crashing the silk road down, so she went away. Then one day she saw her country was better than before, so she went back home and lived happily ever after.

The Great Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Kong, Letitia –

A long long time ago, people don't have planes, cars, and phones, so they cannot buy things on the internet like us! It is inconvenience! How can I get "mint" on my pizza when long long time ago? We need 'the silk road'.

In fact, 'Silk Road' is not only one road but so many different paths! You can travel by ships, camel, and even by walking because the Silk Road can be crossing the dessert, the ocean or the mountain! They use the camels to cross the dessert because they can walk very far without drinking water or eating. They can store fat and water in their humps. SO AMAZING!

It is very difficult to get success of the trading if you are on your own. It might be sandstorm in the dessert so you need to have a partner and camel to help. (Camel are not afraid of the sand because they have two layers of eyelashes!) Or you might find a wild animal that you cannot fight by yourself to win!

So, be careful if you want to travel alone! Or you can travel in a group which is called 'Caravan', that is much more safe!

The Silk Road is very important, it's like a large busy market. We can hear different languages, we can see different spices (MY MINTS), we can see different fabrics and we can learn different ideas and even technology!

I cannot imagine that the Silk Road does not exist, because it is so IMPORTANT!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lai, Thea – 7

Once upon a time, there lived a girl named Sakura. She was a smart girl who liked to discover many things. One day, she wanted a shiny diamond.

Sakura found some shiny silk surrounded by many dragons. She tried many times to sneak in, but the dragons always found her sneaking in and pushed her out of the silk road. Then, one night, Sakura crept in to get the silk and ran quietly to one of the shops. She gave the silk to the owner of the shop in exchange for a shiny diamond and quietly ran back home. She put the diamond on the shelf and went to bed.

The next morning, the dragons woke up and looked at the place where the silk was yesterday. They knew Sakura had taken the silk, so they ran to her house. But Sakura was not home. She had left some yummy truffles for the dragons. The dragons tasted the truffles and wanted to ask Sakura how to harvest truffles.

Sakura learned that she should exchange things instead of stealing. She apologised to the dragons, and from that day on, they became friends. It is better to share and care than to take things unfairly.

The Little Silk Thread

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Lau, Mia – 7

Lily was a little girl in ancient China. One bright morning, her mother gave her a red silk thread. It felt soft and smooth between Lily's fingers.

"This is for the Silk Road," Mama said gently. "Take it to a faraway land."

Lily carefully put the silk thread into her bag and set off with a caravan. There were tall camels, strong horses, and many travellers. Lily could hear the jingling bells on the camels and smell the dusty air as they walked on. They travelled through hot deserts, crossed over cold rivers, and climbed up high mountains. The sand felt hot under her feet, and the wind whispered around her ears.

"The silk thread will help us make friends," Mama had said, and Lily believed her.

At last, they arrived at a big, busy market. Lily looked around and saw people from many different countries. The air smelled of spices and sweet tea, and everyone was talking loudly.

A little boy from Rome picked up the silk and gasped, "Wow! This silk is so, so, so soft!"

In return, he gave Lily a shiny, beautiful stone that sparkled in the sunlight.

Lily smiled happily. As she held onto the silk thread, she knew it had helped her make a new friend on the long Silk Road.

My Silk Road Adventure

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ng, Hannah –

Bright streams of colourful light streaked across the sky, zig-zagging like fireworks. The dazzling beams, coming from a strange spaceship hovering above us, just zapped our camels' tails and made them hop around like kangaroos! The circular spaceship looked like an ancient Chinese coin and had appeared out of nowhere just as we crossed the Kazakhstan border into Russia. Instead of attacking, it seemed to be playing tricks on us. Our convoy was in chaos but in a silly way — camels giggling, soldiers hopping and tea jars rattling like drums.

Earlier that day, the sun blazed overhead like a giant fireball with heat pouring down mercilessly. Sweat streamed down our faces like waterfalls as we trudged along the Silk Road. Our Emperor wanted to acquire Russia's prized animal furs from Siberian tigers, Arctic foxes, snow leopards and Siberian lynx, to make fancy coats for the royal family. That's why we carried bundles of jade, rolls of silk and chests of tea for trading with Russia. The Silk Road was renowned for connecting China to many lands, and we were proud to be part of its adventures.

After a blinding flash lit up the tangerine sky, everything around us glowed in rainbow colours in an instant. My companions gasped as their clothes turned bright pink and sapphire. One soldier's helmet became a giant watermelon, and another's boots squeaked like yellow rubber ducks. One camel suddenly sprouted a moustache and looked very serious. I couldn't help but laugh, even though I suddenly found myself floating a few feet above the ground like a hot-air balloon!

Looking upwards, the emerald green spaceship, sparkling like jade, slowly descended. A door appeared and out stepped three funniest creatures I had ever seen. They had wobbly antennae, giant googly eyes and wore vibrant mismatched socks! One sneezed so loudly that his whole body bounced like jelly. Another carried a giant spoon, as if he was ready to eat soup from the desert sand.

Just as I was about to burst out laughing, I heard one of them say:

"This one is still awake. Let's bring her back for... a tea party!"

The aliens dragged me towards their spaceship, but instead of scary experiments, they served me tea in cups shaped like camel hooves. They asked me to teach them how to juggle silk scarves, and one alien tried to balance a teapot on his head while dancing. Another wanted to trade his socks for our jade, claiming his socks were "magical."

We traded jade for alien jokes, silk for rainbow bubbles and tea for endless laughter. I could feel their friendly smiles underneath their funny faces. When I finally returned to my convoy, I told everyone that the Silk Road wasn't just about trading goods — it was also about trading stories, surprises and fantasies... even with aliens in mismatched socks.

The greatest reward of my Silk Road adventure wasn't the furs we traded, but the laughter and friendship I found in this magical secret encounter.

The Super Loooooong Road in my Backyard

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Su, Sophia –

Today in school, we learned about the super looooooong road called the Silk Road. It is a rough road and it looks like a huge, stretchy snake. A long time ago, they used this for travelling, buying and selling things across different continents because there were no airplanes and ships then. So this road was very important for the whole world and the people.

I am always excited when I travel on an airplane with my family, so I wondered how it was to travel on the Silk Road. So I took Pandy my panda doll, Cutie my bunny doll and Ruffy my dog doll to our backyard and pretended to be riding on the Silk Road. I felt cold, nervous and proud of myself to be on the Silk Road watching the brown, sparkly sand of the desert. We climbed mountains, walked on the rocky and rough roads. I had my Harrow backpack with me and it had pure silk, paper and noodles from China my home country. I want to exchange these goods with gold, silver and olive oil.

Wow! We have finally reached the big market. There were so many people, food, jewels, gems, silk, spices, gold and many other things. I wanted to go shopping! There were so many people. I tried some honey and walnuts. They were so delicious.

“Sophia! Sophia!” someone called my name. I turn around and it was my mom. “It’s time for dinner.” she said. The Silk Road and market I imagined turned back to my backyard. “Okay, mom.” I replied. “Let’s go to the Silk Road again tomorrow.” I whispered to Pandy, Cutie and Ruffy. What a fun day!

China's Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Tsim, Klara – 7

Twenty-two years ago, Klara sold silk to the rich people from Europe to China to earn money for her family, through the largest trade route during that time. Klara is a beautiful little girl, who loves gold and sparkly things.

One day, when her handsome butler was driving on the Silk Road, delivering the most precious silk to one of the richest families in Europe, she realized that the wheels of her car had become sparkly. The sparkles from the wheels glistened so brightly that they stopped the car and stepped onto the Silk Road.

Her butler carefully carried her out of the car, and then to their surprise, the butler's legs became sparkly. This made them think the road had magic. They decided to dig up the road to try to find gold. So the butler dug and dug until he struck something solid.

Klara peeked down the hole that her butler had dug and saw something shiny. Her butler cautiously removed the shiny object from the ground, and they both yelled, "OH MY GOD, we've struck GOLD!" Klara grinned from ear to ear.

Klara and her butler dug a tunnel under the Silk Road and followed the gold. On the way, they continued to grab all the pieces of gold until there was no gold left. They returned to the car with an abundant amount of gold.

In the end, the gold she found made Klara the richest person in the world. With this newfound wealth, she was able to provide for her family and expand her silk business to include other goods for trade, like gold. Klara's long-term vision is to develop railways and ports to connect the east and the west.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yang, Mark – 7

Once upon a time there were 5 bandits that were not smart. They were stupid and never learned.

Bandit 1 was a shortie and tried to hide behind a cactus. He was not careful and did not have good eye sight so he tripped on a pebble and bumped his head on the cactus! Ooooooooooooooooooooo! The spikes went into his head and brain, so he didn't even know what was 1+1. And he looked like a hedgehog!

4 bandits left.

Bandit number 2 was day dreaming and suddenly a camel was running at him (he was wearing a red jumper) and the camel stamped on his feet. Aaaaaaarrrrrrggggghhhh! He screamed so loud that his lungs were almost broken. He flew into the air and when he landed it was on his butt on the cactus.

3 bandits left.

Bandit number 3 wanted to steal a box full of gold. The man who was holding the box needed the toilet, so he suddenly threw the big, heavy box to the side just as the bandit was creeping on the sand behind him, and it hit the bandit's head. Owwwwweeeeeee! And he fell down unconscious.

2 bandits left.

Bandit number 4 wanted to go to the fortified caravanserais to sneak in and steal some treasures. When he was climbing on the wall he slipped and he made a lot of noise. The soldiers heard and shot at him. An arrow hit him in the middle of his butt. Eeeeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyeyey! And he ran away.

1 bandit left.

Bandit number 5 was not that stupid. He saw all of this and ran away and was never seen again.

My Magical Dream of Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yong, Katie – 7

Hi, my name is Katie and I want to share with you a magical dream that I had about the Silk Road. In the dream, my camel soft toy that my dad got for my birthday came to life!

Humphrey the camel came to my bed. I climbed onto his bumpy back, and he started to fly. I was in the clouds soaring through the sky.

After several minutes, we landed on a desert, and Humphrey saw a lot of friends. They were all carrying people and baggage. Some of Humphrey's friends spoke Chinese, saying "nǐ hǎo" (which means hello), while some spoke English, saying "hello." They were from China, the Middle East, and Europe. They were talking about how long they had been traveling. Some had traveled for hours, and some had been on their journey for days!

We were all walking into the market; it was noisy and crowded! I saw colorful silk, vibrant carpets with amazing patterns. I could smell the sweet and spicy spices all around me. The market is like a treasure chest that was just opened with hundreds of colors and thousands of different smells.

Humphrey's friends were very busy helping their riders. They carry pots of shiny gold and beautiful gems. One of them is carrying yummy refreshing fruits, I was so hungry and my mouth was watering. The rider saw me and he gave me a bunch of bananas.

Suddenly, a cheeky monkey climbed to my shoulder and took one of my bananas. In return for the banana, the monkey gave me his tiny red silk hat. Then I realized the merchants are trading animals too like sheep, elephants, monkeys and parrots. They are all very excited about travelling to another country!

As the sun started to go down, the sky turned all pretty with orange and pink colors. I knew it was getting late. Humphrey, the other camels, and the silly monkey walked slowly with me to the desert. We found a nice spot on the sand and sat down together. I feel warm and cozy.

The sky turned navy blue with many twinkling stars. Everything looked so magical! We are all very relaxed and we sang Twinkle Little Star. It felt so peaceful, like we were in a dream.

After a little while, Humphrey said it was time for me to go home! We flew up into the night sky around the sparkling stars.

When we finally landed, I climbed off Humphrey's back and tiptoed into my bed. I sleep under my warm blankets, missing all the bright colors and yummy smells from the magical market.

The next morning, when I woke up, I felt something in my pocket. I reached in and found the cheeky monkey's tiny red hat! I know my adventure was not just a dream. I will keep the tiny hat and the special magical memory forever.

The Great Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Guan, Eli –

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Just as I was about to burst out laughing, I heard one of them say:

"This one is still awake. Let's bring her back for... a tea party!"

The aliens dragged me towards their spaceship, but instead of scary experiments, they served me tea in cups shaped like camel hooves. They asked me to teach them how to juggle silk scarves, and one alien tried to balance a teapot on his head while dancing. Another wanted to trade his socks for our jade, claiming his socks were "magical."

We traded jade for alien jokes, silk for rainbow bubbles and tea for endless laughter. I could feel their friendly smiles underneath their funny faces. When I finally returned to my convoy, I told everyone that the Silk Road wasn't just about trading goods — it was also about trading stories, surprises and fantasies... even with aliens in mismatched socks.

The greatest reward of my Silk Road adventure wasn't the furs we traded, but the laughter and friendship I found in this magical secret encounter.

The Super Looooooong Road in my Backyard

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Su, Sophia –

Today in school, we learned about the super looooooong road called the Silk Road. It is a rough road and it looks like a huge, stretchy snake. A long time ago, they used this for travelling, buying and selling things across different continents because there were no airplanes and ships then. So this road was very important for the whole world and the people.

I am always excited when I travel on an airplane with my family, so I wondered how it was to travel on the Silk Road. So I took Pandy my panda doll, Cutie my bunny doll and Ruffy my dog doll to our backyard and pretended to be riding on the Silk Road. I felt cold, nervous and proud of myself to be on the Silk Road watching the brown, sparkly sand of the desert. We climbed mountains, walked on the rocky and rough roads. I had my Harrow backpack with me and it had pure silk, paper and noodles from China my home country. I want to exchange these goods with gold, silver and olive oil.

Wow! We have finally reached the big market. There were so many people, food, jewels, gems, silk, spices, gold and many other things. I wanted to go shopping! There were so many people. I tried some honey and walnuts. They were so delicious.

“Sophia! Sophia!” someone called my name. I turn around and it was my mom. “It’s time for dinner.” she said. The Silk Road and market I imagined turned back to my backyard. “Okay, mom.” I replied. “Let’s go to the Silk Road again tomorrow.” I whispered to Pandy, Cutie and Ruffy. What a fun day!

Emma's Birthday Wish

Heep Yunn Primary School, Kwong, Emma Ka-June – 7

It had been almost a year since I left Changan to travel across the Silk Road with my merchant parents. I missed Changan and my friends. When the desert wind whispered through the tents, I felt loneliness wrapped around me like silk.

My train of thought broke as our carriage stopped. One evening, just before my birthday, we arrived at a small village near Venice. The air felt warm and gentle, like a blanket scented with fresh bread and wildflowers. By the cluster of red-tiled village houses, children were playing in the snow, their footsteps teasing me to join them.

That evening, I walked down to the common room. I spotted a girl sitting on a stool. Finally! Someone my age, someone to talk to. I felt nervous approaching her. I noticed canvases by her feet. The sounds of her gentle brushstrokes dissolved into the night breeze as she painted a woman's warm smile.

'Is that your mum?' I asked.

The girl turned around, and I was taken aback. She had beautiful European features, but masked by her drained, bloodshot eyes.

She nodded. 'Yes. She's very sick.' Her eyes were heavy like clouds before a storm.

'I'm so sorry to hear that. It's a beautiful painting though.'

'Thank you! I'm Kayla,' she said with a small smile.

'I'm Emma!'

I wanted to help, so I tried speaking in Venetian, using the few words I had learned. Kayla smiled and said, 'Grazie.' I smiled back, feeling closer to this new place.

Kayla's eyes lit up for a moment, then she cut me off. 'I have to go. I'm sorry!' She hurried away.

That night, I kept thinking about the sad girl I had met. After my family sang 'Happy Birthday,' I looked out the window and saw a ray of white light falling across the sky. It was a shooting star! Instead of wishing to see my friends again, I squeezed my eyes shut tight and made a wish for Kayla's mum to get better.

The next morning, I found Kayla before we left. I took the red string from my wrist—a lucky charm from Changan, with a bamboo bead. 'In China, bamboo means good health and strength,' I said. 'I want you to have this. I hope your mum gets well soon.'

Kayla's eyes filled with tears. She gave me a small painting—a picture of two girls sitting beneath a large tree. 'This is for you, so you'll remember that you have a friend in Venice.'

We promised to stay in touch and gave each other a hug. As our cart rolled away, I looked back at Kayla waving. Even though I was leaving a new friend behind, a warm glow spread inside me. I glanced at my parents and realised how lucky I was to have them by my side.

That day, I learned that even miles apart, hearts can still meet. And sometimes, the best wish is the one we make for someone else.

From the East to the West

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Shi, You Ran – 8

Long ago, the Silk Road was a network of trade routes. It lasted for more than a thousand years. It was a meeting place for people from different lands who wished to learn about one another. People there traded goods like silk, cotton, horses, pottery, jade etc. They learned and knew about the countries' cultures and food.

One day, a girl from Beijing called Meiling went to the airport to pick up her friend from Italy. Her friend Giorgia came to China to study at Peking University. This was Giorgia's first time coming to China, so Meiling brought Giorgia to experience Chinese culture.

First, she took Giorgia to try some Chinese food, such as Peking duck, dumplings, and noodles with soybean paste. Giorgia thought that the food was finger-licking good and she enjoyed it very much. After that, Giorgia invited Meiling to come to her house to try some homemade Italian food in return. At her house, Giorgia cooked pizza and spaghetti. Meiling thought they were very delicious and loved it very much. She also thought the Italian pizza was a bit like the Chinese scallion pie but with all the toppings outside. "Maybe from the very beginning, our ancestors already exchanged ideas on how to make pies," said Meiling.

The next day, Meiling took Giorgia to watch Peking Opera and visit the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. Giorgia respected traditional Chinese art very much. She also thought that the ancient architecture were breath taking. Then, Giorgia showed Meiling some photos of Western castles and churches. Meiling thought that Western buildings were spectacular. Although the architecture from western and oriental culture were very different in style, both Giorgia and Meiling admired the wisdom of ancient people who built such magnificent buildings.

After visiting the attractions in Beijing, Meiling took Giorgia to her home to show her silk collection, including famous types like Hangzhou's "Soft Gold" and Habotai. Giorgia was surprised as she did not expect the softness of Chinese silk. She also showed the fine jewelry that she was wearing such as the gold nose ring and necklace. Meiling liked it very much and they exchanged things with each other.

During Giorgia's stay in Beijing, she met more friends from different cities of China, and learned more local cultures in different parts of China. Friendship is built upon communication and sharing of ideas. Also, through understanding and respecting different cultures, it helps the development of science, technology, and art.

The Last Trip to Silk Road

Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section), Ho, Ying Ching – 8

A few hundred years ago in Kokand, Uzbekistan, a modest family made a living selling embroidered silk. The father, Orif, bought silk from China, and the mother Muazzam embroidered it with help from their son, Fozil. They traded the embroidered silk along the Silk Road.

One day Orif received a letter: his father was ill and needed money for medicine. Tears rolled down Orif's face as he read. He rushed to his family, and they decided to go on a trading trip at once. They loaded their caravan with silk, watered their camels and set off that night.

As they reached the city gate, the Silk Road was closing. "Sir, please let us in!" Orif shouted. The guard hesitated but kept the gate open. "Come with me!" he ordered.

The family was shocked. Orif stepped off his camel and told his family to get out of the caravan. The guard brought them to a nearby tent and said, "Settle down!"

A second guard, stern and uniformed, walked in and demanded, "Who are you? Where do you come from? And why are you here?" "Sir, I am Orif and this is my wife. Muazzam. The boy there is my son, Fozil. We came from Kokand." The guard scribbled on a piece of parchment while Orif clasped his hands. Orif cleared his throat and continued, "We are here to trade silk to buy medicine for my sick father." Nodding the guard said, "Show me your silk!" Fozil straightened himself and fetched the silk from the caravan. Orif added, "Our trips usually last four to six weeks. My son stays in the caravan to keep the goods safe, and my wife prepares our food." "Sounds reasonable," the guard said and walked away.

The family waited nervously. Muazzam whispered in a shaky voice, "Will they let us go?" Orif sighed and put his head in his hands, while Fozil distracted himself by feeding the camels. At last, they heard footsteps. "You may go," the returned guard said, "but report here in your next trips." Relieved yet confused, the family reloaded the silk into the caravan and rode away.

Years later, Fozil, now grown, set out to trade on the Silk Road one final time with Orif and Muazzam. But when they returned to the tent, they were told, "Don't you know? The Silk Road is closed. The last traders passed months ago." Disappointed, they returned home with unsold silk. "What shall we do now?" Fozil asked. "Why not open a shop to sell the silk in our city?" Orif suggested. Muazzam hesitated but agreed.

At first, business was slow as the shop was in a back alley of their city. Yet gradually, customers appreciated the fine silk and Muazzam's exquisite embroidery. Word spread, sales grew, and they moved to a busier location. Over time, the shop flourished, and the family prospered.

The closing of the Silk Road wasn't so bad after all. When one path ends, you may find a new start.

The Adventures of Gila and Jing Jing in the Ancient Silk Road

Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section), Law, Yi Ching – 9

Once upon a time, there was a very gifted and smart dog called Gila. She lived with her grandparents in the city of Dogville in the West.

One day, Gila played in the attic of her house. She found an old book that belonged to her great-great grandma. She opened it and saw some words in a language that she didn't understand. She was attracted by the words and the beautiful photos in the book. Then, she tried to find out what the words mean, but she failed. She only knew the words were written in a language called 'Chinese' and the photos were taken from the Silk Road. Soon, she decided to take an adventurous trip to the famous China Silk Road.

When she arrived at the Silk Road, she felt excited and homesick. She wondered, "How on earth am I going to get all my food and supplies here? Oh, if only I had brought along a roadie who knows the Chinese language!" But, soon she got her answer.

"Hi, do you need any help? My name is Jing Jing. I am Chinese. I know the language of the West. So, who are you?" "I am Gila, from the city of Dogville in the West," Gila answered. As they talked, they soon became best friends. Gila said that she needed a companion during her journey, and Jing Jing agreed.

They explored the stalls along the Silk Road. First, they went to buy the delicate and precious silk that is famous in the Silk Road. They also saw the beautiful Han clothes and scarves. "My grandma will love that!" said Gila, as she bought a scarf. They also ate in tasty Chinese restaurants. To Gila, that was the loveliest meal she had ever eaten. At night, Jing Jing brought Gila to her home and introduced her family to Gila. It was heart-warming that the family of Jing Jing greeted her and treated her to some traditional Chinese food.

During the journey, Gila learned a lot about the history of the Silk Road from Jing Jing. They visited the museum of the Silk Road, and learned more about the story of Zhang Qian, known as 'the father of the Silk Road', who travelled from China to Central Asia in the 100s. At the end, she asked Jing Jing what the words mean in the great great grandma's book. Jing Jing said 'It means "to my great great granddaughter".'

From this adventure, Gila learned a lot about the Silk Road's history and its tales. She also learned the Chinese language and can speak it fluently. After she spent lots of years in the Silk Road, she brought all the goods and knowledge back to Dogville and wrote a book about her experiences in the Silk Road. It helped people in Dogville understand more about Asian people and their culture. She also became a teacher teaching Chinese culture in a local school. Last but not least, she kept in touch with Jing Jing and promised that they would visit the Silk Road together again.

The Time Travel of the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Ching Yui – 7

Once upon a time, a trader called Chan Siu Ming, was travelling the Silk Road with his team. Siu Ming was a rich man owning a team of crews to do his business from Asia to Europe. He was leading his strong and thirsty camels with his crews across a desert.

It was a boiling hot and cloudless day, Siu Ming's team wanted to find an oasis to take a rest. Suddenly, they stepped into a quicksand zone and swirled quickly into a deep, sandy tunnel.

"Ah...! Help!" screamed the whole team.

They swirled through time until they felt no more falling sensation.

"Where are we?" asked Siu Ming.

"Master, we are still in the desert, but we may get lost," said one of his crews.

Siu Ming looked around, but there was nothing in the endless sandy desert even any scorpions or lizards.

"Look! There is someone over there!" another crew shouted and pointed his finger ahead.

"HELLO! WE'RE HERE!" Siu Ming shouted loudly and non-stop waved his hands.

Someone moved very fast towards Siu Ming and his team until they met each other.

A man, wearing a shiny white and metallic suit with a pair of silver boots, asked "Who are you? Where are you from?"

"I call Chan Siu Ming. I'm from China." Siu Ming answered.

"Where are you going?" the strange man asked.

"We're transporting and trading tea, jade, rice and silk to the West," said Siu Ming, "How about you?"

"So are we!" answered the strange man, "I'm Charlie. Why don't you use robotic camels to carry your goods? I never see traders using real camels to transport goods except in ancient history books!"

"WHAT?" Siu Ming screamed.

"WHY NOT?" said Charlie, "We're in year 2999 now! See, this is my new robotic camel train series, ROBO-CAMEL EXPRESS 3000. My robotic camels are carrying nutrient drinks for westerners, domestic A.I. robots and automatic thermal-adjustment clothes for the coming winter. It only takes one day across the Silk Road. My customers can get their goods and pay for them by a real-time e-payment system."

Siu Ming was surprised by the new ideas from this strange man, but he could not understand one word.

"My time is running out! Bye!" said Charlie sharply. He and his robotic camel train left fast and disappeared in the endless desert in just ten seconds.

"AH?" Siu Ming could not believe his eyes and opened his mouth widely, but he could not say anything.

"What should we do, Master?" asked the crews.

"I don't know!" said Siu Ming, "Maybe, we should keep going to cross this desert first. Let's go!"

Siu Ming and his team started to move again.

"Look! There's an oasis ahead!" shouted the crews.

"Go faster!" shouted Siu Ming.

Unluckily, the whole team stepped into a quicksand zone and swirled quickly into another sandy, black tunnel. They swirled back time again to their original world and never reached their oasis.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Sheung Chi Arthur – 7

Twenty centuries ago, the well-known Han dynasty was expanding, and Emperor Wu was ruling over the empire. Emperor Wu sent a famous explorer, Zhang Qian, to go west to find allies against the Xiongnu people, who were their enemy. Zhang Qian did not finish his mission, but instead, he brought back trading goods from Europe. And that was how the original Silk Road was created.

However, the original Silk Road disappeared around 1400 AD. In the 21st century, President Xi launched the New Silk Road, hoping to boost global trade. A traveller, named Arthur Chan, was sent to promote China's new technology inventions. After receiving the order, he immediately started preparing for the journey. First, he formed a fleet of electric cars. Then, he asked local companies to provide drones and robots to support the team. After that, he sourced tablets, computers, digital phones and charging ports for different devices. Most importantly, he brought along plenty of solar panels. All these devices were installed with an artificial intelligence system: DeepMind, created and developed in China. Arthur led the journey by riding in one of China's most famous electric cars, called "Build China's Dream" (BCD), and the robots and drones soon followed. His trip began in Hangzhou, the heart of the technology development in China.

The fleet went through Iran and Turkey. The people were amazed by the group and wanted to learn some technology from the group. They also ventured through deserts, forests and grasslands. When they finally arrived in Europe, the European people welcomed them warmly, and they were fascinated by the rapid development of China. Technology became the pearl of China in 21st Century Silk Road. Arthur's mission turned out to be a great success. President Xi was pleased and excited. Arthur was thrilled, too. When everyone in China heard the news, they cheered and congratulated him and the fleet. In the end, "Silk Road" became "Technology Road".

My Journey on the Silk Road with Marco Polo

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chow, Micah Christian – 7

My name is Micah, and I was a young assistant travelling with Marco Polo. I carried bags, helped with maps, and did small jobs during our journey. Travelling along the Silk Road was a long and difficult adventure. In total, our journey lasted 24 years, and it changed my life forever.

We began our journey from Venice. At first, I thought the road would be simple. I was wrong. The Silk Road was not one single road. It was made of many paths that crossed deserts, mountains, and wide-open land. Some days we walked for hours without seeing anyone. Other days, we stayed in busy towns filled with traders and travelers.

Crossing the desert was one of the hardest parts. The days were very hot, and the nights were cold. We had to save water and protect our food. Everyone worked together and helped one another. I learned that teamwork was very important when travelling so far from home.

Along the way, we met many people from different lands. Some sold silk, spices, and beautiful cloth. Others were messengers or traders like us. *Many people spoke languages I did not understand, but we still found ways to communicate. I learned that kindness and patience can bring people together.*

After many years of travel, we finally reached China. The cities were large and well planned, and the markets were full of activity. This was where we met Kublai Khan, the great ruler of the land.

Marco Polo served Kublai Khan for about 17 years. During this time, Marco worked as a messenger and helped with important tasks. We travelled to different parts of the empire, learning how the government worked and how people lived. I helped keep records safe and made sure our supplies were ready for each journey.

Every day, Marco wrote careful notes about the places we visited and the people we met. He said these notes were important so people back home could learn about the world beyond their borders.

As we travelled along the Silk Road, I saw how Christianity slowly reached China. Traders and travellers did not only carry silk and spices. They also carried stories and beliefs. Some Christians travelled with us and shared their faith by talking to people they met. They prayed quietly and helped others, which made people curious. In some towns, small groups gathered to listen and learn. Over time, these ideas spread from place to place.

This long journey taught me that the Silk Road was more than a trade route. It connected people, ideas, religion and cultures. I was often tired, but I was proud to be part of a journey that helped the world understand itself better.

Jacob's story of the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Fu, Yim Kai – 9

My name is Jacob, and I am a thirteen-year-old soldier in Xi'an. A man named Master Kung gathered the men in our city for a trip to trade goods through a mysterious road to Alexandria. My friend Jun was also chosen. Master Kung told us that our most essential duty was to protect the critical goods, such as food, cloth, tea, china, and the animals.

As we began, a massive sandstorm struck. I covered my face with silk cloths Master Kung gave me, but sand still found its way into my eyes and mouth. Everything was blurry. When the storm stopped, Master Kung and Jun had disappeared. I was so scared I couldn't put it into words. I decided to find them by following clues on the ground, such as scraps of torn clothing and scattered food.

While walking, I found a tribe. I didn't know their language at first, so I misunderstood everything. The leader let a boy teach me their language. Six months later, I finally learned it and noticed something strange. These people used spices to enhance the taste of their food and played with lapis lazuli, treating it like ordinary marbles. One day, the leader offered to trade lapis lazuli, black pepper, and a camel for my silk cloths. After we traded, I decided to find my team, as I had enough money and a camel.

Using a map from the tribe, I walked for two weeks until I caught up with my team in Alexandria. However, I discovered they were being forced to clean the palace and cook for the Emperor of Alexandria.

One night, I snuck in to find Jun. His back was covered in marks from being poorly treated. "Jacob?!" he whispered. "We thought you were dead!" I told him, "I have a sharp sword, and I am going to assassinate the guard and save you guys." "Okay," he said. Fifteen minutes later, I successfully crept in and killed the guard while he was sleeping. Jun woke the others, and we all snuck out.

We headed straight back to Xi'an. The people celebrated with a giant feast, although we did not take anything back. They cooked our favourite foods, but I didn't really want them; I missed the food from the tribe. I gave the lapis lazuli and pepper to our Emperor and told him I wanted to go back to the tribe.

The Emperor agreed, "Sure. Go back, but visit us often and bring more spices. Take Jun with you, too." Jun and I left the very next day. Trading is like giving away a part of your home, but getting something amazing back in return.

A year later, we became the most trusted traders between Xi'an and the tribes on the mysterious trade route to Alexandria. We transformed this perilous path into a steady link, trading silk for spices, china for horses and improving everyone's lives. Later, this road became the legendary Silk Road.

Silk Road Adventure for Klis and Daor: Journey with a friend from the Future

St. Joseph's Primary School, Fung, Pak Yin – 7

Once upon a time, in a bustling market in Chang'an, a 7-year-old boy named Daor was helping his parents **deliver** rolls of silk to the market. His trolley moved so fast that it accidentally bumped into a little box. The trolley tipped over and **spilled the silk rolls all over**. To Daor's surprise, **a shimmering blue light came from the little box** and the box burst open. A cat-like creature with a red nose and big, sparkling eyes came out.

"How dare you crush my time machine!" the creature stared at Daor furiously. "Oh, I'm sorry! I'm in a hurry!" Daor replied, feeling embarrassed. "Who are you?"

"I'm Klis, a robot cat from **Year** 3154. I was travelling in my time machine but got lost. Where am I now?" "You came all the way here in this little box?" Daor gasped with his eyes **widened** with a surge of excitement, "I'm Daor. Here's Chang'an, a city in China. We are in **Year** 728. Come on, let me show you around!"

They wandered past colourful stalls where merchants traded silk, spices, and rare gemstones. Daor explained how to produce silk from the silkworm and how the silk was delivered by the caravan which travelled thousands of miles through the two-way trade route, connecting and sharing cultures between the East and the West.

"It takes so long to send goods around! In my time, it's much easier. Things can be sent to other places in just minutes. We use the 'Magic Label' to help!" Klis said. "Magic Label?" Daor exclaimed with curiosity. "**That sounds interesting!**" Klis continued to share more "New Technology" of his time. Daor's eyes twinkled unbelievably and said, "I wish I could live in the future!"

"Our world moves faster now – messages cross oceans in a blink, voices travel without breath, and even affection is wrapped in screens. Technology has a beautiful face, but behind it... the warmth between hearts slowly fade. Sometimes, I miss the days when things took time." Klis gazed off into space.

As the sun set, painting the sky orange and purple, Daor shouted anxiously, "Oh no! I forgot about my silk! I'll be late. My mum will be mad at me!" "Let me help you," said Klis. A 'Magic Label' appeared with a flick of his wrist. Daor quickly wrote the address, stuck it on the pile of silk rolls and they pressed "SEND" together. The pile vanished in seconds. "Hope it arrives on time." Daor sighed in relief. "I have to go now; my parents are waiting **for me**. You **should return** home too, your owner must be worried."

Klis fixed his time machine and was ready to go. He smiled gently and said, "I'm glad to know you, Daor. I hope we will meet again. Goodbye!" A blue light enveloped the box, and it vanished into the evening sky. Daor stood there and waved goodbye, feeling thankful for the adventurous journey with a friend from the future.

My Amazing Adventure on the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Ho, Chi Heng Ethan – 8

This was not a typical holiday.

I thought we'd just go to some zoos or cities with boring museums. But Mom and Dad surprised me with a super cool adventure in China. We were going to explore the ancient Silk Road!

Grandpa always told me stories about it. He said the deserts looked like a giant golden rug, the mountains were like huge upside-down bowls of jelly, and the stars twinkled like little electric sparks. His eyes got all shiny when he talked about it.

Before we left, Grandpa gave me his special lucky coin. It was old and plain, but it was his favorite thing ever. "Keep it close," he whispered. "It'll bring you good luck."

We flew to Xi'an, and that's where the fun started. We rode camels and headed west along the Silk Road. That's the old path where history, people, and myths all crashed together. The sand felt soft and yellow under us, and the hot wind messed up my hair. I felt like the bravest explorer in the world. Did Marco Polo feel this excited too? I yelled, "Charge!" My camel just grunted, but I knew it meant "Aye aye, Captain!"

The desert was so big and empty. The checkpoint was still far away. My camel rocked like a cradle, and my eyes got super heavy...

I guess I wobbled a bit, because the coin slipped right out of my pocket. I jumped off the camel to grab it, but a crazy wind blew sand everywhere. The coin vanished! When the wind stopped, everyone was gone. Mom, Dad, the guide, the camels—poof! I was totally alone in the huge desert.

"Helloooo?" I shouted. My heart pounded like crazy. I was really scared.

Then, out of nowhere, a loud voice boomed from the sky: "Monkey King to the rescue!" I looked up. A figure with golden fur stood on a yellow cloud. "You're Sun Wukong!" I gasped.

"You know me, huh?" he grinned big. "What are you doing out here alone?"

I told him everything. "Losing the coin started this mess," he said. "Finding it will fix it. Hop on!"

I climbed onto the cloud. Whoosh! We zoomed off. Sun told me stories about traders hauling silk, spices, and cool stuff along the Silk Road, and how he battled demons to bring back special scriptures from India.

We hunted for the coin everywhere: Jiayu Pass on the Great Wall, the Mogao Caves, tons of places. Nothing. Then we reached Crescent Moon Spring. It was this perfect curvy lake snuggled under the giant Echoing-Sand Mountain. It looked exactly like a big blue eye winking at the golden dunes, just like Grandpa described. It felt amazing and peaceful. All my fear went away.

Suddenly, Sun pointed at something sparkly by the water. The coin! I snatched it up. "Thanks, Sun!"

"My pleasure, kiddo," he said, holding his fist. "See ya someday."

Tap tap on my shoulder. "Wake up, sleepyhead! We're here!"

I blinked. Mom and Dad smiled at me. We'd reached the checkpoint. Everyone was putting up tents by the Crescent Moon Spring. It was beautiful, just like my dream!

I felt in my pocket. The coin was there, with a piece of golden fur stuck to it.

This was the best holiday ever!

Lost in the Pages: The Experience in Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Keung, Nga Fung – 9

This afternoon, I was focused on reading a history book called “The Silk Road”. I flipped to a page about a desert but all of a sudden, some kind of force sucked me into the book. I was extremely terrified and my jaw dropped.

When I was sucked into the book, it was pitch black and I couldn't see anything. My hands and legs shook with fear. I felt like I was flying through a long tunnel and finally dropped down the desert. There was a man nearby and asked me, “Who are you? Are you Great Yuezhi's messenger?” I replied, “No, I am not. I am from the future. I am just an ordinary primary student.” After this man heard, he said, “Never mind, I also need a tiny shadow. Come and follow my path, little guy!” After that, I suddenly realized that the man I had just talked to wasn't a normal person, he was Zhang Qian, the first explorer to the Western Regions who enhanced cultural and economic interaction with the West.

Soon, I followed Zhang Qian and rode past different countries like Parthia, Bactria and so on. Crossing through various countries, the scorching sun beat down on the endless dunes, we saw the depiction of Dunhuang murals, the vast grassland of Central Asia and the spacious desert. Lastly, we carried Akhal-Teke, grapes and precious silk to Changan. When we went back to the opulent palace, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty was proud of us. Emperor Wu said, “I am truly proud of your work! This is your second mission to the Western regions, you have helped us, the Han dynasty, to build up stable diplomatic relationships with the Central Asia's countries. Moreover, you have brought valuable resources to us. I will reward you and your tiny shadow with precious jewellery and gems, also an enormous amount of land.” After we heard his words, we stood there astonished.

Then, I went back to my room and took a rest. Abruptly, I saw a shiny jade which was glittering and sparkling. The jade had some kind of magic power. It sucked me into a portal and a strong mysterious force pulled me back to the future.

At last, I heard an alarm and woke up. I figured out that it was all just a dream. I felt sad because I really wanted to experience this unforgettable journey in my real life.

Endless Silk Adventure

St. Joseph's Primary School, Kung, Chung Kwan Garrick – 8

Silk is renowned for its smoothness, shininess and durability. However, not everyone knows about the story how this fiber can be spread throughout the world. Here is an adventure about how silk was spread to the whole world.

A long time ago, a group of merchants travelled more than six thousand four hundred kilometres from China to the Mediterranean through a network of routes in order to reach the Silk Road, set up a trading stand there and to share silk traditions to other countries.

To prepare for the journey, they had to herd camels, find bodyguards and stock up on food and water. Before they started the adventure in the caravan, one merchant said, “The camels aren’t strong enough for the journey!” However, as weather was getting worse and colder, the other companions did not act upon his warning.

Not long after they started the journey, they encountered their first danger. A flurry of sand shot over the desert floor and the desert was filled with dust. Some people were lost in the harsh sandstorm.

After this tragic natural disaster, the remaining merchants kept venturing through the dense desert that seemed to be endless until another tragedy happened: raiders had ambushed them in an attempt to steal their resources. This was a major problem as the sandstorm greatly impacted their food and water supply and the number of bodyguards they had. The merchants had to protect their resources by themselves with everything they had and eventually fended the raiders off.

After the rounds of danger they had encountered, the merchants finally made it to the end of the Silk Road. They learnt about the traditions of the world and shared techniques of how to manufacture, process and trade silk to the Indians, Persians and Europeans.

This led to the development of silk knowledge in different parts of the world and caused silk to be one of the most valuable commodities to be traded through the Silk Road.

Ghost of Aralkum Desert

St. Joseph's Primary School, Lee, Yi Jun – 8

It is the year 3025. The new Silk Road hyper-rail connects to all major cities in Asia and Europe.

My dad is a freight train driver traveling between Hong Kong and Paris, transporting all kinds of goods: robots, clothing, instant egg tarts, croissants...

He usually travels from Hong Kong to Chengdu, going through the super Tibet Tunnel to Kyrgyzstan, Caspian Sea, Istanbul, and to Europe. It takes eight days to travel 10,000,000 km. What an amazing distance !

Now, it is my favorite week, as today is the first day of the Christmas holiday! I feel as happy as a clam. But when my dad tells me I need to join him, I feel very disappointed. During the boring trip, I miss my mother who is shopping in Tokyo with my sister.

On day 4, my dad told me, 'Now, we are going to the deadliest desert in Uzbekistan, the Aralkum desert. The temperature outside is -10° at night, make sure you stay inside the train!'

While we were crossing the desert, we experienced a traffic disruption. A train from the opposition direction broke down. That train was full of passengers from Europe. My dad offered help.

After a few hours, the sky turned dark. The passengers from the other train set up campfires and shared food. I looked for my dad to see how he was doing. My dad told me it would take a few hours to fix the engine. I was happy as we could go soon.

Then, a girl appeared. She was about my age, with blue eyes like sapphire. She seemed curious about the repair. My dad told us to wait outside. I spoke with the girl with a translator. She told me that she had no friends in this train but she didn't want to sleep. So I taught her how to play Chinese chess. In return, she taught me how to play Tarot. We sat next to the campfire and exchanged stories. It was the first time I stayed awake overnight.

It was dawn we heard the engine roaring. She said, 'Au revoir! I need to go back to my family, I am moving to a new city.' We said farewell to each other. I suddenly realized I don't even know her name.

After having some foie gras in Paris, my dad and I travelled back to Hong Kong. It was the end of the Christmas holiday. It was the first day of the spring semester and I was back to the classroom. I started missing my new friend. Was she a ghost of the Aralkum desert?

All of a sudden, my class teacher announced, 'Fellow students, we have a new classmate.' I saw a girl come in. I looked into her sapphire blue eyes. I gasped. Guess who she was?

The Fantasy Exhibition of the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Leung, Yu Jing Jax – 8

On a sunny weekend morning, I joined my community centre on a trip to the History Museum's "Silk Road" exhibition. The halls were crowded. While chatting with my best friend Paul, we realised we lost our group.

We pushed through the crowd and slipped into a quiet room. The walls were covered with hundreds of white silkworm cocoons.

"They look so real!" I exclaimed, reaching out. But Paul grabbed my wrist. His face pale as a ghost. "Look!" he whispered.

In the corner, a giant cocoon tightened around a boy. He struggling soundlessly, eyes full of fear. It was Peter!

I grabbed a broom and jammed the handle into the opening. "Hold on!" Paul and I pulled until Peter tumbled out. We ran for the exit, half-dragging him.

But the moment we ran out of the room, we realized that we were no longer in the museum.

In front of us was a vast, scorching desert. Hot sand whipped our faces. We ran, guided by instinct, until we finally collapsed, exhausted and thirsty, on soft green grass.

In the distance, we saw a lush vineyard with bunches of round, shiny grapes sparkling in the sun. Thirsty Peter reached for a juicy grape.

"Don't eat it!" a voice shrieked.

A boy with tea-dark skin slapped the grape from Peter's hand.

I recognised him — he was on our bus that morning!

"My friend ate a grape and shrank into a tiny grape person," the 'Tea Boy' cried, pointing to a teapot on a small table nearby. "When I drank the tea here, my skin turned this color. Please help us!" Uneasy, the five of us moved on.

Drums thundered in the distance. Through swirling sand, acrobats appeared — sword swallowers, tightrope walkers. We stared, spellbound, until the ground crumbled beneath our feet.

We fell into a giant arena where a fierce tiger prowled and staring at us. Just as it pounced, a tamer in a colourful robe jumped in, splashing a foul-smelling liquid on the beast. The tiger lay down like a kitten, and the crowd cheered.

Suddenly, the tamer pointed upward. Peter and the tiny grape boy were tied to a giant cannon!

"No!" I shouted. Before I could react, the tiger knocked us down. Soon, all five of us were tied as human cannonballs.

As the fuse burned low, the tamer removed his mask.

It was Pax — our social worker!

Boom! We were blasted into the sky, and everything went black.

We woke up in the museum security room. The guard claimed the CCTV showed we had bumped into each other and fainted.

We told him our story in detail. We knew it wasn't a dream.

But the guard just smiled. "Kids' imaginations are wild!"

Back at the community centre, Pax winked and dusted golden sand off his shoulder. "Next time, stay close."

That evening, I still felt grit on my clothes and smelled gunpowder. Could the museum's Silk Road really go to another world? We smiled, sharing our secret.

My Whole Life

St. Joseph's Primary School, Mok, Ka Lun – 8

"A tiny architect, clad in white from head to toe. It eats no earthly rice, but spins out silken threads of snow." — Guess who I am? That's right, I am a silkworm.

My life lasts only a few dozen short days, yet I undergo four transformations: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. When I first emerge from my sesame—seed—sized egg, I'm dark and tiny, like a little black sesame seed. Mulberry leaves are my whole world. "Munch, munch, munch," I nibble day and night, then molt and grow. After shedding my skin four times, I raise my head and begin to spin out pure white silk. The threads gently envelop me, and I fall into a deep sleep within the pure white "palace" I've built, transforming into a motionless pupa. Then, the "palace" is softly immersed in warm water. A pair of warm hands draws out and lengthens my cocoon, then dries it in the sun, and I become a bundle of glistening silk threads.

In 138 BC, from my birthplace in Yuling (now Zhoucun, Shandong), I, along with millions of other "me"s, was woven into smooth silk. Carefully stored on the backs of camels, I was taken westward from Changan(now Xi'an) by the Han Dynasty envoy Zhang Qian. And so, I embarked on a journey far longer than my own life. Laying between camel humps, I climbed over snow—capped mountains, endured scorching heat, heard the howls of wild wolves, and was nearly robbed by bandits. In the end, I arrived in a completely foreign land. People competed to buy me and take me home. I was worn by nobles, a symbol of status.

My journey was like a strong thread, stringing together the pearls of civilization scattered across the ends of the continent. Chinese paper carried ideas, allowing distant scholars to write wisdom on pages. Meanwhile, seeds of grapes and pomegranates traveled east with returning caravans, taking root in unfamiliar land and bearing sweet fruit. Later, I came to understand that what traveled with me was not only goods, but also sparks of technology, inspirations for art, and seeds of faith.

Thus, an international trade route from China to the West—the Silk Road—was opened widely. Vast quantities of Chinese silk traveled via the Hexi Corridor, the regions north and south of the Tianshan Mountains, Central Asia, and West Asia, reaching as far as the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and Rome, forming a great thoroughfare connecting the Eurasian continent.

Millennia later, as I slumber in a museum display case, I am astonished to find that the narrow path we trod long ago has, over time, grown into unseen, robust roots deeply embedded in humanity's shared memory. Today, as new railways stretch along the ancient trails of camel bells, and hands of different skin colors clasp once more across deserts, I seem to feel again that familiar warmth in my core—the warmth of a tiny life that once partook in pioneering a great journey: We bridged the hardest divides with the softest threads; with the briefest of lives, we forged the most enduring of dialogues.

The Gift from Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tso, Man Lok – 7

About a thousand years ago, there was a town called Qing Shui in China. There lived a boy called Xiao Ming. He went to the Qing Shui Village Market with his grandma. This market was famous for fried rice, dumplings and green tea. But everything changed the day when the Silk Road merchants came.

In the market, Xiao Ming saw huge camels and heavy carts. The villagers gathered around in a curious crowd whispering and elbowing each other like children seeing an ice cream truck. Xiao Ming asked, 'What is in the box?'

The Merchant said, 'There is some pizza in the box.'

Xiao Ming could smell the pizza. It smelt like smelly socks, but he was brave and took a bite. His eyes were watering, his mouth was drooling. He couldn't believe how good it tasted. His mind exploded. After finishing the pizza, he asked the Merchants what was in the other box. The Merchant opened the box and said, 'There is some coffee in the box.' Xiao Ming wanted to try it so he asked with his eyes wide open, 'Can I eat the coffee?' The Merchant laughed so hard and said, 'You drink it, you don't eat it.'

He squinted. 'You drink a bean!'

The Merchant turned around and made a pot of coffee right there in the market. The smell drifted through the air across the whole place. It had a mysterious rich, chocolate smell. Every villager sniffed and enjoyed the scent. The merchant gave him a cup of coffee. He took a sip and he thought it was mud water. Xiao Ming did not like it at all. He wanted to spit it out. The Merchant wished Xiao Ming to come again so he took a chocolate bar from his pocket. It was a thank you gift for Xiao Ming. The chocolate had been sitting for more than a week. It was all melted. The melted chocolate got stuck in his pocket.

Xiao Ming knew that he would not have any chocolate, he was sad. The Merchant said that he would go on another Silk Road trip next month. Since it was a long trip, it would take him another month to come back. Xiao Ming smiled again because he can have the chocolate two months later.

The Silk Desert Quest

St. Joseph's Primary School, Wong, Torin Chun Yin – 7

I am Torin, one of the Merchant Brothers.

In the heart of the scorching Silk Desert, where the sun burned the sand like a dragon's breath, three daring merchant teams set out along the ancient Silk Road. My twin brother Joel and I travelled as the Merchant Brothers. We were joined by the Seaweed Stone Team—Clio and Patrick and the Glue Teleportation Team—Crystal and Mimi.

Our packs were heavy with obsidian, crystals, pearls, jade, rubies, metal, and shimmering dinosaur scales. We hoped to trade these treasures for rare white diamonds, gems said to shine even in the darkest night.

As our caravan crossed the endless dunes, we finally met beneath a blazing sky. I clapped my hands and shouted, "Tonight, we feast like kings!" By sunset, a roaring campfire lit the desert. The air was filled with the smell of sizzling meat and spiced herbs.

Danger soon followed. A massive king cobra struck from the shadows, but Joel leapt forward and cut it down with his gleaming sword. Not long after, a venomous spider crept towards us, only to be blasted away by the Seaweed Stone Team. Then Crystal and Mimi played enchanted flutes and drums. Their music was so powerful it felt as though the stars themselves were dancing. We laughed, sang, and spun around the fire, the desert alive with magic.

That night, I wore my enchanted armour and stood guard as the winds whispered through the dunes. When Joel took over, a terrifying cry rang out. A walking shark rose from the sand, its fins scraping the ground and its jaws snapping fiercely.

"To arms!" Joel shouted.

We charged together. Swords clashed, guns thundered, and flashes of teleportation lit up the darkness. With one final, mighty blow, the beast collapsed in a cloud of sand. We cheered beneath the moon, proud and exhausted.

At dawn, we returned to trading. Joel and I bargained with the Glue Teleportation Team.

"White diamonds for our iron?" I asked.

They smiled and agreed. The Seaweed Stone Team joined us, sharing seaweed snacks and stone carvings.

Then a shadowy interpreter appeared, his eyes glinting like coins.

"I will guide your trades," he hissed.

Against my better judgement, we followed him to a hidden camp. Suddenly, fire tornadoes erupted around us. In the chaos, a thief stole our packs and escaped.

"We chase!" I bellowed.

We ran across the burning sand until we trapped the thief in a narrow canyon and recovered most of our treasure. Still, I suspected the interpreter. We returned, laid spikes around the camp, and soon caught him in our trap.

That night, as we sat around the fire once more, we laughed at our adventure. The Silk Desert had tested us with monsters and trickery, but we were stronger for it. I realised then that our greatest treasure was not diamonds, but the bonds we had forged together.

A Camel Guiding the Caravan Through a Sandstorm

St. Joseph's Primary School, Yeung, Yin Hei – 9

The desert was hot and quiet. A long line of camels walked slowly across the golden sand, carrying silk, spice and travelers. At the very front of the caravan was a strong camel called Sunny. Everyone trusted Sunny because he was clever and had a great memory. He always found the right way in the desert, even when the paths looked the same.

Sunny was not only strong but also kind. He often stopped to wait for the other camels when they were tired. Everyone in the caravan loved Sunny very much because he made them feel safe. They believed that as long as Sunny was leading the way, they would never get lost.

One afternoon, the sky turned dark suddenly. The sun disappeared behind thick clouds and the wind started to blow hard. Then, a terrible sandstorm swept across the desert. Sand filled the air and covered the sun completely. The travelers could not see the road. They were scared and shouted, "What should we do now?" The caravan leader looked at Sunny and said, "Only you can help us now." Sunny nodded and moved bravely and carefully, step by step, at the front of the caravan.

Unfortunately, the storm grew stronger and stronger. Sand hit the faces of both travelers and camels, they were not able to keep their eyes open. Everyone felt worried. Some of them wanted to stop and wait for the storm to pass, only Sunny stayed calm and kept walking steadily. He remembered the smell of water and the shape of the sand dunes he had seen before. Even though the storm hid everything, Sunny trusted his memory. The caravan followed him closely.

A few hours later, the wind finally weakened and the sandstorm stopped. The sky was clear again and the travelers opened their eyes. There was a beautiful oasis with green trees and fresh water in front of them. Everyone felt very happy and they shouted loudly, "Sunny saved our lives!" They rushed to drink the fresh water and rest under the trees. Sunny felt very tired too, but he was happy. He lay down to relax and rest.

After that stormy journey, a story spread across the desert about a brave hero named Sunny who guided the caravan through the dangerous storm. Whenever people travel along the Silk Road, they think of Sunny. They learn that the Silk Road is not just about silk, spices and trade, it is also about courage, trust and friendship. Sunny's bravery reminds us that even in difficult times, a calm heart and a strong memory can lead us to safety.

The Mongolia Merchant and his Silk Road Adventures

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Bell, Alastair – 8

There was once a young merchant named Ganbaatar who lived in Mongolia. He travelled on the Silk Road to sell his gunpowder and silk to the people in the west. Then he would buy horses and wool to sell to his people back in Mongolia. It was a difficult and dangerous job with many bandits on the road. He also had to be away for months or even years at a time. But he did it because he needed to provide for his family. He travelled on the Silk Road with his friendly golden horse named Sharga.

One day, Ganbaatar and Sharga set off on a journey loaded with gunpowder and silk. They were headed west. Two days into his journey Ganbaatar ran into trouble. He was stopped by the most wanted bandit on the silk road, Zaya. She was accompanied by a gang of men known as the Mad Dogs. Ganbaatar was very scared. He was afraid of bandits because of all the horrible things that they had done to other merchants.

Zaya and her bandits caught Ganbaatar and took the gunpowder and silk from him. They tied him up and stole Sharga the horse.

For several days, Zaya and her bandits camped in the mountains with Ganbaatar. During that time something strange was happening. The food supplies were going down very fast. Too fast! Ganbaatar wondered why this was happening. He thought someone was stealing their food. Late at night, he was still awake whilst everyone was asleep when he heard some rustling. To his surprise he saw a ginormous snow leopard sniffing around the camp. It was stealing their food! Ganbaatar had an idea. He thought he could use his gunpowder to scare away the snow leopard and protect the food supply. In the morning, he told everyone about the snow leopard and his idea. Zaya thought this was smart but didn't know how to do it. So Ganbaatar said to Zaya, "if you let me go free and give me half of the silk, I will teach you how to use the gunpowder and save your food". Zaya agreed. Zaya liked Ganbaatar because he had good ideas and was helpful.

That night Ganbaatar showed Zaya how to set up some of the gunpowder on the floor, near the food and they watched from the campfire. When the snow leopard was near, he lit the gun powder with a stick from the fire. BOOM! The snow leopard was very scared and ran away never to be seen again. The bandits woke up startled. To their delight, the snow leopard was gone and the food was safe. Zaya was overjoyed and released Ganbaatar.

Ganbaatar took his horse and rode off to continue his journey. He was happy that he could continue his journey with his horse but also sad that he had lost some of his goods. But at the end of the day, he was alive and could continue his journey on the Silk Road.

The Silk Road Boy

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Deng, Yuanxi Cici – 6

Hello, my name is Cici, and I live in Chang'an with my mum and dad. They sell silk fabric at the Central Market.

One day, the sun shone brightly and the grass was emerald green, flowers of all colours and shapes bloomed around. I was playing with stones by the West Lake. Suddenly, I saw a boy with curly golden hair walking towards me, wearing a warm and gentle smile. He was holding some stones too, but his were way more beautiful than mine. They shimmered in crimson, sky blue, and lavender – prettier than I'd ever found. I asked him, "What are these stunning little stones? And did you eat too many oranges? How come your hair is orange?" But the boy didn't reply to me, he just stood there, staring at me with gentle confusion. After that, he started to speak a language I didn't know. It sounded like, "Salaam, khosh-hālem ke to ra didam." Then, he made some gestures when he saw my confused face.

I walked over to my mum who was having a little chat with the boy's dad (I didn't know him at first). I asked her who the boy was, and she told me his name was Ali and his family came all the way from Persia to sell jewelry.

After a few minutes, I asked my mum if I could go to the sweet shop to buy some candy with Ali and she said, "Yes, of course, but just be careful!" So Ali and I happily skipped over to the sweet shop and bought some candied fruit and karinto.

We sat on a nearby bench, and I taught Ali how to make dolls clothes out of silk, but when he tried to wrap silk around a stick, the silk tangled into a messy ball! However, Ali was patient. He watched my hands carefully, and soon, he got the hang of it, making a silk skirt that fluttered in the breeze. And then, guess what? Ali started teaching me how to string beads onto a string. We collected some stones in the colours crimson, sky blue and lavender, the same colours as he had before. After an hour, I finally made a perfect bracelet and a gorgeous necklace.

Time flew by so fast and the sun began to set, Ali's dad called him over. Before he left, Ali put the crimson stone in my hand, and I gave him the doll's clothes we made together.

That night, I put the stone next to me, and I thought the Silk Road wasn't only a normal road, it was a road on which we could make new friends.

Thank you, Silk Road! You gave Ali and I such a nice friendship.

We will always remember this happy day together!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Fung, Cheuk Lam – 9

I have read thousands of books, but not a single one was as magical as this one. After reading this book, I am never going to read books about China's Silk Road ever again.

Today, our teacher taught us about China's Silk Road. I thought it was interesting, so after school, I went to the library to find books about that topic. After some time, I found a book that had everything you needed to know about China's Silk Road. I thought it was the perfect book, but when I opened it, the book started to absorb me into it! I tried to climb back out, but that did not work, and before I even knew it, I was in a totally different place!

I did not know what to do. I had a case of butterflies. In the distance, I saw people riding camels and they were wearing clothes with a vibrant mix of luxurious silk and practical wool. That was when I knew I had gone all the way back to 130 BC. I did not know how I could survive. The people did not even speak the same language as me. My eyes dropped to the floor and I saw the book I was about to read. The back cover showed a boy in a desert, with people riding camels in the distance. I could not help but think that the boy on the back cover was me.

Suddenly, a group of people came from one of the alleyways and acted friendly, but they had scars all over their faces and tattoos. I did not trust them. They offered to help me using sign language, but I saw a long pouch on the waist of each person. I also saw a handle, and something was shining behind their backs. That was when I quickly turned back and started to run like my life depended on it. I hid behind one of the shops. I thought I had gotten away, as I could not see them anywhere. But after a while, I realised that I was wrong all along. That was when I turned my head around and saw them sneaking up behind my back. I quickly stole one of the camels to escape.

That was when the chase started. I ran as fast as I could and that was when I realised I was on China's Silk Road in the Kashgar Village. After a while, I was finally able to escape from the bad guys. That was when the real problem began: I still did not know how to get back to my own timeline. So, I went to countless bookstores and, to my surprise, they had the exact same book that started this mess in the first place. I quickly borrowed it, and the book absorbed me back to my house. And that is why I am never reading books about China's Silk Road ever again.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Hui, Yan Yin Dorcas – 8

On a sunny Friday afternoon, Yuki rushed to the Gacha machine after school. She had one dollar, so she could play only once. Luckily, she got a special prize – a bright, shiny pink bouncy ball. She was overwhelmed with delight and showed it to her friends. They exclaimed, “Wow! It’s so pretty!”

After Yuki got back home, she called her sister, Christy. “Come and see my new ball!” They bounced the ball on the floor together. Suddenly, the ball became brighter and brighter, as bright as the sun. It hurt their eyes, so they could not see anything.

When they opened their eyes, they were teleported to the Silk Road. They saw many people there trading and having fun. It was very lively. Yuki and Christy walked around and looked at everything with excitement.

Then, they saw a beautiful merchant selling shiny silk and sweet-smelling spices. Yuki and Christy greeted her. The merchant replied happily, “Girls, you are so cute and polite. Here, have some spices. They will bring you good luck.” The girls received the spices and said, “Thank you very much!”

While Yuki and Christy were looking at the silk, a line of colourful camels was walking towards them. They were so excited that they jumped up and down to follow the camels. Later, Yuki realised the ball was not in her pocket. She was very scared. “Oh no! Where is the ball?” Yuki cried.

Suddenly, the spices in their hands turned into smoke and rose in front of them. They heard a voice coming from the smoke, “Follow me, I will lead you to the ball.” They ran behind the smoke and soon saw the ball. “It’s the ball!” they shouted. Yuki and Christy were very happy and felt thankful for the magic spices.

After that, Yuki felt the ball become warm in her hand. She knew it was time to go home, so she told the ball, “Time to go.” Instantly, they went back to their room. They felt very lucky and thought the trip was unforgettable.

The next day, Yuki and Christy packed some glittering hair accessories and got ready for their next Silk Road trip.

Can you guess what will happen next?

Jasper's Adventure to The Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Kwan, Jasper – 8

Once upon a time, a boy named Jasper lived in a village. He wanted to trade for the first time, so his mom prepared some fruits and other items for trading on the Silk Road. He needed to travel to this famous route, and everyone cheered for him for his bravery.

As he traveled along the road, he saw many shops filled with all sorts of things to trade, like glass cups and much more.

When he walked to another city, he saw many things to trade that he wanted, but he didn't know how to talk to the traders. He thought, "Maybe I should use some pictures to communicate." So, he picked up a stick and drew in the sand to make his wishes clear. He hoped the traders would understand what he wanted and teach him some words in their language. He knew a little bit of different languages.

When he was traveling to a city where he knew one of the languages, he saw some English people. They looked at him and said, "You are a scammer!" They told their friends because they thought he was trying to trick them. Jasper replied, "I want to trade fairly."

At the same time, Jasper saw that many people from his village wanted to trade, but they had trouble talking to the dealers. He remembered his own adventures and decided to help. Jasper gathered everyone and began to teach them some important words in the dealers' language. He used simple drawings in the sand to make it fun and easy. Soon, they could trade for beautiful things just like Jasper did.

Gradually, the people changed their minds and realized he was a kind person. They started to trade with him fairly, giving him beautiful things like a necklace and spices.

After that, he decided he didn't need to go to the next city because he had plenty of things, and they were too heavy to carry around. So, he slowly walked back home. When he returned, the people in the city celebrated his bravery, as they were proud of him.

Finally, he went to his mom and said, "Mom, my first time trading on the Silk Road was fun!" After hearing his long story, she said, "I'm not just happy about what you traded; I'm happy that you were brave enough to trade and solve problems."

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ng, Pak Yui – 8

I am Dastan, a spice merchant from Persia. I am on my way to a marketplace located in Aksu. Why am I heading there? That's because I want to trade spices for silk and porcelain goods. Spices like pepper, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg are becoming more and more popular in China. Meanwhile, silk and porcelain goods are sold for tons of jewels in Persia. This business can easily make me rich!

Aksu is a city in Xinjiang, within the territory of China. Gorgeous porcelain and silk are easier to find in this marketplace. Luckily, I didn't end up in a bad situation like a sandstorm, and I arrived at my destination swimmingly. I dismounted and parked my camel near the entrance. Then I found a suitable place in a high-traffic area to set up my market stall. Next to my stall were Roman and Indian spice merchants. Chinese customers could reach out for different categories of spices from our countries simultaneously. The business was booming! I sold my spices to the Chinese for porcelain goods and silk.

When all my stock on hand was sold out, I decided to go home. Then I saw the sky gradually turning dark. Suddenly, I found something suspicious lurking in the corner of the marketplace. When I took a peek, nothing seemed to be there. Then I resumed packing my belongings and getting ready to leave. After I exited the marketplace, three bandits showed up out of nowhere. The bandit leader shouted, "Give me all of your belongings immediately! Otherwise..." I was trembling in fear. Then they started to loot my luggage on the camel. Eventually, some mysterious men shouted, "Stop robbing him!" I had no idea what was going on.

It seemed that there were three people. I could barely see them. "I am a prince from the Far East, and my men are ready to fight if you don't leave," the prince said with confidence. The bandits kept looting, completely ignoring him, but they had underestimated the prince. The prince commanded his men to capture the bandits. Even though the bandits pulled out their scimitars, they still did not stand a chance against the prince's bodyguards. The bodyguards wiped the bandits out easily; the bandit leader had no choice but to surrender.

"Kheili Mamnoon! (Thank you very much!) You appeared at just the right time! May I know what brought you here?" I said. "I am WuKong. I'm out here seeking a consistent supply of spices. When I spotted you, I knew you were perfect for this. I saw some suspicious guys following you, so we stepped in," the prince replied. I showed WuKong a bright smile, imagining how much easier my job would be from now on.

The Silk Road is amazing. Different people with different traditions and cultures can build friendships, no matter whether they are from the West or the East.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ng, Tsz Yu – 8

Once upon a time, Chen Chan from Shanghai, China, wanted to take some paper to Rome. Meanwhile, Sofia from Rome wanted to bring some Roman wool and horses to China and Samarkand, so they both went on their journeys.

First, Chen Chan walked for around five months, more than 5,000 kilometers, and arrived in Samarkand. A man asked him, "Have you seen a Roman woman? She said she would bring some Roman wool to our city!" Chen Chan answered, "No, but I'll keep an eye out for her." So he kept walking. After a few hours, he saw a Roman woman trapped in a bandit's net and some suspicious footprints.

Chen Chan used his sharp scissors to cut the net. The woman was saved, but she had broken her leg, and her horses had been stolen by the bandits. Chen Chan followed the footprints and saw a bandit he knew. He was called Rostam! Chen Chan quickly ran back and asked the woman, "Do you have wine?" She nodded and gave him some. He went back to the bandit camp and gave them some wine to show friendship. After Rostam drank the wine, he fell fast asleep. Chen Chan sneaked into his tent and used his own net to trap him!

Then Chen Chan opened the barn for the woman's horses and brought them back to her. He asked the woman, "What is your name? My name is Chen Chan." The woman answered, "I'm Sofia. Nice to meet you!" Sofia needed to heal her leg before resuming her travels. During this time, Chen Chan gently took care of her. After this experience, they fell deeply in love and agreed to continue their trading journey together.

After a few weeks, Sofia's leg was healed, and she could travel again. They went to Rome, for Chen Chan to trade his paper for jewels and gems. Chen Chan used a ruby ring to propose to Sofia, "Would you marry me?" Sofia sweetly said, "Yes." Then they both agreed to get married in China.

Sofia wanted to know more about Chen Chan and his home country. She asked, "What do you like to eat in Shanghai?" Chen Chan said, "I like to eat soup dumplings. And you? What is your favourite food in Rome?" Sofia answered, "I like to eat tuna." Chen Chan said, "We use chopsticks to eat!" He continued, "Chopsticks are like two sticks. I will teach you how to use them when we arrive in China. What utensils do you use to eat?" Sofia said, "We often use our hands and bronze spoons to eat." They talked about themselves and their countries' traditional clothes along the way to China. The Silk Road really helped connect people from different countries.

Finally, they arrived in China safely. Sofia traded her wool and horses for silk. They met and fell in love because of the Silk Road. They married, kept the trading business, and lived happily ever after.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Prince Li and the Silk Road of Friendship

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ryan, Brooklyn – 8

Long ago, in the grand city of Beijing, there lived a brave prince named Li. His father, the emperor, sent him on a special mission: travel the ancient Silk Road west to the faraway city of Constantinople to meet Princess Elena and bring gifts for peace and friendship.

Prince Li packed beautiful silk robes from China and precious spices that smelled wonderful – shiny black peppercorns, warm cinnamon sticks, and tiny fragrant cloves. These spices were rare and magical in far lands, perfect for a princess!

With a caravan of camels and brave guards, Prince Li set off. They crossed tall mountains and vast deserts. The sun was hot, and a big sandstorm came whooshing in! Sand flew everywhere, and they couldn't see the path.

"Oh no!" cried Prince Li. "We'll get lost!" But he was clever. He remembered stories of wise travelers. They covered their faces, held tight to the camels, and waited for the storm to pass. Soon, the wind calmed, and they found their way again.

Then, one-night, sneaky bandits appeared! They wanted precious gifts. Prince Li's guards fought bravely with swords, and the prince shared some tasty, dried fruits to show kindness. The bandits were surprised and decided to be friends instead. They even showed a safer path!

After many months of adventure, Prince Li reached Constantinople. Princess Elena was kind and beautiful. She loved the silky robes and the amazing spices that made food taste like magic.

"Thank you for your bravery," she said with a smile. They became great friends, and the two kingdoms lived in peace.

And so, the Silk Road brought not just treasures, but friendship across the world.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tang, Cheuk Hang Levin – 8

Two thousand years ago, there was a poor Chinese merchant named Zhu. Zhu had very little money, but he knew how to make noodles. His dream was to make his kingdom's noodles famous. He could do that by selling noodles on the Silk Road. He would get rich by trading noodles in Europe.

First, he set off with some noodles and dumplings, a few bottles of water, and one cute donkey to ride on for his trip. After a while, he bumped into the first trader of his journey. The trader sold a bag of spices to him in return for some dumplings. After a while, it was lunchtime, so Zhu took out his noodles to eat, and he remembered he could add the spices. Zhu discovered that adding spices to noodles tasted much better than just plain noodles.

After Zhu finished his delicious lunch, he continued his journey across the Silk Road. He walked through hot deserts, across wet forests, and over tall, cold mountains until he reached the land of Italy. There, the strange land had a lot of different materials, such as tomatoes, herbs, and bitter wine. Zhu did not expect Italy to be so beautiful: tall, fancy houses and big, green, lush parks. Zhu thought this magnificent place was the perfect place to sell his noodles.

As soon as he could, Zhu began selling the noodles. At first, nobody looked, but suddenly the Italians became very interested in the noodles. They asked Zhu questions, but since Zhu did not understand their language, he could not answer them. Because the Italians did not get an answer, they rushed to buy the noodles to eat, and they loved the noodles very much. Zhu became a little richer and was proud of his work.

Just as Zhu was going to rent a hotel, he heard a lot of whispering. Zhu thought, "What are people doing outside in the middle of the night?" Then he saw a gang of thieves holding sharp knives, and one of the thieves was holding a net.

Before Zhu could run away, the thief holding the net captured him! Luckily, another Chinese merchant named Cheng saw the incident. Cheng knew the thief holding the net was weak. The thief shouted to his team, "You go rob somebody else, I've got this!" After the rest of the thieves left, Cheng bravely charged at the weak thief, hit him, and then freed Zhu. Zhu thanked Cheng, and they became friends.

In the morning, the king of Italy himself declared that Zhu's noodles were fabulous. Then the king gave Zhu some money as a gift for making such good food for them. The king also helped Zhu spread his love of noodle-making around the world. Zhu stayed in Italy with Cheng to continue their quest to make his kingdom's noodles famous. Who knew that Chinese noodles inspired Italy to make their very own pasta!

A New Tale of The Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Hang, Tsang Pui Salma – 8

Hi. I am Cally the camel. It was a very exciting day to go on an adventure. We were going on a Silk Road journey. It was a 6,000 km adventure for over three months. When we were packing, I felt very scared. I thought my owner would not pack enough water for me! We also packed beautiful silk to exchange with people from Europe.

Our journey started in the hot dessert. The sun was bright and the sand seemed endless. I worried that there would be no ponds in the dessert. We walked for ten days and nights. We still couldn't find a pond. The water we brought was getting less and less. My mouth felt dry, and my legs became very tired. Finally, after five more days, we saw a small pond. We drank and drank until there was no more water left.

Later I found out that I was wrong. It was not a pond. It was only a puddle. Soon there was no water at all. I felt very exhausted and sat down on the sand. My owner looked worried and gently touched my neck. Just then, we saw another pond far away. We stood up and walked towards it slowly. This time it was real! I drank the cool water and felt strong again. I learned that we should never give up.

After being in the desert for so long, we reached a forest. The forest was green and quiet. The air was cool and there were tall trees everywhere. As we walked along a path, I suddenly saw a huge snake on the ground. It moved slowly across our way. I felt scared and stopped walking. My owner pulled my rope gently and led me away. When the snake disappeared into the grass, we continued our journey safely.

Eventually, we arrived at the busy market. People from many countries were there. They wore different clothes and spoke different languages. My owner exchanged some silk with another trader for some magic bean seeds. He told us the seeds were special and could grow into a very tall plant. I carried the seeds carefully on my back.

That night we rested under the stars. I was tired, but I felt proud. I am Cally the camel. I am Cally the camel. I help people travel the silk road and I carry hopes and dreams on our long journey.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yip, Ting Hong – 9

A boy ran out of the forest. He was holding something called “silk”. When he reached the marketplace, the villagers stopped and looked at the boy's hand. The silk in his hands was as thin as a hair but shone like a golden coin. The villagers' eyes went wide and they began whispering to each other, “What is that?” The whispering became louder and louder.

The Emperor saw that there were many people gathering around the boy, so the Emperor told one of the soldiers to bring the boy to the palace. The Emperor asked the boy where he got that silk, and the boy said, “Your Majesty, I got it from a spider.”

The Emperor looked very surprised and leaned forward on his throne. “A spider?” he asked with wide eyes. “How can a tiny bug make something so precious?”

The boy smiled and replied, “Small things can sometimes make the biggest wonders, Your Majesty.”

“Wow,” said the Emperor, and he asked the boy to give him that beautiful silk. The Emperor thought of a marvellous idea, and that was when the Silk Road was made.

The Silk Road is very long; it is about six thousand to seven thousand five hundred miles long (ten thousand to twelve thousand kilometres long). No travellers travel from end to end because the Silk Road was too long for them to travel, even though they had camels.

When trading grew, there were more and more people living in China and a huge problem arose. The streets were so crowded that people needed to climb onto their neighbour's house just to get into their own house. It was so noisy in the streets that people had to shout just to be heard. Carts got stuck in the narrow alleys. Children could not play outside because there was simply no empty space left, so the Emperor got very confused and did not know what to do.

The Emperor asked the boy for some wise ideas, and the boy suggested making a city with wide, straight roads where people could lie down on the ground but still have plenty of space left. The Emperor said, “OK.” After the city was made, the Emperor called it “Chang'an”, which became the biggest city in the world. Under the Emperor's command, Chang'an became a noisy city with merchants from faraway lands who came to trade their treasures. Chang'an is almost as big as ten cities! And do you know that it can fit about eight hundred thousand to one million people?

After ten years, the ancient Silk Road ended and China made the “Modern Silk Road”. It was something like a train. It goes much faster than travelling on foot, and it became easier to travel to far places for trading.

The First Journey on the Silk Road

St. Mary Canossian School, Elly Ngai Sum, Fung – 9

Long ago, a glowing flower led a traveler to safety. His name was Wang Zhen. He was rich because he sold precious paper, shimmery silk, and gleaming gems. He lived in ancient China, and he started his journey on the Silk Road to reach India with his strong camel. They walked under the scorching sun. Every footstep crunched against the sand.

But the desert was not always calm. A sandstorm struck. It howled like a wild dragon. Wang Zhen swallowed hard. He hadn't thought they would be trapped in the storm. His heart pounded like someone banging a drum in rage. The sky turned into a brown sheet. The sand scratched their skin while they shivered in fright. Wang Zhen and his camel rushed into a cave for the night to stay safe. Inside the cave, it was dark and quiet—a shelter from the roaring storm.

The next morning, Wang Zhen walked out of the cave and saw the empty desert. He couldn't believe his eyes. All the paths had disappeared and he had no idea where he was. He shook his head and sighed, "Oh no! We will be lost here forever!" His camel nudged him, forcing him to look at the sky. Wang Zhen looked up and saw a glowing lotus flower pointing west. Feeling hopeful, his face lit up and his eyes widened. Was it a sign? He was determined to follow it.

When he arrived in India, he was exhausted. He saw a spectacular temple and went inside. He saw golden walls and monks. The sound of chanting made him feel relaxed and lucky. The smell of sweet incense filled the air. They walked on the cool stone floor. A monk smiled at him, "Hi. Please sit down and have tea." Wang Zhen told the monk about his adventure. The monk replied, "The lotus is a symbol of luck, peace, and guidance." "Lotus." Wang Zhen's ears perked up when he heard the word. It was the flower that had saved him.

After spending a few peaceful nights, Wang Zhen learned about Buddha and Buddhism. He also sold his goods at high prices. He became a follower of Buddha. The monks gave Wang Zhen a prayer bead as a gift. They wished him good luck. He returned to China with a belief, an unforgettable story, and threads of wisdom.

Master, Let Me Protect You

St. Mary Canossian School, Hee Yee Chloe, Chan – 9

“Ruff! Ruff!” A loud bark woke up the people. It turned out that there were enemies at the gate. The loyal guard, strong and brave, was a Persian dog, responsible for guarding the gate for the king. In his heart he said, “Master, let me protect you.”

The long road from the Western Regions to China was hard. The sun was brimming bright. It was boiling hot. Everyone was dripping with sweat and worn out from all the walking. Suddenly, some robbers came to attack them because they wanted to steal the treasure, and the people stuttered, “Please don’t kill me!” The robbers seemed ready to attack him too. The Persian dog rushed to protect them. The Persian dog beat the robbers, they started to bleed and fled. He looked at the robbers with wide eyes and thought, “Master, let me protect you.”

At night, the wind was howling like a wolf. It was freezing. The Persian dog slept next to the fire in front of the tent. If strangers came, his ears would stand up, he would stare at the strangers, and he would let out a low growl. After the strangers escaped, he would sleep peacefully and whispered, “Master, let me protect you.”

The people from the West arrived in China. At first, the Chinese were scared by the Persian dog. His body was muscular and looked frightening because his teeth were very sharp and his eyes were big. The children hid behind their parents, and the parents stepped back. The elderly was screaming loudly.

One day, a baby in a stroller rolled down the stairs. The Persian dog dashed down the steep steps and quickly pulled the stroller. The baby was safe! The people clapped their hands and cheered. From that day, the people became friends with the Persian dog. They learned that the Silk Road carried not only silk and tea, it also carried love and friendship. He lifted his head, stood straight, and said, “Master, let me protect you.”

A thousand years passed. Persian dogs became human’s friends. One night, the bright moon and sparkling stars were hanging in the sky, and a cool wind blew through the windows. There was a comfortable bed. Inside the room, a night lamp cast a warm yellow glow, a soft pillow lay on the bed. A newborn baby was sleeping sweetly. The Persian dog lay next to the bed and watched the little hands. In his heart, he said, “Little master, let me protect you, let me protect you...”

Ancient Silk Road & One Belt One Road

St. Mary Canossian School, Hei Wun, Mak – 8

One day, Tom read a book about the Ancient Silk Road. He fell asleep after reading for long. He had a dream and went back to the Ancient Silk Road.

There were many merchants. They traded goods such as porcelain and jewellery. A man approached me. I remembered him appearing in the book. He was Zhang Qian, who was the first traveler of the Silk Road. He introduced to me that the Silk Road was the longest and most important land trade route in the world. It connected China, Central Asia and Europe. Merchants exchanged silk and paper from China to the West. They imported horses and gold to China. The Silk Road was an exchange bridge for culture and religions. Tom rode on a horse and flew back to modern life.

Tom started to search more about the Ancient Silk Road as he was interested in it. The Silk Road declined because of the speedy development of sea transportation and new technology.

Then, he found a new Silk Road in the twenty-first century called One Belt One Road. There was a land route similar to the past. Another new route was the Maritime Silk Road. It was founded in 2013 by the president Xi Jinping. Over 140 countries joined One Belt One Road. It promoted trading and improved relationships between the people in different countries. China also developed infrastructures such as railways and ports from China to Africa and Europe.

The New Silk Road brought people a lot of advantages such as cultural learning and global changes. For cultural changes, students had more opportunities to exchange with each other in partner countries with educational and cultural centres along the Belt. It sounded exciting. Tom wanted to join it too.

Second, it strengthened the communications between people in the world. They could build up a friendship more easily. They could also spread religions such as Catholic and Buddhism between the East and the West. Tom would like to explore more about the religions in different countries.

Third, One Belt One Road could promote tourism. People can travel to different attractions between the East and the West more conveniently. Tom liked traveling too. He hoped he will have a chance to travel to Europe along the Belt.

In view of global changes, there were more job opportunities with building more roads and express railways. People could share new construction technologies among the countries. Next, One Belt One Road could foster trades and business between different countries. Merchants could build up factories and start business among the Belt. It fostered the global economic growth. Also, One Belt One Road improved the transport infrastructure from Asia to Europe. Different countries were connected with highways, railways and airways.

It looked like One Belt One Road is a super idea which connected the friendship and trading between different countries. Many people can benefit from this new idea. Tom promised himself he would work and travel along the Belt after he grew up.

The Owl's Gift: A Dream of the Silk Road

St. Mary Canossian School, Pui Hei, Wong – 9

“Hoot, hoot,” an owl hooted. It was nearly my bedtime. I peered out of the window and noticed an owl sitting on a tree branch. As if the owl had magic, my eyelids suddenly felt incredibly heavy. I drifted off to sleep, snoring softly.

Out of the blue, I found myself in a temple in a desert. Feeling quite thirsty, I noticed a girl carrying a bottle of water, but I didn't know how to communicate with her. Suddenly, I heard a voice inside my head. It said, “Close your eyes and open them again; then you will be able to communicate with the people around you.” Astonishingly, when I opened my eyes, I could speak with the girl! “Salam!” The girl replied me with a big smile.

I saw people wearing different clothes walking around. Suddenly, a boy named Emre came up and gave me a sticky, sweet candy called “Lokum”. He said, “Taste this.” As soon as I popped the candy into my mouth, I exclaimed, “It’s TASTY!” I then asked him, “Do you know where I am?” “You are in Samarkand, don’t you know that you are my first guest?” replied Emre.

I was surprised to discover that I was on the famous ancient Silk Road. Before starting my journey to Istanbul, Emre’s grandmother insisted that I stayed for a meal. She served a bowl of “plov”, a rice dish with lamb. It was delicious and different from the food in my country. Emre’s grandmother smiled to me and said, "Food tastes better when you share it with new friends." I understood that sharing food is a special way to be friendly.

After this delicious meal, I asked Emre, “Could you take me to Istanbul?” Emre nodded and said, “Follow me.” We walked for two days and one night and finally saw a city split between two continents. When we arrived, I said goodbye to Emre. I continued by myself and, not long after, I met a girl named Aiman. I saw her playing an interesting game and asked, “Can you teach me?” She said, “You shoot an arrow like this.” After we played her game, I said, “Do you want to play on my tablet? I have a favourite math app.” We exchanged our games, and both of us felt excited. I was delighted to make friends with Aiman.

Suddenly, my eyelids started to feel heavy once more. In an instant, I found myself lying in my bed at home, holding a tiny archery bow. “Did I really go to the ancient Silk Road?” I whispered. I had an idea and thought, “There are many treasures on the ancient Silk Road and so many different people with unique cultures.” I learnt so many things from my journey, so I invited my Mum, “Do you want to explore to the modern Silk Road?” My mum looked very surprised, and she said, “Yes, definitely, my dear.” I am looking forward to exploring more in Silk Road.

My Silk Road Time Machine Adventure

St. Mary Canossian School, Zhihan, Qin – 9

My friend Ellie made a great time machine. It could take people back over 2,000 years. I was interested in the Silk Road, so I took it to learn about ancient Silk Road culture.

When I arrived, I saw Zhang Qian who started the Silk Road and his helpers getting ready to go. I followed them quietly. I wanted to join their journey and be one of the travellers on this famous road too.

We walked for three long years and finally reached West Asia. It was very busy there. People did their traditional dances and sang folk songs. Some prayed in temples. Their culture seemed really rich.

In the market, Zhang Qian and his team traded with the locals. The West Asians gave us gold, pearls, spices and taught us their dances and songs. We gave them Chinese porcelain, tea and the Four Great Inventions in return.

We were dancing happily when I heard a "click." My time machine was broken! I went to the temple to pray with my new West Asian friends. When we came back the time machine had fixed itself. That was amazing!

I got on it again and it took me to China's biggest museum. There was an exhibition called "Modern Silk Road". I found many advantages that the Silk Road has brought us: sea transport is cheaper, ships carry more goods than trains, products from other countries along the way.

I then wondered what the Silk Road will be like in 2000 years. Will AI replace the Silk Road? Or will people use robots for trade? I'm so curious. I hope the historical sites along the Silk Road will be well-preserved so our next generation can learn about its legacy and how significant it is to the world.

Qian's Tasty Adventure on the Silk Road

St. Mary Canossian School, Ziyang, Shang – 8

Qian loves food. One day, he wanted to try some food from the famous Silk Road. He took the China–Europe Railway Express, departing from Chongqing to Hamburg.

As the train moved fast, Qian felt hungry. He opened his lunchbox, but to his surprise, he found a shiny key inside! “How strange!” Qian said. Suddenly, the key began to glow and he vanished!

Qian landed on a hot desert. “Ouch!” he shouted. A friendly man approached him. “Hello! I am Adil,” he said with a big smile. “Where are we?” Qian asked. “This is the Silk Road,” Adil replied, pointing to the west.

“Do you want some sweet potatoes?” Adil asked. “Yes! I can make a special treat—candied sweet potatoes with syrup!” Qian said happily. He opened his bag and found some white sugar. “What is this?” Adil asked. “It’s sugar!” Qian answered. He gave a bag to Adil, who took him to a market.

At the market, they saw a cook named Fatina. She was making curry, but nobody was buying it. “Why is no one buying your curry?” Adil asked. “I have no meat!” she cried. Qian smiled and took out some beef cubes from his bag. “Here is the meat! Don’t forget to add carrots as they are good for you!” he said.

Next, they went to a bakery. The bakers looked at their bread, which had some chopped parsley on it. “Yuck!” they said. Qian opened his bag again and took out garlic powder. He sprinkled it on the bread, and it smelled so good! Soon, many people came to buy the bread.

Then they visited a tea shop. The tea maker looked sad. “What’s wrong?” asked Adil. “There are too many tea shops. Nobody buys my tea and leaves,” he said. “I can teach you how to make yummy milk tea!” Qian said. “First, stir the tea leaves, then add sugar...”

They were still hungry, so they cooked some meat. But it doesn’t taste good. Qian took out red pepper powder and sprinkled it on the meat. “What’s this?” Adil asked. “It’s red chili powder,” Qian replied. “Wow! It’s too spicy!” Adil shouted. “Don’t worry, you will get used to it!” Qian laughed.

Suddenly, Qian felt something in his pocket. It was the glowing key! “It’s the key!” he shouted. In a flash, he vanished again, leaving behind a cookbook open to a page that said: “How to Make Lotus Root Soup.”

The key brought Qian back to the train with his lunchbox in front of him. Qian saw a pizza inside the box. He took a big bite and loved it! Looking out the window, he realized something important: the Silk Road is not just a place in the past. It is still here today, in the delicious food we share with each other.

Let's Ride On a Caravan

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Cheung, Hin Wai Randolph – 6

“Mommy, can we have a caravan trip?” I ask my mother excitedly. “I read from books that caravans are vehicles looking like petit houses that can drive you anywhere.”

“Okay, let’s ride on a caravan to Australia this summer holiday.”

Hurray! I arrive at a beautiful vineyard. Yet, where are my parents? I cannot see my dreamed caravan. Instead, I see a flock of camels with long eyelashes and large nostrils being fastened together in strings, with bells on their necks. Two young men walk towards me. They have tanned skin tone, short blonde hair and blue eyes.

“Who are you? Where is my caravan? Where are my parents?” I bombard them with questions when they approach me, with my hands sweating and my voice trembling.

“Hi, little young man. I am Francesco and he is Riccardo. This is our caravan with travelers and camels. I don’t know where your parents are, but where are you from?” The shorter man speak with a strange English accent. “We are now in Turpan. We are on our way to China along this Silk Road. We are going to buy some beautiful silk from China to our hometown, Italy. Would you like to join us?” The taller man speaks gently.

“Silk Road?” I am desperately looking for my parents. I have no choice but to follow them as I am now in the middle of nowhere. Riccardo lets me ride on a camel. The other camels are carrying heavy baskets of glassware and gold which are to be traded in China. The camel ride is very bumpy. We cross many humpy sand dunes. “We are now in the Taklamakan Desert, a dangerous place,” says Francesco. A shiver goes down my spine. I really want to be home. Riccardo knows I am scared. He always cheers me up by sharing what they have seen in their journey.

Day after day, I become part of their caravan. At daytime, the sky is cloudless and the rays from the sun make the desert boiling hot. I ask Francesco for any sunscreen and portable fans. “What are you talking about?” Francesco replies me with a puzzled look. In the evening, the wind howls through the hollow desert.

One day, the sand is swirled high and blown all around by the terrifying wind. My face, nostrils and mouth are all stuck with sand. Our caravan is split apart. Our footprints disappear and we get lost! Suddenly, there are a few fierce-looking men trying to rob us with spears and sickles. To my surprise, the camels spit, bite and kick them in their faces aggressively. They finally scream and flee in terror.

After that, we pass many places including Hami, Dunhuang and Lanzhou. We finally arrive at Xian. Everyone in our caravan holler in excitement. “Riccardo and Francesco, we make it!”

“Who are they?” My mom’s voice wakes me up. Yawn. “Mommy, can we go to the Silk Road instead? I want to ride on another type of caravan.”

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, , Cheung, Hing Yuet Hailee – 7

A bright and sunny day.

In the faraway Celestara Kingdom in the year 9025, a land of glowing towers, enchanted skies, and rivers that sparkled with magic, there lived a princess named Haileessa. She was working on a visual art project, making Silk Road treasures from clay. While searching through her family's old albums, she found a picture of the Silk Road and longed to visit it. With her magical, wish-granting parchment map, she travelled across time to see it.

The map whispered, "Where do you want to go?" Haileessa replied, "I want to see the Silk Road and its treasures." The map glowed and said, "Step inside, and I will take you there."

With a flash of light, Haileessa walked through the doorway and arrived at the Great Wall of China. In an instant, sparkling glitter showered from the sky, forming a shimmering path along the wall. When Haileessa stepped onto the glittering road, the Great Wall connected to a glowing bridge that carried her to the Silk Road.

When she landed, she was dressed like a princess of the Han Dynasty, the time when the Silk Road first began.

Haileessa saw merchants carrying loads of goods for trading, including tea, silk, metal, spices, wool, paper, and more, in a marketplace alive with colour, sweet smells, and lively voices. Here she met Melvis the camel, tall and gentle, and Alyssaparo the parrot, bright and cheerful. They quickly became her friends and guided her through the crowded streets.

Three treasures stood out among the goods. The first was a flying carpet from Persia, covered with shapes and flowers that seemed to move in the wind. The second was a necklace made of pearls from seashells of Arabia, glowing softly like stars in the night sky. The third was pottery painted with dragons and phoenixes, decorated with gold and silver that sparkled like diamonds in the sunlight.

Haileessa was amazed. She knew these treasures would be perfect for her project. She, Melvis, and Alyssaparo spent time together, laughing and enjoying the exciting adventure. Soon, they noticed that no one else was around, and they had no idea why. Then someone warned them that bandits were coming, so they left quickly. Haileessa said, "Thank you, my friends. I will always remember this journey." Melvis bowed his head, and Alyssaparo chirped happily as they said goodbye.

The magic map glowed again and whispered, "Your wish has been fulfilled. It is time to return." Haileessa nodded and stepped back into the light, returning to the Celestara Kingdom.

In her classroom, Haileessa presented her clay project, shaped like the treasures she had seen. Then she noticed something surprising: Jarvis and Alysse had made the same carpets, pearl necklaces, and golden pottery.

Haileessa stared in shock. Then she realised the truth: Alysse and Jarvis had been Alyssaparo and Melvis all along. The three of them laughed together, their secret revealed, and Haileessa knew the Silk Road had given her not only treasures but also true friends.

Through the Bead of Time

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Wong, Hoi Shun Lauren – 8

I've always liked science for its certainty. Reactions, equations – everything follows rules. History – a collection of events that didn't feel connected to real life – on the other hand, always seemed distant. On our class trip to the History Museum, I drifted from exhibit to exhibit without much interest. A small glass bead beneath a label reading *"Persian-Trade Bead: Silk Road Era"* caught my eye. I reached out and touched it out of idle curiosity. The bead warmed instantly. Before I could react, the room blurred, and light exploded around me in a swirl of shimmering dust.

When the world settled, I found myself in a bustling desert marketplace. Merchants called from their stalls, camels shifted in the sunlight, caravans prepared for departure. A tall traveler with a weathered cloak approached, studying me carefully. "There you are, young apprentice," he said. "We're expected at the glass workshops. I'm Marco Polo."

Before I could explain, I was swept into a caravan and taken into a blazing workshop echoing with hammering tools. A craftsman pressed a tray of shimmery blue beads into my arms, barking orders I didn't understand. My grip tightened—too late. The tray tilted, and the beads tumbled to the floor in a shattering rain of color. A hush fell over the room. Someone whispered, "Those were part of the Azure Furnace Formula tribute." I later learned it was a nearly lost method for creating an intensely clear blue glass treasured along the Silk Road—and I had just ruined the last batch.

Determined to fix what I'd done, I turned to what I knew from school chemistry labs. I gathered sand, soda ash and minerals from nearby jars. The materials weren't exactly what I was used to, but with familiar purposes. Working quickly, I mixed them and placed the blend into the furnace. The craftsman shouted for me to stop, but the mixture was already melting.

As the ingredients fused, the molten glass began to glow with a blue deeper and clearer than I expected. Remembering a lesson on metal oxides, I added a hint of copper. The color strengthened into a vivid azure – same as the beads I had dropped. When the new beads cooled, the workshop fell silent. Marco Polo lifted one, turning it in the light. "This," he murmured, "is the true Azure Furnace Formula." He wrapped the beads carefully, promising to bring the technique west. I didn't know it then, but this rediscovery—my accidental recipe—would inspire the brilliant blue glass of Venice for centuries.

As he stored the final bead, the marketplace dissolved into swirling light. In a heartbeat, I was back in the museum. The bead in the display now gleamed with the unmistakable azure color I had made.

For the first time, history didn't feel far away. It felt alive—full of discovery, challenge, and human effort. I left the museum with a new curiosity, ready to explore the stories that shaped the Silk Road, one moment at a time.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chan, Kei Yu – 8

One cloudy Sunday, Mommy and I were looking for party dresses. We saw a silk dress displayed at a vintage boutique. While Mommy was trying it on, I found a special camel-shaped pendant made of shimmering ruby. Curiously, I looped it around my neck. Suddenly, I saw my mom and the salesperson freeze — even the clock had stopped!

A hole appeared under my feet and I fell in. I was so frightened when I noticed I had shrunk. Then, I landed on the sandy ground. Two mice in ancient Indian costumes were sitting next to me. They could speak! “Hello, I am Princess Celestia and this is Prince Richard. Please help us find the golden crystal; we lost it in the Thar Desert when a black blizzard appeared last week! Your pendant is the key to find the crystal,” Richard explained. “We lack silk for making our wedding saree and dhoti, and the wedding is in two days.”

I tried to calm myself down and asked, “I can help, but where am I?” They replied, “We are in the golden city of Jaisalmer. The forts glow in golden during sunlight because they are all made of yellow sandstone.” They explained that Indians rely on trading peppers, cinnamons, cloves, and luxury jewelries to exchange fine fabrics like silk from China. “The golden crystal will guide us to find more rubies, emeralds, and sapphires,” Richard said.

“Why do you need silk from China? We can buy it from a shop directly,” I asked. “We don’t have any shops here, and we only have wool, linen and cotton for clothing. We don’t know how to make silk, so we have to trade for it from China,” replied Celestia. “Please close your eyes, touch the pendant, and say this spell: Charming pendant, show me the way!” I followed the steps as she said.

Suddenly, some pictures popped up in my mind: a camel pattern, a wagon, and some fabrics! A Chinese caravan was passing by. I suddenly shouted, “I know where the crystal is! Let’s get into the first wagon with the camel pattern.” While the camels and the Chinese rested by the river, we sneaked into the wagon, and luckily no one saw us. We saw a pile of goods inside the carriage: there were porcelains, tea leaves and fabrics. At this moment, a beam of light was glowing from a roll of silk. “We found the golden crystal, thank you!” said Celestia. “Let’s hurry out of the wagon and trade it for the perfect silk,” I said.

Finally, Celestia and Richard held a spectacular wedding in their shiny saree and dhoti. When the wedding music started, I felt dizzy and fell onto a big cushion. When I opened my eyes, my mommy was trying to wake me up and said it was time to go home. I knew I had returned from ancient times. On the way back home, I was still wearing the necklace and looking forward to the next journey.

The Mirror's Promise

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chau, Tak Kwan – 6

“Mama, look at these beautiful carpets!” Bo exclaimed delightedly, eyes sparkling. “And those odd-looking fruits over there! What are they?”

Ten-year-old Bo and his family finally arrived at the legendary trading post, Kashgar’s Sunday Market, after a year-long bumpy ride on their caravan across the snow-capped mountains and blazing deserts, far from their home in Chang’an. Kashgar was their destination on the Silk Road route, where they would exchange wonderful goods to bring back home.

Curious like a cat, Bo darted around the bustling bazaar, pausing here and there to check out the exotic treasures. In one hand he clutched several copper coins his mother had given him to spend on whatever he fancied. There was ivory from India, carpets from the Middle East, horses from Arabia, and coins from distant Rome. The air smelled of roast lamb, saffron and horse sweat. Bo’s eyes grew wide as he marveled at all sorts of wonders and the many different languages that he could not understand.

Pushing his way through the crowds, Bo stopped in front of a tiny stall. An old man with frosty grey beard sat cross-legged behind a carpet with only one single object: a small bronze mirror no larger than Bo’s palm. It was polished so bright that it sparkled like sun on the sea. Bo could not take his eyes off the mirror, so he leaned forward, cautiously reaching out his hand.

“The mirror costs a promise,” the old man muttered.

“What promise?” Bo asked, perplexed, “That makes no sense!”

Before Bo realized, the old man pressed the mirror into his palm. Golden light exploded across the market, blinding him. He felt weird because he could not feel the ground under his feet. When he opened his eyes, he was standing in a desert, face to face with a man wearing the same patched flowing robe his father had described in tales of the Silk Road.

“Are you Zhang Qian?” Bo gasped, unable to believe his eyes.

“You are finally here, boy,” the man said gently. “I have a wish unfulfilled. Someone must carry on the journey to the Sea of the West.”

“This mirror will guide you westwards,” he continued. “Keep it safe!”

As Zhang Qian spoke his last word, the mirror flared again. In the blink of an eye, Bo was back in the Kashgar market, but the old man and his stall had vanished. Bo stared at the shining mirror in astonishment, lost for words.

“Enough wandering, little monkey!” Bo’s father called. “It’s time to go home!”

As Bo and his family loaded their caravan and headed east, Bo paused, gazed at the desert in the distance, and whispered, “I will keep my promise,” clutching the mirror close to his heart.

The Unexpected Fortune of the Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Kao, Titus Caden – 6

“No! I don’t want to go! Ma, why do I always have to feed the cows?” complained the boy. Ma sighed. “Gao Qian... Ba has gone to fight against the Mongols. Without cows, we’ll have no food to eat.” Young Gao Qian’s heart grew heavy, having the responsibility to take care of his family.

Gao Qian walked sadly to the back of their broken hut. All the cows were gone. He wasn’t surprised. Everything at home was falling apart. He stood at the hole in the broken gate, and tears ran down his cheeks. Slowly, he pulled from his pocket the last gift Ba had given him—a silk handkerchief—and wiped away his tears.

From a distance, Gao Qian saw an individual riding a camel along a path from the corner of his eye. His heart raced. Ba had told him magical stories about the Silk Road, a place for trading goods and bringing fortune from faraway lands. Ma had forbidden him to go, afraid of losing her child. But Gao Qian longed to change his family’s fortune and quietly slipped through the hole in the gate and ran towards the road.

After walking for what felt like forever, Gao Qian met a mysterious man dressed only in animal hide. The man carried what looked like a gigantic, shiny tooth. Gao Qian asked, “What is that?” The man replied, “It is an ivory tusk from a great creature with a long nose. It brings fortune.”

He explained that he had traveled from a faraway land in search of silk, which was rare where he came from. Gao Qian knew the ivory tusk was exactly what his family needed, so he offered Ba’s silk handkerchief. The man smiled, accepted the silk, and gave Gao Qian the tusk. Though it was heavy, Gao Qian carried it all the way home, filled with hope that it would change his family’s fortune.

“Ma! Look, I got an ivory tusk!” he shouted. Ma was shocked. “You went to the Silk Road? You gave away our last remaining memory of Ba!” she cried bitterly. Gao Qian felt numb. He tried to calm her, promising never to disobey again. Ma wailed all night; it felt like a never-ending nightmare.

The next morning, Gao Qian still felt guilty. He went to the back of the hut and noticed a few animals had returned, though the gate remained broken. With no tools, he thought of using the tusk as a hammer. As he hammered the gate, it started to crack open. Suddenly, the tusk split open and an endless stream of gold poured out.

Shocked, Gao Qian ran to Ma and shouted, “We have gold that will last us for generations!” Ma gasped, then smiled with pride. “I should have trusted you,” she said. Just then, Ba stepped through the door, his voice filled with joy, “I’m proud of you, son.” Gao Qian replied, “You’re right Ba! The magical tales of the Silk Road are true!” They embraced one another and lived happily ever after.

Silk, Sand, Secret Stories and Sustainability

St. Paul's College Primary School, Ng, Caspar – 9

Peter was many things: a multi-sports athlete, a bookworm, and most of all, an explorer at heart. His love of reading combined with his adventurous character always guided him into a world of imagination, free of the limits of reality. While other children rushed to the playground at recess, Peter hurried to the library. One book in particular always caught his eye: *The Actual History of the Silk Road*. Strangely, it never stayed in one place. Wherever Peter sat, the book appeared before him. One day, unable to resist, he opened it. The pages were blank, except for one page saying: *Welcome, Peter*. Peter felt dizzy. The world spun, and his adventure began...

Some blinding bright light woke him, and hot sand tickled his feet. “Ciao, amico mio!” Peter was startled by a thick but cheerful voice. “Welcome to the Gobi Desert!” In a whirlwind, Peter was grabbed by the shoulder and shoved onto a camel. He turned to look at where the voice came from. “My name is Marco Polo,” the cheerful young man said.

Peter was stunned. He was riding a camel beside the wildly famous explorer! “What’s happening? What time is this?” he stammered nervously. Marco chuckled. “You’re a bit mad! Of course it’s the fifteenth century!” Peter hesitated. “But I come from the twenty-first!” Marco was awed. “Tell me about it! Ready for an adventure?”

Feeling uneasy, Peter agreed anyway. As they traveled, he marveled at the differences from his own time. People cooked over open fires, wore handmade clothes, and traded goods instead of money. Merchants exchanged silk, spices, inventions, and stories. Marco explained, “These exchanges help people learn from one another – sometimes through knowledge, sometimes through culture, and sometimes through the objects they carry.”

Peter noticed that many of the travelers’ belongings looked worn but still useful. Marco said, “Travelers like us can’t afford to waste space or throw things away until they are completely torn.” Peter thought about the modern world, full of waste and pollution. The ancient world felt so natural and clean. He daydreamed of a future where cities had less waste, more gardens, and people shared ideas and resources like Silk Road travelers once did.

Marco listened carefully. “It can be possible,” he said, “but you must work very hard. My mission is to walk the Silk Road, experience different cultures, and bring back knowledge to my country. You should do the same.”

As the sun set, a black portal suddenly appeared. Inside, Peter saw a vision of a modern world become clean, green, and unrecognisable. “I guess this is farewell,” said Marco. “Farewell it is,” Peter replied, stepping into the portal.

He opened his eyes in the library once again. The clock showed a quarter past one – the same time he had left. The book was back on the shelf. Peter knew the journey was more than a dream. Inspired, he couldn’t wait to share the story with his best friend, beginning: “I am an ambitious boy...”

The Most Dangerous Book

Stanford American School Hong Kong, Gu, Youzhen Miranda – 8

Once upon a time, there was a brave and hardworking camel caravan that traveled and rested in the desert.

One day, one of the team members sighed, “I’m so bored. I wish I could explore the Silk Road—maybe we’d find something exciting!”

Another member nodded in agreement. “Me too! I’ve been feeling restless as well.”

Soon, the whole team grew excited at the idea. “Why wait?” someone said. “Let’s explore the Silk Road—today!”

They decided to split into two groups. The first group, made up of five members, set off first. They wandered until they found a dark, mysterious cave. Inside, lying on the dusty floor, was an ancient book. Its cover read: “The 100-Year Magic Book.”

Curious, one of them carefully picked it up and gently opened it.

Suddenly—the book trembled!

Before anyone could react, the member who held it began to change... and in seconds, he turned into a terrifying MONSTER!

The others screamed in fear and tried to flee—but rocks crashed down, blocking the cave entrance. Trapped and trembling, they huddled together, certain the monster would devour them. One by one, they vanished. None escaped.

Later, the second group arrived at the same cave. When they saw the pile of rocks sealing the entrance, they pushed with all their might—and broke through.

Inside, they found the monster. But unlike the first group, they were prepared: they carried knives and simple weapons. Without hesitation, they fought back. After a fierce battle, they defeated the creature and freed themselves from the cursed cave.

They returned to the desert as heroes—and soon became famous across the Silk Road.

Though they never found their missing teammates, they feared the worst. With heavy hearts but newfound fame, the five survivors chose to stay in the desert. From that day on, they gave up exploring the Silk Road.

And though they missed their friends, they lived peacefully—and happily—ever after.

Princess Lin and the Silk Road Adventure

Stanford American School Hong Kong, Kan, Abigail – 6

Once upon a time in China, there lived a kind and gentle princess named Lin in a golden palace. Everyone loved her for her sweetness—but Lin wasn't happy. More than anything, she longed to see the world beyond palace walls.

On her birthday, she heard a commotion outside her window. Peering out, she saw a camel caravan arriving—travelers dusty from the desert, smelling of black pepper and sun-baked sand. They were preparing to journey west along the Silk Road.

"I wish I could go with them," Lin whispered. Then she had an idea. *It's my birthday—they might say yes!*

She ran to her parents. "Dad, can I go see the world? It's my birthday!"

"No," her father said firmly. "It's too dangerous to travel alone."

"But what if I go with the camel team?" Lin pleaded. "They'll keep me safe."

Her mother smiled at her husband. "Let her go. She'll be protected with the caravan."

After a long pause, her father sighed. "Alright... but promise you'll come back."

"I will!" Lin hugged them both. "Why wouldn't I?"

"I'll miss you," her father murmured.

"I love you, baby," her mother said. "Take care."

Lin packed her bags and joined the caravan. Along the Silk Road, she saw snow-capped mountains, whispering forests, and vast deserts. She met camels, horses, cattle, and brilliant peacocks. In bustling cities, she admired statues and temples, tasted new foods, and watched children play with joyful laughter.

The caravan finally reached Italy—the western end of the Silk Road—where they traded goods before turning back. While there, Lin wondered if she might find someone to share her love of adventure.

One day, a young man approached her. "Hello," he said. "I'm Marco Polo. You look like an adventurer—I've never seen anyone like you. Where are you from?"

"I'm from China," Lin replied with a smile. "I'm returning soon with the caravan. Would you like to come with me?"

Marco's eyes sparkled. "I'd love to! I've always dreamed of exploring the world."

So together, they journeyed east. Lin showed Marco every wonder she'd discovered on her way to Europe—the rivers, markets, and mountain passes. When they arrived at her golden palace, her parents rushed out, tears in their eyes, and embraced her tightly.

Her father looked at the stranger. "Who is this man?"

Lin beamed. "This is Marco Polo. He loves to explore... just like me."

The Magic Road

The French International School, Rheia, Zheng – 7

“What is One-belt, one road?” A question I asked my mum.

She tried to explain, but her answer was so complicated that it only left me confused. The only thing I could remember was something about “The Silk Road”.

That night, I had a dream. I traveled in a time machine back to the era of the Silk Road. A horse carried its riders on a journey from Xi’an all the way to Rome, a distance of 13371 kilometers. They rode horses and camels, as there were no cars or machines invented yet, more than two thousand years ago. So they could only travel by animals.

The Silk Road was a vast network of ancient trade routes that connected East and West, linking Asia, Europe, and Africa, for over 1500 years. It served as the longest commercial road in ancient times, used for trade and travel.

In my imagination, maybe the horse had wings, or perhaps the camels and horses had special powers and could go anywhere they wished. Maybe a magician zapped them straight to Rome! Or maybe they found a flying carpet and flew there!

Altan's Silk Quest

The French International School, Tsui, Edward – 7

Altan was young but he had a big dream. He lived in a caravanserai long ago in the Tang dynasty. At night, he sat by the fire with other children. They sang:

Rain from the east, sand from the west,
One treasure will help the quest.
Thread and paper, spices and corals,
Glass and gems, perfume florals,
One coral will float in the final quest.

Altan said, "I want to go! I want to find this treasure!"

He went to Chang'an. The streets had stalls selling many wares. He got a spool of thread. As he pulled the thread, a Treasure-Flower picture was revealed. It pointed to Dunhuang where the Mogao caves are. He met a monk there. The monk gave him paper. He told Altan, "Write down everything about your journey. You must find the next place that sells spices."

Later, Altan travelled to Kashgar. The air smelled like spices. His camel sneezed so loud that people laughed. A kind trader gave him corals for his thread. Altan picked three and put them in his bag. He said thank you and left.

Then, he journeyed to Samarkand. He saw beautiful blue domes. In the market, he bought glass beads and shiny lapis stones. People whispered about the treasure like in the song he sang at the caravanserai.

Altan kept going to Baghdad. There were big libraries. The air smelled like flowers. A scholar amazed by Altan's quest, gave him perfume and a scroll. He said, "You will meet the Rain Master in the East."

Altan sold his camel for a horse. He rode to Antioch in the East. At the gate, an old man had a bucket. Altan put the corals in. Two sank, one floated. The man was the Rain Master! Altan gave him a special coral so the Rain Master gave him a riddle:

I am small but I am powerful,
I make mountains but I can move like water too.
What am I?

Altan replied, "Sand!"

The Rain Master pointed west. Altan knew where he was going – The Taklamakan desert. He was born there. He was named after Altun Shan. It means Golden Mountain.

Near Miran, a lady waited. She said to Altan, "You have collected the treasures like in the song. I will show you the greatest one now."

The dunes opened. There were mulberry trees and silkworms. The silkworms made shiny threads. This is how 'Silk Road' got its name.

Altan went home to the caravanserai and wrote his story. The children sang a new song:

Altan found silk, soft as clouds,
A treasure making happy crowds,
Spice and stone, glass and scroll,
Perfume and gems, a story is told.

Lavender and the Journey of her Tea

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Ho, Leah – 7

Long ago, in a beautiful mountain village in China, there was a little wooden house surrounded by tea farms. There lived a happy little girl called Lavender, her mom and her dad. They are a tea merchant family living a warm and comfortable life selling tea from the village to travelers from the West. Lavender would remember her dad going to ChangAn for business trips and always bringing her presents. Unfortunately, her parents passed away from a horrible disease that everyone called the Black Death. Since then, Lavender was always cold, hungry, and lonely.

One cold December night, Lavender ran out of food and was cold and hungry. She searched everywhere: kitchen, bedrooms, and the shed in the backyard. At the shed, she found piles of tea that her dad left behind! A tear rolled down her eye, as the tea reminded her about her kind parents. Then, she realized that she could also sell tea! This finally brought hope into her life!

The next morning, Lavender woke up from a great sleep and ready to sell tea! Once she stuffed all the tea she could put into her backpack, she sets off towards ChangAn. When she arrived, it was already midnight and she was exhausted! She sat down on the side of the street and drifted off to sleep. The next morning, the sound of people talking and laughing woke her up. She put her backpack on happily and explored the city while selling tea. She was amazed by what she got by trading tea with the Western travelers. First a jar filled with honey and then a gold coin! Suddenly, the scent from a bun stall reminded her about breakfast. She wanted to exchange the coin for some buns, but the owner did not accept it. When Lavender left the stall feeling disappointed, an old lady handed her a plate of buns! Lavender was happier than a dog with a thousand bones.

As Lavender enjoyed her buns, the old lady explained “You can’t use a coin from Rome in China. Would you like to visit my shop? I can explain more.” At the shop, Lavender saw silk, tea, perfume, beautiful plates, and gold. “WOW! I have never seen such beautiful things!” said Lavender. “Travelers from the West brought them here across thousands of miles in exchange for our silk and tea. My shop connects Western and Eastern people so they can exchange their goods,” replied the old lady. “Your shop is amazing! My family sells tea and I still have some in my backpack. Would you like to try some?” said Lavender. Over this cup of tea, they chatted about their lives, tea, and family. The old lady realized that Lavender is an orphan and a tea expert. She invited Lavender to run the shop together, and Lavender immediately agreed! Their business got better and better, and Lavender’s tea became famous all across the Silk Road.

Whispers of the Desert

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Suarez, Maya – 7

The shiny yellow sun yawned and stretched over the mountains as the caravan of camels began their walk at dawn. Sultan, who was the eldest of camels, pushed past Clumsy with his strong boulder shoulders. Clumsy stumbled in fright and dropped his porcelain pots. “That’s why they call him Clumsy everybody!” mocked Sultan. All the camels snickered and Clumsy’s eyes fell to the ground in embarrassment.

In the scorching afternoon, Clumsy felt a vibration whispering into his hooves. He stopped dead in his tracks and flared his nostrils bringing the whole caravan to a halt. A merchant yanked on his rope and yelled, “Move you stubborn sack of meat!” Suddenly, the path ahead collapsed with its soil and rock falling like a waterfall. The caravan had to take a detour around. Sultan scoffed at Clumsy, “Lucky oaf.”

When the sun's curtains began to draw shut, the moon took its dance onto stage. In front of the caravan, a narrow and dark canyon stood menacingly. The camels marched. Clumsy felt butterflies in his belly and slipped on some loose stones. Without realising, a sharp thorned tree branch had torn Clumsy’s bails of silk which were perched upon his back. After three hours, the camels were ordered to stop and rest. “Where’s all the silk?!” the merchant cried. His eyes glared with fire towards Clumsy. “You useless beast!” he scolded.

The next morning, Clumsy was sent to the back of the pack. Isolated. Feeling alone and unwanted, his head and neck hung down. While walking, he heard whispers of water rushing underground. Clumsy tried to warn everyone but no one would listen. He raced ahead past Sultan and guided them to a higher ledge. Without a moment to spare, a flood of water swallowed the lower ground out of sight. “How did you know?” Sultan asked. “I could feel and hear it,” replied Clumsy, “The desert speaks to me.”

Days had passed, but the caravan stood stranded on a high plateau without any water. “Can your whispering find us a drink?” asked a younger camel. Clumsy closed his eyes and blocked out the mocking memories. He felt the deep, cool song of the earth. Walking to a barren spot, he scraped it with his hoof and lay down. The humans dug and found a small spring. It was enough to save them all.

From that day, Clumsy led the caravan at the front with Sultan and the other camels followed with awed respect. He held his head high and always remembered to listen to the whispers of the desert.

Qiao Xi's Silk Road Adventure

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Bo, Zixu – 8

The burning, red sun rose up from the horizon and lit up the kitchen like a beacon. QiaoXi slouched over her breakfast that was almost empty. The cupboards and house were bare. She looked down at her old torn clothes and wished she could be like her friends, smart and warm.

As QiaoXi and her sister sat in the camels tent, Qiao Xi peered out of the broken holes in the old torn tent, she looked at the dusty, bumpy road towards the vast, towering mountains.

Time passed, QiaoXi slowly travelled across the burning sand on her old, weary camel. Her head dropped and she wanted to give up, but she couldn't stop. The dusty tents were now in sight! Soon, she was dreaming of a wonderful sleep under the sparkling stars in her tent.

Early the next morning, QiaoXi battled the swirling sand and rainy weather to get her camel ready for another day of long travels ahead. As she climbed the mountain, the edge got narrower and steeper. Her heart was thudding like heavy rocks. A short while later, a dark opening in the cliff face appeared. Shivering and shaking from the wind, she slowly entered the cave on her cautious camel. In the distance, she heard footsteps. Grrr! Grrr! A low growl echoed through the dark cave.

Suddenly, she looked back but it was too dark to see anything. So, she kept riding forward. A bright beam of light guided her way. "Is it a beacon?" QiaoXi whispered to herself, as she rode forwards towards the light. When QiaoXi saw what was shimmering through the darkness she couldn't believe her eyes, it was jewellery! QiaoXi jumped down the camel and put the jewellery into the tent. Then, she climbed back into the camel's tent. While she climbed, she heard some more footsteps, she turned around and saw a lion! Ahh! Ahh! QiaoXi screamed, she jumped off the camel and threw rocks at the lion! The lion growled, and ran away.

"Phew!" Said QiaoXi, she climbed up the lion and continued her journey.

In the distance, she heard the loud, raspy voice of the traders calling to trade their ancient pots and silk. As she approached, she smelled the rich spices swirling around her and her stomach started to rumble furiously. However, she still had the dangerously steep cliff to tackle. Bravely she took her camel down, down, down until she reached safety at the bottom and heard the caravan's cheers.

Quickly, she races towards them with her heart beating rapidly. She turned her head and saw a golden glow under the sun. The lion was watching.

Looking at the sunset, she learned that having money doesn't make you rich, it's the adventure that makes you rich.

How Mosaic Roamed The Earth

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Cheng, Tsz Yu – 8

“It’s ART! Mosaic is our culture, our pride! We should get mosaic art scattered all over the world. Please let me follow Uncle Hasan!” Mahmud, a young man from a noble Anatolia family in 720 AD, begged his dad with an unwavering stare.

“Don’t even think about it!” Dad bellowed with rage and stormed out of the living room. He knew Mahmud’s talent, but the Silk Road was just too dangerous. He didn’t want to lose Mahmud.

Darkness filled the sky, Mahmud had secretly packed gold and daily necessities, and of course tesserae, quill and parchment which allowed his creations. He slipped through the window and the courtyard, then dodged the main door guards and left his home.

“Clip–clap!” The hooves clattering sound told Mahmud that it was uncle Hasan’s caravan. They were ready to set off the journey to the Silk Road. Without hesitation, Mahmud snuck into a cart filled with fodder. While the cart was wobbling, Mahmud’s eyelids felt heavy and dropped down eventually.

Some warm air pumped into Mahmud’s face. Weird, he thought.

“How are you in this cart? Huh?!” Uncle Hasan growled with hands on his waist. As the caravan was already far from Mahmud’s home, uncle Hasan had to bring Mahmud with him to the Silk Road.

Persia was a dynamic corridor for traders and travelers. Mahmud was fascinated in exploring a variety of luxury goods such as raw silk, jewels, aromas and spices. He also enjoyed learning new languages, religions and cultures, and exchanging his mosaic designs with his new friends. Next, the caravan had to cross the roof of the world – Pamir mountains.

“Boooooom!” It was an avalanche! Falling rocks and snow from the sky crushed their luxury goods, broke the food carts and killed half of the caravan companions! Mahmud and uncle Hasan felt ravenous, freezing cold and hopeless. They rolled themselves in the snow, shivering and praying. They thought they were going to the end of the world.

Suddenly, a miracle helping hand thrust into Mahmud’s face and saved them! It was a group of musicians from Kangguo who wished to show their musical talent along the Silk Road. They invited uncle Hasan’s caravan to join them.

The combined caravan then headed to Taklamakan Desert. It was a horrible journey passing through swirling sandstorms and suffering attacks from the marauding bandits, but sharing of the mosaic art and music brightened up their path! Besides, Mahmud was shocked by thousands of Buddhist sculptures carved into cliffs along Dunhuang, which could rival mosaics!

Finally, the caravan arrived at Changan, a vibrant city at the end of the Silk Road. Mahmud’s musician friends performed there and became very popular. A tri-colored glazed pottery with a camel and musicians inspired Mahmud to create his mosaic art on small objects too! Although his mosaic art hadn’t been valued by Tangren, Mahmud believed that people will see mosaics in a new light very soon. What concerned him now was getting back home!

Adventure on the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Choi, Anders – 7

As Andy tugged the aged map out of his back pocket, he stared at the distant structures before him. This isn't the Taj Mahal, he thought. Andy was travelling on the Silk Road to Agra, India to see the Taj Mahal. He had learned about the Silk Road in school and had been immensely interested ever since, he also heard about amazing adventures traders had on the silk road.

The excursion was much harder than he had expected, it had already taken him through the Taklimakan Desert, and he was approaching a mountain range which he isn't sure if it is the Kunlun Mountain that he was looking for. Suddenly, he remembered that he had a special compass with him, given to him by his friend Tom.

The compass had a distinctive appearance. It was made of solid gold and featured a precious ruby right in the centre. While Andy was examining the compass, he noticed that the ruby had a slight glow to it. He wiped it with his handkerchief.

"How dare you wake me from my sleep?"

The voice startled Andy, causing him to drop the compass.

"Who said that?" shrieked Andy.

"It is I, the compass of Pandora," replied the compass "I have been asleep for three thousand years."

Unbeknownst to Andy, six bandits were secretly listening to his conversation with the magical compass. Their plan was to steal the compass from Andy, believing it would lead them to great riches.

Suddenly, Andy felt something graze his left arm, he didn't know what happened, but he knew that he had to escape. Soon enough, the bandits cornered him behind a mountain. There was nowhere to go.

"This is the end," thought Andy as he backed up against the mountain. Suddenly, as the bandits closed in, an arm appeared from a crack in the mountain and pulled Andy through. The arm then reached out and covered Andy's mouth.

"Shh..." a voice commanded. Surprised, Andy turned and saw his friend Tom.

"I've been following you all along, just in case you ran into trouble," Tom replied "And I was right."

The compass then spoke, "You both saved me from the bandits. For this, I am grateful and my services are at your disposal."

"Whoa! the compass is alive!" Tom screamed.

In a hushed voice, the compass told them the bandits had given up, and they were free to crawl out of the dusty crack.

Soon they arrived at the Taj Mahal and take in the sight, and it was as amazing as the old trader described it, but it was even better. The details like the carved flower in the walls were out of this world, the gem inlays were mind blowing.

After seeing the Taj Mahal, they heard about this cool city called Venice and they were tempted to keep going. But in the end, they decided to follow their hearts and get home safely and return to their families.

Friendship Ribbon

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Dong, Brea – 7

In the busy city of Chang'an, where the Silk Road began, lived a little fairy named Rosy. She had wings that glittered like crystals and loved watching travelers bring fruits, silk, and bright jewels from faraway lands.

One morning, as Rosy flew above the city wall, she saw a beautiful carriage coming through the gate. Inside sat Fairy Princess Brea from Italy. Her golden crown sparkled brighter than Rosy's wings. "Hello!" greeted Rosy. "Welcome to Chang'an! I am Rosy, a fairy of this city." Brea smiled. "Nice to meet you, Rosy! I came from Italy on the Silk Road. My family says this road connects our countries like a long friendship ribbon." Rosy smiled happily. "That's a lovely way to say it! Come, let me show you the market. There's silk as soft as clouds and sweet dates from the desert!"

The two fairies laughed as they flew through stalls filled with spices, colorful ceramics, and fabrics. But suddenly, the ground began to shake.

"Oh no!" cried Brea. "An earthquake!" shouted Rosy. The market stalls toppled over and people ran in fear, as dust filled the air. When the shaking finally stopped, the fairies were separated. "Brea! Brea!" Rosy shouted desperately. But she could not find her friend anywhere. Meanwhile, Brea rubbed her eyes. "Rosy, where are you?" She could see only broken roads and frightened travellers. Both felt scared but brave. "We will find each other," they whispered at the same time, far far apart.

Rosy overheard traders planning to send messages along the Silk Road. At that moment, an idea twinkled in her fairy heart. "I will send a letter with them!" she said. She wrote glowing fairy words on a piece of golden silk: "Dear Brea, I will follow the light of our friendship along the Silk Road until we meet again."

Meanwhile, Brea met a kind merchant who was heading east. "I must return to Italy, but I lost my fairy friend," she told him, feeling sad. The merchant smiled, "The Silk Road is not only about trade. It is also about hope. Leave a message in an ornament. It will find her one day." So Brea gave him her magic silver mirror. "Please tell Rosy to look for this sparkle."

Many months passed. The letter and mirror crossed deserts, mountains, and seas – carried by travellers, on the backs of camels, and even on ships. One sunny morning, Rosy saw something shining by the city gate. It looked familiar. "It's my friend's mirror!" she gasped. Inside, Brea's smiling face appeared. "Rosy! The Silk Road worked! We can visit each other through gifts, letters, and dreams." Rosy waved her wand. "And when we meet again, we will build a rainbow road, our very own Fairy Silk Road!"

From that day on, people believe that every sparkling trail across the night sky is a message of friendship, travelling the magical Silk Road of the heart.

Jin and the Royal Silk Quest

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Ho, Max – 9

“Jin, my most courageous warrior,” the wise emperor commanded, “you are tasked with a magnanimous mission. We must seek friendship and secure the favour of the Roman emperor! You shall deliver our precious silk to the Roman Empire. I grant you these three cards to aid you in your quest.”

“Yes, my majesty!” Jin replied. With the Emperor’s decree, Jin set off on his fine steeds from the majestic Giant Wild Goose Pagoda. The wind blew through his clothes, and the silk swayed gently behind him.

His journey began in Dunhuang, where he marvelled at the beautiful caves adorned with ancient murals. These colourful pictures depicted the long history of his homeland. As he rode through the scenic landscapes, he soon reached a quaint village. He decided to rest there after enduring the long journey. The villagers greeted him warmly, inviting him to share juicy grapes, cool goat’s milk and roasted lamb.

They chatted with Jin for a whole night. Jin taught them about the properties of herbal medicine, and in return, they gifted him valuable ceramic wine bottles. Their kindness filled Jin’s heart with joy, reminding him of the beauty of human connection.

Further along the path, the vast desert lay ahead. The harsh sun shone on him, and the sands shifted like waves beneath him. Thirst clawed at his throat, his stomach rumbling. Suddenly, a gang of ruthless bandits who rode camels rose from behind. “Stop! Hand over all your money and goods! Or we will kill you!” Their leader, whose face was scarred, shouted.

The sudden loud noise filled Jin with terror, freezing him in place. In this critical moment, words from the Emperor surged in his mind. He reached into his pouch, and the cards began to glow. Out came a glorious Phoenix, whose cold ashes froze the sand; a thunderous Dragon that spewed out lightning; and the regal Qilin, whose aura protected Jin.

“Run for your lives! Those mystical beasts are too strong!” a bandit screamed, who retreated as fast as he could.

With the danger gone, Jin pressed on, his heart racing with joy as he crossed a large sea that sparkled like gems. Finally, he arrived at the palace on the Palatine Hill in Rome, where the Emperor awaited him. “Welcome!” the Emperor exclaimed.

The automatic grand doors opened to the royal banquet hall, which erupted in laughter and music as Roman dancers, clad in elegant purple, performed. Jin shared stories of his adventures, the silk’s journey woven with tales of friendship and valour.

Before Jin left, the Romans made a gigantic statue for him, symbolising the peace between their land and others.

Travelling on the Silk Road was not easy. Jin had to cross deserts, mountains and even the sea! He knew he was not just travelling for the quest, but was also connecting cultures. Along the way, people showed off ideas, art, science, and even food! It was a bridge between worlds, linking people together!

The Treasure At the End of Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Jalsevac, Alicia – 8

There are many stories about the silk road. Here is one about some best friends who found themselves on an adventure on the Silk Road. Dawn and James were working at their family's trading stalls.

Dawn and James were taking a rest. A caravan was passing by and someone from the caravan called out, "Break is over! Let's get moving."

Dawn and James saw a man from the caravan that had stopped. As he was getting on to the back of his camel a scroll dropped from one of the folds in his robe.

"Hey!" Dawn called after the man. "You left something."

Dawn and James started running after the man on his camel, but it and the other animals were kicking up so much dust that they soon had to stop. The scroll was half-buried in the sand. James picked it up and unrolled it.

"Let me see," Dawn said, grabbing the scroll excitedly.

On the scroll was drawn a map of a forest, a cave, and inside the cave a treasure chest.

They follow the road and walk past the Mogao caves. Dawn saw animal tracks that were made from a camel.

"Look James, we're on the right track!" Dawn exclaimed as she pointed to their first clue. They continued to follow the camel's footprints until they saw the forest that looked like the one on the map.

All of a sudden, they heard a whirring sound and they were magically transported to the cave. They walk into the cave and the walls began to shake. In front of them they saw a dragon. The dragon was guarding the treasure.

They show the dragon the magic scroll and the dragon allows them to pass.

They go through a long tunnel and they see a bright light. As they enter the room at the end of the tunnel they see a magnificent treasure. They fill their pockets with gold, gems and jewels. In the meantime, the door to the room has locked. They are trapped.

Then they remember the magical map. As they open it, they hear the whirring sound once again. Suddenly they are transported back home.

Their families are relieved to see them. "What an adventure!" Dawn exclaims and then they tell their families all about it and share the treasure with them.

Steve's Silk Road Adventure

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Jalsevac, Christopher – 7

One day, Steve woke up, but when he opened the door he saw some grass blocks making a portal shape and then it lit up! “Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” screamed Steve. He knew it was dangerous so he ran away, but the portal kept pulling him towards it. He was in the Real World! The villagers were talking about something until he heard one say the word “Minecraft”. His eyes grew wide. He now knew that the villagers definitely knew what happened so he decided to ask them. He asked them, “Do you know anything about how I can get back home?” A villager answered, “Only if you help me find the Minecraft Gem.” Steve told the villager that he would help him. Then the villager answered, “Okay my name is Sam, and now I will tell you what the problem is.

In 195 CE, there was a king that lived in the Middle East called King Mojang and he had a gem called the Minecraft Gem. He had a sister that wanted to become queen and be the ruler instead of him so that she could use the gem to rule the world. But, King Mojang hid the gem in a caravan that went into a deep hole. King Mojang’s city was called Damascus, which was an important city for trade on the silk road. It was the gem that made the city a good place for business. Then Sam said “If you help me find the gem, I will help you go home.”

Steve said “Let’s get going!” and placed a Minecart on the silk road. They travelled through a cave until they found a deep, dark hole. Steve asked “Is that the hole you were talking about?” Sam answered, “Yes. We need to jump through it.” Steve and Sam jumped through and then they ended up in a dungeon. Steve asked “Where are we?” but Sam had disappeared! Steve didn't know what to do! So he followed the signs and at the end of the dungeon he saw a mysterious looking vault that said “PASSWORD” in big glowing red letters. Next to the sign there was a picture of a moat, a paper boat, a carved pumpkin, an apple, a newt and a glue stick and a hint that said “STARTING LETTER.” Steve thought that the answer was the starting letter of the picture. The first picture was a moat, so the first letter must be the letter “M”! Then he figured out the other pictures, O for origami, J for jack-o-lantern, A for apple, N for newt, G for glue. That spells MOJANG! He had figured out the password. He entered the password and the door opened and he saw Sam in a cage. In the wall he found the key and unlocked the cage so that Sam could escape. Sam said, “Thank you!” and he helped Steve get back to his base..

Sam and Steve lived happily ever after.

Lavender's Silk Road Adventures: Pirates of the Caspian Sea

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lam, Venus – 7

Lavender was pulled from her daydream as she saw a jagged bolt of red lightning crackling in the distance. The deafening roar of thunder soon followed as she was heading towards the Sheltered Deck. The skies turned grey and foggy instantaneously as the ginormous stormy rain clouds loomed above her ship, GEMSTONE. It rocked violently as the waves crashed into its side. Lavender hurried inside the cabins to warn her parents about the impending storm.

As they were about to shut the cabin doors, Lavender spotted the outline of a ship coming towards them. “Look Father and Mother, help is coming this way!” exclaimed Lavender. Her father walked back up on deck, “Oh dear, that’s not help, Lavender. Do you see the pirate flag flying in the wind?” “Lock the doors and secure the goods!!!” bellowed her father. The pirate ship drew closer as the crew scrambled to prepare their defences, but it was too late! Devious pirates have already boarded the ship and captured Captain Arbi as hostage and detained him in their brig.

“Quickly on your feet” screeched the pirates as they shoved Lavender’s parents and crew into the cabins. Lavender quickly slipped behind a cupboard to conceal her presence. The stomping footsteps of five angry pirates faded as they marched past the cupboard towards the cargo hold that stores invaluable jewellery and gemstones Lavender and her family were transporting back from the West. Lavender ran in the opposite direction towards the gunpowder room. She started frantically searching for any leftover gunpowder from their previous trade route. Fortunately, there were four kilograms of gunpowder left. Lavender hastily shoved all of it into a big rucksack. She then tore her clothes up and smeared soot on her face, hair and skin. The plan to save everyone was brewing in her mind.

Lavender waited till the coast was clear before sneaking past the snoozing guards and stealthily boarded the pirate ship. She dashed to the brig and found Captain Arbi tied securely to a pole. She swiftly untied him and together, they darted to the bridge and poured gunpowder all over the wheel and deck. “Quick! Let’s rig the fuse to be triggered once the pirates open the captain’s door.” whispered Lavender as they left to set small fires around the pirate ship while escaping.

Back on GEMSTONE, a pirate noticed that fumes were coming from their ship, “Ahoy! Me hearties! Our ship is on fire!!!!!!!” The thunderous footsteps of panicked pirates arose as they flocked back to their ship. Captain Arbi promptly steered GEMSTONE towards the bright horizon, far away from the pirate ship. Lavender was busy untying the crew and her parents when they heard the deafening rumble of the explosion. As they peered their head out, they saw the pirate ship engulfed in flames.

Bobbing in the sea, the pirates were seething as they watched the silhouette of GEMSTONE disappearing into the distance. “Mark my words! We will get our REVENGE!!!!!!!”

Time travel?

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lau, Chi Yin – 8

One day, Marcus Pool was figuring out how to time travel. Suddenly, someone mysterious came out, he looked exactly the same as Marcus. Marcus was so shocked that he jumped on the chair, the mysterious person said something arrogantly, “Well Hello, Marcus.” Marcus said, “Who are you!?” “Well I’m you from the future. Listen! Something bad is going to happen if you time travel back.” Marcus said, “Really? I wanna see!” Marcus replied ignorantly. “No, you shall not!” “What happens if I do it?” “I won’t tell you!” “Then I’ll find it out myself.” The mysterious Marvin said worriedly, “We shall see then ...”

After twenty days of hard work, Marcus finally made a time travel machine, “Will this work? I’ll test it myself!” That worked! The last thing he had to do was time travel to the past!

Just then, he saw people riding on horses and there were goods on camels! He thought it was peaceful there. All of a sudden, many robbers came and started robbing people! Marcus went inside a house behind him! Marcus Pool was shocked and a boy looked like him was there. He called, “Marcus! Do you remember me? I’m Marco Pool, your ancestor.” He said, “Oh my god! Marcus, I know you are back to my days.” “Yea but one thing, the future me told me that something bad would happen here in the past at the Silk Road, that’s why I want to come back and see what to help.” The young one replied. Just then, they heard a screaming voice, “AHHH!” Marco said, “It’s probably the robbers, how bad could it be?” So they peeked outside and saw ten or maybe more robbers standing outside. They quickly went back to the house. and took two sets of diamond armour. They fought with the robbers bravely one by one. They won but they were hurt badly...

Marcus and Marco opened their eyes consciously, “Where are we? We were supposed to be fighting.” The doctor said, “You were severely injured and found by my ‘BOSS’.” “Who’s the boss?” they just wondered. “Anyway, can we leave now?” Marco asked. “No you can’t, you need a long recovery time which is 10 weeks.”

10 weeks past...

Marcus and Marco went out of the hospital, they saw everyone was trading peacefully as before. “What are you guys doing?” A villager said, “We are doing trading, we get things from home to exchange other things with other persons. People are doing the same to and from Asia and Europe here in Silk Road.” “Every summer, we go out and travel on horses and camels through the desert. We encountered some robberies or diseases sometimes.” Marcus said, “Woah! That’s amazing. Well, I think I have to go back now, good luck.” And he hugged Marco and time traveled back to the future. He told his friends about his journey.

And Marcus and Marvin decided to go together to the past again.

Amazing Adventure to the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lee, Tsz Tung – 7

Whoosh! Something sparkled with a golden light. Sonia and her little brother Winston found a dusty pencil in the library.

When Sonia drew a door in the air, a swirling tornado rapidly swept them inside. Moments later, they stood at the busy gates of ancient Chang'an, the start of the China Silk Road.

“Wow! Oh my god! Where are we? What are those?” Winston shouted, his eyes sparked with wonder. He turned his head and pointed to a line of camels carrying heavy goods under the hot sun. “They look like trucks of the desert!” Sonia said. There was a sea of people in the bustling markets. The merchants were calling out about silk, tea and pottery, which they were selling. Some western traders were amazed by those smooth, shiny and colorful silk. “The silk is incredibly special and enormous in the West, it is worth more than gold,” said the traders. The shopkeeper waved to Winston and passed him a tiny, wiggle silkworm. “Come here, little boy. Keep it a secret. Take care of this little silkworm and it will bring you good luck!” the shopkeeper said.

Some vibrant, multi-colored bowls and vases caught Sonia's eyes. “We travelled over thousands of miles to come here for some beautiful porcelain, then traded them in our country. We love Chinese pottery as they are in a brilliant range of colors, different shapes and patterns. They are masterpieces and we are eager to exchange them for our precious gems.” an old Persian man said.

The sun began to set, Sonia and Winston had a terribly empty feeling in their stomach. Following the spicy smell, they found a restaurant selling western spices from India. Some traders were exchanging some sweet grapes and crunchy carrots for Chinese tea. “If you help design a new sign for my shop, I will give you the biggest bunch of grapes as a gift,” said the farmer. Sonia took out her magic pencil and drew an eye-catching sign. A group of traders rested under the hot sun, chitchatting about their thrilling yet exciting journey across the deserts and mountains. They shared funny stories, exchanged ideas and made friends. The ancient Silk Road was not only a giant highway made of paths and trails, it was also a bridge that enriched the cultures of the East and West.

The magic pencil glowed again and it was time to go home. When Sonia and Winston opened their eyes, they were back to the library. “Did we really travel to the Old Silk Road?” Winston asked with curiosity. Sonia smiled as her heart was full of excitement. “Look! We brought back this little silkworm home”. They looked at this little gift from the silk road, and looked forward to their next exciting journey.

The Missing China Silk

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Li, Charis – 8

In a small village, Shelly is the only child, and she is sweet and warm. One evening, there was a big storm that blew away their wooden house. Her parent were scared that their child would get hurt, so they risked their lives to save Shelly. Shelly ran as fast as she could to escape the storm, fighting back tears. Their last words were faint as her parent were gone. After that, the storm stopped, and Shelly continued her journey alone to the China Silk Road to find the famous silk.

Once she arrived at the China Silk Road, she found some Chinese people and realised it was the Silk Road her mom and dad had wished to visit.

On the way, a couple adopted Shelly as their daughter so they could have someone working for them as maid. The parents seemed kind of strict, but she had no choice but to accept it. After all, she needed a home to stay safe.

To her surprise, they shared a sneaky smile on their faces. Unfortunately, Shelly was not trusted by her adoptive parents , and things started to get confusing. The parents acted as if they were good. They began to spread drugs on the bed that Shelly slept in to harm and control her. But Shelly was smart. She noticed the difference and started to clean her bed every night , so she did not become addicted , sick or even died. The parents were furious about it .

One day, Shelly saw an expensive piece of China silk that her parents had mentioned to her before. However, she didn't have enough money to buy it, so she came up with a plan that no one expected her to do: to steal! Stealing is a crime on the China Silk Road. Soon, the stolen silk was in the news, and one of the suspects was Shelly. The parents nervously went to the judge to clarify that they were not involved. The judge eventually figured out that Shelly had stolen the silk. Knowing that Shelly had come here after the tornado and lost her parents, the judge agreed to free her. She promised never to steal again. Instead, the judge put her adoptive parents in jail for spreading drugs on Shelly's bed and trying to harm her. In the end, she was adopted by a couple who owned the missing silk. They are as kind as her original parents and looked similar as well. They sold silk on the China Silk Road.

As Shelly learned the truth about her new look-alike parents, she discovered they were actually the sister and brother of her parents. After that, they live happily after. And now Shelly learned the truth of being kind, is to be honest but not to steal or use someone or something as an excuse.

Star Chart of the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Liu, Elsa – 9

Ten-year-old Atu had never seen so many stars.

The camel bell echoed hollowly in the silence of the Taklamakan Desert. He clutched the oilcloth-wrapped astrolabe to his chest—the last bronze star chart crafted by his grandfather, and the only hope for the caravan to cross the "Sea of Death." Three days ago, the leader had fallen ill with fever, leaving only Atu and this old, road-wise camel in the vast ocean of sand.

"Follow the Big Dipper," his grandfather had said on his deathbed. "The star chart will show you the way to the Moon Well."

But there was no moon tonight, and the wind-whipped sand blotted out the sky. Trembling, Atu unfolded the astrolabe. Its delicate engravings gleamed faintly under the starlight. He remembered the warmth of his grandfather's hand as he etched the final arc on a spring night in Chang'an, when the pomegranate flowers were in full bloom.

Suddenly, a wolf's howl pierced the distance.

The camel shifted uneasily, tugging at its reins. Atu's heart pounded like a drum. He traced the twenty-eight lunar mansions marked on the astrolabe by Persian astrologers, his finger resting on the "Well" constellation—according to the chart, the Moon Well lay just ten li southwest, behind the yardang landforms. But the sandstorm had erased all landmarks.

The howls drew nearer.

Atu took a deep breath and pressed his face against the cool bronze. On the back of the astrolabe, his fingers brushed a shallow, faint engraving: not a constellation, but a simplified pomegranate flower—the emblem of his grandfather's courtyard back home. In a flash of understanding, he realized—the star chart guides the heavens, but blood remembers the way home.

He abandoned his search for the Well constellation and instead recalled a Qiuci folk tune his grandfather used to hum. Hidden in the melody was a rhythm: three quick steps, a pause, like the cadence of a caravan trekking over dunes. Following his intuition, Atu guided the reins, and the camel obediently turned. Before dawn, a damp scent reached his feet.

It was not the Moon Well.

It was a small oasis surrounded by saxaul trees, its spring no larger than a bowl, yet the water was clear and sweet. Carved into a stone beside the spring was the same pomegranate flower—thirty years ago, his grandfather's caravan had rested here.

As Atu knelt to drink, the first light of dawn tinged the eastern sky. The wind died down and the full heavens slowly unveiled themselves. Raising the astrolabe to compare, he saw that the Well constellation was, in fact, in the opposite direction.

The first ray of sunlight illuminated the bronze astrolabe, filling the grooves of its constellations with gold. At last, Atu understood: a guide more reliable than the stars is the memory and love engraved in one's bloodline. He carefully put away the star chart and bowed deeply toward the caravan's original destination.

Ahead, morning light of the Silk Road spread across the sandy sea.

Silk Beyond the Glass

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Shi, Emma – 7

Today, our class visited the Hong Kong Palace Museum, after a year of learning about different eras in China. As we walked the winding pathways, my classmates rushed towards the Terracotta Warriors, while a small section of the Tang Dynasty drew me in. In a glass display, stood an opulent, multi-coloured hanfu made of silk. A big red sign said DO NOT TOUCH. I glanced around. The room was empty. I knew I shouldn't, but my hand moved on its own. I reached past the velvet rope, expecting to meet cold glass. Instead, my fingers passed straight through. Gold flickers began to grow around my arm. The silk brushed my skin—cool, soft, alive. Light exploded around me. I squeezed my eyes shut as the illumination devoured me whole.

I adjusted to my surroundings, realising the museum was gone—now, a garden of willow trees and lotus ponds replaced it. A mixture of tunes danced its way into my ears—flutes and gentle drums. My school uniform was replaced with the colourful hanfu that now draped over me. A girl in matching silk appeared on the path. She looked my age, her hair coiled with jade pins. The girl smiled and bowed.

“I’m Mei. My father trades silk along the Great Silk Road. You’re wearing one of our finest pieces!”

I looked down at the glowing hanfu, then back at her—confused. “I’m Emma...I have no idea how I got here...”

Mei laughed. “The silk often chooses curious hearts. Come!”

I couldn't tell if Mei's words held hidden meaning or just teasing, but I decided to feed my curiosity. I trailed behind as she guided us to a queue of camels loaded with bolts of shiny fabric. Within the vibrant market, merchants from far-flung lands traded spices, jewels, and tales alike. Folks of every colour and language exchanged smiles and lively conversations. In that moment, I saw how the threads of the Silk Road had woven not only friendships but also culture across the east and west.

Suddenly, a thief snatched a bolt of crimson silk and ran.

“Stop, thief!” Mei cried.

“Use the ropes!” I shouted. Together with Mei and other children, we stretched the ropes across an alley. The thief tripped, dropping the silk. Rather than punishing him, the merchant offered him honest work instead.

That evening, around a fire, drinking brick tea, Mei said, “The Silk Road teaches us that everything is connected. Stealing breaks those connections, while sharing makes them stronger.”

I thought of how I'd touched the museum hanfu against the rules. Agreeing, I nodded. “We must protect history's treasures so their stories will last forever.”

The hanfu began to shimmer. Golden lights swirled, and I was back in the museum, in my uniform. In my pocket lay one crimson silk thread. Later, I told my class about the Silk Road's true magic: respect, cultural exchange and friendship. Curiosity is tremendous, but true adventure lies in honouring the past so everyone can enjoy it.

The Tapestry of 80 Generations

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Siu, Hayden – 8

In 130 B.C.E., during the Han Dynasty, a shopkeeper named Kwong lived in Chang'an (modern Xi'an). Every morning, he sat beneath a mulberry tree, munching buns before heading to work at the imperial silk shop. He sighed as nobles strutted past in shimmering robes.

"Why should only the rich wear the 'Breath of Heaven'?" Kwong muttered. "Silk should belong to everyone!" For two millennia, the royal family had guarded the secret of sericulture, and Kwong longed to share it and make silk affordable.

One night, a knock rattled his door. A mysterious lady in a glowing white dress whispered, "I'm the Silkworm Fairy". Kwong froze, eyes wide. He stuttered, "Who...who are you?" "Touch my dress," she said. When Kwong's fingers brushed the fabric, warmth spread through him. She handed him tiny eggs and a jade scroll. "Raise these silkworms well. Share their gift, and you will weave a belt of prosperity and a road of friendship across the world."

With a sweep of her long sleeve, whoosh, the Fairy vanished in a flash of silver light, leaving only the scent of mulberry leaves. Kwong blinked at the empty room, unrolled the scroll, and discovered the long-hidden secrets of silk. Clutching the eggs, he vowed, "This gift will change the world."

But danger lurked. The king punished anyone who produced silk without authorization. To escape death, Kwong fled with his family to the Tarim Basin (Xinjiang), beyond the Han border, where he built a hidden farm. There, silkworms fed on enchanted mulberry leaves spun threads that glowed like starlight. When his first bolts were ready, Kwong joined a caravan westward. In the bazaars of Samarkand, Bukhura, Persia (modern Iran), and Baghdad, he shouted, "Silk from Han!" Merchants marveled at the shining fabric and eagerly traded gold, spices and glass. Soon, China's silk became famous, and Kwong's route was known as the Silk Road. He returned with fortune, but his true treasure was the vision of a connected world.

His two sons carried this vision toward the Mediterranean, reaching the Roman frontiers. Kwong introduced silk to the West and brought back fragrant spices and translucent glass, ensuring the Silk Road became a path of cultural exchange as well as trade.

As centuries passed, overland routes fell to bandits and maritime trade took hold. Yet Kwong's descendants persisted. Guided by his "Golden Compass," they turned the family trade into a vast international business empire, shifting from silk to the "digital silk" of global logistics and e-commerce.

In 2026, Kwong's 80th-generation heir stood in a Xi'an skyscraper. Honouring Kwong's spirit, he became the financial heart of the One Belt One Road initiative, funding high-speed trains and cultural exchange programs that transformed ancient camel paths into steel tracks and digital corridors. He lifted the jade scroll, Kwong's heirloom. A whisper filled the room: "Silk is a gift to bring people together." The Silkworm Fairy's prophecy had come true, the world was bound in a tapestry of prosperity and friendship, just as it began.

A Journey of a Ninja Wannabe Panda

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Tam, Ashley – 7

It was cold on Christmas morning in 2024. A group of merchants from Chengdu, China started travelling to Europe, as they were to sell jade jewellery in the department stores in Paris. Unfortunately, they could not take the airplane because all the pilots were on Christmas holiday. So they had to ride on their camels to the west.

Lily was a 12-year-old giant panda, who enjoyed travelling and watching TV. She heard about the trip of the Chinese merchants. She decided to follow them because she saw on TV that the food in Europe was not as spicy as the food in Sichuan. She was not a fan of spicy food.

As the group started trekking westbound, Lily was following them in the back quietly and trying to keep a distance.

The camels talked for seven full days. Everyone was tired and decided to set up some tents near Islamabad to take a break. A group of bandits had been following the merchants for days. They wanted to steal the jewellery as they knew it was made of high-quality jade and worth a lot of money.

At night, when the merchants were sleeping, the bandits started approaching their tents. They were running towards the three tents where the jewellery was kept. Lily was awake at the time as she was looking for some late-night snack. Lily saw the bandits, and shouted at them and asked them to go away. But that was no use. The bandits were not afraid of Lily at all.

Lily got an idea – she would become a ninja panda just like what she saw on the TV. She immediately put on the costume that she had with her. However, she only knew a few ninja moves and those were not enough to scare the bandits. The bandits simply ignored her and started carrying the jewellery away from the tents.

At that moment, a monkey called Liv was passing by. She was woken up by the noise and came to see what happened. Lily shouted at her and asked for help. Liv immediately went to wake up her family. Everyone in her big family, 12 monkeys in total, came out and started chasing the bandits. The monkeys were pulling the bandits' hair and biting their legs. The bandits did not know what were attacking them because it was so dark. They thought the monkeys were dark desert spirits that punish bad people from stealing from others. The bandits ran away and left the jewellery behind.

The merchants realised that Lily was following them the whole time, and were grateful for her and the monkeys for saving the jewellery for them.

After two weeks, they finally arrived in Paris. The sale of the jewellery in the department stores was a big success. The Parisians liked the designs and craftsmanship.

Liv also followed the merchants to Paris, where she had a good time and good food with Lily.

The Brave Silk Road Warrior

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Tseng, Ariana – 8

A dragon flew through the midnight sky, wings slicing the clouds like knives. *Whoosh!* Wind roared past its scales as it landed with a heavy thud outside Lucy's window.

Lucy jumped up, her heart beating fast. Two bright red eyes stared at her through the glass.

"Hi, Lucy," the dragon said in a deep voice. "I know you like adventure. Hop on my back."

Lucy climbed onto the dragon. "Where are we going?" she asked. "Is it dangerous?"

"I am taking you to the Silk Road," the dragon replied. "It is an ancient route used to trade treasures. It is a place of wonder."

Lucy nodded. "I hope it won't be scary."

The dragon started flying. They soared higher until they reached the snowy Tian Shan mountains. The air was freezing cold. The wind howled like a wolf. Lucy looked down at the sharp, icy peaks.

She held out her trembling hands and tapped the dragon. "It is too cold," she whispered. "I want to go home."

"We still have many places to explore," the dragon said gently. "This is just the beginning."

Lucy took a deep breath and wiped her sweaty palms. She remembered what her parents always said: "Never give up, keep on going!" She didn't want to be scared anymore. She sat up straight, like a warrior on a horse.

"I am ready! Let's go," she said.

They flew for a long time, and soon the air turned hot and dry. Below them was the Taklamakan Desert. It was an endless ocean of sand. The wind began to blow dust into the air. Every sand dune looked exactly the same.

The dragon slowed down. "I cannot see the path anymore. I think I am lost."

Suddenly, Lucy pointed down. "Look!"

Below them, traders from Rome were walking with camels to find silk. The dragon decided to follow them.

The sun began to rise, and it became scorching hot. Suddenly, a group of bandits burst out from behind a dune! They waved curved swords and circled the Roman traders. The traders huddled together, trapped.

Lucy shivered, but she remembered she was a warrior now. She shouted bravely, "Leave them alone!"

ROAR!

The dragon swooped down and breathed a blast of fire. The bandits screamed and ran away.

"Thank you," the trader said and guided them to the path home.

The dragon flew Lucy home and landed with a heavy *thud* outside her window. Lucy climbed into her warm, cozy room.

She looked down at her palm. She was still holding grains of sand from the desert. Back in the desert, her hands had trembled with fear. Now, they were steady and strong.

She turned and whispered, "Thank you."

The dragon blinked its bright red eyes and said, "Goodbye, brave warrior"

Lucy smiled as the dragon disappeared into the clouds. Lucy didn't need to sleep to dream of adventure anymore. She had lived it. She was a brave Silk Road warrior.

Winnie in Mogaoland

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Tsui, Winston – 7

“Children, gather around!” said the guide. Grotto 257 was narrow and dark; we stood in the center while the adults surrounded us. It was our third day in Dunhuang, and we were admiring the murals and sculptures in the Mogao Caves.

Our guide pointed at the ceiling with a torch, which was decorated with three rabbits with conjoined ears. How marvelous! However, my mind was still on the mural of a nine-colored Divine Deer. I was utterly captivated by its beauty and wished to see it with my own eyes.

Suddenly, a small white rabbit dashed by. I glanced up—one rabbit was gone from the ceiling! Without thinking, I followed it down a tiny hole, sliding along a roller-coaster path until I tumbled into a glowing world of shimmering trees and rainbow-colored mountains. Right in front of me stood the Divine Deer!

Her antlers were as white as jade, her skin as smooth as silk, and her hooves as green as emeralds. Even the finest brushes could not capture her colors. She wore an iridescent halo around her head.

“I know your story!” I exclaimed. “You saved a drowning man, but he betrayed you!”

She nodded. “Yes. A silk merchant from China saved me by presenting the king with a scroll of precious silk that resembled my coat. I came to Dunhuang with him to guard the Silk Road. The three rabbits—Past, Present, and Future—are my companions. We need your help: the Future Rabbit is missing.”

“Oh, I followed a white rabbit here—he was as fast as a high-speed train. It’s just like Alice in Wonderland. I’d call it Winnie in Mogaoland...” I could go on forever, but I was interrupted by two identical rabbits jumping up and down. “Please! Please help us find our brother!”

No time to lose, I took out my drone. The two rabbits hopped onto it, and up they went. I searched everywhere, from the shimmering mountains to the colorful forests, but the rabbit was nowhere to be found.

Just as the battery was dying, I spotted a moving snowball on a snow-capped mountain! “There you are!” I cried out with joy. The two rabbits formed a ladder to rescue their brother, but on the way back, the overloaded drone wobbled and tipped, sending all three of them down like snowballs! Just before I closed my eyes in terror, the most amazing thing happened—their ears joined, twirling like a parachute until they landed safely on the ground.

The Divine Deer bowed her head in gratitude. “Thank you for your magic flying machine. The old Silk Road was quiet for generations. With inventions like yours, it will revive, carrying more than silk.”

At that moment, my mother’s voice called from the cave. “Continue to be guardians of the New Silk Road!” I shouted, rushing back. The rabbits followed, ears conjoined, twirling...

I was back in the grotto. My parents checked on me as I gazed up—all three rabbits were back on the ceiling. I’m sure one winked.

A Memorable Expedition

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wong, Chun Yu – 7

“Vroom! Vroom!” After the jeep travelled for three long hours, Photographer Xing finally arrived at Dunhuang. The morning breezes blew, and the hood windbell rang, making a jingling sound. At the entrance of the Mogao Caves, he was fascinated by this UNESCO Heritage, a spectacular structure on the Silk Road.

Xing investigated the cave, which was dim but enormous. On the ceiling and the side walls, painted hundreds of pictures of different Buddhas, and traders playing antique musical instruments. The environment was peaceful.

Suddenly, something glowing caught his eyes. Intrigued, Xing stepped cautiously towards the painting, reaching out his fingers. In a split second, his hand was tightly glued to the sparkly stone. He tried, but failed to pull away. He was petrified. Meanwhile, the light grew brighter, then even brighter. He got sucked in...

It was unexpectedly quiet.

Xing opened his eyes, looked around, and was taken by surprise. He had an odd-looking outfit and the surroundings were different. A voice broke the silence, “Hurry up, we have to get to the traders’ station before sunset!” The photographer rushed out of the cave, and in front of him was a caravan of traders and camels carrying silk and porcelain. The leader was slim and tall, with tawny beige skin and curly black hair tied up in a bun. He wore a long blue-checkered robe with a red belt and a pocket knife on the side.

“Where are we heading to?” asked Xing nervously, reaching for his phone which showed no signal.

“Towards Taklamakan Desert, to trade for spices and tea,” explained the leader as he spearheaded under the blistering sun. “Our families have been doing this since the Tang Dynasty began, for 30 years now. My father said the route is 6,000 kilometers from here to the West, to a place called Constantinople. I want to go there some day too, but we only work in this region.”

“Tang? So this must be thousand years ago. Did I travel back in time?” Xing murmured, opening his eyes wide in disbelief.

While he was catching up, they came across a group of fierce-looking and sneaky bandits armed with weapons. Instantaneously, the traders started to defend. As they fought, their weapons made clinking sounds and sand was sifting around. Despite an arduous struggle, the bandits were still stronger than the traders. Xing felt scared and ran behind the camels, when his camera accidentally dropped and he suddenly had an idea. He seized his camera, rushed back to the battlefield, and flashed it. Surprisingly, the bandits were scared and were sent scurrying in different directions. The traders celebrated and the evening was a campfire filled with laughter.

Three months later, Xing looked back at his photograph collection, remembering his journey to the past in the Silk Road. What had happened remained unknown, but he would never forget his interaction with the traders, nor the unanticipated sandstorm that brought him back to the present. Xing couldn’t help but smiled.

The Great Adventure

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wong, Katie – 8

Once upon a time, in a magical land, there was a boy named Ming. He was 8 years old, tall, and always wore a bright blue cap, a comfy white T-shirt, and fun shorts. Ming loved adventures, and he had a special friend—an amazing white tiger named Snow. Together, they set off on a journey along the ancient Silk Road to find famous magicians and hidden treasures.

As they traveled through beautiful places, they saw fields of colorful flowers, tall mountains, and busy markets filled with bright colors and yummy smells. Ming's eyes sparkled with excitement as he imagined all the fun adventures waiting for them.

One sunny afternoon, while riding on Snow's back, they reached a stunning view of the huge blue Caspian Sea. Ming wondered how they would get across it. Then he remembered the three magic bottles in his pocket!

Feeling brave, Ming pulled out the first magic bottle. "Drink this, Snow!" he said excitedly. Snow sniffed it and took a sip. Suddenly, a shiny propeller appeared on his tail! "Hold on tight!" Snow roared as he jumped into the water. They zipped across the sparkling waves, leaving bubbles behind.

When they reached the shores of Russia, they saw a giant wall with amazing sculptures of nine dragons. Suddenly, the dragon king woke up, his eyes sparkling like jewels. "Why are you here, young boy?" he roared. "My brothers are waiting for dinner!"

Ming felt a bit scared but thought quickly. He still had two magic bottles left! Courageously, he opened the second bottle and took a brave drink. In a flash of light, he turned into a giant dragon, his blue cap still on his head!

The nine dragons shrank into tiny baby dragons, making squeaky sounds instead of roaring. Now feeling safe, Ming flew over the wall, excited and proud. He had outsmarted the dragons!

Continuing his adventure, Ming finally arrived in the famous city of Chang'an, where the great magician, Mr. M, lived. In the busy market, Ming found Mr. M, an old man wearing a shining robe.

Mr. M smiled and took the bottle from Ming, giving him a glowing crystal. "This is the Magic of Power," he explained. "It holds the bravery you've discovered on your adventures. You can use this magic to help others when they need it."

Ming felt proud. He learned that true adventure is not just about finding treasures but also about discovering courage inside himself. Thanking Mr. M, he headed home, ready for whatever came next!

A Chang'an Dream Inside a Seashell

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Yeung, Wilfred – 7

I love searching for seashells on the beach with my mom and dad. Today, I found a snowy—white cowrie shell. My mom patted my head and said, “A long time ago, people used shells like this as money. They carried silk and tea along the Silk Road to Chang’an.” Holding the shell to my ear, I listened to the ocean's whisper and fell asleep.

In my dream, the ringing of “ding—dong, ding—dong” woke me up. I rubbed my eyes and saw camel caravans outside my window, their bells jingling. The city of Chang’an stretched before me. My father was a porcelain merchant here, and I helped workers pack delicate plates with damp soil and tiny millet seeds. An old man smiled, saying, “When the seeds sprout, their roots hold the plates tight.” It is like ancient ‘organic bubble wrap’.

Later, my father showed me a map. He pointed to a winding red line and said, “This is the Silk Road. A brave explorer, Zhang Qian, travelled this path long ago during the Han Dynasty. His journeys opened trade between China and the West, bringing us grapes and new ideas!” I imagined the connections across vast deserts and mountains.

After packing the crates, I wandered into the busy West Market. The air smelled of warm tea and cheerful voices. Persian merchants with big beards sold sparkling jewellery, while colourful silks danced in the breeze. I saw workers packing Jinhua ham, wrapped in sheepskin to keep it fresh on journeys!

My attention turned to a stand of bright, candied hawthorns. I offered my shell to the vendor. He laughed and said, “What a treasure! Here, enjoy a sweet treat and a gold coin!” I took a bite; the sweet—sour flavour made me happy. Just then, the crowd gasped! A tall Persian man was leading a magnificent lion by a chain. The lion let out a roar that shook the ground! The man struggled to hold the lion, which looked ready to chase me. I felt frightened, and my legs were shaking, making it hard to run. The lion opened its big mouth and showed its sharp teeth right in front of me. I closed my eyes and shouted, “HELP!” then threw the golden coins, hoping to distract the lion.

Suddenly, I woke up, my heart pounding and my face sweaty. I was holding a heavy gold coin in my hand! It was filled with chocolate—my favourite chocolate coin from my mom! I took a bite, and it tasted so yummy! It made me feel better and made me smile. Although I still felt a bit scared from the lion, the sweet chocolate made everything feel okay.

This moment reminded me of the Silk Road, linking people through goods and culture. My mom also spoke of Professor Charles Kao, the “Father of Fiber Optics,” who created a modern—day Silk Road, allowing people to communicate instantly

The Magical Adventure to China's Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Zhang, Summer – 7

Last summer vacation, Mom, Dad, my little sister Aurelia and I visited the Ningxia Museum in Yin Chuan. We can't wait to see its cool Silk Road Exhibition!

When we went into the Ancient Silk Road section, a big, bright painting caught our eyes. It was from the Western Han Dynasty, showing six two-humped camels in the Gobi Desert. A group of people in wide-sleeved Han robes sat beside the camels, looking tired and hopeless, with green, blue and white bags piled on the camels' backs. We stared at the painting, wondering if the bags were full of soft silk, when a gentle breeze blew from the window— and suddenly...

Whoosh! the painting swirled like a tornado, and we were in a world of hot sand and burning sun. The air is very dry, and far away we could see some continuous low hills. Right in front of us we saw the same people and camels from the painting, sitting on the sand, and looking sad.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" Asked little Aurelia curiously. A man looked back, answering through his dry and cracked lips, "My name is Zhang Bo, we are traders from Chang An" he continued with a sigh "we heard that there are villages in the west who might buy our silk. We walked for ages but can't find anyone. We are almost out of water and food. Maybe it's time to give up. We are about to go back."

Incredible! I just realized that we'd traveled back to the western Han Dynasty — before the Silk Road was even discovered! I suddenly remembered the map we saw in the museum, which magically came with us! "Oh!" I shouted, "Don't go back." I pointed at the villages on the map and showed to Zhang Bo, "If you go further west, soon you will meet some people who like your silk!"

"Really?" Zhang Bo asked unsure. "Yes, the silk is very nice, we're sure the people living there will love that!" Dad added affirmatively. They looked at each other, after a moment of hesitation, they slowly stood up and dust the sand on their robes, "Ok, we'll continue to go further west. Thank you for giving us hope." "Here, bring some water (yes, our water bottles also magically came with us!), keep going!" Mom said and helped Zhang Bo filling up their water pouches.

Suddenly, the breeze blew again. In the twinkling of an eye, we were back in the Ning Xia Museum. We were still standing in front of the painting. "Look! It's Zhang Bo!" Aurelia said excitedly with sparkling eyes, "He looks happy!" I gazed at the painting and nodded, "they turned around and went back. I guess their bags are full of money now."

"Did this road exist before?" I pointed at a vaguely visible road in the painting, scratching my head. Mom smiled and said "Amazing! You just helped to start the Silk Road!"

The Silk Road of Freindship

Wycombe Abbey School, Fan, Chloe – 7

In a faraway land called Friendship Land, everyone was kind and loving. They had even invented magical Friendship Wands—when gently waved over two people, the wands would help them become friends.

But there was one problem: they didn't have enough gifts to give each other for celebrations and gratitude. They longed for something different and beautiful, like sparkling gems.

A boy named Silas, who was intelligent and patient, came up with an idea. "Let's build a road to trade with other lands," he said. "And let's build it in the sky!"

So the people of Friendship Land began collecting air and clouds in buckets, weaving them into a road that flowed like a ribbon of silk. They called it the Silk Road.

Silas gathered a group of brave children to travel the Silk Road. They rode on soft, cozy clouds and carried the magical Friendship Wands with them, ready to trade along the way.

On the other side of the world was Wish Land, home to shimmering Wish Gems that could grant one wish a day to their owners. But the people there often fought over the gems—they were greedy and always wanted more.

Only one girl, whose name was Serena, did not fight. Serena was kind and generous. She dreamed of making the people of Wish Land more helpful and loving.

One day, while walking in the woods, Serena saw something amazing: children she'd never met before, walking down a road in the sky that flowed like silk. Even more surprising—they carried magical wands that could make people friends instantly!

Silas greeted Serena warmly and was delighted to learn about the shimmering Wish Gems.

"Why don't we trade?" Silas and Serena both said at the same time.

"Yes!" they exclaimed together.

Serena joined Silas on the Silk Road back to Wish Land. There, she told everyone about the Friendship Wands. When they saw how kind and loving the children from Friendship Land were to one another, the people of Wish Land realized how wonderful it was to make friends instead of fighting every day.

The two lands agreed to trade Wish Gems for Friendship Wands. From that day on, everyone had what they truly wanted—all thanks to the Silk Road, which made the world more connected and peaceful.

The Lost Sailors of Zheng He: Legacy in a Distant Land

YK Pao School, Zhu, Stella –

Once upon a time, during the early 15th century of China's Ming Dynasty, a legendary admiral named Zheng He (郑和) commanded a vast fleet of magnificent treasure ships, sailing across uncharted ocean. His fleet had tall masts and red sails, and the ships carried silks, spices, porcelain, and gifts for distant rulers – symbols of peace and friendship. On one such journey, as the fleet sailed near the eastern coast of Africa, a terrible storm came.

The wind howled, the sky turned black, and waves rose like mountains to crash over the decks. Suddenly, from the deep ocean, something ancient and monstrous emerged — it looked like a giant octopus, but much bigger and far more terrifying than any fish has ever seen! Its eight arms were as long as pine trees, and its eyes glowed in the dark like beams from the lighthouse.

With just one sweep, it wrapped two treasure ships and pulled them down into the roaring water. Some brave sailors managed to grab floating wood and barrels and survived. They drifted for three long days and nights. At last, they reached a faraway island covered in green palms, home to a tribe both kind and cautious. At first, they did not trust the strangers and held up spears against them. But when the sailors waved peacefully and showed their good will, the tension eased. Yet danger still lurked. The native islanders have been infested by a giant python for generations. This beast was longer than a house and living in the mountain cave. It came out every full moon to hunt!

One clever sailor remembered an old trick from southern China. They dug a deep pit, covered it with leaves, and used a goat as bait. When the snake slithered in the pit and got busy swallowing the goat, a group of brave islanders shot arrows and threw stones to kill it. The tribe rejoiced with song, dance, and firelight ceremonies. The sailors were treated like heroes from then on. In gratitude, they taught the native people how to plant rice in flooded fields, how to make tools, and even how to write simple Chinese characters in the sand. Children learned to say “明” (Ming, meaning Ming Dynasty) and “家” (Jia, meaning home). They built huts together and started farms.

Years passed. The sailors grew old. Though they tried many times to build a boat to return, the forests had no strong enough trees, and storms kept destroying their work. So they stayed, married into the community, and raised families. Before passing on, each man whisper to his children: “We are from China. Never forget.” And so, generation after generation, they kept the dream alive — looking eastward, waiting for the day that someone would come bearing news from home. Their spirit, though far removed, remained forever tied to their birthplace, China.

An Adventure in Time

YK Pao School Shanghai, Chi, Jaclyn – 9

It was a typical sunny afternoon in Xi-An. I was snapping pictures of artifacts that were used in the silk road. The only pictures I could get were the blurry images of the backs of people's heads. I sighed in annoyance. What was the point of learning about trade routes that were established thousands of years ago? We have cargo ships and planes now. Why should we learn about transportation that isn't used in the 21st century? I glanced up at the sky and squinted my eyes. My vision felt like it was disappearing. I felt kind of dizzy and my eyes closed shut.

A few moments later, I woke up. My eyes fluttered open. The noisy shoving crowds were gone. Instead, I was greeted by mountains and trickling streams. The wind brushed my face as the birds nearby orchestrated a performance. The world felt peaceful and comfortable. It calmed me down when I should have been panicking and frantically searching for any signs of the museum. Then, the birds stopped chirping abruptly. A crunch of boots on pebbles drew my attention. Behind me was a man that had just dismounted from his horse. There were other people in carriages following him warily. I looked at him and was reminded of that picture I've seen in the museum. It was him! Zhang Qian! The explorer who would bring back information about cultures from the west. The father of the silk road. Zhang Qian then spoke in a deep, gruff, voice, "what brings you here, traveler?" I hesitated at first, not knowing how to respond. I thought of what to say like "Nice to meet you, I come from the future, and I was just studying you and for some reason I became a time-traveler". He would think that I'm a total psychopath, as no one would believe what this even in 2025! Instead, I tried to put my only two brain cells that are competing for third place to use. I told Zhang Qian that I was honored to meet him and that I was a traveler from Xi-An. Surprisingly, he believed me.

Time really flies. Years passed by. I saw the greatness of the silk road. Trade routes joined and split like rivers. It's such an amazing feat accomplished by the people of ancient China. I marveled at the intelligence of ancient Chinese people, as they had managed to create and link trade routes. I learned more by experience than looking at a piece of art.

There was a shove and a push. One second ago, I was in a carriage, immersed in an enthusiastic conversation with one of Zhang Qian's lackeys. The next second, I was back in the museum. Everything that had just happened was just imagination. What felt like years were just minutes. But regardless of whether it's real or not, it still taught me that ancient China is a civilization built upon thousands of years of wisdom.

My Fantastic Dreams

YK Pao School Shanghai, Lo, Rosabelle – 9

One day, I decided to go to the library to read some books. I noticed a very thick, old book on top of a bookshelf. I asked the librarian to help me get it. Taking a closer look at the cover, I saw a man who looked like an explorer standing there. He looked very strong and formidable. There were camels and other men standing behind him. The book was called *Marco Polo's Travels*.

I got interested and started to read the book. But it was very dusty and smelled strange. As I skipped through some pages, I couldn't help sneezing. So I returned the book and went back home.

That night, I went to bed and dreamed about the seventeen-year-old Marco Polo! He was younger and much skinnier than the man on the book's cover. He asked me a lot of questions, like how long it would take to get to China, what it would be like, and what he could get there. He seemed to be very interested in the journey.

But I couldn't answer any of them because I hadn't really read the pages I had skipped. I also asked him some questions, like "How are you feeling?" and "What is it like in Venice?" He only said that he was a bit nervous but also very excited! I told him I would find out the answers to his questions. Then I woke up from my dream and, surprisingly, it was morning!

I got up and hurried to the library for the book. This time I was so absorbed in the book that I didn't notice hours had passed. I peeked out of the window and saw the moon. I dashed into my room, tucked myself comfortably into my blanket, and fell asleep. In my dream, I saw Marco Polo again! I was so eager to tell him what I had found: that it would take four years to travel from Venice to Dadu, the capital of China, and the journey was over 10,000 kilometers.

Marco Polo shushed me and whispered that I should look around. I suddenly noticed that Marco Polo looked much different from the last time I had seen him. He said that he was 21 years old then and that he could show me around and take me to Kublai Khan. Realizing that we were already in Dadu then, I was really excited!

That was a moment I had always been looking for! I saw red carpet lying on the ground welcoming us. At the end of the carpet sat Kublai Khan. Marco Polo and I were invited to be the Khan's messengers! So we traveled around and visited different places in and beyond China.

At last, I heard the alarm clock and had to wake up from my dream. I went to the library and kept reading *Marco Polo's Travels*. The story in my dream was just same! Look, I was mentioned in it too!

My Adventure to the Past

YK Pao School Shanghai, Lo, Travis – 7

One day in the forest, I found a strange machine. I stepped inside, though I did not know what it was. Out of curiosity, I pressed a red button, and it took me back in time!

I met a man who was looking at a very old map. He noticed me and introduced himself as Zhang Qian. He told me that Emperor Wu had sent him on a mission to the Yuezhi to form an alliance and fight against the Xiongnu together. Zhang Qian invited me to join him, and I said, "OK." But I was worried about the dangers along the way. Zhang Qian smiled and said that it would be fine because he was going to bring 100 men. With me on his delegation, he would then have 101.

Unfortunately, on the trip, we were captured by the Xiongnu. Zhang Qian helped me, I was the only one who managed to escape. I ran back to the time machine, thinking I could get help from modern times. I started the machine, and it brought me back to the present.

I looked around; the time machine had taken me to my home! I grabbed my robot and an axe from my dad's toolbox and hurried back. I was so eager to help Zhang Qian. I knew that he was the pioneer of the Silk Road, and without him, the East and the West might not have known each other for centuries.

After I traveled back, I was surprised to find that ten years had passed since Zhang Qian and his delegation were captured! "Oh no, it's too late!" I murmured. I sneaked into the Xiongnu camp, only to find that Zhang Qian was still imprisoned. He had never surrendered!

I had to help him! I sent my robot to throw a stone at the Xiongnu guards. They saw the robot and all ran after it. I went in and cut the chains of the cell with my axe. "Let's get back on the Silk Road," I said.

"What is the silk road?" Zhang Qian looked curious. I suddenly remembered that the name Silk Road wasn't invented until the 19th century. So I said, "The Silk Road is an international trade route between Asia and Europe. Thanks to this road, people in different countries can exchange goods like silk, tea, spices, and so on. You are the pioneer who will make it happen!"

The Silk Road

YK Pao School Shanghai, Qiao, Teresa – 8

Beep! Nobody knew where the noise came from. The mysterious strangers approached closer, and one bizarre face stared at me, my heart pounded like a drum. What was that? Suddenly, the stranger slammed a letter onto my face, anger rose inside me, but then I saw the letter contained something important:

“Dear Teresa,

I was searching for a responsible person just like you for a long time, and you have a very important mission. We are traveling through the North Pole to trade with Europe, the binding hours are about five weeks. If you fail this voyage, China will not have any confidence for all the explorers and even me, so please be cautious about everything you did in this journey. You will need a giant vessel, sturdy enough to carry all the food and goods. You can find it in the harbor.

Your best friend,
Alien”

After reading this letter, questions swirled in my mind, curiosity mixing with fear. Why did my alien friend choose me to undertake such an important task? Why did we need to trade with Europe? But something interrupted my thoughts and my eyes popped out as the robots surrounded me and hustling me into the closet, selecting clothes for me to wear on the journey. I barely had time to protest. I calculated the time we spent on finishing packing up, and it was speed of lightning! This was the magnificent Chinese manufacturing industry.

Day after day, we finally sailed to the Arctic Ocean, but something went wrong. Icebergs floated everywhere like a white, thick blanket of winter. With a shudder, I called my alien friend to prepare an icebreaker and sail it to the Arctic Ocean, I hopelessly looked at my watch, wishing time would freeze. Then, angels cast an enchanted spell upon me, an image of an icebreaker popped in my imagination but before I realized it, the icebreaker appeared right in front of me. No one could believe the future world was full of supernatural phenomena. I jumped into the mysterious icebreaker and continued the journey.

Time flowed like water. Meanwhile, the icebergs melted. Lofoten Island, Bothnian Bay, all these symbolic landmarks indicated that we reached Europe. “You are welcome!” an enthusiastic voice boomed from the Vikings warrior. An unfamiliar language danced through the air, almost teasing the foreign visitors! We went to the Palace of Sweden. The majestic walls represented the culture that had passed down from the Renaissance period. My eyes popped out, as if the world was turning into a book full of pleasant surprises.

“Thanks for all the wonderful goods you’ve brought us! We have tons of gifts for you, and I hope we can become friends!” the queen smiled, her eyes shone, bright and wide. Sweden had gifted us a wealth of precious resources such as oil to reinforce the friendship between China and Sweden. Then, without warning, BANG! The queen locked the palace doors. Something wasn’t right...

The Magical Silk Road to Friendship

YK Pao School Shanghai, Xu, Zi Chun Arina – 7

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there was a magical road called **The Silk Road**. It helped people trade shiny gold, silk, and many wonderful things. People were sharing treasures! But then, a new road called **The New Silk Road** was built!

In a cozy little village, lived a curious girl named **Lei**. She loved to imagine amazing things. Lei liked listening to her Nainai, (grandma) tell stories about brave merchants who trading and making friends with many people. The stories made Lei interested about adventures.

One sunny morning, Lei had a fantastic idea. She jumped up and shouted, “What if we go on adventures like the travelers in Nainai’s stories?” Just then, her best friend **Finn**, who loved to explore, came. “That sounds amazing!” he exclaimed. Together, they called their friends: **Oona** and **Angus**. “Let’s follow the New Silk Road!” shouted Angus happily.

They packed everything they needed for a fun day. “Let’s go!” Lei exclaimed, . As they walked along the New Silk Road, they saw market stalls with treasures! There were shiny toys, fancy things and delicious smells.

“Look at those!” Oona yelled. The colorful stalls made her happy and curious. They were ready to explore more.

As they went down the Silk Road, they spotted a colorful stall filled with shiny little things, bright silks, and delicious snacks. A friendly merchant waved at them and said, “Welcome! Would you like to try some of my famous sweets?”

The children’ jumped excitedly and yelled, “Yes, please!” The merchant gave them treats. After enjoying the yummy sweets, he smiled and said, “If you can solve my riddle, I’ll give you a special gift!”

The kids listened to the riddle. The merchant asked, “I fly without wings. I cry without eyes. Wherever I go, darkness flies. What am I?” They thought hard, scratching their heads. what could it be?” Finn wondered. After a moment, Oona jumped up with a big smile. “I know! It’s a cloud!”

“Correct!” the merchant laughed.. He gave them a beautiful silk pouch with shiny coins. “Go buy something from another stall!”

Feeling excited, they kept walking and soon reached a stall with colorful clothes. A kind woman smiled and said, “These clothes come from faraway lands. You can trade your coins for anything you like!”

Each child picked something special just for them. Lei chose a bright scarf, Finn picked a cool hat, Oona grabbed a lovely dress and Angus chose a silly vest that made everyone laugh.

As they walked away, they felt happy to trade and make friends with the cheerful merchants. “This feels just like Nainai’s stories!” Lei said with a smile.

Suddenly, they heard a cry for help! A little boy was stuck in his cart. The kids rushed to help him. They pushed and pulled until they lifted the cart. You’re my heroes!” said the boy. They felt proud and learned that the New Silk Road was about friendship and kindness too. Their adventure made their day truly special and unforgettable.

Creative Writing Fiction

Group 1



The Silk Road Adventure

King's School Shenzhen, Lawson, Ivan – 7

Tom and Ben are walking to school. They find a map. The map takes them to the Silk Road then they want to walk home but they don't know that it is the silk Road. After a very long time there are some people from Europe they said "do you have silk?" Tom said "no we don't". The European people said "then you must go back to China", but Ben said "we have candy" they said "what is candy?" Ben said "you eat it". They eat it. "Oh this is so yummy you can go". Tom looked at the map, the map says they are on the silk Road. They want to go home but they cannot. Then they go forward. After a long time they go to Europe but they don't know their home is in Asia. They go back but some bad guy said "you must go to France if you don't you can't go home". Ben and Tom didn't go. They fight. After half an hour the map took them home.

The Silk Road Adventure

King's School Shenzhen, Li, Adam – 6

The fennec fox was reading a book and it was about the silk Road. Suddenly a lightbulb turned into a hole and the gravity pulled the fennec fox into the hole. He was now standing on the silk Road but there were bad guys. There were seven people some had sticks and the fennec fox saw a map. The map told him to go around. Then go left, go through the woods and jump into the muddy puddle. Soon he was reading a book about the silk Road again.

The Silk Road Adventure

King's School Shenzhen, Liu, Jackson – 7

Jackson finds a big map, the map shows the silk road. Suddenly it drags Jackson into the map. A boy comes to Jackson and the boy said "do you know China?" Jackson said "yes I know it". "What's your name?" the boy said. "My name is Pian". He too walked and walked, he too went to Africa. Pian walked away. Jackson saw a man and the man asked Jackson "do you know how to get to China?" "I will tell you!" The man said "ok". The man got some things he needed and Jackson got a lot of things he needed. Jackson and the man went to China and got some silk. He went back to Africa. Some people said "good job man".

The Five Secret Gems of the Silk Road

King's School Shenzhen, Ma, Kian – 6

Captain the camel could talk and he was very strong. He carried silk and spices along the silk Road. His friend was Leo the lizard who was quick and clever. Their other friend was soft. The cactus he was prickly and funny he couldn't walk so he rode in a pot on the captain's back.

One day a fennec fox gave them a map and said "find the five Element Gems – metal, wood, water, fire and earth from Dunhuang to Italy. They will bring happiness forever". The bandits black and white eavesdropped. "I will steal the gems and get rich" they said and they began their adventure.

First they found a gold mine beneath the desert. They saw the golden metal gem hanging from the ceiling. The bandits tried to break the rope with a gun. Leo climbed up the ceiling quickly and took the metal gem.

Next they travelled to a forest. "Look there is a shiny and green wood gem on the tree" said soft. White wanted to grab it but Captain was the first to snatch it down. After that they reached a blue lake Leo followed the blue light and dived into the lake to search for the water gem. Black and white caught up with them but they couldn't swim so Leo got the water gem.

Then they crossed a hot desert. Captain suddenly shouted while taking a break "the fire jam is here". It was red and bright. After hearing this the bandits tried to steal the gem Soft jumped off the camel's back and used his spine to stab them. Ouch! They ran away and Soft got the fire gem.

Finally they arrived at a rocky mountain. There were many stones of different shapes. "The Earth gem is under the stone" Leo said. It was orange and round. The bandits hid behind a rock. They tried one last time to snatch the gem. "Give us the gem!" They shouted. Leo went into their pants and tickled their leg. Black and white lost their balance and fell off the rock. Captain, Leo and put the five gems together. They arrived in Italy. They had completed their adventure along the Silk Road!

The Silk Road Treasure

King's School Shenzhen, Qiu, Elaine – 7

Once upon a time there was a camel and a snake. They were very best friends. They lived in a forest. One day, Camel was sleeping and snake woke him up. The snake was holding a very old treasure map. At the top it said "The Silk Road Treasure". They decided to find the treasure.

On their way through the desert, they were by a very tall and wide wall. They could not go around it. The camel looked for something to help them get over the wall. Soon he saw something shining under the hot sun. When they got closer, they saw a golden ladder came or put it on the wall they were very excited and they tried to climb up the ladder but it was too short. They had to jump over the wall and fell down the other side.

The evil rat was waiting for them on the other side. He tried to steal the map, snake yelled run and they both ran camel found a gigantic rock and they hid behind it. The little evil rat could not find them and he went back to the wall and waited for the next animal camel and snake quickly followed the map. They had to cross deserts and mountains when they found the treasure chest and opened it. It was full of silk and tea. They bought the treasure back and shared it with all of their friends.

The Silk Road Adventure

King's School Shenzhen, Shen, Iris – 7

The silk Road is a road that can go to many places. The camel was so excited, he sees a silk shop. He has 10 silks. The jerboa and the snake was so surprised. A bad guy comes to take all the silk but the jerboa is smart so she knows a plan. She whispers. She said "you to go and defeat the bad guy. I'll go and take all the silk from the bad man". Finally the bad guy is dead they save the day.

The Silk Road Adventure

King's School Shenzhen, Wang, Joanna – 7

There was a girl named Sasha. Sasha had a friend Nikki. They saw a map they wanted to find the treasure. Some bad guys wanted to find the treasure too but there was only one map. They all wanted the map they had a fight most people helped Sasha and Niki. Lin and Lisha helped the bad guys. Finally, the bad guys lost then the bad guys gave the map to Sasha and Niki, but the treasure was not there.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Lam, Yat Him – 6

This Christmas holiday, my sister and I went to Sai Kung for hiking. At the start of the hike, we arrived at Shui Long Wo. After walking for one minute, we saw a very special Star-gazing Deck, which looks like a pyramid. We wanted to take an adventure in this special building so we went up the stairs.

Before we could see the sky, we suddenly fell into a hole on the floor. We travelled through a door and landed on Camel Hill, where we could see thousands of camels resting there.

A man invited me to ride on the smallest camel as the camel was too small for him to sit on it. However, my sister said she was thirsty and she saw a lake far away. She ran towards the lake. She ran so fast that I could not see her in a blink. I was so worried and sad but, luckily, my sister came back and said, 'there is no water, it's only a mirage.'

The man said, 'if you are thirsty, we can go to a Mongolian yurt. We can serve some drink.' My sister was so happy and jumped on a camel to the yurt. The man led us to go to his home in a Mongolian yurt. We were welcomed by the special drink called Mongolian milk tea. It was exotic and delicious.

After enjoying the tea, we went back to the camels and followed the camels to India. When we arrived in India, we unloaded the stuff. We suddenly fell into a hole again. After travelling in the time tunnel, we arrived at home. Oh my god! The camel was with us! I pushed him up to the hole again before it closed.

Mum was so surprised to see me in front of her suddenly and I shared with her about what happened as well as the Mongolian milk tea in my water bottle. I asked my mum to copy the recipe for me so that I can sell the special milk tea from Mongolia. I am going to name the milk tea 'Mon Mon Tea'.

The Silk Road: Past and Present

Lei Muk Shue Catholic Primary School, Shao, Ching Nam – 8

Long long ago, we carried silk, tea and spices on camels and horses to faraway places. We call this long path the Silk Road.

We started in China with shiny silk cloth, walked across deserts and mountains, meeting new friends in other countries during the journey. We shared stories, food and gifts. The Silk Road was like a giant friendship bridge, bringing people together.

Nowadays, we heard that the Silk Road is different from that instead of camels, they have trains, ships and airplanes. What a surprise!

Goods travel very fast and people from different places still share ideas and culture more easily than before.

The Silk Road now connects all the people around the globe together, and as Chinese, we feel happy and proud!

The Smart King and the Hardworking Farmer

Taikoo Primary School, Chan, Wing Yi Chloe – 8

In a small city, there lived a smart king and a hardworking farmer. The farmer always grew too much food, so some food would rot. Every night when he went to sleep, he lay on his bed and thought about how to stop the food from rotting.

A few years later, the king knew that the farmer was very hardworking. So he told all the people, "I want to make a trade road to get from and share with others." All of them said yes and jumped around with excitement.

When they almost finished what they now called the Silk Road, a big lion ran towards them! Some people ran away because they were scared. Some ran to other cities to find help. Some tried to help kill the lion. But after a few minutes, all of them ran away. Then something amazing happened! Some army generals and three armies of soldiers came to fight the lion. The soldiers had bows and arrows, and some had iron swords. With all the soldiers there, the lion was no match for them, so it quickly ran away.

After that, no more lions came to scare them on the Silk Road. Now the small city could get lots of new things from other places. All of the cities were over the moon and very happy. The farmer was so happy because now he could sell his extra food to other cities through the Silk Road, and nothing would rot anymore. The king was proud that his idea worked so well for everyone.

Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Bala, Ava – 5

Dear Diary,

I am on the Silk Road. I saw some cactuses and I saw some camels. I travelled on a camel in the desert. The camel walked slowly. The camel is tall and brown. I felt tired because the camel walked for a long time. Today, I arrived in China. I carried silk. It is a shiny cloth. I felt happy. I sold my silk and got coins.

A Glowing Silk Handkerchief

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Chen, Amanda – 8

I have an old silk handkerchief, kept in a box in my mother's drawer. My mother said that my grandmother once mentioned it was a gift from the Silk Road. One corner of the handkerchief is embroidered with a golden camel. On nights with a full moon, the handkerchief emits a silver glow that extends out the window, while a golden camel quietly waits.

On this day, with the full moon high in the sky, I decided to climb out the window along the silver light path shining from the handkerchief. As soon as my feet touched the ground, the sand grains sparkled like stars. At that moment, the golden camel approached me. "I am the Phantom Camel, and I have finally been waiting for you. My mission is to take you to the Silk Kingdom." Its voice was like wind chimes—crisp and melodious—and its golden body shimmered like flowing sand, radiating light. I climbed onto the camel's back and entered the legendary Silk Kingdom. The Silk Road was everywhere: oases, trees swaying in the wind and making a jingling sound. Under the moonlight, the surface of the oasis lake sparkled, and fish danced in the water, their scales emitting rainbow-like brilliance.

"Look over there!" shouted the Sand Phantom Camel. A huge jade dragon was resting, its eyes tightly closed, its whole body emitting a fluorescent green colour, and its surface covered with cracks. The Sand Phantom Camel said, "Only silk intertwined with sincere singing can awaken the Jade Dragon." I sat next to the Jade Dragon, gently caressing its scales, which were icy cold. I took a deep breath and began to sing softly:

The Silk Road is long and wide, and the desert is an oasis.

Camel bells jingle; porcelain, silk, grapes exchange between humps;

Hometown and culture are all communicating softly.

The moonlight changes endlessly, and all beauty sings here.

The singing turned into musical notes, gently brushing against the Jade Dragon's forehead. Starlight and moonlight began to wrap around its body, and wherever it passed, the cracks gradually disappeared. The jade dragon opened his eyes, shining like two stars. It nodded at me and spat out a heart-shaped seed. I buried this heart seed in the sand, and in an instant, a jade tree covered in silk grew out. Each piece of silk tells a story that connects Eastern and Western civilizations. I sat on the Jade Dragon; it pushed up into the sky, telling me about the Silk Road. Later, the Jade Dragon flew down to the spot. I went down, and the Jade Dragon closed its eyes, full of cracks again.

The sky was slightly bright, and the phantom camel escorted me home. I had an extra bottle of sand in my pocket, and a camel and a jade dragon on my handkerchief. On countless full-moon nights in the future, I will continue to sing the song of the Silk Road!

Mr One and the Lost Silk

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Fan, Louis – 8

Once upon a time, Mr One was travelling across the hot desert on the Silk Road. He was carrying beautiful silk to trade. The journey was long and difficult, but Mr One did not stop walking.

One afternoon, Mr One reached the end of the desert. Suddenly, his bag of silk fell into the sand. Mr One felt angry and sad. He searched everywhere, but the silk was gone. Soon, Mrs One, Lucy, and Gru came to help him. They dug in the sand and worked together.

“Stop,” said Mrs One. “The silk is very important. We must work as a team.” Everyone searched carefully.

Just then, Tom Dog ran over with a new bag. Together, they found the silk under the sand and put it safely into the bag.

In the end, Mr One smiled. He learned that teamwork helps solve hard problems.

Silk Road Harry Potter

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Han, Erico – 7

Little Black's grandmother gave him a jade which was worth ten million, but on a stormy night it was stolen. Little Black went on a trip to look for his lost jade.

He started his trip from Xi'an. In Xi'an, he bought a horse named Chuichui, which was white and fast. It could run 50 kilometres per day. After 20 days, they got to Dunhuang. On the road to Dunhuang, a group of wolves killed Chuichui. Little Black had to walk by himself to Yangguan, which was a trading place.

The road was so long and hard. He was tired and almost died because of lack of water. But he was told the jade was sold to a man in Khotan. Little Black was so sad and he prayed that something magic could happen.

All of a sudden, a flash hit him. When he came to his senses, he found himself stronger and full of power. He could run faster and tirelessly. Soon he got to Samarkand. In a jewel market, he was looking for his jade when he heard somebody shouting, "Help!" It was a young boy. Some bad guys were beating him and asking him to pay them money.

Little Black jumped in front of the boy and said, "Stop! Don't bully the boy!" Those bad guys laughed and said, "Who are you? Want to be beaten together with him?" Little Black said, "I'm Little Black from China! I forbid you to beat him!"

The bad guys laughed even louder, saying, "Can't you see we are much taller and stronger than you?" Then they felt a strong wind and all fell down to the ground. Magic showed and they flew away.

The young boy, who had very white skin, said "Thank you" to Little Black and asked to walk together. He said, "I know where the jade is. It is in Rome." Little Black was happy to have a new friend. He felt not so lonely anymore.

Together they arrived in Rayy. One day in the desert, they were thirsty to die when something green and shining attracted them. It was half covered in the sand. Little Green picked it up. It was a green jade coin.

Little Green said, "My grandfather has ever told me a green jade coin can summon water." Little Black was very excited and said, "Let's have a try!"

They rubbed the coin and sweet water came out from the coin's eye. They drank the water and even sold water to people along the way. They made a lot of money.

When some bad guys wanted to rob the coin, Little Black beat them down. The magic water coin earned a lot of money. They got to Alexandria. They bought a ship and it was easier to get to Rome.

As soon as they arrived, they heard a jade from China was on sale. They traded the magic water coin for the jade. What a happy ending!

Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Huang, Sammi – 6

Dear Diary,

Today is a very hot day. I saw flowers. I saw camels. I rode a camel on the Silk Road. My camel is so big and fat and walked slowly on the sand.

I met a nice trader. He gave me a jewel and grapes. I gave him tea and silk.

Just then, my camel hurt two of his feet. Oh no! What can I do? It's too hot to walk! So, I used my silks to make slippers and I could walk on the hot sand.

I went back home.

I took my camel to see a vet. He felt much better.

I went back to my tent. I went to sleep.

On the second day, everyone woke up. We walked on the Silk Road. We were so thirsty. We drank water. I got some water, but the water spilled on the desert floor and was gone quickly. Just then, I saw a man get the big watermelon. I asked them, "Can I trade my tea for a watermelon?" He said, "Yes!" We became good friends.

I showed my watermelon to my camel. We were not thirsty anymore.

My trip is so much fun! There are many fun things waiting for me on the Silk Road. My camel and I are excited about the next trip. My camel and I are happy.

A Magic Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Jiang, Iris – 7

This Silk Road has no fairy. The fairy is a good fairy. Some one is hot. She can help. One day she is gone. Everybody is sad and has a bad fairy. It looks very like the good fairy. And the good fairy came and said she is the good fairy.

Do, but it is not, and everyone knows this thing. Everybody said sorry to the good fairy. And the bad fairy knows she did bad things and she said sorry. Everyone said thank you to the good fairy to help us. And the good fairy and bad fairy make a party.

They make a cake. The cake has a heart tree. It is a chocolate cake. It is so yummy. Everybody laughed, “Yummy, yummy!”

But a queen flies down and takes the bad fairy. The queen is the bad fairy’s mother. Her mother makes the bad and good fairy want to help the bad fairy. But she doesn’t have magic. She tells her mother. Her mother tells some soldiers and takes the bad fairy back. They are very happy.

They dance and sing and they are very happy. They eat ice cream, cake, cookies, pie, and pizza. They make a party. In the party they have balloons, a fun house, popcorn, marshmallows, and a zoo. Everyone has fun.

And they eat dinner. They have rice dumplings, whole wheat bread, turkey, beef steak, and soup. They finish the dinner. They go to play a game. The name is hide and seek.

And they go to sleep.

Norna on the road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Lau, Norna – 7

1000000000000000000 years ago, one day on the Silk Road, Harry Potter, some people, and Norma Lemon went on a journey. They went to a better campsite, but they got lost on the road. Then they saw an island, so they went to the island. When they went inside, they saw a witch.

The witch said, “Who are you?”
Harry Potter said, “Who are you?”

The witch thought, “People think I am bad, but I am not.” Then the witch said, “I am good, but my mom does not like me, so I guess I have to live here without my mom.”

Harry Potter said, “Oh, your mom is so, so bad!”

Then they went to the Xi'an Silk Road. They looked around and everything looked good. Then they saw a camel fairy. The camel fairy said, “Can I go with you?”
Lemon said, “OK, you can come.”

They walked a little bit and then saw a sandstorm. They ran and ran, and then they saw some Santa people. They said, “Are you OK?” Then they said, “Run! There is a sandstorm!”
The Santa people said, “Don't go away!”
They thought these were magic people, so they did not run.

Then the camel fairy said, “Santa Brogt, is it you?”
Santa Brogt said, “Yes!”

The Santa people did some magic and the sandstorm disappeared. They were surprised.
Santa Brogt said, “We will go to the Xi'an Silk Road.”
They said, “OK, we will go.”

Then the witch saw them and said, “OK, I will go there too.” The witch laughed.
The witch and Harry Potter saw each other together.
The witch said, “Come, it's OK.” And they came.

The Santa people said, “Go away, bad witch!”
Harry Potter said, “But the witch said her mom is bad.”
The Santa people said, “NO! The witch's mom is good, but she is bad, OK?”
The witch said, “Yes.”

Then the witch said, “Everybody in the house.”
Everybody went in the house.

The witch said, “We will have a fight. Whoever loses will listen to the witch. The winner will govern the country.”

They agreed. The witch had a magic potion. The witch drank it and disappeared in an instant. Only Harry Potter could see her. They fought and fought, and Norma won, but the witch summoned a monster.

The monster said, “Camel fairy, I will be your pet.”
The camel fairy said, “OK.”

Then the witch went away. They went to switch and switch by then.
The monster said, “I like you, camel fairy.”

A Merchant and his Camels

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Li, Logan – 7

One day, a merchant was on the Silk Road. He was leading a caravan of camels loaded with goods. The goods included silk cloth, money bags, wine, jade, tea leaves, and pottery.

After two days, when he was resting in a village, some robbers came at night and stole things. But the caravan had a hall, and he was lucky because he was the one who put the camels in the hall.

The hall had 250 rooms. But every room could only contain 1 camel. There were 55 camels, so the other camels and their things were stolen.

But that did not stop him from going on the Silk Road. After that kind of stealing, the journey was not finished. After two days, there was a sandstorm. Then the end of this story.

The Magic Water

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Li, Sloane – 6

One day, Dalio and I found a Silk Road book. Inside there is a map. Suddenly, the map shone and turned into a key. The key started to glow. After a while, we were on the Silk Road. There was a girl riding a camel. The girl greeted us and offered us some food.

The key glowed again and we were back to the library again.

We read the book. The first page said, “If you two people find the magic water and drink it, girls can fly and boys can have strong powers.” We turned to the next page. It said, “You can find the magic water from a girl on the Silk Road”. We closed the book and looked for a new adventure.

Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Peng, Aura – 7

Last summer, I went to my grandpa's house for the summer holiday. He lives in a village on the Silk Road. It is very different from my city. There are fewer trees and big deserts. The days are very hot, but the nights are cool. What I liked best was seeing lots of stars at night. I can not see them in the city.

Grandpa often told me adventure stories about the Silk Road at night. It made me dream about finding treasure on the Silk Road.

One day, I decided to look for treasure, but I got lost in the desert. I couldn't find my way home, so I started to cry. Just then, a camel appeared. It knelt down so I could get on its back. The camel took me back to the village. Grandpa found me and then the camel disappeared. It was truly a magical story. I will never forget that summer.

Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Sun, Dalio – 7

Dia and Mao are sleeping.

They dream about the Silk Road. Dia said, “Where are we?” One man said, “It is the Silk Road.” Mao asked, “What is this?” The man said, “It is silk.”

Gug gug. Dia and Mao were hungry.

They said, “We are hungry!” and the man gave them some food.

They saw some horses and camels.

“How did we get here?” said Mao. The man said, “I don’t know.”

Dia and Mao said, “Can we borrow your camel?” The man said, “Yes.”

They climbed up the camel and they left the village.

The camel ran really fast.

They saw a rock. On the rock, there was some writing. It said, “Rome”. Suddenly, the sun rose and they woke up.

The Missing Jade

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Tang, Rella – 8

1,500 years ago, one hot afternoon, Mr Brown was travelling across the desert on the Silk Road. He was carrying a very special bag filled with jade. The sun was strong, and the sand was deep. Suddenly, Mr Brown felt worried. He looked down and shouted, “Oh no! I lost my bag!”

Mr Brown quickly called Mrs Brown. “Where is your bag?” asked Mrs Brown. Mr Brown pointed to the sand. “It fell into the sand,” he said sadly. Mr and Mrs Brown tried to pull the bag out, but it became heavier and heavier. The bag would not move at all.

Mrs Brown remembered something important. “The more we pull, the heavier it gets,” she said. She decided to ask for help. Soon, Mr Wu, who was very strong, came to help them. Mr Wu pulled carefully, and slowly the bag came out of the sand. Everyone cheered happily when they saw the jade inside the bag.

Suddenly, a robber ran past and grabbed the bag. He did not see a deep hole in the sand. The robber fell into the hole, and the bag fell out of his hands. Mr Brown and his friends got the bag back.

In the end, everyone was safe and happy. Mr Brown thanked his friends and learned an important lesson: working together makes hard things easier.

From Xi'An to Rome

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Teng, Isabella – 8

Long ago, on the Silk Road, there lived a lazy eagle. The lazy eagle lived in a small village near a pond. One day in 1021, an adventurer came here. One day, the eagle saw her, so the lazy eagle flew down and asked, “What is your name?” “My name is Wendy,” said Wendy. “Where will you go?” asked the eagle. “I want to go to Rome,” she said. “May I go with you?” “Yes, you can,” said Wendy. Then they began to walk.

Walking straight, they needed rest, so they rested and ate some food. Next, they walked for another five days. Today, they were resting. Suddenly, Wendy said, “Did you hear the wind get bigger and bigger?” “Yes, friend,” the eagle said. They looked back... it was a sandstorm! They shouted, “Run!” But then the eagle got lost because the wind was huge, and the lazy eagle was blown away by the wind. The next day, when he opened his eyes, he saw no one was with him. He thought he got lost. But he was very lazy, so he just flew to a tree and lived there.

She looked back to find Wendy. When she opened her eyes, she didn't even see a bird feather or her bag! She really wanted a great solution to find Lazy. She would not rest until she found Lazy. She searched and searched... She looked for Lazy for five weeks. At last, she found Lazy in the tree. Wendy said, “Did you know how many days I needed to find you?” she complained. She looked in front of her and saw the door to Rome in front of her. She walked inside and saw many people in Rome.

The people stood beside the door and shouted, “Welcome to Rome!” Then they saw a man with a handsome shirt and a crown walk closer. Wendy asked, “Are you the King of Rome?” “Yes,” he said. He couldn't believe Wendy could walk past all the countries. The king said, “I'm very like you, so can you just... be the next queen?” “Yes,” Wendy smiled and said. Then they lived happily in the tower.

The Camel Fairy

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Xie, Sara – 7

One day, there was a girl who went to the park. She saw a camel and she had never seen a camel before. There were many people, so she chose one camel and put it in her shirt. She walked home. Her house only had her. She put the camel on the sofa and put the shirt on the camel. Her phone had a message. She saw it was from her teacher. He said, “We needed some food, but it was in the UK.” So, they walked on the Silk Road.

She thought if she had a camel fairy, it was good, but she only had one baby camel. She saw it was nine o'clock, so she went to sleep.

The next day, she got up and walked out of her bedroom. She saw her camel had become a camel fairy. She was excited. She quickly got a shirt and went to the camel fairy. The camel fairy was getting up and looking at her. The camel fairy was talking, and she was frightened. The girl said, “You can talk?” The camel fairy said, “Yes, I can talk,” and the girl was happy.

She said, “Can you help me walk on the Silk Road?”

The camel fairy said, “Yes, I can.”

The girl said, “Today we needed to walk on the Silk Road.”

The camel fairy said, “Yes, let's go,” and the girl said, “OK, we can go.”

On the Silk Road, the girl was very tired. The camel fairy was not tired, and the camel fairy was flying very quickly. They walked and walked. Sadly, there was a sandstorm. The camel fairy saw the girl was very dizzy, and the girl fell down. The camel fairy worked very hard. The camel fairy had an idea. The camel fairy used magic to help the girl get up, but the camel fairy was a little bit tired. So, the camel fairy's magic was not very strong. The camel fairy could only hug the girl to help her walk on the Silk Road.

The sandstorm was very big, and the sandstorm was like a monster. The monster was coming out!

The camel fairy saw it. The camel fairy put the girl on one road, and the camel fairy used magic to get one monster in the sky. The monster was very scary, but the monster said, “We must win.” The camel fairy said, “I think you will not win.” The monster Kim did not speak, but the camel fairy had won the fight. The camel fairy wanted to move, and the camel fairy.

The Dangerous Journey to Rome

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Xu, Glen – 7

A long time ago, Zhang Qian and the Chinese trading team went on a journey to Rome because they wanted to exchange goods and develop China. They went to many countries and travelled across deserts, mountains, valleys, and seas, and they met a lot of difficulties.

They started their journey and walked and walked. Suddenly, they went into a desert. A sandstorm came with strong wind and flying sand that did not let them see anything, so they got lost. Zhang Qian said, "Everybody, hide behind the mountain!" This plan worked. Later, the sandstorm stopped. They were safe and happy, but unluckily, the storm took their goods and food away.

They found some goods and food. They were very tired, so they drank a little water because they only had a little. They went to sleep, and tomorrow was a new journey (Day 2).

A new day started. They led their camels and walked and walked. Suddenly, a black snake showed up and bit a camel. The camel fell down and died after a while. More and more snakes bit more camels, and now the people felt unhappy and terrible. They had to walk with the heavy goods and food. After a long time, they saw a port where they could exchange goods and food. They changed the port to camels because if they did not buy camels, they could not carry the goods and food because they were very heavy.

A new journey came on Day 3. They came to the sea, bought some boats, and had a sea journey. The boat drifted and drifted. Suddenly, the sky turned black and the waves began to surge violently. Water got into the boat. They used buckets to let the water go back into the sea. The strong wind almost blew the boat over. The people were dizzy and seasick, so they needed to rest. One person said, "You can sleep on the hammock." They slept on the hammock and it was better.

They drifted and drifted. A person came down and told Zhang Qian, "A pirate boat is coming to us." Zhang Qian said, "Please let me go up to see it," and he climbed up. He saw pirates holding knives and cannons. Zhang Qian was so scared, and he said, "Everybody, fire!" At the same time, the pirate boss said, "Everybody, get ready to fight and take away their goods and food!"

They had a big fight that day. Zhang Qian's team won. They saw a port and used goods to exchange for some horses, and they started a new journey.

They walked a lot and met many troubles, and finally, they went to Rome.

The Ghost in the building

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Yang, Lele – 7

One day in the hot desert on the Silk Road, Mr Joke was very tired and thirsty. The sun was bright, and the sand was everywhere. Mr Joke saw an old building far away. He walked slowly to the building to rest and find water.

Inside the building, it was dark and quiet. Suddenly, Mr Joke heard strange sounds. "Boo!" Some ghosts appeared. They looked scary, and Mr Joke felt afraid. He thought the ghosts were not real, but then he saw one ghost move very close to him. His heart beat fast.

Mr Joke took a deep breath and spoke kindly to the ghosts. The ghosts smiled and showed him a cup of water. Mr Joke was happy and not scared anymore. He rested and then continued his journey on the Silk Road.

Lisa's adventure on the silk road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Yang, Sally – 7

In the Han Dynasty, there was a girl called Lisa who was 10 years old. She lived in Xi'an, and she wanted to explore the Silk Road because she heard many interesting stories about it. So, she began to take the adventure to the Silk Road.

Lisa walked for two years, and she made a friend called Yellow, who was 11 years old. He also wanted to explore the Silk Road. They talked and laughed along the way. Then they walked to a market in Dunhuang on the Silk Road. At the market, they met a mysterious old man with a beard like silver thread. His name was Red, and he had many mysterious goods. Lisa looked at them and found a blue carrot, and Yellow found a diamond which was beautiful and shiny. So Lisa bought the blue carrot and Yellow bought the diamond. They were happy.

They kept on walking in the desert. Then Lisa was tired and hungry, and they stopped. Lisa ate the blue carrot. Suddenly, Lisa became a Godzilla. Yellow screamed and he was scared. He said, "What happened?" Lisa didn't know how she looked. So Yellow gave Lisa the diamond to look at herself. Lisa was frightened. She cried, "What happened?" Yellow calmed down and said, "We need to find Red the merchant and ask him for help."

They walked back and found Red in the market. It was noisy and crowded. People looked at Lisa strangely. Yellow said, "Red, please help us." Red said, "Okay, I have an antidote, but I put it in my house. You need to go back home with me." Then they rode on a camel and went to Red's house. Lisa took the antidote and changed back. She said, "Thank you so much." Red said, "No worries. It's late. Do you want to stay and eat dinner?" Lisa and Yellow were both tired and hungry. They smiled and said, "You're so kind." They ate very delicious food, such as turkeys and red potatoes.

Suddenly, all of them became camels.

Thrilling experience on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhang, Benson – 8

Once upon a time, there was a very famous explorer called Explorer Travis. He heard that there were a lot of very valuable goods on the Silk Road, and he decided to explore something that he had never seen before. He packed up and started the journey.

He walked into a forest and saw a cave. It was very dark inside that you could not see your fingers. Suddenly, he saw a glowing blue diamond, floating in the middle of the cave. Explorer Travis was very excited. "Oh my god, it was the so-called Heart of Silk Road," said Travis. But there was a demon called Light Dream standing next to it and he took it away. Travis was very scared and ran away, shouting to the villagers that "The Heart of Silk Road was stolen." The villagers were very worried because everyone would disappear if the diamond was taken. Explorer Travis said: "be brave, let us go to bring it back." All the villagers agreed.

Unfortunately, a bad soldier saw them and told the Light Dream about their plan. Light Dream said: "it doesn't matter, they cannot even get into my dark castle. " Explorer Travis and the villagers started to break the gate. Then a lot of evil soldiers ran out. Travis took out a big machine called Punching Squirt. The soldiers were punched and were locked in this big machine. Light Dream suddenly appeared. "Oh, no. " said Travis. They hid behind a huge rock and shot its heart. But it didn't help at all, the Light Dream was still very powerful. Explorer Travis and the villagers covered themselves with sand so that the soldiers couldn't see them. They kept moving and soon they arrived in a room. They saw the Heart of Silk Road floating in the middle of the room. Travis took it and ran away as fast as he could and returned it back to the cave.

The Silk Road was protected and everyone could do business as usual. The cave was locked forever and the Heart of Silk Road is safe too. The villagers were very happy and wanted to treat Explorer Travis. But he said: "Bye bye my friends, it is my pleasure to help you. And now I will continue my Silk Road Journey."

Jessie's Journey

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhang, Jason – 8

Jessie was a scientist who invented a lot of magic machines to learn about the world. One day, she decided to sell all her inventions to other countries to help more people. She and her huge pet which was a camel named Jerry started the Silk Road Journey.

After walking for three days, Jessie and her camel were very thirsty. Just then, Jessie saw a river and she ran to it as fast as she could to drink water. But she felt the more water she drank, the more thirsty she was!

Jessie saw more people running to the river, and she said: “don’t drink the water, it is dangerous.” People stopped running. Jessie pulled out a magic machine and said: “it is an X-Ray machine and it could tell us what happened in the water.” She then put a metal string into the water and said: “No! Inside the water, there is a kind of unknown toxic insects. If they spread out, they will kill all the people on the Silk Road.” Jessie, her camel and everyone were scared. Jessie said: “don’t worry, my camel and I will solve the problem and save you.” All the people said: “Ok, but first we need to know where all the unknown insects come from.”

“Wait!” said Jessie. “There is something in the river.” Jessie picked up a fur and said “look at this, it is from a broom, let’s put it into the DNA machine.” A few minutes later, Jessie said: “the test shows that the fur is from a witch.” A young man shouted: “I can dive so I can find the witch with a gas mask.” After a long time, the young man came out with a magic flower. He said “I got it. It is the witch who wants to control the whole desert and gets all the money from the trades on the Silk Road. The toxic insects she sent into the river can absorb people’s blood. But the witch will die if we destroy the magic flower.”

Jessie wanted to stop her evil plan so she took the magic flower and ripped it into pieces and fed all the pieces to the camel. Suddenly, the river turned to clean and everyone was very happy. They all said Jessie was the hero but Jessie said the young man was the real hero.

In the end, Jessie and her camel sold all her magic inventions to the people in this desert and they finished the Silk Road with a lot of money.

The Poet and the Bird

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zheng, Cooper – 7

The bird and the poet are in Rome. He wants silk, so he goes to buy silk on the Silk Road. There is a big ocean, so they need a boat. The poet and the bird take the boat. A storm is coming. They can't find the Silk Road, but the bird has a compass, so they find the map of the Silk Road to Chang'an.

They walk far, far away and see a caravanserai. They buy a camel and sleep for one night. The next morning, they continue their journey. During the journey, a sandstorm hits them. Luckily, someone is in front of them. They walk far, far away. The poet and the bird arrive in Xi'an.

The poet and the bird use grapes and wine to swap for silk.

With silk, the poet wants to live in Chang'an because there is lots of delicious food and beautiful ceramics. He starts growing grapes and carrots to make money. He also brings Fergana horses to sell. He writes poems about his journey in Chang'an. He wants to have lots of money. The poet buys a big house. Then he becomes a general. He can win wars every time. He runs a school in Chang'an. At that time, only rich people can go to school, but the poet does not ask poor students for money. He teaches them different languages because the poet learned many languages on the Silk Road.

One year later, he decides to go back to Rome because he misses his home and family. His students also want to go home. So the poet and his students prepare camels, water, tea, silk, and food. They start their trip to Rome. When they arrive in Dunhuang, robbers attack them. Luckily, they learned Chinese kung fu in Chang'an, so they beat the robbers badly. They get caught in a sandstorm in Khotan. They almost pass out. Luckily, there is only 1.5 km to the caravanserai, so they rest there. They pass by Samarkand, Rayy, Petra, Alexandria, and finally arrive in Rome.

The poet sells all the silk and tea to the Romans and becomes a billionaire. He writes a book about his journey.

Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhou, Andy – 8

Sam is at the beach and sees a map in the sand. He puts the map on the chair and goes swimming. After he finishes his swim, he finds the map has become a door. He opens it and goes inside.

He sees some camels and he sees some buildings. He buys some silk from a man and the door opens by itself. He walks through it and finds himself back on the beach. He heads home and falls asleep. When he wakes up, he thinks it must have been just a dream.

The Silk Road

Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Ng, Ka Pak – 8

2000 years ago, Alex was building The Silk Road in China for convenient transportation of goods such as glass, cotton, bronze ...

Suddenly, a green door to a magic world appeared. Alex was curious and slowly walked towards it. He looked inside. What he saw was the same as the normal world, so he went in to continue paving the road.

Alex worked very hard on the top of the tallest mountain. There was nobody. There was only a tall tree with a smooth round rock next to it. It was a scorching day. Water in the oceans and rivers boiled due to the presence of a gigantic sun in the sky. Therefore, he sat on the rock to take a rest. Suddenly, the sky turned red. He looked at the sky and saw an enormous bomb flying toward China.

Alex knew that it was Jaden from Russia who launched the bomb. He was as furious as a tiger. He immediately went to Russia to find Jaden. On his way, the bomb destroyed The Silk Road. He was down in the dumps.

Alex was so scared that he cried. He thought he was going to die. Then, he saw a special card in the mud. When he picked it up, he saw “Silk Road reversing” on it. When he touched it, his serious wounds were healed! It looked like a “UNO” card, but it sparkled and disappeared in the air. He was astonished. He thought, “Why? There must be something wrong ...” While he was wondering what had happened, The Silk Road was fixed and 10 doors appeared in front of him. At the same time, he saw another bomb flying toward China. He wanted to go back to the normal world to escape from the bomb. He looked at the doors and figured that one of the doors could bring him back to the normal world, and the other nine doors were fake, so he tried door by door.

When he opened the first door, there was a tunnel connecting the door and the other world. He walked through the tunnel and saw Space. He knew that was not the door he was looking for, so he tried the second door. It led him to a lava pool, so he left and tried the third one. When he opened the third door, he knew it was the door as there were words carved on the back of the door – “Normal World”. He rushed in and was finally back to the normal world. He immediately closed the door, and the door vanished. Alex looked at the sky. It was peaceful with only the scorching sun. He went back to work and would never forget what had happened.

Clara the Unicorn's Magical Adventure

Marymount Primary School, Wu, Bryanna Emma – 7

A long time ago, during the Han Dynasty, there lived a brave girl named Qing. Her family was famous for making beautiful silk in a peaceful village in China. The silk shimmered like rainbows in the morning light, and everyone in the village admired it.

One day, the great king of China sent a special message. He wanted Qing's family to go on an important mission. They would bring their precious silk to mysterious Europe, where people had never seen silk before. Qing's heart filled with excitement and a little worry because she had never traveled far from home.

Her mother gave her a warm hug and said gently, "You are a brave girl, Qing. Believe in yourself." With her family's blessings, Qing packed her bright rolls of silk, waved goodbye, and began her long journey across the desert.

At first, the road was smooth, but soon it became hot and dusty. The sun shone like fire in the sky, and the sand burned her feet. Qing felt thirsty and weak. She almost wanted to give up. Just then, she heard a strange "huff, huff" sound behind her. When she turned around, she saw a big camel slowly walking toward her. Qing blinked in surprise. "Could this be real?" she whispered. She rubbed her eyes, but the camel was still there. Qing reached out her hand and patted its soft fur. The camel knelt down, as if inviting her to ride.

Qing climbed onto the camel's back and kept going, happy to have a little time to rest. The wind felt cooler, and the sand sparkled like gold. Qing felt cheerful and strong again. But the journey was still challenging. She crossed fast rivers, climbed big rocky cliffs, and faced strong dust storms that roared like dragons. With her new camel friend beside her, she never felt lonely. Remembering her mother's kind words gave her the courage to keep going.

After many days and nights, Qing finally reached a busy market in Europe. She heard music and chatter all around her. The air smelled like warm bread. People gathered to watch as Qing opened her silk. The silk shone brightly like sunlight. "Where did you come from?" asked a curious man. "I traveled along the Silk Road to share our Chinese silk and culture," Qing said proudly.

Everyone gasped and clapped in amazement. They had never seen anything so beautiful and shiny! Soon her silk became very popular, and everyone wanted some. When Qing returned home, her village celebrated her brave adventure with bright lanterns, cheerful music, and cheers for their hero. Her journey brought back new stories and ideas, and it started a special friendship on the Silk Road that helped people from faraway places share and learn from each other.

The Silk Handkerchief

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Cheung, Tsz Kiu Chloe – 7

It was a summer holiday. Tsz Kiu, Sze Wan and their parents went to China to visit their beloved granny, who always told interesting stories.

After lunch their parents went to the farm while the girls ran around the house. Tsz Kiu stopped at the bookshelf, looking for a book, instead she found an old map.

“What’s this, Granny?” Tsz Kiu asked, holding the map. Granny pointed and said, “Long ago the Silk Road wasn’t just one road. It had many paths. Traders on camels carried silk, paper and spices between China and faraway lands.” The girls listened closely.

Later in the attic they found a treasure box with half of the key inserted. “I wonder what’s inside,” Tsz Kiu said as she inserted and turned the key.

A loud noise pulled them into the box. When they opened their eyes, they were in a desert. The sun was like a huge golden fireball beamed down on them. The caravan of camels passed fully loaded.

“Who are you? You look funny,” a boy asked. A man beside him smiled kindly and asked, “Are you lost?” Then he looked up and down at them and murmured, “You look familiar... almost like someone I once knew.” Sze Wan showed the key. “This key brought us here,” she said.

“Come with us. We will keep you safe,” the man said. They joined the camel caravan.

During the day, they watched camels walk across sand dunes. At night, they set a camp fire and sat under stars to tell stories.

The girls wondered what the Silk Road carried. So the man told them the shining silk went westward while wool, gold and silver came to the east. “Silk threads woven into clothings were transported to other parts of the world. Besides, people also carry tea, porcelain, spices and jade.” He pointed to the camel caravan who were trained to carry heavy loads.

One quiet night, a stranger sneaked into camp and stole the goods and the key placed next to Sze Wan’s pillow. “Thief!” the boy shouted. They chased him across the desert. After a long run, the thief slipped and tumbled, then caught by the man and he took back the key.

Before they left, the man handed each girl a silk handkerchief embroidered with ‘Cheung’ in Chinese. “A gift for you. We hope to see you again soon,” he said.

Then a strong wind twirled and spun, the key glowed and soon they were back in Granny’s attic.

Granny heard the noise and ran up to the attic.

“You won’t believe it, Granny,” they cried. “We went to the Silk Road. We saw tea, silk, porcelain and camel caravans. Someone even gave us these handkerchiefs.”

Granny gasped, then opened the treasure box and took out a handkerchief exactly like theirs with a knowing smile.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Chow, Nok Hei Oliver – 9

Light flickered through my eyelids. My head was pounding with a fiery headache. I forced my eyelids to open. "Ashley? Is that you?" A familiar face was slowly coming into focus. "Yes, where are we?" My mouth was dry, my throat raspy. "I don't know." Ashley replied vaguely. I blinked again, taking in the view. We were standing on top of a small sand dune, golden yellow against the fading sunset. "We're in the desert," I said, astonished. "How are we ever going to get out!" Ashley stomped her feet on the golden mound, sending loose sand down the hill. "Look!" I pointed at the distance, "Someone's coming!" From the valley came one, then two, then three, and finally a whole company. The company came on camels, with brightly coloured cargoes strapped onto their backs. "Come on." I said to Ashley, "Let's go." "Hello," said the man, "We're heading to Aleppo, do you want to come?" "Yes," Ashley said enthusiastically, accepting the ride.

Aleppo was a large city connecting the east and west. The market was bustling with different people from all over the world. "This is the middle of the Silk Road," said the Chinese man, "We come here from our city of Chang'an. We're just resting on our way to the Roman Empire." The man also showed us many Arabic cultures in the city, like snake charming. We also saw Chinese traders selling silk, tea and porcelain to the Arabs.

After our short rest at Aleppo, we travelled to the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, the fortress of Constantinople. Constantinople was a magnificent city, with towering walls and marble houses. We strolled into the city of Constantinople, where merchants were trading silk and other Chinese goods in return for precious silver coins. We walked inside a broad villa where we took out our silk. "Where are we selling them?" I asked, pointing at the silk. "At the busiest part of Constantinople, of course the Grand Bazaar!" the Chinese man said. The Bazaar was enormous, with every kind of spice, jewellery, fur and antique available. We sold our silk, porcelain and tea for gold and silver and started our journey back.

After selling most of our silk, we rode on our camels back to Chang'an. The stunning sunset painted the muddy ground golden. Once we reached our homeland, China, we saw horses and soldiers everywhere. We strolled around and talked, "This is the west market of Chang'an. Also, one of the largest and busiest markets." "Chang'an is so busy!!!" I answered. "Yeah! Chang'an has the....." All of a sudden, everything went black.

My eyes fluttered open, and I looked around. The TV was playing the national PLK CKY news. I recounted my adventures to mom and dad, but nobody believed me. But Ashley both knew it was real.

The Secrets of the Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Gu, Mia Milan – 8

Dapple, a little brown mouse with curious eyes, nibbled on a piece of sugar from a merchant's bag. She shivered, from excitement and a little fear. She knew many dangers—hungry eagles, endless deserts, and strange creatures—awaited her upon the legendary Silk Road. Yet Dapple was determined to see it for herself.

Suddenly, she heard a camel's deep grunt and squeaked in fright, nearly dropping her treasure.

“So thirsty! My throat is drier than desert sand !” one camel grumbled.

“Hmph! I'd leave this caravan now if they didn't give us seven meals a day with sweet grass and fresh water!” complained another, flicking its tail.

More camels joined in, their grumbles growing into such a racket that Dapple scurried deeper into the woven baskets, hiding behind a ball of soft silk.

Just then, a deep, rumbling laugh broke through the noise. An old camel named Sage, with fur weathered by many journeys, said with a calm but firm voice, “Youngsters, our caravan leader has given us more than we deserve. Did you already forget the terrible sandstorm that swept through just last week? Where would you be without his guidance?”

The camels, including little Dapple, trembled at the memory of howling winds and stinging sand. “The desert is not just an ocean of endless sand. Many secrets are hidden beneath, if you know where to look.”

As days passed, Sage became a gentle teacher. He showed the young camels how to find an essential water plant by its special smell, and how to read the twinkling stars for direction and hidden weather signs. Dapple listened carefully, huddled nearby. “The true treasures of the Silk Road,” Sage would say, “the skills, knowledge, and wisdom passed down by those who know the way. Remember, the journey itself is the greatest teacher.”

When the caravan finally reached a bustling trading city, Dapple spotted a fierce warrior named Arash, his arms crossed and a scowl on his face. The silk weaver called out, “Silk! Strong, unbreakable silk! Perfect for kites and strong robes!”

Arash scoffed, “Unbreakable? Impossible! Nothing so thin can be strong.”

The weaver smiled. “Let us have a contest.” He tied a single, thin silk thread to a heavy stone, then asked Arash to snap it. He pulled and twisted, but try as he might, the delicate thread held fast.

The stocky warrior was stunned into silence. The weaver replied softly, “True strength is not always loud and hard. You see, gentleness and flexibility can be a powerful kind of strength, too.” Grinning, the impressed warrior traded a shiny dagger for a full roll of glorious silk.

That evening, as the sun set in hues of orange and purple, Dapple felt her heart swell, glad she had come to the Silk Road. She had discovered different treasures and wonderful secrets along the way. Gazing at the road stretching ahead under the first stars, she was sure there were many more surprises waiting to be uncovered.

The Silk Road Adventures

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Lo, Cheuk Wing Hailey – 8

Sheldon was nine and loved adventure more than any other thing. One night, one of his grandma's ancient silver pendants started glowing bright yellow and started blinking. A mysterious deep voice whispered, "Kiddo, do you want an adventure?" Sheldon grabbed his backpack with a food box, some stationery, the blinking pendant and jumped inside a tremendous ancient vase.

WHOOSH! He landed in a dusty city called Acre, in the year 1271. Three men on camels were debating about how to get back to their hometown, Venice. A young gentleman wearing a fur cap and red robes, holding a bow and a sword, looked worried. "Hi! I'm Sheldon from the future 2025!" Sheldon shouted. Two machos reached for their swords, but Marco laughed and spoke. "Relax guys, he is harmless. Hello, my name is Marco Polo and these two are my helpers, Jack and Phil." Sheldon rang his bell, and he couldn't believe his eyes that in front of him was the widely known as the most famous western traveler. Without a doubt, Sheldon became the fourth Polo member. He rode the smallest camel named Spidey.

They crossed a giant red desert. One time Marco was starving, Sheldon shared his magic food box that never ran out of food. The box would have food refilled infinitely. Marco liked to call it "The witchcraft box " At night, the sky was full of sparkling stars as Sheldon had never witnessed. He drew some new constellations, like a desert camel, a poisonous red snake and an angry Marco etc.) and Marco duplicated them into his special notebook, it later known as "The Travels of Marco Polo"

They got lost in the scary Taklamakan Desert. Jack and Phil were concerned, but Sheldon recalled following the North Star rule from school. "We should follow that one and we will be safe. Please trust me" he said. As expected, they came back on track after they got lost for almost two days. Everyone cheered and referred to him as Captain Sheldon. In a green oasis, they met some foreign traders selling merchandise. Sheldon traded some of his stationery for a heavenly horse. Marco traded silk for Buddhism.

One day they reached the summer palace of the great Khan. The Khan had a swimming pool bigger than a stadium! Marco told stories and Sheldon drew pictures on rice paper. The Khan laughed so hard. He gave them both golden medals as an award.

After a few months, it was time for Sheldon's silver pendant to glow again. On the last night Marco gave Sheldon his favorite red fur hat. "For my bravest little brother in the world," he said. Sheldon hugged him tight. "You're going to write the best book ever, and kids like me will read it seven hundred years later!" The yellow light came, and Sheldon waved until Marco had just disappeared from his sight.

He popped back into his present living room. On his dining table sat Marco's red hat and a note in funny writing:

"Thank you for showing me the way, Captain Sheldon. Keep exploring and having curiosity!
Your best friend forever, Marco Polo, 1271"

Li Xiao Long's Journey on the Silk Road

Shanghai Singapore International School, Fan, Erlin – 7

“Li Xiao Long, are you ready to leave yet? Sunrise is almost here.” called Chang’e to her husband.

“Yes, yes! I’m done packing the donkey with the silk,” he replied.

“I’ve got rice, meat and a cake to eat on your journey,” Chang’e called back.

On the dusty path from Xian (Chang’an) on a hot dry morning, Xiao Long felt excited as he thought about how much money he could make. Happily, he thought about the food and goods he could bring home to his wife and children.

Sadly, Xiao Long thought about how many months it would be until he saw his family again. The Silk Road was enormous, like a long winding snake and crowded, like a stall selling dumplings cheaply!

After six long months, Xiao Long had become an experienced trader who had sold most of his silk for a good price. He had also bought surprises and goods to take back home to his family. They would be so pleased!

Many moons came before Xiao Long finally arrived in the city of Luoyang, a busy city with many traders. Xiao Ming and stood before the impressive city gates, along with hundreds of caravans carrying silk and other fine goods, foods and materials. Of course, Xiao Long knew this was a key city in the Silk Road. His clever plan was to sell the rest of his silk and head home to Chang’e. He missed his family.

Unfortunately, Xiao Long found it much harder than he had planned. He tried to sell his last silk, but no one bought it. People said, ‘Too costly!’ Li Xiao Long’s heart sank. Early one morning he was sitting at a café, sipping hot tea, sighing about his problem, when he saw a familiar face, a friend he had met months ago from Europe also travelling on the same road.

“My old friend! It has been a long time since I saw you,” Lorry exclaimed as he hugged Xiao Long.

“Indeed and I am hoping you can help me,” said Li Xiao Long. “I need to sell my last bags of silk before going home. Are you keen to buy?”

“Of course, I’m just looking for silk of excellent quality,” smiled Lorry.

The next day, after a large breakfast, Li Xiao Long finally packed his donkey for the last time. Excitedly, he thought about buying more gifts for his family but decided he had enough. He smiled as he pictured his children running to him. He could almost smell the warm cake at home. He jumped on his donkey and followed the dusty, winding road north to home.

The Little Rainbow Beyond Yumen Pass

Shanghai Singapore International School, Jin, Adeline – 8

Xiaomei, a 15-year-old Chinese girl obsessed with adventure stories, drifted into a deep sleep on a train to Yumen Pass, dreaming of a boundless desert.

In the dream, she met Marco Polo, a boy her age, and his father and uncle, who invited her to join their Silk Road expedition. The group trekked over snow-capped mountains, their legs aching under heavy packs. By the time they reached the Taklamakan Desert—known as the "Sea of Death"—their water skins were empty. The scorching sun parched their throats, and exhaustion weighed on them like a boulder. Soon, dehydration and heat left Xiaomei and Marco with high fevers; they could barely tell sand dunes apart from clouds.

Marco panted weakly, "This desert whispers eerie sounds and swallows travelers without a trace!" Hardly had he finished when a low howl rose from the dunes. Golden sand twisted and surged toward them like giant snakes. Terrified, Xiaomei clung to Marco, whimpering, "A monster is coming to devour us!"

Just then, a streak of colorful light burst from the sand: a tiny dragon-bird "Sinosauropteryx" named Xiao Loong, protagonist of *The Adventures of Xiao Loong: A Feathered Dinosaur's Tale*, here for a new desert adventure. It chirped loudly, freezing the sand instantly, then hopped toward a nearby hill, urging them to follow.

Weak and feverish, the two stumbled after it. The bird scratched the sand, and Xiaomei dug until she found damp earth—clear spring water seeped out. They drank greedily, their throats soothed and heads cleared. Marco tied a Venetian glass bead to the bird's leg as a thank-you. The dragon-bird chirped happily, darted toward the sun, and turned into a tiny rainbow fading into the horizon.

Their fevers subsided, and they walked out of the desert, spotting Yumen Pass's majestic silhouette. As everyone cheered, Xiaomei woke up—still on the train. She smiled, moved her bag, and offered her seat to a standing little boy. Outside, the desert no longer looked scary.

The vivid dream taught her a precious lesson: kindness and friendship are like bright lanterns, lighting even the loneliest, most perilous paths, turning arduous journeys into unforgettable adventures.

My Silky Life

Shanghai Singapore International School, Zang, Jessica – 8

Once upon a time there lived a lively cactus called Ghobi. She was sand-coloured, not bright green like the others, and her spikes were extra sharp and sensitive. She had two stubby ovals which stood on either side of her which made her look like a human. She never had flowers but had flower buds on each point of her spikes. The strangest part was that she never grew—not even one inch. Ghobi felt embarrassed, so she stopped going to cactus school. Her parents hired a tutor but when the tutor just glanced at Ghobi, she fell over laughing.

But even if Ghobi did not go to school she kept herself busy by studying something dangerous and interesting for her. In her desert, there was one strict rule: Never go near humans! One day, Ghobi had enough. She wanted to see them with her own eyes. When she finally spotted humans, she was amazed. How huge and tall they are! They also sat on huge sand lumpy things. They carried huge brown boxes. Ghobi rushed home, buzzing with fascination.

For two years, she watched from far away and studied what they did. At last, she decided, “I’m going to follow them.” She packed a few things and set off, pretending to be a normal cactus whenever anyone looked her way.

Soon, Ghobi heard the human whispering. “Do you think it’s clear?” said the first one. “I think so!” whispered another. Suddenly a man picked up a cactus and threw it far away while saying “K!” (made-up language). Then they fell into a pit with glittering jewels and fabulous silk that covered every inch of the floor. Ghobi realized, they were thieves!

Ghobi’s first instinct was to run, but she remembered what her pet saod before he died, “Stop bad guys wherever you can. If you don’t, it will affect everyone’s future.” So she hatched a plan.

Ghobi travelled to the nearest city. There, she discovered something amazing: she could pull out her own spikes and turn them into a tiny cello—her “sello.” That night, she played a sweet lullaby in the city square. She found herself in front of the famous Emperor Palace!

“Casicion(cactus musician)!” sneered a guard. “Goody, goody, just right for the king’s private musician!” snapped the other. They brought her to the Emperor’s private chambers.

When the sun had risen, the Emperor also rose. “Oh, your majesty, this is a casicion we found for you!” bowed the first guard. “All right, let’s see you play,” grumbled the Emperor, clearly not expecting him. Ghobi picked up her bow and played a lovely, happy song. When Ghobi finished, the Emperor was quite delighted and clapped kingishly, couldn’t help but smile.

Ghobi played for the king every day. When the Emperor trusted her, she told him her story.

When Ghobi was finished, the Emperor’s face turned serious. He sent his guards at once, and Ghobi led them through the desert.

After many days, the thieves were caught, and the treasures were returned. From that day on, Ghobi’s fellow cactuses called her the “Mother of Bravery.”

Marco Polo and his Great Silk Road Adventure

The British International School, Shanghai Puxi, Charekar, Aria – 8

Once upon a time there lived a boy called Marco Polo. He lived in a beautiful city called Venice. One day his uncle and father asked him to go on an adventure with them to China. His family was a rich merchant family who were involved in trade. He travelled for many years and explored different foods and cultures on his way. His journey from Venice to Turkey to China exploring the silk route has shaped the ancient trade route.

Their journey began by sea, sailing across the vast Mediterranean Sea and then travelled by land on horses, camels and passed by many bustling cities. Each day brought new wonders. He saw different animals and learnt new language on his way.

After four long years of journey, on his way he met the Mongolian King Kublai Khan, who introduced him to the Chinese trade and food. Marco liked the Chinese culture, and he learnt about the Chinese noodles. He introduced these Chinese noodles back in Italy and pasta was thus famous in Italy. Kublai Khan was a wise and powerful ruler. He was impressed by Marco's intelligence and curiosity. He appointed him as his special envoy carrying messages.

Marco witnessed incredible inventions, like paper money which made trade easier. Marco discovered the secret of ice-cream, a frozen treat. He eagerly shared it with his friends. He learnt about the art of silk production and how the artisans made silk fabric.

After 24 years in China, Marco travelled back carrying hundreds of memories and treasures from Asia. He decided to write a book and found a writer who could write all about his journey and discoveries. Thus, the book "The Travels of Marco Polo" was created that spoke about faraway lands, cultures, languages and incredible inventions. His stories amazed Europeans. His stories connected Europe with faraway Asia and opened new trade routes. His adventures were important and rewrote the map of explorations and even today is an important trade route.



Fiction

Group 2

Silk Road Spacetime

Anfield School, Wong, Tsz Ching Jessmyn – 10

The sandy soil swirled around as Shiyin's leather soles of her sandals patted the dry dust. The sky was a rich azure, with wispy pearl-coloured clouds. And the trees! The trees which were large and towering with luscious green leaves. In the distance, two small figures approached briskly and appeared rather impressive—sand drifting around the pair, conjuring a mist of gold. Today, she'd explore the Silk Road with her friends—assuming Huiyan didn't do her habit of telling them every little thing about every little thing—and show them the new map she'd acquired recently. Ecstatic, she bounded over to the two silhouettes striding over to her—Huiyan and Tianxi. Huiyan, the human encyclopedia of the trio, was, as usual, rattling off all the new facts she'd learnt over the one day they'd been apart. And, of course, Tianxi was as bubbly as usual, what with her hopefulness and naivety. Shiyin doubted she had *ever* seen sunlight before she started school. They all knew today was set out to be great—nothing, in their opinion, could go wrong on this day. Their parents were sitting by a towering tree, which was young, by the looks of the lush blanket of green swaying in the breeze.

“Look! I got a new map! Of the Silk Road! And look—look—” Shiyin stuttered gleefully, too excited to talk properly. “It glows! I’ve never seen anything like it!” Huiyan and Tianxi pored over it in admiration. “It’s pretty. Where’d you get it?” Tianxi asked. Shiyin explained that, while she wasn’t sure, her parents had given it to her, knowing she’d like it. Tianxi suddenly gasped and exclaimed, “Look! Look at the map! The buildings on it are unlike anything we’ve seen!” Shiyin barely looked at it and sighed. “You’re always overreacting, Tianxi. I bet you’ve just never seen it before.” “But it’s only the year 983! We don’t have buildings the size of giraffes!” Tianxi said, confused. Huiyan laughed. “Buildings the size of giraffes? I think you’re hallucinat—” Something stopped her in her tracks. “She’s right! Just look!” Indeed, there were buildings the size of, not a giraffe, but an entity much larger than one. Curious, they ventured forward in the direction of one of the buildings. When they reached it, they all gasped in shock. “But how...?” Shiyin whispered. Standing in front of them was a 432-foot building.

A few days later, they found themselves in front of the town hall. While they had no idea how they worked, they had a petition ready to be suggested to the council. Thousands of people had written their names down in the hopes that the Silk Road—which was thought of as a relic now—could be revived. From what little information they’d gathered, it was the year 2013, which meant that they’d actually time-traveled. A voice made them all jump.

“How may I help you?”

It turned out to be an official. “We wanted to show you our petition. It was only supposed to be a small thing, just a few hundred people. But thousands of people chipped in and think we should have a “Belt and Road Initiative” to revive the Silk Road.” Huiyan stated. For a minute, they thought he would laugh. Then he said, “That’s the most I’ve ever seen on a petition. I have to get it to the highest officials, the president even. But this *has* to work. I’m not the only one who thinks the Silk Road is interesting.”

In hours, the Belt and Road Initiative was a possibility. The president had gotten word of it—through something called *email*—and thought it might work. Even though they were thrilled to revive the Silk Road, their hometown on the ancient, weathered map was disappearing—and it was disappearing fast. One day, while they were out, all they could see left over were their three houses. Time was running out quickly. Two weeks later, a government official came up to them and told them how most people were supporting the Initiative. The government even came up with a slogan—“One Belt, One Road”. But since their hometown started to disappear, the map had always been with Shiyin. It had been so that Shiyin drew a big red arrow pointing to their vanishing village. Now, all that was left was a barren piece of land. Shiyin glanced at the others, and they knew what was wrong immediately. Before the government official had finished talking, they darted away and in the direction of home. They found their parents were still sitting by the tree, unaware of anything that had happened. The month or so they’d been away, time had been frozen in this world. The trio grinned at each other and launched into their parents’ arms. When everyone except the kids and Shiyin’s parents were befuddled, they just mumbled into the cloth. Before going off for a walk, they caught Shiyin’s mother’s wink. “She’s also a time traveler.” Shiyin laughed. “When she first told me, I didn’t believe her! But now I do. I sure do.” They walked off into the distance, the sand clouding around them.

Tianxi put her hat on. Today, they’d see the Silk Road again—Huiyan’s mother had thought the previous excursion had gone great—and they wouldn’t bring the map! Tianxi and Huiyan couldn’t wait to see Shiyin; she always had something new to show them. This time, it was an exquisite leather pouch. As usual, the three obsessed over it and got bored within thirty seconds. “Let’s just go for a walk this time,” Tianxi said. The shimmering sand swirled in loops

around the trio. Trees that used to be bare were now fresh with moist leaves. No one could create anything more stunning than this fairytale setting. The friends laughed and joked about everything that came to mind, in that cheery mood where everything seemed like the one-liner of a lifetime. Back at Shiyin's house, the map glimmered in the darkness.

Sacrifice

Chinese International School, Tsang, Dylan – 11

In the year 2150, Dr. Eric Thomas was studying the Silk Road in Cairo. As the lead scientist for the Silk Road Investigation Project (SRIP-88), it was his mission to retrieve an Egyptian artifact rumoured to be the key to solving impossible issues that affected the new world.

Eric drove through the vintage gate of Cairo in a flying car but encountered a giant sandstorm. The car spun around in circles, and Eric was flung off.

“Caw, caw!” Eric heard. It sounded like a raven screaming through the air. Eric struggled to lift up his head, since the dust felt heavy and pushed his body down.

Eric saw a giant ball of fire spinning above him. The heat radiating off the ball of fire was almost unbearable, but then it morphed into a large phoenix. Eric thought that the Great Phoenix was a myth, but there was something about this that seemed real. This was the mythical phoenix, the protector of the Silk Road, or known in China as the Feng Huang. It stared down at Eric.

“You’re not from the Tang Dynasty,” the phoenix rasped. “Am I right?”

“Yes,” Eric said, confused, “I’m from the year 2150, *this year*.”

“No, it is the year 850, and it is the Tang Dynasty,” the phoenix replied. “I wasn’t expecting anyone for another 600 years...” Eric thought about the date. The year 1453 was when the Ottoman Empire came into power, and the Silk Road ended. “I’m not here to end the Silk Road,” Eric said.

The phoenix looked into Eric’s eyes. “I know that you are here for the Artifact. I am its protector, which is why I am guarding the gate. If the Artifact is misused, the Silk Road will collapse. The future depends on my protection, Eric,” the phoenix said.

Eric wondered how the phoenix knew his name, but turned his mind to the words that the phoenix said. “You said you are guarding the gate, which means the entrance is here.”

The phoenix frowned. “Your logic is sound, Eric. But you have to get past the protector—me.”

Suddenly, the phoenix noticed the golden disc-shaped object sticking out of Eric’s shirt pocket. One side depicted a caravan while the other side had a camel, both of which symbolized the Silk Road. The phoenix stared at it as if gazing into an abyss.

“Where did you get that?” The phoenix hissed darkly.

“It was hidden in a chest that I examined when searching the great pyramid. Why?” Eric asked.

For a few seconds, it seemed like the whole universe paused. Then the phoenix shot fire at the golden key. Eric ducked out of the way but fell towards the ground. The golden key started to fall out of his pocket. Eric reached for the key as it glowed blue and teleported Eric into a large room filled with lights.

Eric looked around the room. The walls were hung with fine Chinese silk curtains and the floors were covered with Middle Eastern rugs. A cabinet in one corner of the room held Roman glassware, and bottles of spices from India. The room was a treasure trove from the trade along the Silk Road.

He walked towards the table in the middle of the room. An old box laid on top. Eric wiped the dust off of it, and opened it. Suddenly, the room’s lights became more vibrant, and wind blew out from the box. The air became thick as a crystal floated out of the box.

Eric knew deep down that this was the artifact.

The crystal flew into Eric's hand and teleported him back to the phoenix, who looked at Eric with an unreadable expression.

"You must return the artifact! It will create A LOT of danger!" The phoenix pleaded.

"How are you so sure about that?" Eric said, feeling the crystal. The crystal had a warm touch on one side, and cold on the other. "What technology does this hold?"

The phoenix sighed. "This crystal has ancient powers, not technology. The human who holds it has the power to do anything they wish. Which is why this is dangerous! You mustn't use it!"

"But I need to save the world," Eric said, softly.

"I know you want to help your new world's problems, but that won't help in the long term. That crystal gives you one wish, but then it fades into dust. The only way that humans can succeed is if **they all work together**. Then they would be able to achieve extraordinary things."

Eric thought about all the incredible human creations held in the chamber and the relationships across peoples that the Silk Road enabled. "This artifact maintains the Silk Road's balance right?" Eric asked.

The phoenix nodded sadly.

"And you're the Silk Road's protector right?"

The phoenix nodded again.

"Then I know what I need to do."

The phoenix regarded him, seeming to stare into his heart. It understood his plan.

"Don't you want me to send you home?" The phoenix asked.

Eric froze. He didn't think the phoenix cared about him, but he was wrong.

"Someone needs to keep watch over this chamber, with or without magical powers." Eric replied.

Eric took a deep breath before putting the crystal gently onto the phoenix's chest. The crystal turned rainbow as the phoenix rose in the air.

"My wish is for the phoenix to be able to guide all people from all generations." Eric said quietly.

The phoenix flew into outer space. The last thing it did was smile at Eric before it formed a new constellation that took the shape of a phoenix.

Eric used the golden key to return to the chamber to keep watch, knowing that he did the right thing by sacrificing himself.

In 2150, history books would record a mysterious spike in solar activity in the year 850, but only the grains of sand would remember the man who gave up his future to save the world.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Chef Bao Bao and His Magic Wok

Creative Primary School, Chan, Liam Lok Hang – 9

Hi, I'm Bao Bao. I'm eight years old and I live with my grandma on the outskirts of Xi'an. One rainy afternoon, we were making my favourite dumplings. Hers looked like presents, mine looked like squished buns. Grandma smiled and said, "Yours are just perfect!"

Grandma watched me try again and again, never giving up. Her eyes sparkled, as if deciding something important. She reached into the cupboard and pulled out a dusty old wok. "This belonged to your great-grandfather," she whispered. "It's a magic wok, but only if you stir it with a brave heart!" That night I held a wok and stirred it with all my courage.

WHOOSH!

A cloud of smoke swirled around me. When it cleared, I was standing in the bustling imperial kitchen of ancient Xi'an.

"Hey, you little boy! Can you make noodles?" the royal chef barked. "Yes... sort of. I've always made them with grandma, but never on my own." I stretched the noodles so long that the chef was left speechless! I said nervously, "Your Majesty... your noodles." The emperor took a bite and tears rolled down his cheeks. "It tastes just like my mother's!" he cried.

The palace chef smiled proudly, **"Simple food if done just right, brings joy and love in every bite."**

WHOOSH!

I landed in the middle of Dunhuang's desert village. A monk stepped out from the cave with a tray of lotus seeds. He said softly, "Pass me the honey and I will show you something yummy!" Together we pressed little mooncakes from molds and shared them with the villagers. The monk said wisely, **"Sharing food with those we meet, makes each meal taste twice as sweet."**

WHOOSH!

I popped into a busy market in Samarkand. The spice shopkeeper waved me over, "Come and try my kebab!" We walked into the shop and the smell of spices dazzled me. He handed me a glowing chilli and laughed, "This pepper is silly, it'll burn your belly!"

Together we cooked kebab and flatbread. The spices danced through the air. He smiled and said, **"Spices shine like rainbows do, colours, scents and stories too!"**

WHOOSH!

Suddenly, I was in Venice at a chef's competition. The judges shouted, "Invent a new dish for our town!" I grabbed my wok and remembered all the places I travelled.

I made a pizza with a mooncake crust, long stringy cheese, kebab toppings and a chilli tomato sauce. The pizza was as long as a gondola! The crowd cheered, **"Delizioso! Bao Bao's wok is fantastico!"**

WHOOSH!

I landed back home after whooshing through journeys of the Silk Road. Grandma asked, "How were the noodles my dear?" "I made the king cry!" I replied. Grandma looked puzzled. Then she smiled and said, "Bao Bao, your wok taught you the greatest recipe – **sharing love through food!**"

Now I have a restaurant called *Wok Through Time*. I cook dishes from everywhere I have been. Every night, I stir my magic wok... wondering what adventure will come next.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: Bandits of the Silk Road

Creative Primary School, Cheng, Man Yan Jessica – 10

It's the summer holidays! Everyone's having a good time, except for me ...

I'm Ellie, a Primary Five student currently working on a piece of writing about some sort of Silk Road thing. I do know a thing or two about the Silk Road, but I don't think the teacher would approve of "the Silk Road is a road" or "Silk Road is a name of a road." But luckily, I have a secret weapon: ChatGPT! But even AI won't help with this situation because I don't understand what it means, so I rushed towards my brother's room.

"Ethan! I need your help!" I said.

"What do you need help with?" he asked.

"There's this Silk Road homework I need help doing."

He thought for a while and said, "Actually, I have something better than help. A time machine."

"Ethan ... I know you're already in college studying this sort of stuff, but HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TRUST YOU?"

"I'm top of the class, what else do you need as proof it'll work?" he said.

"Fine, I'll trust you this ONE time," I said.

"Okay, but you must swear to never tell anyone about this and here's a keychain to get yourself back to the present," he told me.

"Okay," I agreed. I put my notebooks, pens and keychain in a small blue bag. *Here I come Silk Road ...*

Zap! I looked around, there were people, a lot of them. Some Chinese, some other foreign people. The blazing hot sun instantly blinded me, I could still see but I would have to squint my eyes. It was hot, too hot. I grabbed my notebook and pen and wrote down *hot and sunny* for climate. Later, I found somebody who offered me a palanquin ride for silk, but I didn't have any, so I gave them a notebook and they seemed to like it. Palanquins are boxes with sticks underneath them so people can carry things or other people. I thanked them for their service and hopped on. When I was looking at what the traders had to offer, one of them caught my eye. I couldn't hold back my curiosity, so I got off the palanquin and rushed toward them, hoping to trade for something. He was holding a sign that said *TRADING FOR BOOKS!* But when I approached him, he told me that there was no stock left. Disappointed, I went back to the palanquin only to find even more bad news.

"Have any of you people seen a small blue bag?" I asked. But no one answered. *This is bad, really bad! How else am I supposed to get back home, how else am I supposed to mark down things in my notebook?!* My mind was racing, I was panicking. I told the people underneath me to stop moving so I could find my bag. I frantically looked around, hoping to find my bag, but no. It was gone.

Suddenly, a little girl came up to me and asked, "Sorry to bother you, but are you trying to find something?" Her name was Alice Cheng and she wanted to help me find my lost bag. She told me she also lost something recently. "It honestly could have been burglars ... there are a lot of robberies nowadays."

"Do you want to look for our missing items together?" I asked.

"Good idea, I lost an expensive shell for trading and I've been down in the dumps ever since," she said.

"Don't worry, we will find it!" I replied.

I stayed over at Alice's house that day. I suggested that we could distract the thief long enough that one of us will be able to get our items back. I learned the Chinese flute when I was young so I could play a tune while Alice

took back what was rightfully ours! So far, the plan was going well, but even the tiniest mistakes could bring us trouble, so we needed backup plans too!

“Okay, so we need a backup plan if the whole thing falls apart. How about just running back to your home and locking the doors?” I suggested.

“No, the thief could break it, how about running back home and hiding in our basement? We have a really big one!” Alice said.

“That could definitely work out! But won't the thief barge in and know we're in there already?” I asked.

“We can cover it up.” Alice said.

It was the day of the heist. We were going to get our stolen items back. We decided to locate the burglar first. I borrowed a flute and headed out. We quickly spotted a suspicious looking guy lurking around with ... a small blue bag!

“That's him!” Alice exclaimed. I took out the borrowed flute and started performing, everybody clapped when I finished and the thief did too, so he put down his stolen items which gave Alice a chance to steal it back. I watched as Alice crawled underneath and grabbed it. She gave me the signal to leave.

“Yay, we did it!” Alice said. We got some cake from a trader and celebrated together. Even though I didn't get a lot of information to write about, at least I had memories to treasure. I told Alice that I would have to go now.

“Bye and have a good day, Alice,” I said.

“I look forward to seeing you again.” she replied. After that, I time travelled back into the present.

School starts today! The first thing my friend did when we met was ask me if I heard this story about two girls stealing from a robber hundreds of years ago. *That seemed oddly specific...* “No, I haven't,” I smiled. If only she knew.

New Tales of China's Silk Road – The Last Silk Route

Creative Primary School, Fong, Choi Yin – 10

Once upon a time, there lived three children named James, Eliza and Walker. They were all born without knowing who their parents were and raised as orphans, and they loved going on adventures. This was a time when the world's great trading paths, like the famous Silk Road, were losing importance because of big, fast steam trains and large ships owned by rich empires. But the three children wanted one last grand adventure.

They were in a dusty, beautiful city called Samarkand, which had amazing buildings. Walker thought their adventure needed more people. There, they found two new friends called Jake and Mary.

"I've found it!" James announced one morning, rolling out an old map he'd traded a pocketknife for. James loved maps more than anything. He knew all the capitals of the world. "There's a secret mountain path, a 'goat path' through the very top of the world that leads to China. No one uses it anymore because the air is too thin and the cold is too great."

Eliza, who could speak many languages and always knew the right thing to say to strangers, tapped the map with her finger. "But James, the grown-ups say that path is too dangerous. The altitude makes you sick, and there are soldiers everywhere looking for intruders."

Walker, who hardly ever spoke but could track a rabbit through solid rock, just nodded slowly and started checking their supplies: blankets, pots, and food for their mules. He added extra layers of wool to the packs, understanding the importance of warmth better than any map.

Their mission was to deliver a special box of American-made compasses to the other side of the mountains, a place called Kashi in China.

They set off with their mules and two new friends. Jake was always singing silly songs about camels and funny-looking mules, and Mary knew every single plant and star in the desert and mountains. She had a calm presence that made the others feel safe.

The journey was immediately harder than James had thought. The flat, warm land of Samarkand quickly gave way to giant, pointy mountains that scraped the sky. These were the Pamir Mountains, the "Roof of the World". The air became thin and cold. Every step made their chests ache. James spent hours worrying about the food and the map, his mind a swirl of numbers and supplies. "We have enough flour for five days, maybe six if we eat small portions!" he'd say nervously. He felt the weight of the expedition on his young shoulders, the responsibility for everyone's safety pressing down on him.

Eliza, meanwhile, was busy making friends. When they stopped at tiny villages high in the clouds, the children were wary of the foreign group. But Eliza would use the few words she knew to ask about their families and compliment their beautiful clothes. With Mary's help as a better translator and a respected peer in the community, Eliza secured fresh yak butter tea, which tasted very strange but was very warm and helpful, and sometimes extra dried fruit for the journey.

Walker was their silent protector. He walked ahead or behind, always watching the ground and the horizon. One evening, as they were making a small fire, with Jake humming a tune about a sleepy donkey, Walker held up a hand. "Quiet," he whispered, the first word he'd spoken all day.

He pointed to the dirt path. There were strange boot prints that didn't belong to their group.

"Soldiers," Walker said. "Russian soldiers. They are looking for people like us, intruders and independent traders."

Panic set in. If the soldiers caught them, they would take the compasses and maybe even their mules.

"We can't go forward on the path!" James wailed, staring at his map which offered no help.

Walker used his eyes, pointing to a hidden opening in the side of the mountain. It was a dark, spooky cave. “We go through,” he said simply.

The cave was dark, icy, and very cold. The mules were scared, but Walker gently led them inside. They walked in the darkness for hours, the sound of their footsteps echoing. It was thanks to Walker’s bravery and instincts, and Mary’s knowledge of the stars and rock formations guiding them from within, that they managed to sneak past the patrolling soldiers without being seen. Jake’s quiet humming now less silly, more calming and keeping their spirits up.

After more days of cold, thin air, and climbing, they finally reached the top of the world.

Then, they began their descent into China. The air grew thicker, the landscape greener, and finally, they saw the ancient, brown walls of Kashi.

Merchants in colorful robes were selling melons the size of small barrels, beautiful silks, and shiny spices. They found the people they had to meet. The men were formal British agents in neat uniforms, a stark contrast to their own dusty, worn-out clothes.

The handover of the compasses was quick. The British men barely looked at them.

James felt a profound emptiness. He had successfully run the last silk route, but the world they operated in was gone, replaced by the mechanisms of empire and industry. The great age of independent trade was over.

“What now?” James asked his friends, looking at his map which seemed very complete, with no more blank spaces.

Walker looked out at the endless desert, the sun sinking below the horizon. “We are Walkers,” he said, sharing a name that meant they never stopped moving.

Eliza smiled, “The land roads might be closed, but there’s still the sea. The world is changing, yes, but there are always new stories to be found. The adventure is just beginning.”

Mary pointed out the direction of the coast, her eyes full of the wisdom of a new journey.

And so, the five children walked out of Kashi, their grand land adventure over, but their spirits high, ready to find a new path in a world that was quickly getting smaller.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: The Tale of the Forever Wine

Creative Primary School, Lau, Hei Seon – 9

“Ding!” The door opened. An Egyptian merchant I had met three years ago walked in. I greeted him in Egyptian, “Uncle Khalid, welcome back!” and he replied, “Wei Ali! You are ten now, right? I miss your wine so much.” I made some and passed it to him. Uncle Khalid stirred the wine and watched its colour change. He said it was the best wine of his life.

My family secret began in Dunhuang, in 200BC. I live with my sister and parents in a warehouse where we sell our special “Forever Wine.” This wine is well-known among the merchants and travellers on the Silk Road because it vanishes if you drink too much and it never spoils, making it a valuable drink for long sea voyages and desert caravans. It is made using a secret recipe passed down from my great-great-grandmother:

“First, go to the Eastern Desert of Egypt to find the rare fig. Smash the figs to get the sweet juice. Next, go to the mountains of China to get the dried lichen and add it to the juice. This starts a slow fermentation, but the alcohol vanishes when it reacts with stomach acids. Then, get some powdered gemstone from Rome and a drop of sacred lotus extract from Egypt. This makes the wine sparkle and shift colour. Mix and boil for forty minutes.”

“Ding!” The door opened again. A Chinese trader came in so I greeted him in Mandarin and gave him a cup of wine.

“Ding!” The door was pushed open heavily. A fat Roman walked in with his two slaves. They put two stacks of gold on the counter, and the Roman said, “Sell me the recipe, and this is all yours.”

“Sorry, my wine is for friendship, not for money,” my father replied in Greek. Many Roman merchants spoke Greek, and our family knew how to manage it. The Roman then opened the door, revealing chests of diamonds, gold, camels and spices. Still my father replied firmly, “Sorry, the recipe is my ancestor’s secret. I will not tell anyone.”

“Then I will drink here. Give me three jars of wine.” I watched them closely as they drank the wine. I saw the Roman winking and whispering about something. I crept closer and heard the words, “Recipe,” “Tonight,” and “Steal.”

I told my sister and we came up with a plan. First, we put rocks on top of the window and bells on the floor. Next, we put a fake wine recipe in a box and placed it under the bed—it looked real. Then, I hid another 300 fake recipes everywhere! We also set up a network of mirrors so we could see everything from my room.

Ding-bang-ding! We heard the bells and rocks. The Roman had arrived! We watched as he looked puzzled by all the fake recipes, but he soon spotted the box under the bed. He opened it and smiled greedily as he left. But he didn’t have our secret!

Across the Silk Road: A Han Dynasty Adventure

Creative Primary School, Li, Cyrus Sing Hei – 11

A Big Dream

A long time ago, during the Han Dynasty, there was a big city called Chang'an. It was full of markets, music, and people from many places. In this city lived a boy named Wang Weilai. His name, Weilai, meant "future". His father had chosen this name because he believed his son would do great things one day – make the family proud and help the empire become better.

Weilai was eighteen. Everyone thought he would soon work for the government. His father had taught him books and rules for years so he could pass the civil service exams. That was an honorable path, but Weilai wanted something different. He wanted an adventure before starting his career.

The Silk Road had just opened. It was a long trade route that crossed deserts and mountains, connecting China to faraway lands. People told stories about strange goods, new languages, and distant kingdoms. Weilai imagined colorful markets, spicy foods, and music he had never heard before. With his father's reluctant blessing and a small bag of coins, Weilai decided to chase his dream and see the world.

A New Friend

At the caravan yard outside Chang'an, Weilai saw a boy about his age adjusting the saddle on a strong camel.

"You look like you know the road," Weilai said.

The boy smiled. "I do. My father mapped half of it."

"Your father?" Weilai asked.

"Zhang Qian," the boy said proudly. "I'm Zhang Bao. My father was the emperor's envoy who first explored the west. I want to finish what he started."

Weilai's heart leapt. Traveling with the son of a famous diplomat was a lucky chance. They shook hands, and a new friendship began.

The Departure

On the morning, they left, Weilai wore a simple indigo robe tied with a leather belt. His mother packed dried dates, millet cakes, and a small jar of pickled vegetables. His father gave him a bamboo scroll and said, "Knowledge is your compass. Don't lose yourself."

Weilai bowed deeply. "I will return wiser, Father."

Beside him, Zhang Bao checked his bow and arrows. "Adventure loves the bold," he said.

Meeting Ming

The caravan leader was Ming, an old trader with a silver beard and patched robes. He looked at the two boys and said, "Beyond the Jade Gate, you'll face sandstorms, bandits, and thirst. This road is not easy."

Weilai smiled. "I want to have stories worth telling."

Zhang Bao added, "I want to build bridges between worlds."

Ming chuckled. "Bridges need patience, not pride. Courage is good, but wisdom keeps you alive."

From that day, Ming became their mentor. He taught them how to read desert winds, save water, and judge a man's character by his eyes. "Trade is not just goods," Ming said one night by the fire. "It is trust."

The Journey Begins

The caravan moved through the Gansu Corridor, a narrow path between tall cliffs. They traveled with camels carrying silk bolts and bundles of tea bricks, the treasures of their land. At night, under a sky full of stars, Ming told stories about his youth – how he traded silk for Persian glass, jade for Roman coins, and learned words in twenty languages.

"Every language is a key," Ming said. "Collect enough keys, and no door stays shut."

Trials of the Desert

The Taklamakan Desert was the hardest part of the journey. The heat scorched their skin by day, and the cold froze them at night. Sandstorms roared like angry dragons, forcing the caravan to huddle together. When water ran low, Weilai shared his drink with a tired camel. Ming nodded. “Compassion is the rarest coin on this road. Spend it wisely.”

New Worlds

Weeks later, they reached Dunhuang, a bright oasis where cultures mixed like colors on a painter’s palette. Weilai wandered through markets filled with treasures – lapis lazuli from Afghanistan, glass beads from Syria, and music played on strange instruments. Ming taught them how to bargain without insult and greet strangers with respect.

Danger on the Road

Near the Tianshan mountains, bandits attacked the caravan. Though untrained, Weilai grabbed a fallen spear and fought beside Zhang Bao, who shot arrows quickly. Ming fought like a young man, his staff cracking skulls. After the fight, Ming said, “Courage is not charging into battle. It’s standing firm when your legs beg to run.”

Saving Zhang Bao

One night, the bandits came back. They sneaked into the camp and grabbed Zhang Bao while everyone was sleeping. When Weilai woke up, he saw footprints leading into the dark hills. Ming whispered, “It’s too dangerous.” But Weilai shook his head. “He’s my friend. I can’t leave him.”

Weilai took a small dagger and tiptoed into the bandits’ camp. He hid behind boxes and listened. The bandits were laughing loudly. Zhang Bao was tied to a post, and his bow was broken. Weilai remembered what Ming always said: *“Sometimes words can save you better than a sword.”*

So Weilai jumped out and shouted, “Let him go! The emperor’s army is coming!” The bandits froze. Fear spread quickly. In the confusion, Weilai cut the ropes and pulled Zhang Bao free. They ran as arrows flew past them. Their hearts raced, but they didn’t stop until they reached the caravan.

Ming smiled when he saw them. “You’ve learned the most important lesson – loyalty.”

Weilai was tired but happy. “Adventure isn’t just about seeing new places,” he said. “It’s about standing up for your friends.”

Home Again

Months later, Weilai returned to Chang’an with treasures and stories. Zhang Bao was already planning another trip west. Ming stayed behind, smiling. “The road never ends,” he called. “It only waits.”

When Weilai walked into the hall of the local magistrate to start his career, he felt ready – not because of books, but because of the Silk Road. He whispered, “The Silk Road is not just a path across lands, it is a journey across the soul.”

New Tales of China's Silk Road – A Special Trade

Creative Primary School, Ong, Luke – 9

"UGH, why can't I think of any ideas?" This is Henry. He is a clothes designer. He has four kids and a wife. Now his boss wants him to design a new piece of clothing, but he has run out of ideas. The design is for a worldwide competition with the theme of silk. He has to take care of his four kids because his wife went on a business trip. He must think of a new product in three days' time or he will get fired. No pressure, right?

He was sitting in his chair, trying to focus on creating a new product and ignoring his kids running around his desk. Suddenly, a silk worm dropped out of nowhere. The even crazier part was that the worm could talk. Henry was so surprised that he jumped out of his chair. "Who are you?!" said Henry. "I'm Bill the silk worm," the silk worm said. "I see that you are very frustrated with this project. Let me help you! Shall I?"

The silk worm used a machine to open up a portal, and that made Henry think that he was Doraemon's close cousin. When they went into the portal, they reappeared on the Silk Road in the year 1400. Suddenly – KABOOM! Henry's kids crashed into them. (Henry's eldest son, Peter, nearly smashed into Bill the silk worm and killed him.) When Henry asked Peter why they were here, he just said, "It's a long story. Max was chasing Jonathan, and Mason screamed when his Lego broke, then ..." (the story went on and on, and Henry lost focus). If you didn't know, Henry had four kids: one named Peter, one named Max, one named Jonathan and one named Mason. All four boys – so you can imagine how chaotic it could be in the house, and how much noise there was. It was often hard for Henry to concentrate on his work.

Bill explained to the boys that the Silk Road was a vast ancient network of trade routes connecting places in East Asia, like China, with Mediterranean Europe and North Africa. It was active for 1400 years! It was named for China's highly prized silk, but it also facilitated the trade of spices, precious metals and ceramics. Most importantly, the trade of silk clothing created interconnected civilisations. Like Bill said, it was not a single path but a complex one.

Henry could see a lot of people: some were from the Han dynasty, some were from the Roman Empire, some were from the Mongol Empire ... They walked around and looked at what people were selling. There were a lot of merchants. Those merchants looked exotic, and none of their goods were recognisable. Meanwhile, the kids were busy making new friends from different countries!

When things were going as planned, there was suddenly a huge BOOM!

At that time, the Ottoman Empire was trying to take over the Silk Road and gain control. It had been capturing the trading hubs like Cairo, Baghdad, and Aleppo. Now, they were under attack. In every direction, everyone was losing their minds: guns were fired, and bombs were detonated. Everything was being destroyed! A soldier was running directly towards them, but Peter had a plan up his sleeve. He grabbed the nearest barrel and knocked him out.

While their father and the worm made a portal, the kids protected them with shotguns. They grabbed them from a nearby stall and shot at the enemies (all this nerf gun shooting at each other at home became useful in this situation!). Dad finished the portal, but no one knew what lay behind it. Then they jumped inside. Zoom! Zoom! Zoom!

They all went back to 2026. Henry came back through the portal last. Bill was nowhere to be seen, and the kids were already playing with their toys. He thought it might just be a dream, but when he sat down, he felt something on his bum. He stood back up and saw a piece of silk cloth. The silk material was so special: it was metallic, yet it shone in different shades when you looked at it from different angles, just like a rainbow. That made him sense it was not a dream.

"Is that you, Bill? Did you sacrifice yourself and turn into a piece of silk cloth?" A light shone through the piece of silk. An idea suddenly popped up. He drew a sweater with wings made of silk that shines, with a dragon stepping on a world map showing all the countries that traded on the Silk Road; pants with multiple pockets, handy for putting many things in. He handed it to his boss just in time, right before his boss got mad at him. At least he could hand it in on time, right? (No.)

New Tales of China's Silk Road – The Legend of the Silk Road

Creative Primary School, Wong, Ngo Yeung – 10

“How many silkworms did you catch today?” asked Gary’s dad.

Gary Chan lived in Xi’an during the Han Dynasty. His father raised silkworms, and Gary helped every day. He caught them, bred them, and gathered mulberry leaves. The more silkworms they had, the more silk they could produce, since the silkworms were boiled alive in their cocoons during the process. Gary was always busy.

He enjoyed caring for the silkworms, but he thought that producing only white silk was too plain. He often wondered about colourful, shiny silk. Occasionally, one in a thousand silkworms would have a slight mutation and produce gray silk, but no one had ever seen a silkworm create silk in vivid colours.

One day, his father had to work overnight. “We have enough silk to trade for a fortune,” he said. “Since I must stay, you will go to the Silk Road and trade for textiles and leathers. Your mother and grandfather need them.”

Gary’s mother was a fashion designer, and his grandfather was a shoemaker. They longed for new materials to attract customers. Gary set out with his mule, Muletan. He passed Dunhuang, skirted the Taklamakan Desert, and crossed a perilous mountain pass before reaching New Delhi.

Gary was amazed to see women wearing long skirts decorated with intricate patterns. They wore jewelry like necklaces and earrings.

“Wow! Look at that woman’s red earrings. They’re sparkling in the sun! What are they made of?” Gary exclaimed.

“They’re rubies! Rubies are very popular here. Every woman loves them. Would you like some? We sell them in our store,” said a friendly Indian girl.

Gary entered her store and felt dizzy at the sight of so many jewels and rubies. He decided to exchange his silk for the gems. The girl was equally surprised by the silk. It was so light and smooth. She wanted to use it to make long dresses and skirts to sell to her customers. So they struck a deal. Gary was thrilled with the exotic rubies and jewels.

“My mom’s fashions will look amazing with these rubies and jewels!” Gary thought.

He also bought textiles and leathers from the shops where he had traded before. He was satisfied and eager to return home. He couldn't wait to show his family the incredible rubies, jewels, textiles, and leathers.

On the way back, Gary chose a new route through forests and valleys in northeast India. He loved the landscape.

Suddenly, Muletan brayed and tumbled into a hole. They found themselves in a dark cave. As Gary comforted his mule, he noticed a huge spider with black and yellow markings crawling on Muletan’s nose. On the mule’s head rested what looked like a golden hat. Gary touched it. It felt like silk!

“Gold silk! This spider can produce gold silk!” he cried.

Gary was astonished. He watched the spider closely. It used its back legs to pull liquid silk through tiny nozzles on its rear, which turned into a solid, golden thread. He couldn’t help but jump with excitement.

“I’ll bring some of these spiders home. I’ll name them Golden Silk Orb Weavers!” he declared.

Gary caught about 25 spiders and found his way out of the cave. He rode Muletan again, eager to show his family the Golden Silk Orb Weavers, the jewels, and the rubies.

After several days, Gary and Muletan returned home. Gary's mother rejoiced at the jewels, rubies, and textiles. His grandfather was thrilled to see the leathers. His father marveled at the Golden Silk Orb Weavers. Gary raised the spiders alongside the silkworms, feeding them insects and even dead silkworms from the boiling process. When he saw the first strands of gold silk, tears filled his eyes. His dream of creating vividly coloured silk came true.

Once they had enough white and gold silk, Gary set off again on the Silk Road. This time, he travelled even farther to Iran, Syria, and the Mediterranean region. When people there saw the gold silk, they were astonished.

"Wow! How beautiful! How can silk be so soft and shiny? How did you make it?"

But for Gary, it was a secret. Only he had the gold silk.

There was one problem, though. Although people were amazed by the shimmering gold silk, greedy merchants undervalued it, unsure if it would sell. They knew Gary desperately wanted their food, spices, precious metals, textiles, and glassware, so they tried to bargain unfairly.

Gary, being simple and trusting, agreed to the trades. He believed his father would love the goods from the West and that they would sell well in China. But he didn't receive the value he truly deserved. Later, he saw his gold silk made into clothes and sold at prices nearly twenty times higher than what he had received. He realized his gold silk was being severely undervalued.

Then, a clever idea popped into Gary's mind. He invented a set of scales with two bowls balanced on a rod to weigh goods. He created a system to ensure fair trade and wrote a price list on a large cloth so everyone could see the value of his white and gold silks. For example, ten grams of gold silk could be traded for a full sack of spices or a roll of fine wool.

People liked his idea. With fixed prices, everything felt fair. Finally, Gary was able to trade equitably for spices, precious metals, gems, textiles, and more.

He earned a great deal on his journey along the Silk Road. When he returned home, he brought back wealth and treasures. His father was overjoyed, and the family became very rich. People in China were excited to buy the new goods from the West.

With each trade, harmony grew, and the spirit of the Silk Road flourished. Every item carried a story from distant lands, opening doors to a brighter tomorrow.

The Lost Key

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Chew, Chin Chun – 12

"We have lost the last record of the Silk Road that happened 2000 years ago since our enemy's spies stole the last book," General William hissed in my ear as the war between Stormhelm and Thornewood continued. The war had been happening for a few centuries already, both fighting to conquer the mysterious island known as Soul Rock, where legends had it that the last oil and fossil fuel in the whole world were located. I was fighting for Stormhelm, where hurricanes and other perilous weather occurred. Luckily, our head scientist, Grace, made a big discovery: Soul Rock was guarded by terrifying beasts that ripped trespassers into shreds, and the only way to unlock the island was to use the Blood Key, which was lost in the Silk Road during the Han Dynasty.

"Use this," He took out a small gadget made of silk, "To time travel back to the Han Dynasty during the reign of the Silk Road, and obtain the Blood Key." My jaw dropped. "Wha— what? Me?" I spluttered. The General nodded. "It's the only way to win," he said. Even though I was shocked, as a loyal soldier, I accepted the quest. I pressed the on button as I felt a mixture of fear, awe and excitement.

I appeared in a tunnel of dazzling white light. I felt my heart spinning inside. For a second, I could feel nothing. I could hear nothing. "Am I in heaven?" I thought. But then, everything came crashing back into my head like a wave. I focused back on my mission, and looked around. All I could see was white, but among the nothingness, there were strange clock-like objects, time portals, I assume. An invisible magical force pushed me ahead, and as I floated, I saw a time portal, bigger than the rest. This must be the place. I dove into the portal and appeared in the middle of the sky.

I screamed like a child, high-pitched and loud, as I started falling down. Luckily, my body hit soft grass. I took a heavy blow to my arm, and it screamed in silence. I rolled over, and saw the sky, blue as a diamond. The remains of the time portal disappeared as I stood up slowly. I rubbed my sore arm and had a look around. I was in the middle of nowhere, and all I could see was green, green grass and a donkey wailing in the distance. I ran to the donkey and leaped onto its back. It buckled and tried to throw me away. Luckily, I had an apple in my backpack and fed it to the donkey. It calmed down gradually and stopped moving. I rubbed its neck and ordered,

"Donkey, please start running now—" before I finished talking, it had already sped into the distance as I hung on for dear life.

After what seemed like hours, I saw a massive structure ahead. I squinted my eyes and exclaimed, "Is that what I think it is?" As we got closer, I finally saw it: the Han Kingdom! We arrived at a nearby stall and I got off. I hid behind a tree and took out the Clothes Changing Gadget, another of the amazing magical tools General William prepared for me. I turned it on, and it said "REMOVE". I swiped the screen: "ACCESSORIES". I grumbled and swiped again. This time, it said "CLOTHES". I double-clicked it and I was suddenly wearing traditional Chinese clothes with knight armour. I walked to the entrance of the castle and was stopped by two bulky guards. "What you tryna do, huh?" "I am here to meet the King," I announced. "No one can meet the king unless they can defeat me, the elite guard!" He spat. I beckoned him with my fingers.

The two guards rushed into me and I spun aside, grabbed my sword and used another one of my gadgets to enchant it to a flaming sword in a clean move. I swiped my sword down and their pants caught fire. "Ahhhhh! My pants!" They screamed in agony and urged me to go inside the palace so they wouldn't need to face any more torture. I opened the door and told the King, "I am here to accompany you on your journey to the Silk Road. I come from the future and I am on a mission to achieve an important item—the Blood Key." Seeing his puzzled face, I took out one of my gadgets and showed it to him. To persuade him to let me join his journey, I said, "Here, keep it. I really hope you will trust me." It was just a useless item, one that made your clothes change colour, but it already served as a bond of trust. He nodded hesitantly, and let me join his team of knights.

I was walking for days now. All I could see was plain sand in the vast and endless desert. Our team consists of 30 people, and so far, I had been using my gadget, the Infinity Food Generator, to produce food and water for everyone to eat. Just when I was day dreaming, suddenly, an evil laughter filled the air. It was a gang of bandits! They roared and charged in, planning to steal our previous trading items. Luckily, I reacted just in time, and shot fire with my sword. I successfully burned their shoes in the process and now they are jumping across the scorching sand,

whimpering as they ran away, terrified of the magical sorcerer. The king stared at me in utter shock and I grinned under my sweaty helmet.

We continued our journey. Weeks later, we arrived at our destination, and India was on the horizon. The king successfully traded a lot of herbs with the Indians and to my surprise, the king himself fished me the Blood Key from his pocket. I gaped in awe and screamed with joy! My mission was complete. I pressed the Time Machine gadget and teleported back to the current time. I handed the Blood Key to General William and told and gave him the diary of the journey that I had been writing for the whole journey. He gave me a slap on the back and exclaimed, "Good job, General Oscar!" My jaw dropped. I had been promoted. I smiled from ear to ear, but something still bugged me:

Why did the king have the key? Had it been in his pocket all along? Did he know everything from the very start?

A Spy's Loyalty

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Ip, Hin Wang Mason – 11

"Ganfu, you must hide in Han and figure out a way to sabotage their plans..."

I obeyed.

"Attention!" barked the emperor at the hall of generals. "The Xiongnu are always a step ahead of us! We must form an alliance with the Yuezhi so that we can destroy the Xiongnu tribe!" The whole hall grew silent. The emperor just stared at us, waiting for a response. "Zhang Qian, go and communicate with the Yuezhi!" He commanded. "Ganfu, you were born a Xiongnu. You must be familiar with the foreign lands. Accompany Zhang Qian and save him from any kind of danger. Do not fail."

I nodded with exhilaration.

We set off on our interminable journey. Days passed, weeks passed, months passed. It was harsh as the weather penalized us and the mountains and rivers obstructed us. During this period, Zhang Qian didn't treat me as a servant but as a brother. He shared his little drops of water with me. He shared his last piece of bread when food was scarce. We starved, we hunted, we spent every day together. We shared our laughter and tears. The feeling was strange yet warm, especially to someone like me growing up as an orphan.

"Is this what a family is about?" I wondered.

"Master, once we cross this last piece of desert, we will reach the land of Yuezhi!" shouted a soldier. We erupted with excitement.

SWOOSH! An arrow sliced through the air, making a killing hissing sound. Before we could react, a shower of arrows poured out from the sky, piercing our people and camels. One of the arrows shot towards me. I couldn't dodge but Zhang Qian managed to push me away. The arrow pierced through his clothes and skin. "Master", I cried desperately. Zhang Qian was thrown to the ground. Everybody screamed and I lost my consciousness.

A frightening moaning sound awoke me. I opened my delicate eyelids. A silver sliver of moon cut through a high barred window, hurting my eyes. The smell of old straw and urine depressed me. I realized I was in prison. I looked around only to find Zhang Qian lying beside me. By the look of him, he wasn't dead, he was just asleep, taking a weight off my mind.

Since then, we started a new chapter of life on the Xiongnu land.

We weren't always trapped inside the filthy old prison cells. In the daytime, the Xiongnu guards ordered us to herd their sheep. Sometimes, we also had to help the Xiongnu hunt.

The Xiongnu land was a sea of endless grass. One afternoon, Zhang Qian and I were lying comfortably on the soft grass with wind blowing peacefully at us, sighing a cool, soothing breath at our warm skin.

Motifs, Xiongnu's exquisite artwork to depict animals

Cheese, made from goat milk, preserved for a long journey

Recurve bow, more powerful than the Chinese ones, made from horn

Zhang Qian was recording everything he learned from Xiongnu on his cloth diary.

"Why are you doing this?" I doubted.

"These are exotic items and I want to bring them back to China," he explained.

"But we will probably be trapped here forever."

Zhang Qian just smiled. I admired his optimism.

Weeks passed, months passed, years passed. In this cell, on this piece of foreign land, we were not alone because we had each other's company.

...

It was a stormy night. The moans from other cells grew stronger than ever. I peeked through the bars of the cell, only to see my prison mates with a look of abject misery crossed over their faces. The miserable atmosphere grew stronger.

"Thump!" Heavy footsteps alarmed me.

"Welcome back, sir. Congratulations on winning the war!" The prison guard greeted.

I saw a familiar face.

Thick eyebrows, big grey moustache with a deep ragged scar beneath his mouth. A pair of cruel eyes, cold as steel. Just a look at him would give anyone, even the bravest, a shudder. I knew who he was. He was my uncle. "Come," he rasped. "We will speak, alone."

He didn't wait for a reply. He turned, his expectation of obedience as solid as the prison walls. With a glance at Zhang Qian, I stepped out into the cold air to face the judgment in my uncle's eyes.

"Ganfu. Kill that Han dog. Prove your blood. If you don't, I will do it myself tomorrow," my uncle commanded, handing a dagger to me.

...

It was dawn. I couldn't sleep. The words my uncle said kept echoing in my mind. I was torn in two. My duty to my country demanded Zhang Qian's blood but this man who saved me deserved my loyalty. I couldn't bear it any longer.

"Zhang Qian," I came to him.

"Ganfu, you should rest," he replied with care.

I shook my head and drew a shuddering breath.

And so, I confessed. I revealed my identity — a spy, hiding in Han with a mission to sabotage Han's plans.

"You saved me with your life, you shared all you have with me," I continued, tears forming in my eyes. "My uncle demanded that I kill you to prove my blood."

Silence followed.

I expected Zhang Qian to be in rage, with hatred in his eyes. Instead, he responded with forgiveness and encouragement, "Ganfu, it's okay. You have confessed, which is the bravest thing you have done. Your mission ends tonight and ours starts tomorrow."

Decision made. I gave a single, firm nod, "We shall get out of here tomorrow."

The next morning, the sun shone brighter than ever, bringing new hopes and aspirations. As we went to herd the sheep as usual, I spotted two vigorous horses left untied. Seizing our chance, we hopped on and galloped away, finally free.

Weeks later, we crossed the last desert and arrived at Yuezhi. Joy surged through us. We were there. Unfortunately, the King of Yuezhi declined our proposal. We had no choice but to return to Han.

Back to Han, at the hall of generals, we were greeted with honour. Zhang Qian impressed everyone with his wealth of knowledge about the foreign lands. His documentation was a true jewel. Our mission was a success of a failure. I looked at the man I was sent to kill, now my dearest brother. The long and exhausting journey had ended.

I was home.

A Second Life

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Lam, Yik Long – 11

“MANIUS, DON’T LEAVE US!” The soldiers screamed and shouted, as they got pummeled with arrows and swords, with blood marks all over the war grounds. “I’m sorry……” Manius whispered as he fled, with countless corpses behind him.

Manius, a 40 year old soldier, with a strong and bulky body, with a big black beard, deserted and betrayed his own army in war out of fear, now is a soldier again in the Silk Road at 50. He got this new job under a false name.

He lives in a camp with other soldiers and friends, in the middle south part of the Silk Road. Most importantly, his best friend is most certainly his pet bulldog, Rocky. His job was to protect the traders travelling along the Road, and fighting with bandits. Therefore, with this kind of job, he has plenty of battle experience, battle scars and marks up his belt. His daily routine as a soldier was like this: he wakes up, eats, fights, eats, fights…… and it repeats over and over again until he sleeps at night again.

One morning, Manius woke up with a horrified look. He had dreamt about his past, his bloody past he tried to forget. He dreamt of the soldiers he deserted years ago, with their blood splashing everywhere. He was traumatised once again. He flipped up his armor, revealing his brown stomach, and he looked at the long red scar crossing over the skin on the stomach. Looking at it, he shivered all over and remembered the time he nearly escaped death. The spear, the throw, the miss, the pain, the shock, and the realization...

From that day onwards, he was scared that his past would come to haunt him again, so he had started to devise a plan. He wanted to leave his army again, and leave the Silk Road, to Xi’an and start a new life.

He knew everything he needed, as he had past experiences with escaping and joining something with a false name. He prepared fake identity papers and documents, daily necessities and other things, in a big suitcase.

After a few weeks of preparation, he was ready to leave for good, once and for all. He planned to leave tomorrow at midnight, when everyone was asleep, he would grab his suitcase and Rocky, and sneak away.

And that time would come fast, he slept with his soldiers. However, he pretended to fall asleep that night, or else he would not have escaped. Midnight came, the sky was pitch black and the stars were as bright as ever, Manius stood up slowly and quietly took his suitcase, and took Rocky, who was fast asleep. He crept slowly, along the Silk Road, and when the camp of the soldiers was not in sight, he started to make a run for it along the narrow cliff on the side of the Silk Road.

He ran away so fast, that everything was zooming past him and becoming blurry, and when he saw a pair of city gates in sight, with “Xi’an” marked on top of the door, he started to slow down. Unfortunately, just when he abruptly stopped, his right ankle was twisted and sprained, he shouted, “OW!” The scream echoed across the whole road. He had never experienced the pain of an ankle sprain before, so he quickly dropped to the floor, with his hands clenched tightly to his feet. When he fell, nearly off the cliff, he dropped his entire suitcase down the cliff.

He had no choice but to return to his camp slowly. He was demoralized.

After an hour, it was already three o’ clock midnight, he finally returned to his camp. He sighed to himself as he dropped himself to bed. His fall destroyed the hopes of him escaping and starting a new life. The moment he closed his eyes, he took a deep breath, and glanced around his camp. He saw the asleep traders, merchants, and soldiers that were in his camp.

Then, the harsh truth hit Manius —— he had no way out, he couldn’t escape.

Looking around the camp, and with the thought in mind, an unexpected tear fell down his cheeks. For 20 years, he told himself to not cry no matter what, because of his harsh childhood, he tried to forget it, forget it, forget it, but he had never been like this before, crying and being “soft”...

The thought of his childhood flashed in his mind—“Manius, stop crying! You need to learn to grow up!” “Manius! Stop being soft! You are grown up already!” His parents shouted, and Manius was hiding in a corner, hands on his head, “Mum.. dad.. but I’m just a kid..” He whispered, crying silently...

Manius broke down into silent tears, prohibiting himself from wailing loudly. He cried himself to sleep.

Fortunately, during the next few days, he started to accept his fate. His fate of being a soldier to earn money for a living, and protecting the people in need.

Three weeks passed, and he adapted to the new "soldier life" quickly, he lived happily as a soldier, and served his country proudly for 25 more years. He even confessed to some people that he was planning to escape that night, they were all shocked, some of them were even in disbelief, thinking that this was a dream, but Manius shook it off with a scoff.

After a while, he retired as a soldier at 76 to live with his parents, whom he missed and was very old, and later migrated from England to Xi'an, to fulfill his past dreams of forgetting his past and starting a new life. The only difference this time was that it wasn't under a false name.

Manius passed away peacefully on the hospital bed at 84 because of old age, he died without regrets, didn't need to cover up his past, and lived on to become the man he was proud of, and the man he wanted to be.

The Journey Which Does Not End

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Lau, Yuet – 12

The wind and sand pummelled my face as I spurred Shothera, my horse, to go faster. I turned my head, and saw my brother emerging from the waves of sand that surrounded us. Comforted by his presence, I turned back and continued to ride.

“Halt!” After a while, the words from my brother, Chang Er, rang in my ears. “Halt! Aliraca is hurt, and she cannot go any further.”

I pulled on the reins, turned back, and saw that his horse, Aliraca, had a long wound on her belly, and her leg was broken, so I suspect she had fallen on her side.

“Only another three kilometers to the oasis!” I shouted over the howling wind, straining to hear my voice. “We will heal her there.”

“No, brother; she has to be put down,” he shouted glumly. “She is greatly pained.”

I understood, as Aliraca was indeed more wounded than I thought at first. I spoke no more, only waved my hand, and turned away to re-tie Aliraca’s wagon to Shothera. A whine sounded behind me, and I knew that Aliraca was gone. I closed my eyes shortly, then climbed onto Shothera’s saddle, while my brother climbed into one of the wagons.

We arrived at the oasis later than I would have liked, due to the extra load Shothera had to carry. Dingy tents littered the grass there, and some sleepless travellers crowded around a large bonfire. I ignored them completely. However, Chang Er, as the talkative man he was growing up to be – unlike me – sat down next to them and began to pester them about their travels.

“Where are you going?” Asked one of them.

“To the western countries. Our final destination is –” Chang Er replied, but one of them cut him off.

“Do not, my fair friends; we had the same thoughts as you, but bandits ambushed us. Do not go!” He said, much agitated.

“What do you think, my brother? What do you think?” My brother turned to me and asked, fear evident on his face.

“We go,” I said. “We go.”

Chang Er started to protest, and any other brother – any other better elder brother, I realised now – would have listened, but I, a cold man and not of words, shunned him there and then.

“Do as you wish. I set out no matter what.”

...

The next day I did just that. I left my brother his wagon, so it would not hinder me – I wouldn’t have to share my future wealth with him anyways, I thought. Then I left.

Up until noon I encountered no trouble; even the sandstorm had set. However, after a brief lunch in the middle of nowhere and continuing my journey, I soon found myself surrounded by battle-scarred folks at a random dune, far, far from the oasis I rested at last night for me to reach before they kill me. And with their raised swords and wide snarls, I won’t be surprised that they might both seek to rip me of my treasure and also quite possibly my life. I pulled on Shothera’s reins, and pulled out a hatchet I got from a blacksmith for my eighteenth birthday and prepared to fight.

Whoever strikes first has the advantage, I thought. Jumping off Shothera, I swung my axe as easily as I would swing my own hand, and embedded my axe in the head of one of the bandits. Dodging a crossbow bolt, I rolled near another and sliced him first in the chin, then in his throat.

Spinning around, I buried the axe in the chest of a third bandit, but before I could do a second strike to ensure he was dead, a sword sliced through my leather armour and pierced my left arm from behind. I delivered a backwards kick to the bandit, but he did not fall, so I spun around to strike his head with the axe.

To my surprise he blocked my swing with ease, unlike every other bandit I had killed. But I fought often, and I had met many formidable enemies before, so I pivoted and swung again. He deflected the blow, then sliced on my right arm, creating a wound five inches long.

Pain enveloped me, and he, piercing my right ribs. I panicked, because blood was slowly filling my lungs, and I couldn't breathe. My vision blurred, and a sliver of blood ran from the side of my mouth. My lungs screamed as I fought on, and once, when I was close to landing a strike, I ran out of oxygen and flopped onto the ground, right in front of him.

And at one point, my memories overlapped with my vision.

In my memories, my father, drunk, swung his cane at me.

The bandit swung his broadsword at my head.

I blocked the cane with my right hand.

I faintly stuck out my hand to block.

The sharpest pain sliced through my mind as my right arm was sliced off by the bandit. I screamed out, and all my organs clenched from the intense pain. I was about to black out, the bandit was about to land his final strike, when a cutlass beheaded him.

It was my brother. He had, as I later learned, bought a horse from a traveller, and came after me, just in time to save my life. But I did not hear him. The world spun, and darkness defeated me.

...

When I awoke, I was back at the oasis, healed. Afterwards I sobbed like a newborn, with my emotions overwhelming me. My arm was gone, but that was the least of my worries now. I was alive.

And after a few days for me to recover, my brother came to me, during which I thanked him for saving me and apologised for my harsh treatment of him.

He smiled like a child promised candy, and asked me a question.

“Do you want to go on?”

And I said yes.

Li Wei's Journey on the Silk Road

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Li, Tsun Nip Priam – 10

In the vibrant and bustling city of Chang'an, a merchant named Li Wei prepared for a momentous journey along the legendary Silk Road. The air was filled with the scent of spices and the sounds of merchants calling out to potential customers, creating a symphony of commerce and culture. Li Wei was known throughout the city for his exquisite silk, a fabric so luxurious that it was sought after by nobles and traders alike. Each bolt of silk he packed was a testament to his craftsmanship, shimmering with hues of deep indigo and rich crimson.

As the sun rose, casting a warm golden light over the city, Li Wei felt a sense of excitement and trepidation. He had heard tales of the vast distances and the many challenges that lay ahead—treacherous mountains, scorching deserts, and the ever-present threat of bandits who lurked in the shadows, waiting for unsuspecting travellers. Yet, he was resolute, driven by the desire to expand his trade and connect with distant cultures.

With his cart laden with silk, Li Wei bade farewell to his family and set out on the narrow pathways leading from Chang'an. The journey began with a sense of adventure, the anticipation of meeting new people and discovering unfamiliar lands filling his heart.

As he ventured further into the wilderness, the terrain became increasingly rugged. The roads twisted and turned, often leading him through narrow gorges where the sun barely pierced through the rocky cliffs. Li Wei's determination was tested as he faced the elements—harsh winds whipped through the valleys, and sudden storms threatened to halt his progress. Yet, he pressed on, motivated by the thought of the treasures he could acquire and the stories he would gather along the way.

One fateful afternoon, as Li Wei navigated a steep incline, he suddenly found himself surrounded by a group of bandits. They emerged from the shadows like phantoms, their eyes gleaming with greed. "Your silk belongs to us now," one of them snarled, brandishing a crude weapon. Li Wei's heart raced, but he knew he had to think quickly.

Instead of cowering in fear, Li Wei stood tall and addressed the bandits with confidence. "What if we trade?" he proposed, "I can offer you silk and tell you stories from the lands I visit. In return, allow me safe passage."

The bandits paused in what they were doing, intrigued by his offer. Li Wei blew a sigh of relief, about what he promised the bandits. He told them all the tales he knew, mostly about his daring expedition, and the dangers he encountered, he also handed them a enormous bag of silk, the bandits was thrilled about his tales and surprised about the silk, they agreed to let him pass, having gained a newfound respect for the merchant.

Continuing his journey, Li Wei soon reached a serene monastery nestled among the mountains. There, he met a wise monk named Xuanzang, who had travelled far and wide in search of knowledge. The monk welcomed Li Wei with open arms and offered him food and shelter for the night. As they sat together, Li Wei shared his ambitions and the challenges he faced on the road.

Xuanzang listened intently, nodding thoughtfully. "The journey of a merchant is not solely about the goods exchanged but also about the understanding and respect you foster with others," he advised. "Every trade is an opportunity to create bonds that can last a lifetime."

Inspired by Xuanzang's wisdom, Li Wei resumed his travels with a renewed sense of confidence. He understood that his journey was not just about silk and spices but about the connections he would forge and the stories he would share.

As he approached a bustling market governed by a local dynasty, the sights and sounds overwhelmed him. Merchants from various regions displayed their wares, and the air was thick with the scent of spices and incense. Li Wei felt a surge of excitement as he set up his stall, carefully arranging his silk to catch the eye of potential buyers.

With each passing hour, traders approached, curious about the quality of his silk. Li Wei engaged them in conversation, sharing stories of his journey and the craftsmanship behind his products. His genuine approach and the tales of far-off lands captivated his audience, leading to successful negotiations. The silk, once merely a product, transformed into a symbol of connection and cultural exchange.

Among the traders was a merchant from Persia, who spoke of exotic spices that could revolutionize the culinary traditions of Li Wei's homeland. The two negotiated +enthusiastically, exchanging goods and ideas, and Li Wei left with not only spices but also a friendship that would benefit both men in their future endeavours.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm glow over the marketplace, Li Wei secured not only the spices and treasures he had sought but also the respect and camaraderie of fellow merchants. The bonds he formed transcended borders, creating a network of support that would benefit all involved.

With his cart laden with goods and his heart full of stories, Li Wei began his journey back to Chang'an. The road felt different this time; he was no longer just a merchant but a storyteller, carrying the essence of the Silk Road within him.

Upon returning to his city, Li Wei was greeted as a celebrated merchant. He shared his adventures—the bandits he had outsmarted, the wisdom of the monk, and the vibrant cultures he had encountered. His tales inspired others to embark on their own journeys, embracing the spirit of the Silk Road—a pathway of trade, culture, and shared humanity.

In the heart of Chang'an, Li Wei became a figure of admiration, embodying the timeless lessons of the Silk Road. His journey taught him that true wealth was not merely measured in gold or goods but in the connections forged and stories shared along the way.

As the seasons changed and the years passed, Li Wei continued to travel the Silk Road, each journey enriching his spirit and expanding his horizons. He became a living testament to the enduring legacy of the Silk Road—a journey that continues to weave together the threads of humanity, culture, and trade across time and space.

The Three Explorers' Success

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Li, Tsz Yeung Lucas – 11

Have you ever thought about what it was like to be travelling on the menacing Silk Road? One day, three explorers named Tsz yeung, Tsz yau and Tsz wing were believed to be successors of Marco Polo's spirit, and decided to set out on the silk road. They had a mission to find new treasures and ideas to help the world face challenges of environmental destruction. They carried China silk and ancient artefacts as a symbol of ancient trade, eager to discover new resources and inventions.

They traded china jade artefacts for a unique and glowing crystal, named as Ametrine, believed to have incredible energy properties. While they were exploring, they overheard a plot of thieves, saying they plan to steal the treasure from Somalia, an ancient artefact, that holds the key to control weather and prevent natural disasters like tsunamis. They were shocked by the dangerous plan, they decided to warn the emperor and protect the world. To reach the empire of the emperor, they had to journey through the vast Gobi Desert, they face scorching heat and danger of running out of water, their supplies were dwindling at a fast rate. Luckily, they found a caravanserai – a resting stop where traders and travellers gather to rest, trade and share resources. The explorers found water, food and friendly caravan guides who helped them refill their supplies. Meanwhile, the thieves realized the explorers had the crystal and began to pursue them again. Using their quick thinking, they evaded the thieves by hiding in a maze full of tents to escape detection.

The explorers continued their journey. They peeked behind them. They had no sight of the thieves. Thinking they were safe, they cheered and expressed their laughter, but little did they know, that made a sense of detection. While walking through a narrow mountain pass, Tsz wing told the others she felt like they're being watched, like someone is watching them, but the others didn't believe her and continued. A while later, Tsz yeung was the one who claimed that he felt footsteps emerging behind them, but Tsz yau still kept on going. Later, they reached another caravanserai, Tsz yeung and wing both sensed someone behind them and this time, Tsz yau agreed, as a huge shadow approached them! The same thieves that had chased them were with a man that had a cold expression. The explorers were still shocked when the man said he was the leader of the thieves and ordered the trio to hand over the crystal. The explorers acted quickly and sprinted as fast as a cheetah. Hearts pounding, they realized they were cornered with themselves, the group of thieves and a random lush oasis.

They were trembling with fear, but didn't show it. Instead, Tsz yeung quietly went to the lush oasis to find another caravanserai. He thought for a while, and then came up with an organized and brilliant plan and told the others. Tsz yau then got out a plain black stone and told the thieves it was the rare crystal. While the thieves were chasing her, Tsz wing got a rope from her backpack and tied it with lots of stones and placed it above a tent. Then, Tsz yeung gave an "okay" sign to Tsz yau, the thieves chased her to the tent and the rocks fell on them! In a daring confrontation, they outsmarted the thieves. Their bravery and team work prove that wisdom, courage and cooperation can triumph over greed and danger.

At last the explorers arrived at the palace with the crystal and a warning about stolen treasure. Recognizing the crystal's potential to generate clean energy and prevention of natural disasters, the emperor commissions them to develop new machines inspired by Chinese inventions.

The rare crystal became a symbol of hope, powering eco – friendly machines that protect the environment and prevent tsunamis. The explorers look forward to saving the planet, ensuring a sustainable world for future generations.

The Enemy that Changed my Mind

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Ng, Andric Anthony – 12

I am no one special, people say I am cruel and cunning, but I am an average human, or an official from the Han.

I left my royal residence since I heard noises outside. There was a message informing me that emperor Liu was asking me to come to his palace.

“This is my order! I shall send you to Rome and exchange goods, you have 3 days left to pack and go. Here are your 3000 troops protecting along the way.” The holy emperor ordered.

I was shocked, thinking: what ? How on the heavenly side of earth could I prepare for 3 days? I didn't say that, but I replied “Yes sir, holy emperor , I shall try my best to fulfill my duties, long live the emperor! Long live the emperor!”

I went back, preparing for my long trip to Rome.

I set off from Changan to Dunhung, where I will get my main supplies and goods, bidding farewell to Chang-my son. My soldiers set off with me under command from me.

...

I set camp on the plains, a cold breeze blowing on my face. Suddenly, my general shouts. “Mongols!”

I replied with a mean voice,” What do you mean, fight them now!”

The general whose name I had no idea of replies” We are here to trade, not fight, sir!”

I barked back,” Not trade with these barbarians on horse! Kill them all! They are the small stones blocking my way!”

I drink a bottle of wine as the general leaves to fight.

I look at the battle going on, soldiers of my command are being slaughtered en masse. I order one of them to ask for help from the governor of Dunhuang. I could only watch as he was shot by an arrow. Blood spilled on his lifeless body, his horse running in panic, the message soaked with red fresh blood. Then it hits me, I am the last one standing...

“Tie him up!” a Mongol said.

I am tied with ropes, surrounded by soldiers.

“Let me go! I will kill you in a solo battle!”

...

I am beaten and untied, in a camp. My hands are bloodied and dirtied. I am in a cell, a guard walks over, locking me in it. The cell is simple, I am sleeping in a pile of manure, next to me is a food slot and a bucket for toilet usage.

At night, I am given food. Should I mean trash, inedible food, an absolute, definite food in hell. It is mud “topped with” rats and bugs. I didn't eat it at all, I could just die to end my suffering. Suddenly, a man came, he was strong, ugly and fat. He grabbed my “food” and forced my mouth open before stuffing the mud into my mouth and pouring a bucket of water into my mouth. That wasn't normal water, it was mud water.

Life continued like that, the same dish, the same treatment, the same cell. After 30 days, I was taken to labour at a field alongside some Chinese prisoners. It was a corn field! The same thought came in my mind as others: free food. The thought vanished when a poor fellow spotted stealing corn and was beaten to death. Another one resting on the field was hung until his head dropped onto the grass, leaving a bloodied dead body behind. Before I could start working, I was barked at and kicked at. I had enough!

I broke free and used the soldier's sword to kill him. He fell to the ground as I saw soldiers approaching. I quickly put the cuffs on and threw the body into corn bushes.

I soon started wondering: was this how I treated my soldiers? I beat my soldiers when they were trying to rest. I did this to them just like how the Mongols treated me. I was soon stopped by a soldier punching me at the back.

He barked, "Work! Or I will burn your hair!" holding a stick of fire.

Soon, I returned to my cell, only to be fed with the "trash" again. The same man stuffed it into my mouth. Again, and again, they treated me like this.

Until one day, things changed. A band of guards started randomly stabbing prisoners one by one!

As one man approached, he said, "A general is coming! I know you are friends with them....."

I didn't wait for him to finish the sentence as I broke free and grabbed his knife, throwing it away. The guard thrust a spear towards me, I kicked his legs, tripping him and stabbing him with the knife I took from him.

Quickly I was taken away from the camp, by Li Guang.

He said, "You are well beaten up, have some food!"

He gave me some dumplings and I devoured them immediately.

...

My men approached me, "General, are you fine?"

I replied, not bossily, as how I used to be, "I am sorry, I shouldn't have hurt you a long time ago, sorry!"

They knew what I was talking about and replied, "Sir general, thanks for your acknowledgement, we will comply fully under you!"

For that was me, I am myself. People used to say I am brutal, I don't think so. Maybe I was, but now I am kind, generous, thanks to those Mongols, I learnt a lesson. A lesson of my life.

The Intrepid Journey

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Ou, Cheuk Hin Jeremy – 12

The sun blazing hot, beaming mercilessly on our backs. We were packing our wagon for our long trip to the “Otherlands”, to trade, to find new and more customers. People were bored and irritated with the things they can trade, and I can relate, it's just the same old things. Because of this, we have no choice but to go abroad, to find customers more eager. Others said that me and my friend, Gejie, were crazy, they said that the land of the west was full of monsters. But we didn't believe them, because I, Zhenghe, will be the first to trade in the west!

Gejie went to get our best horses, and I stayed in our wagon. I peered into the distant landscape—nothing but sand and an abundance of cacti, your textbook desert. The horses neighed and whinnied softly, normally this wouldn't have bothered me, but the sound of this sounded like a warning, a warning to tell us not to venture any farther, or perish...

We didn't wait long—we immediately set out for our perilous journey. The horses' metal hooves clacked continuously, a monotone, a rhythm. Gejie immediately fell asleep under the almost lullaby rhythm of the hooves. I sighed, and took the reins.

It was night. The sky was navy-blue, after I checked that the doors of the wagon were securely tight, I lay back down beside Gejie and closed my eyes to sleep.

The chaos happened about two hours later. I was in an especially deep sleep, dreaming about the people in the “Otherlands” fighting for our goods. I snored, and rolled over. Suddenly, out of the blue, somebody shook me roughly, waking me. I made an annoyed sound, and turned around. Bearing over me was a man bearing a huge knife. I screamed, scrambled up and reached for my sword. It was just then that I realised that it was Gejie. He put a finger on his lips, and said, “Bandits! We have to be careful!”

I replied nervously, “Should we kill them?”

“We will not kill unless we have to,”

I was deeply reassured by Gejie's suggestion, as I am not a fan of killing, and I am sure that we can reason with the bandits. Also, I am a master at swordsmanship.

We crept out of the back of the wagon, and sure enough, they were all congregated at the front of the wagon. A bunch of amateurs, I thought. They should surround the wagon, and not stand at one side. As the rogues fumbled to untie the horses, Gejie, as fast as lightning, shot an arrow (the best kind too, topped with mamba poison), and it lodged inside the scurvy rag's arm. He doubled over and writhed in pain. The other bandits turned and faced us. For a moment, no one dared to speak, and then they drew their weapons at once and charged at us.

The leading bandit clashed his sword at me, and I blocked it with unnerving ease. Two more of Gejie's arrows lodged into the coming two bandits and they were forced to retreat to the back of the caravan. The bandit I was fighting began to flee in desperation. We went to the back of the caravan and found out that the remaining two had fled too.

Although we had an easy win last night, this experience showed that we must not act rashly and must be cautious at all times, since there could be more dangerous bandits whose swordsmanship could be way better than us. Me and Gejie began to take nightly shifts to watch the caravan—we would do anything to guard our valuable goods we were bringing to the “Otherlands”—there's no way we would let those scurvy rogues take our goods again.

I have to admit, but the way to the west was much harder than I had anticipated. We accidentally took the wrong route and got stranded in the basalt areas of the desert. We were running low on water, since one of the dumb horses had upended the bucket. Gejie was being extremely pessimistic, and kept on ranting about us dying of dehydration in this barren strip of land. I was still optimistic unlike my companion until I started seeing things that were not there—it took a lot of persuading from Gejie to coax me from handing our goods to thin air. I became really sick then, but we eventually found an oasis just when I was about to give up.

We've done it! Hahaha! We have finally arrived at the “Otherlands”, or, as I call it, the west! Life's been great! The “Otherlanders” are truly fascinated by the silk, Chinese Tea and jade that we've brought to them! It's been

bustling day to night in our stall! Hundreds! Thousands of people that came flooding over! We were even official billionaires and had about twenty branch stalls! We're kind of famous too, we got a letter of praise and thanks from the "Emperor" Himself (or Sultan, as some call them. Weird) to thank us about how we influenced trade between countries and something called "immigration", which is about moving from country to country. It was a bit hard to read the letter at first, though. It was written in something the people there call "Cuban Spanish" ...

However, what I've actually gained was not just wealth and fame. It was the strengthening bond of friendship, growing sense of adventure and the new-earned skills of being an entrepreneur. I am sure that I will make use of the useful skills I have attained from this valuable journey to benefit both myself and the communities that surround me. Oh, Gejie is telling me about another wave of customers! Sorry, gotta go!

The Lost Caravan of Chang'an

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Qi, Chiu Ching – 11

The gate of the Chang'an swung open slowly. Sunbeams penetrated the early morning mist, casting a warm glow on the caravan eager to enter.

Li, a royal guard, riding a sleek brown horse entered. Following him were merchants from the West and a group of men whose clothes were tattered, but whose eyes were blazing with light.

"They're back!" someone shouted from the crowd. Suddenly, the crowd erupted into cheers.

Chang'an was already awake. Fine wine bouquets mixed with the aroma of steamed buns floated from the taverns. Opposite, the silk shop apprentices were hanging out bolts of silk. The fabric's vibrant colours glimmered in the sunlight like rainbows. The scene calmed Li, but memories of Pamir Mountains' chilling winds flashed back.

About one year ago, the emperor sent a caravan filled with silk woven by master silk-weavers, rare herbs that could heal sickness, and legendary jade designed by top artisans, to trade with western countries. He was hoping to receive peace and loyalty. Unfortunately, the caravan was lost midway without a word. Accordingly, the emperor sent Li in disguise as a trader to retrace the route and find them. What a mission for this royal guard! A mission that would test his resolve, stamina, loyalty and his ability to survive.

A few weeks ago, there were rumors emanating from a nomadic tribe in the Pamir Mountains claiming to have seen a Chinese caravan climbing a steep mountain. This was Li's destination.

Arriving at the mountain base, Li's caravan faced challenges. Snow blanketed the mountains impeding progress.

"Li, it's too slippery. We can't carry all this!" one of the soldiers yelled, gripping his pack tightly.

Li replied. "Only essentials come."

Tough decisions had to be made. Sadly, horses couldn't accompany them.

"We can't abandon them," another merchant pleaded.

"They will slow us and deplete our supplies," Li insisted.

The caravan was now susceptible to low provisions, foot transport only and limited weapons.

"Push on ! Cave! 50 paces ahead!" Li shouted.

Wind howled. Staggering inside, they collapsed on the ground. Relief was short-lived.

"People!" someone shouted. The entrance darkened as a group of figures emerged.

They were clad head to toe in thick fur coats and carried curved scimitars that glinted menacingly. It was a nomadic tribe.

"Trespassers! Drop your weapons!"

Everyone felt the tension. "Stay calm," Li signaled his men. He took out a piece of legendary jade from the deep pocket of his coat.

The leader's hand on the scimitar relaxed slightly. "Who are you? What brings you here?"

Li continued to unpack some bolts of silk. "We come in peace," Li said. "We're Tang merchants, taking shelter in this cave. This silk is a gift for you." One nomad stepped forward, his calloused fingers brushing the silk as if it was a precious gem. The leader nodded. "Share our fire and share your stories."

A fire was lit in the cave. People huddled around its flickering warmth. The nomads offered kumis, a traditional fermented mare's milk, to warm themselves. Li unpacked another treasure from Tang – a small bag of tea leaves and demonstrated how to brew tea.

Seizing the moment, Li brought up the case. “I heard tales of a Tang caravan that went missing in these mountains,” he began cautiously. “Have you seen them?”

A nomad stood up. “While I was collecting herbs, I saw a caravan with ten men and fifteen horses climbing the Peak of Deep Valley but then nothing.”

The Peak of Deep Valley was noted for how suddenly the terrain could change. Li’s heart tightened. “Have you found any trace of them?”

The man nodded. “When the news came about the lost caravan, we retraced their steps and found pieces of their clothing.”

Another nomad added eagerly. “My hunting eagle can track them. She knows every rock and crevice within 100 miles.”

He led Li to a watchtower where a nomad with a hunting eagle awaited and handed a piece of clothing. “Find it.”

The nomad nodded and released the eagle. “Follow her!” Everyone chased the majestic bird up over mountains and rivers until an ancient castle came into view. The eagle continued flying.

“This appears a good place to shelter,” Li said. The nomads agreed. It was time for Li to say goodbye. He clasped the tribe leader’s hand and bowed deeply. “Next time bring more treasure,” the leader laughed. “We can trade our finest furs and our fastest horses.”

Li couldn’t believe his eyes. The castle buzzed with activity. Craftsmen were busy. People hurried everywhere, carrying bolts of Chinese silk in vibrant colors that contrasted with the dull stone walls.

Li whispered in disbelief. “Is that... the missing caravan?”

Someone stepped forward. “Can you believe...” He began to share the story. “A blizzard pushed us into a glacial crevasse. We felt trapped in a time rift,” he continued. “Days turned into months.”

“Months?” Li was shocked.

“When spring came, we discovered a hidden passage leading to this castle. Their glazed pottery is amazing. We had never seen glossy colors and intricate patterns like that.” He continued. “They provided places to stay. We teach them how to weave, and they teach us pottery skills. You see, we blended perfectly.

Two years later, Chang’an emerged as the hub of the East and the West. Persian carpets, Indian spices, Roman glassware and Arabian herbs fill the markets that painted this city with vitality and success.

At night, lanterns in the Tang imperial palace light up the sky. Artists from different countries play enchanting melodies together. The gentle sound of the Chinese guqin mingles beautifully with the Persian lute and the Indian sitar.

Somewhere far away, camel bells chime softly. A Sogdian merchant shares flatbread with a stranger. A Chinese youngster learns an exotic folk song from a traveller. A Persian trader shares technique for making dried fruit to survive in the desert.

And the silk road, as it always had, kept “weaving” a journey through time.

That was its legacy. That is its magic.

The Beast of the Silk Road

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Yip, Kellan – 10

"Is it real? Do they really know?"

It's just me, in my room, doing nothing. Nothing.

Suddenly...

... Bang! I heard a loud thud against the door of my room. It was Li, my assistant, pounding with urgency, "Master Yip! Chan has stumbled upon a myth of a beast in the west!" Curiosity ran through my body as I rushed to find Chan at lightning speed. He explained "A legend of a mythical beast that has a furry neck with a thunderous roar spanned across the west." The image of the beast flew inside my mind. "If we can find it and be the first one in China to reveal it, we could make a fortune," I said in response.

It was a warm morning; the sun's glistening glow hugged the entire city of Chang'an. Li and I were getting ready for our journey to the west, to find the mythical beast. I took a deep breath as I stepped out of my home door to start our perilous journey with my navigation team.

In treacherous land conditions, our crew navigated for two months. After passing through rough and uneven terrains, overcoming gusts of strong winds and storms and traversing a forest arduously with endless identical trees, Li regretted his decision of joining us on our journey as every part of his muscles screamed in protest because of these hard travels.

Li groaned, "Are we there yet?" "Not yet. But I am in awe of how far you've come already. Every step you've taken has been leading you here," I responded with huge encouragement.

"Remember why you came with me. Think about the myth of the beast. That's waiting for you," I continued. After resting for the day, we continued our journey again. We finally saw some people heading towards a city called Xinjiang, they were riding peculiar animals with two humps. We thought those people would lead to the beast, so we followed them.

Beyond the path to Xinjiang swept the Taklamakan desert, a severe, terrifying and waterless wasteland that swallowed dreams and people whole. The people we followed suddenly disappeared into thin air because of smog. Why was the desert so severe? It had a featureless landscape and was searingly hot. Tales of lost people whispered in the desert winds, seeking fortunes whispered on the breeze, but only finding sand and spirits. Li moved like a slow, impatient serpent, moaning and groaning "Why do we have to do this? Why can't we just give up? Why?" "Think about the animal, think about the money we would earn, there is no giving up now." I replied. Li wailed "Do you really know if it is real? It might be a trick!"

All of a sudden, the commander of my crew came up to me and reported "Master! Our food and drinks have almost run out." Li persuaded me "Let's just give up! If we don't turn back, we will die! Is dying better than having money?" The sky turned orange. Everyone knew that the "sand demon" had arrived. The sky swirled with dust, the wall of sand swirled around our whole team as the storm raged. Suddenly, a large shadow appeared on the ground, it said "Follow me. I will lead you through the desert." We followed the peculiar person out of the desert.

At long last, this person brought us to a market. We felt the rich tapestry of culture across the entire market. We were amazed by this bustling city alive with activities. The market place was vibrant, filled with merchants from different backgrounds e.g. Malays, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and different trade products. The market was awe-inspiring to us. Our eyes widened to marvel at each stall. The merchants welcomed us warmly, eager to share their products with us. One local merchant came up to us and said mysteriously "Follow me. I am willing to trade something with you." We followed the merchant into a secret alleyway. Then he uttered "I would be willing to trade this rare animal for the most exquisite thing from your own town." I turned to Li, "That is the beast that we are looking for!" Therefore, I accepted the trade and traded the merchant silk, jade, tea, and coins from our homeland.

Li and I couldn't believe it! We found it! The legends were real! We accepted the animal gracefully and started our way home. Li cheered "We can finally go home now! Finally!" On our way home, Li was very curious about the mysterious animal and opened the cage door to discover it. The beast felt queer once stepping out of the cage. But once it saw the people surrounding it, it surged out of the cage and was ready to attack.

The beast's cold eyes stared into mine, ready to attack me first. I trembled frantically as my knees knocked together. In an instant, the eerie person who helped us appeared again. This time, he had a pile of raw meat. He threw the meat to the beast to draw its attention, and made a raw meat path towards the cage to lure it back. After the beast returned to its cage, we shut the door behind him and thanked our saviour. I asked Li " Why would you do that? Do you know how dangerous that animal is? Li stuttered " I just wanted to explore how the beast is and I wanted to listen to its roar for once." I turned to the strange person. "I am sorry about that, my assistant wanted to see how the animal would react." "It's okay. Accidents happen all the time. And the beast is actually called a lion." said the person.

After all the remarkable adventures, our hearts now beat a rhythm of peace. These adventures have been the best adventures I have been on. This journey has given me the deepest memories as we achieved our goal. In the end, we became friends with the smart person and exchanged our ups and downs during our journey on the silk road. We brought him back to China and let him explore around our dynasty.

You might want to know who the peculiar person was. When I asked "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Marco Polo."

The Tale of Tantalizing Fortune

Diocesan Boys' School Primary Division, Yiu, Miles – 12

The musky and humid air of the Gobi Desert wafted in the air, the cold breeze of the silent night brushed over my face like a silk cloth. I turned my back, relieved to see that my uncle was behind me.

My uncle Wang, a government official for the Ming dynasty, had lost his honour during a confrontation with a rival government official. After that scuffle, my uncle had lost his home estate, his job and almost everything that he had spent a lifetime achieving. His whole family including me had been forced out of our houses too and had been banished from the palace to live on the streets of Chang'an.

We were soon approached by two guards of the royal court who ordered us to do an impossible task. We had been assigned a task to travel to a far, far city in the northwest: Baghdad, a city of supposedly trades and riches. He had brought us a sack full of spices and other sacks full of goods that we had to bring to the city and trade.

So, then we had started our perilous journey across deserts and sea and travelled north to the outskirts of the Gobi Desert. It took us 6 days and 6 nights through countless cities until we reached the dark orange sand of the Gobi Desert. That leads me to tell you where we are now, in the middle of the Gobi, it had been 3 days since our trek began but it felt like eternity, beads of sweat would travel down my face, as our lack of sufficient water had made this journey much, much more difficult. Our only source of food was a small ration that was slowly dwindling in size from a large bag to a lovely small sack.

"How long 'till we get there?" Bellowed my uncle whose camel had trailed far behind me, his voice was distant but still heard.

"Bout a day," I replied.

"I ain't waiting a day to get to some damned city Ai!"

I looked at my scruffy-faced uncle, looked at the sun to check the time, and found it late. And so I thought: Maybe if we stayed the night, we could potentially recharge and start the journey again at dawn with more energy.

And so, I pulled on the reins of my camel. My uncle, half bewildered, unmounts his camel as he walks in my direction.

"Why did you stop?" He asked, annoyed. "We ain't gonna get to the city by dawn."

"We won't," I cried, "Even if we leave now we won't make it."

"My Honour is on the line, Ai! Remember what the Emperor said, "I can't lose this!"

"Well I—" I was cut short by a low rumbling sound, the sound of horses. We weren't alone.

"Shh..." I hissed at my uncle who had also followed me as I hid under a rock. The sound of the hoof steps was louder. It was travelling towards us. Soon we heard their heavy footsteps as they raided our camp, taking all of our goods and gold. We sat there hunched over in the cramped space, waiting for the perfect moment to escape, but there was none.

"We can't let some random folks ruin our chance to be privileged again" whispered my uncle, his eyes glared at me with such sorrow and guilt.

"Fine" I said, "But be careful."

My uncle stood up as he scouted at our camp, then I heard screaming and shouting.

Crrr.. Then another. "AI RUN!" Then there was a thump. My eyes filled with tears. Through the gap in my hiding place I saw my uncle's lifeless body. He was dead.

I looked up, the voices were low and deep, their language was foreign. I heard their laughter as the body of my uncle was kicked around. I stayed silent as I watched the men, their faces covered by black linen cloth. Soon they left, but not without taking everything from me. My uncle, his honour and all the goods he had brought. I wiped my tears off my eyes as I crept up from the rock as I saw the ravaged state of our camp and the body of my uncle.

The rumbling of their horses slowly dwindled down into silence, I was alone, no one to help me. I stood on top of the large sand dune next to me, trying to find a sign of the deadly killers that had taken the life of my uncle. But they too were also gone.

The sky had turned dark and my eyes started to drift, I picked a small rock as my resting area for the night as I slowly drifted into slumber.

When morning came, I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes as I crouched up to the torn tent on top of my head, and now I had a choice: To go back to the mainland and become a poor measly beggar on the streets, or finish what my uncle had sought to do. I chose the second.

My eyes had a glint of hope, as I packed up what remained of our camp and set off in the direction of Baghdad, the city that we had been travelling to. The sky was bright yellow as the warm sun wafted at my face. The journey was hard, but worthwhile. I thought to myself that from now onwards I wouldn't care about the past, and move towards a new future for myself. Tears brushed upon my face as I mounted my camel travelling towards the horizon and unknown lands far, far away.

Not So Expendable

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Cheung, Sin Ting – 11

Zhang Yue placed a snow-white arm on her brother's shoulder, delicate yet slender fingers clutching at the fabric of his robes. "Qian, please don't go," she pleaded, her lips trembling, onyx-coloured eyes glassy with unshed tears. "It's a fool's errand. You'll never come back alive." Zhang Qian shook off his sister with a gentle smile. "Yue, I'm proud to serve this country, and my emperor. Besides, Emperor Wu has already agreed. You're one of the top female scribes in the palace, you understand what an honor it is to be chosen for such an important mission." Yue sighed, but she knew she couldn't stop Qian. He had made up his mind. "Alright," she muttered as new determination coursed through her. Yue met Qian's confused eyes boldly. "Then I'm coming with you."

An hour later, Yue was kneeling at Emperor Wu's feet, surrounded by skeptical, mocking gazes. The emperor narrowed his eyes thoughtfully. "A scribe could be useful. However, why should I send you?" Yue kept her tone respectful and reasonable, praying that Emperor Wu would agree. "Emperor, I'm a top scribe, but I'm still nobody special. I'm expendable, and I'd be proud to serve you." Emperor Wu appraised Yue, his eyes flicking over her form. After a few seconds that felt like eternity, he nodded. "Approved. You may accompany Zhang Qian."

A month into the tedious monotony of endless land, deserted hills and desolate once-green fields, Yue got into an argument with her brother. "You – you want to go into enemy territory, just because it will shorten the journey?" Yue raised her voice, speaking defiantly even though she stuttered in fear. If Qian hadn't been her brother, Yue was sure she would have been executed for her insolence. "What do you know?" Qian's lips were curved into a disdainful sneer, and he too was shouting. "We have to hurry! Back home, right now, our soldiers are dying to the Xiongnu, as defenceless as lambs to the slaughter." Yue glared for a few more moments before slumping in defeat. She couldn't publicly undermine Qian's authority. "Do as you please," she mumbled dully, completely defeated, hating how helpless she was.

It had been two years since Yue left Qian's traveling group at midnight, fueled by fury and desperate panic. She had slowly and painstakingly earned trust within the group of Xiongnu that had captured Qian and his crew, and now she was standing in front of his cell door, trembling hands cupping a small brass key that felt infinitely heavy. Her usually nimble fingers clumsy, Yue fumbled with the key for several heartstopping moments, before successfully inserting it. She turned the key and pushed the door open. "We can't escape," Qian was saying to his best friend. "It's hopeless—" Qian stopped as a ray of light illuminated the small cell. Yue watched his face shift, her heart pounding, nearly leaping out of her chest. "Qian? It's me, Yue." The desperate hope in Qian's eyes physically pained her. "Yue?" His voice was quiet and rough, his eyes blown wide. Yue nodded, too choked up to speak. Qian leapt up and crashed into her arms, silent sobs soaking her shirt as tears cascaded down his cheeks.

"Stop!" Qian barked, as authoritative as he'd ever been. Yue was glad that he had bounced back quickly, easily recovering from his two years of captivity, both mentally and physically. "Everyone, we're here. Dismount from your horses and tidy up. We're about to meet the Yuezhi emperor." Yue slipped off her mount gracefully, reaching into her bag for some paper and parchment. "Yue and I are the only ones who will enter the throne room," Qian continued, his eyes flicking to Yue for a second. She smiled reassuringly at him. "The rest of you will stay in the outer gardens of the palace. Look presentable."

"I can't believe he said no." Qian's voice was trembling and shaky, his bone-white face a tapestry of confusion and despair. "What will I tell Emperor Wu now? I've failed him, and everyone in my country." Yue's eyebrows creased as she gnawed at her bottom lip, utterly frustrated. "Qian, listen to me. I am confident in our soldiers, our country, our emperor. We will win this war, but rebuilding, finding new jobs, setting up fresh trade routes... that will be difficult. We should help with that." Yue reached into her bag and rummaged around, pulling out several pieces of parchment. She unfurled them as carefully as one would lay down a newborn baby, slender fingers pointing at sketches of trade routes with detailed information of each country they had passed, such as lists of what products they had, along with what they could gain from an alliance with China. Yue sent her thunderstruck brother a sharp grin. "How... how did you..." Qian's voice was bewildered, but tentatively hopeful for the first time since they had entered the Yuezhi emperor's throne room. Yue's eyes crinkled at the corners, her silky black hair cascading around her in smooth, artful waves as she slipped the parchments back into her bag. "Well, I'm not the top female scribe for nothing."

Much to her surprise, Yue and her team returned to an exuberant China. People sobbed and laughed and hugged in the streets, everyone on cloud nine. Yue was confused until she heard a woman scream exuberantly, "The war's over!" In Emperor Wu's throne room, the man seemed to have aged a million years since they had departed, new

wrinkles adorning his aged face. He scanned the parchments, eyes widening with every sentence, looking at the weathered papers as if they were gold. “Who came up with this?”

From where he was kneeling on the floor, Qian noticed Yue in the shadows, fading into someone expendable and unremarkable again. It made his chest feel tight, to see her brilliance overshadowed and ignored. “It was Zhang Yue, Emperor,” Qian announced loudly. Shocked eyes turned to Yue as her head snapped up, eyes wide with surprise. “It was my sister.”

Re-discovering The China Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Cheung, Tsz Yuet – 10

One day, in a small town in China, there lived an extraordinary girl named Flower. She had jet black hair and electric blue eyes, and she could see mythical creatures like griffins, dwarves and pixies wherever she went, but she would ignore them, because she thought her ability was too abnormal. At least she had her trusty pet dog with her to let her feel safer, so she could live just like a normal girl with a normal life, no weird abilities. She lived in a little town named Yue Hua village, but the village had a problem. Their farmers were only good at growing corn, so whenever Flower and her pet dog, Clover, passed by a farm, they would only see a sea of golden yellow corn. The problem was, they had too much corn, and the whole village was turning poorer and poorer day by day. And on top of that, her mother had fallen ill and they were too poor to buy medicine, so her mother's sickness got worse every day.

One day, Flower was determined to do something as she placed a cold compress on her mother's forehead. "It's sad, isn't it, young Flower?" She whipped around and saw an old gnome standing behind her. She glanced at her mother, but she was too feverish, so her mother was asleep. "Now, if you want to fix everything, you must go on a long journey, but you can bring your dog. Follow the red clouds!" Then he vanished with a poof! Flower and Clover looked at each other, then at night, as she was sneaking out, she screeched to a halt. Who was going to take care of her mom? "Do I really have to do this?" asked the gnome. "You want me to go on a quest, so it's only fair." Replied Flower smoothly. The gnome shrugged, and put on a mask that looked uncannily like herself. "Go along now, I'll take care of your mom." Relieved, Flower and Clover finally set off on their big adventure.

After they walked for a few days, the red clouds suddenly disappeared while they were following them. Flower's eyes widened in shock. Clover looked at her expectantly and barked. Flower pretended nothing was wrong and thought, "The clouds were facing north, so....." Then she led Clover and herself to go north, and after a few minutes, there was an enchanted forest, and as they went inside, a red mist surrounded her and Clover, then everything went black.

When Flower opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was Clover barking relentlessly at her, like Flower had done something wrong. She sat up groggily and looked around, then mumbled, "What's wrong? Where am I?" She looked around once more, and then realized that the red mist had teleported her back to Yue Hua village! "Oh no! How will I go on my quest now? I shouldn't have gone into that forest! Oh no, oh no, now what do I do?" She paced frantically. "Haha! Maybe next time I shouldn't give such a great responsibility to a young girl like you, Miss Flower." Flower stopped pacing and turned around to see an old male spirit chuckling. He was wearing a black hanfu with red edges, and a tall golden hat. "Who are you?" asked Flower warily. "I was the one who had chosen you for this quest, for I am the founder of China's silk road, and the reason why I sent you on this quest is because I need you to help find the silk road once again, for your village does not have enough necessities, and I believe that your mother is under the care of Sam the gnome. My name is Zhang Qian, nice to meet you, Flower." He replied. "Zhang Qian, can you please guide me to the silk road?" Clover, who had been listening intently, yapped and wagged her tail excitedly. Zhang Qian reached down to stroke Clover, and said, "Of course, young Flower, it would be my pleasure." Then, the group set off to find the silk road! With Zhang Qian's help, the route to the silk road was much easier, since he had gone there before and he knew the easiest and safest paths. After about a week, Zhang Qian said that they were almost there and that they would arrive in a few days. Flower and Clover were so excited that Flower was practically dancing and Clover licked Zhang Qian and Flower in triumph. When they arrived at a strange grassland with weird lines in it, Zhang Qian lifted his arms to the sky. "Finally, we have arrived! The silk road's gate!" Flower and Clover exchanged glances of confusion. "We didn't know there would be a gate to the silk road." Zhang Qian chuckled. "No, this light will teleport you two back to Yue Hua village, and you must tell the village chief to send some merchants to trade with other provinces, and trade away all your extra corn and get some more useful things like medicine, rice and vegetables. Don't worry, I will guide you there again if you need me on your second quest." Flower looked at him gratefully as blue light surrounded her. "Remember, I will guide you every step of the way!" said Zhang Qian before Flower blacked out.

When Flower opened her eyes, the first thing she did was go to the village chief and do what Zhang Qian asked. Then, with the merchants, they set off the second time and traded all the things they needed, and most importantly, Flower and Clover finally got Flower's mother's medicine! After trading, they raced back to Yue Hua village and told the village chief all about their adventure, and Flower's mother finally got the medicine she needed. Sam could go back to his home, and Zhang Qian went back to the spirit world.

The Time–Traveling Journey: Secrets of the Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chow, Lai Ching Vean – 11

Dora was at home, dreaming about what her future job might be. Lost in thought, she was jolted back to reality by a loud bang. Her AI smartbot, Smarty, slammed her textbook on the table and snapped, “Snap to it, girl! Your English composition is due tomorrow, and you’re just daydreaming? Come on, get to work!”

Dora groaned. “Smarty, who even named you ‘Smarty’? I’m trying my best, you know how **good** my grades are... I just can’t do it! We have to write about China’s history, and, well, history is boring!”

“No problem! Let’s go on a journey, and you’ll get some inspiration. Off we go, Dora the Explorer!” exclaimed Smarty.

Suddenly, Dora and Smarty found themselves in a noisy, lively market. All around, people were shouting, “Smooth, soft silk!” “Beautiful camels!” and more. Dora approached the scene with curiosity, determined to explore every nook and cranny.

“Ooh! Smarty, where are we? It’s like an outlet here!” Dora asked.

“Based on my data, we’re at the Chang’an (now Xi’an) market—a bustling hub full of traders from different cultures, each bringing unique goods and traditions. The market is a sensory delight: the smells of exotic spices, the vibrant silks, the sounds of bargaining, and multicultural chatter!”

Just then, Dora felt a gentle tap. A girl about her age smiled warmly. “Welcome! You must be new here. Let me show you around.” Without waiting for a reply, she led Dora and Smarty to her silk stall.

At the stall, the girl introduced herself as Lian, the daughter of a local silk trader. “Welcoming outsiders is important. It gives them a chance to know our culture—and the Silk Road. People connect and learn about each other through trading.”

“Why is it called the Silk Road?” Dora wondered aloud.

“Because silk was the most famous, valuable thing traded from China to the West. But many other goods, ideas, and cultures traveled these routes. See my dress? It’s made of silk!”

Dora admired Lian’s dress, running her fingers over the smooth, cool fabric. The vibrant colors and patterns seemed to come alive under her touch.

As Lian guided them around, Dora joked, “One day, I’ll trade all my homework for video games. People will be eager to buy my homework, and my mansion will be full of games. Maybe there’ll be a new road called The Game Road, and I’ll be a famous trader!”

Smarty sighed. “That might happen in your dreams.”

2000 years later...

“Smarty, remember when I drank the Elixir of Immortality? It led to my success! If I did not drink it back then, I would have died already and none of this would have happened.” Dora, now the most famous person in the world, declared. She was more famous than Donald Trump or BLACKPINK, and the richest person alive. The Game Road was real, and she traded her old homework for video games. Maybe, just maybe, the moral is...

Nothing is impossible.

The Last Caravan

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chu, Amanda – 10

The silence was the first thing I noticed, the empty roads were the next.

For fifty years, the caravanserais at Khotan had been a beautiful racket. A symphony of camel bells, of Bashir grumbling at a stubborn hoof, the sizzle of fat from a merchant's skillet, the laughter of men who'd crossed deserts to share a flask of wine. Now, only the wind. A dry, lonely sound, scraping at the gates.

I ran a hand over Anahita's soft nose. Her breath was warm, her humps full. She was ready. We all were. Twenty camels, ten men, a fortune in Khotan jade strapped to their backs. A final run to Samarkand.

But my boy, 18-year-old Jun, stood in the gateway, blocking the sun. "Don't do this, Father."

I didn't need to look at him to see his face—the smooth skin untouched by desert sun, the eyes already counting profit and loss like the port-city merchants he admired. My son had always detested the roads, especially after what had happened with his other father—figure, Yusuf. Yusuf had been taking care of him since my boy was born — after I had rescued him from the slave trader in the Gobi Desert, hiding him in my gear when the trader had come knocking. Ever since then, Yusuf had felt like he had an unpaid debt, and decided to fulfil it by taking care of Jun.

However, I suppose Jun's hatred of the roads started there. It was my fault. I had abandoned those eager eyes when they need me most, and when Yusuf suggested I bring Jun along, I lashed out. I told Yusuf to try the road himself first. If he succeeded, I would bring Jun. If not... nothing more needed to be said. Yusuf died on that trip and I brought his body home and laid it on the rug.

"You see," I said, "People who take the road end up like this." That was Jun's turning point. He developed a cold demeanour. We grew distant. There was not a day on the road when I had not been ridden with guilt.

Jun's voice brought me out of my trance. "The Portuguese ships," he said, his voice too calm. "They carry more in one hold than you can in ten trips. No bandits. No warlords. No... this." He gestured at the empty courtyard devoid of people, of life, of laughter.

"They carry things, Jun," I said, my voice rough. "They don't carry the story of the Roman coin I got for a song and a smile. They don't carry the taste of the flatbread that Sogdian woman taught your mother to make."

"It's a dead road," he said, and the pity in his voice was a knife to the gut.

I turned to my men. Lei, who'd lost an eye to a bandit's arrow. Old Man Bashir, who could read the stars like a love letter. They weren't ghosts. They were one of the last true things among world that was forgetting itself.

"We go," I said. The words felt heavy.

The journey was a walk through a dying house. We passed the caravanserai at Cherchen. Its roof had fallen in. The well was a mouth full of sand. In Dunhuang, the great Buddha smiled down on empty streets.

The end came at the Miran spring. It was dust. Just a patch of cracked, white earth. We dug with our hands but found only more dust. The life was gone from the place.

That night, Lei spat into the fire. "The world's broken, Kael. It's all gone to sea."

I didn't answer. I went to my pack and pulled out a small, lacquered box. It held a feather from a Caspian bird. A faded sketch of a camel, drawn by a man with eyes the color of a summer sky. A recipe for Sogdian bread, the ink smudged by someone's tears. A single, worn Roman coin.

"This," I told them, my throat tight. "This is what we traded. Not just silk for silver. We traded pieces of the world. We sat at fires and learned that a man from the other end of the earth fears the same dark, loves his children the same way, laughs at the same stupid jokes. That's the road."

We turned back.

Weeks later, I stood again in the silence of Khotan. I didn't bother unloading the jade. I took my box and I buried it deep in the earth near the stables.

Jun found me. He didn't say "I told you so." He just put a hand on my shoulder. I was surprised.

"It's not the ships, Jun," I whispered. "It's the step. We've forgotten how to take the first step into the unknown. We'd rather stay in our own safe courtyards."

I stared at the sun setting over the Taklamakan. A road I'd walked a hundred times. A road that no longer was.

"Jun," I said, "let me tell you a story."

"There's a man they write about," I said. "Zhang Qian. They call him a hero because he came back empty-handed from the west."

I looked at Jun. "We who knew the road tell a different story. Not of kings, but of a parched man saved by a stranger's last water. Of a cold night where a rival trader shared a felt blanket just to hear a joke."

I leaned closer. "When the Huns took him, a family of potters lied to raiders at their door. They weren't protecting an envoy. They were protecting the man who'd mended their cart."

I placed a hand on his arm. "His road wasn't mapped by scholars. It was woven from a thousand small kindnesses between people who knew the desert claims you if you face it alone."

"Do you understand now?"

Jun's gaze shifted to the darkening dunes. "Yes, Father," he whispered. I thought I saw a tear glisten near his eye.

Perhaps there was still some hope after all.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chui, Po Chi – 10

"Oh finally, I'm done!" Penelope exclaimed, putting all her books away in exhaustion. Penelope was a university student who studied Veterinary Medicine and she would have an exam the next day. Now that she had finished her revision, Penelope longed for a relaxing activity to ease her mind. A post had appeared on her phone that morning which had captured her attention. There was a new exhibition "The Importance of Animals in History" in the museum not far from her dormitory. Penelope always had a great interest in animals, so she was ecstatic to go. After half a day of studying, Penelope wanted to dress gorgeously when she went out to make herself feel uplifted by the vibrant colours on her clothes.

Interestingly, once Penelope got to the exhibition, a special painting caught her eye. There was a caravan with camels carrying cargo on their back in the painting. When Penelope looked at the camels, she found out that they all seemed to be staring back at her no matter from which angle she was observing them. That was very peculiar. As she focused on the painting more and more, her vision started to get fuzzy and was finally covered by a blanket of blurriness. Meanwhile, she felt an overwhelming and mysterious force pulling her somewhere.

When Penelope could see clearly again, she was in a desert. All she could see was a glistening golden sea of sand surrounding her. It was boiling hot. As a gust of wind swooshed past, the sand made a fascinating rustling sound. Penelope looked around, but there was not a single person in sight. A long period of deafening silence followed. Penelope was in a bundle of nerves. She had lots of questions in her mind. Where was she? How did she get here? Would she be staying here forever?

Finally, after what seemed like centuries, Penelope could hear voices of men chatting, which totally lifted her spirits. Behind the men were some camels, just like the caravan in the painting. "Excuse me, where am I?" she enquired in a friendly and gentle voice. A man walked up to her and replied, "You're in the Great Desert, I'm Zhang Qian. We're on a long quest to the west, trading goods along the route and getting to know people from different cultures." Penelope recalled that Zhang Qian was the renowned historical figure who was the pioneer of the "Silk Road", an important route connecting different parts of the world for transportation and commerce. Before she could ask more, a grumpy man came by and challenged Penelope about the different style of clothes she was wearing. Of course, she did not know how to answer and the man grew suspicious. The grumpy man decided to tie her up, just in case, but he still let her stay with them.

After she had walked with them for a while, bandits darted out to attack them. Ping! Pang! The sound of the weapons crashing against each other echoed in Penelope's head. It sent chills down her spine. The caravan guards fought against the bandits courageously. In the end, Zhang Qian's team won. They checked that their silk, gold and other goods were safe from the attack. Nevertheless, most of their food supplies and forage were stolen and a number of their camels were injured.

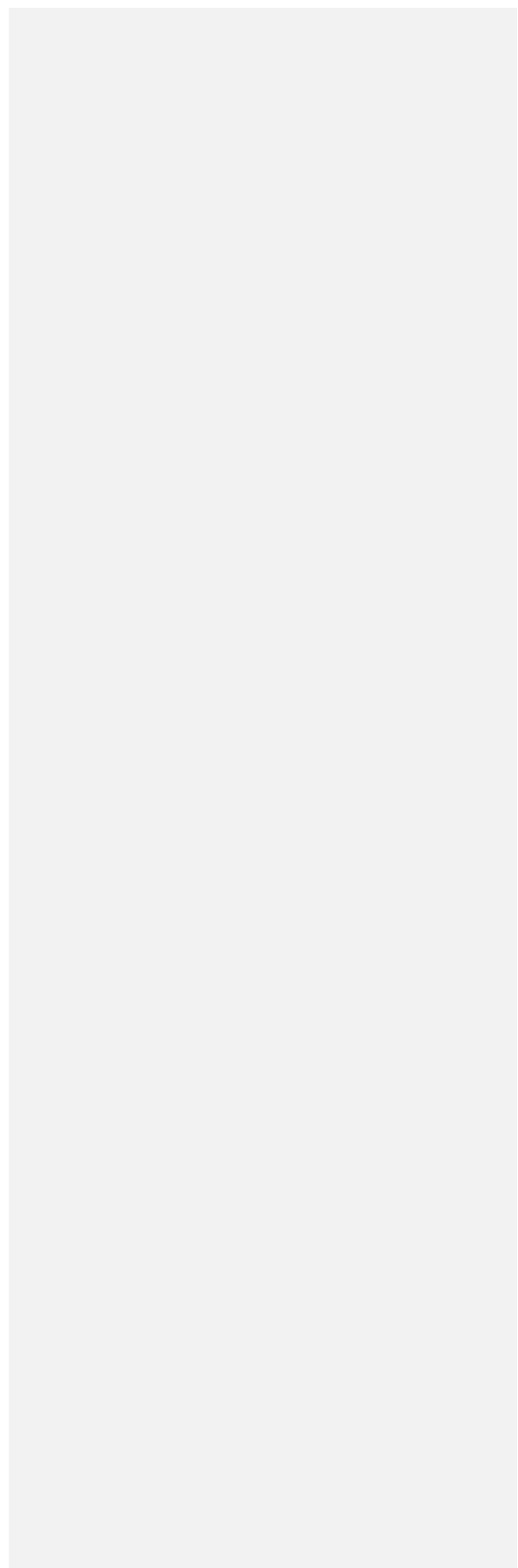
What came next was certainly not something good. It was a storm. Fear. Anxiousness. Panic. They needed to arrive at the next city in a week's time due to the shortage of resources. However, the camels would not move forward as some of them were hurt. Zhang Qian's team were distressed because they didn't have the slightest idea of what to do. That was when a voice rang out. Penelope suggested, with her heart broken because of the camels' injury, "Maybe I could help."

Zhang Qian's team did not have any other solution, so they all agreed to untie Penelope to let her help them first. Calmly, Penelope advised how they could handle the camels' wounds and take care of them after the treatment. The team knew some fundamental skills about how to take care of the wounded camels, but Penelope demonstrated much more advanced knowledge due to the professional training she got in university. "Wow... That is... very impressive," said the caravan members in admiration. "I'm learning how to be a vet at school. Basically, vets help to heal and take care of sick or wounded animals. That's why I know all these skills." Penelope explained.

Being thankful for Penelope's advice, Zhang Qian's team helped the camels with their wounds and took really good care of them. Two days later, they were over the moon when the camels started to move forward again. Gratefully, Zhang Qian's team expressed their gratitude for Penelope's help and promised that they would remember her advice. They also apologized for tying her up at first for safety reasons. Warm yellow waves of happiness were bursting out of Penelope as she realized that she had helped a renowned historical figure and the injured camels. She wanted to stay longer but she felt a bit dizzy and everything started to blur again.

The next moment she opened her eyes, Penelope was back in the museum. Tingling with excitement, she recalled the thrilling adventure she just had. Proudly, Penelope imagined that she might have become part of history. When she could see clearly again, the painting with the caravan was right in front of her. Penelope could not believe her eyes when she noticed the painting seemed to look a bit different now! All the camels appeared to have a contented look. Even more surprising, right next to them was a girl who wore a satisfied grin on her face and was

dressed in modern and vibrant clothes, just like Penelope's current outfit. That girl was surely not in the painting before her adventure. Penelope was speechless and astounded. She wondered, "Was that me?"



The Last Scam

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Chun, Oi Sun Casey – 9

Milan sat on the saddle of his horse, Star. He was going to the Silk Road.

As a scammer, he often made trips to the Silk Road to trade fake silk and fake ivory. He had gotten real goods and precious artefacts in return. This time, his boss, QianQu wanted him to scam a specific person called Paul. Paul was QianQu's cousin and had the family heirloom. The heirloom was a piece of ivory that was carved into a lion. QianQu had claimed that the heirloom was rightfully his, but it was with Paul.

Milan had traveled for months until he reached Rome. By then, his fake goods were replaced by precious artefacts.

He set up a stall next to the crowded roads in Rome. A bald man with black hair and an ivory lion necklace passed by his stall. Milan immediately recognised him as Paul.

"Young fellow, I have ivory from India. Would you like to trade your lion pendant with me for this?" Milan held up the big piece of ivory. Paul thought of the different things he could get from the piece of ivory. The pendant he had was a family heirloom, but surely, he could benefit much more with the bigger piece. His ancestors would be proud.

Paul nodded, excited to make this trade. He was so happy he didn't see Milan's smirk.

Something seems off, Paul thought. *Who would exchange such a big piece of ivory for that necklace?* At that moment, he couldn't remember it was a family heirloom at all.

A few days later, when Milan was going to depart Rome, Paul headed to make a trade for silk with the ivory. When he handed over the ivory to a merchant from China, the merchant told Paul that the ivory was fake.

Paul was astounded and replied, "I traded this for my family heirloom! Have you seen a short man with a moustache and a blue turban and tunic?"

"It must be Milan!" the merchant exclaimed. "He is a fraud."

The merchant started muttering in Chinese. Paul ran off to find Milan.

"Excuse me! Have you seen a short man with a moustache and a blue turban and tunic?" Paul ran around, asking different people.

They all shook their heads or muttered, "No."

Paul sighed after he had spent an entire hour looking for Milan. When he sat down at a well, he saw a blue cloth sweep around the corner. Paul peered around.

There, he saw Milan as he stood loaded his bags onto the horses in the middle of a big crowd. Paul knew exactly what to do.

"Scammer!" Paul yelled.

Lots of people turned their heads.

"You gave me this piece of fake ivory for a real ivory pendant."

The people there decided not to act and quickly fled.

Milan was shocked and embarrassed. Never had anyone found out they had received fakes. Even if they did, none of them would bother to track him down and confront him.

"Wh—what do you mean?" Milan stuttered.

Now it was Paul's turn to be shocked. Scammers normally just admitted their wrong. Paul looked back at the fake ivory in his palm. *Maybe the traveler at the silk store lied*, he thought.

When he looked back up, Milan was nowhere to be seen. Now Paul was certain Milan was the scammer, for there was no need to run or panic if you were innocent.

Paul took off down the street, scanning the crowd for a man on a horse.

There he is! Paul thought as he spotted Milan's horse headed back to the Silk Road.

"He's a scammer! Don't let him go!" Paul yelled as Milan approached a big crowd.

No one heard him as the chatter was very loud. Paul decided to take action himself and "borrowed" a horse from a nearby merchant. The horse ran after Milan as the merchant yelled at Paul. Milan was about ten metres away from Paul, but Paul was catching up.

Milan's horse sped up as well until they were a good distance away from Paul. Paul was behind Milan when Paul took the piece of fake ivory and aimed it at Milan's horse's eye.

Time seemed to slow down as the ivory flew through the air in a perfect arch before hitting Milan's horse straight in the eye. The horse neighed and screeched, then threw Milan off and galloped away.

"My goods!" Milan yelled, then fell to his knees.

Paul went ahead and snatched the necklace off Milan's neck, breaking the string.

"So long, scammer," Paul rasped.

Milan knelt on the floor, dumbfounded.

"How can this be?" Milan muttered.

He was never going back to China, or he'd have to face his boss.

"Look, I am a scammer," Milan muttered. "Please, let me have this necklace. My boss will kill me if I don't go back with it. I promise that I'll never scam again."

Paul stopped. He had a feeling inside that very few people had. It was empathy. His heart immediately softened. He wanted to help. Paul suddenly came up with an idea.

"This necklace is mine. It is a family heirloom," Paul said.

He watched Milan's face turn pale.

"But you don't have to go back. You can stay here. I know a place where you can live. I am sure you will be able to rent it. But you have to promise never to scam again."

Milan nodded eagerly.

Four months later...

Milan lived in a small house next to Paul's. He was now a successful businessman who still did a lot of trading, but he no longer scammed.

His boss, being forgetful, completely forgot about Milan.

Another month passed, and Milan had a wife. He still traded (but with real goods) and has a big family with three sons, five daughters, three grandchildren, and also a good friend Paul, who was with him through it all.

Fury of the Verdant Ninetail

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ho, Sin Kiu Briana – 11

Centuries ago, the Chinese Diplomat Zhang Qian built a path from the small Shaanxi village, China, to the outlying and enormous lands of Central Asia, promising riches.

But greed had always shadowed alongside trade.

Merchants realized that the wealthy would pay for expensive treatment, where the saliva of a bird could provide immunity and better skin, boosting health.

But these creatures fought back. The darkest prize was the Verdant Ninetail. The size of a small wolf, its piercing eyes of silver illuminating the darkest nights, dangerously glinting like moonlight on water. Nine elongated, verdant tails trailed behind, shimmering an ethereal mist. When it felt safe its nine tails sloped downwards, flaring up only when it felt danger.

Rumor had it its flesh was the only cure to paralysis. One trader who came across it near a desert decided to sell it, baiting a reinforced cage with meat, luring the poor creature inside. Once secure, four men smuggled it home. But they never made it.

They slumped down dead, lips blue, faces swollen, cage door was ripped apart. The Ninetail was gone.

All the merchant cared about was money, not knowing that the Verdant Ninetail had a unique defence: its nine tails contained dormant spores. Upon sensing danger, its spores would activate a quick defence, tails rising, emitting poison gas, killing anyone close to it. When the merchant first approached the Verdant Ninetail, the latter thought he was someone good as simple as sharing food. However, as soon as it learnt that the men were here to capture itself, the Verdant Ninetail attacked.

From then on it was abandoned, wandering freely without control, causing casualties everywhere.

The Emperor of China was scared. The Silk Road was the blood of the Chinese Empire, and because of this the Silk Road appeared to crumble more than ever.

He summoned his army of knights. “Kill the animal! Whatever it takes!” he screamed.

Everyone just froze. Silence answered, knights shifting uncomfortably.

“I’ll do it.”

The gravelly voice belonged to a rookie archer obviously without enough practice. His buzz-cut hair was streaked with dirt, yet his eyes burned a strong, kindling fire of determination. “My name is Yao Yung. Yung, as in bravery. I will find the Verdant Ninetail.”

The Emperor studied him doubtfully but agreed. He gifted the young archer three arrows tipped with precious graphene, and the one and only Mystic Freeze, a potion which could freeze anything for five precious seconds.

Yao Yung packed a bag, the precious items inside, and he vanished towards the Gobi Desert, where the Verdant Ninetail was last spotted roaming.

Days blurred into weeks as Yao Yung trekked past windy coasts, climbed cliffs and finally, reached the golden slopes of the Desert, where the eventide sun bled across the blushing sky.

He looked to see the Verdant Ninetail resting on a high dune. Its long tails trailed a green mist that swirled like venomous cobras in the hazardous heat dangerously.

He nocked an arrow to his bow and loosened. The arrow flew quickly at the Verdant Ninetail, but it must have sensed the attack and leaped off into the far distance, a bolt of green flashing across the horizon as the arrow hit dead into a pile of sand.

Yao Yung cursed. He couldn't engage it in melee combat. He needed a plan, but the night settled as Yao got frustrated.

Slowly, dawn took over the sky, shades of pale orange bleeding in. Through heavy eyelids he saw the Verdant Ninetail quietly sipping from a tiny water pool, tails lowered. Now was his chance. He got his second arrow ready. Then he crept closer, until the toxic mist prickled his skin and his lungs began to burn, eyes watering.

As he was about to shoot the Verdant Ninetail turned.

The creature's silver eyes looked at him.

For one eternal moment, creature and man stared across the sand.

Then it attacked.

The Ninetail zipped through the sand like a bolt of lightning, nine tails flaring higher than ever, fanning out into a dangerous mist of swirling poison gas. The air turned dustier, thick and reeking. Yao Yung's vision blurring as the poison break necked towards him.

The poison had made its way into his nose already, time tight. As his head pounded, Yao Yung blindly searched in his bag for weapons, and as the Ninetail closed in quickly, Yao Yung tripped over something and a vial with swirling blue was tossed into the air—and it shattered straight into the skin of the Verdant Ninetail.

It let out a loose howl and reared up its forelegs—and—froze mid—air.

The Mystic Freeze!

Immediately the five second countdown started.

Five.

Yao Yung immediately fumbled with his bow and last arrow.

Four.

With nervousness he nocked it, pulling hard.

Three.

Eyed the Verdant Ninetail the last time, its gaze afraid and innocent.

Two.

Exhaled.

One.

The arrow flew and the tip pierced through the Verdant Ninetail's left hind leg like a knife cleaving through butter, blood bursting out of it, the skin tearing apart. The freezing effect immediately wore off, just as it collapsed instantly, its nine tails' flowing green mist shimmering faintly and vanishing abruptly as it lay, howling desperately, feeling the pain course quickly through its veins.

Yao Yung sighed in exhaustion as he, too, fell on his knees, distraught as he saw the now weak and harmless creature and saw its silvery eyes blink one innocent, sad goodbye, taking one more ragged breath in the silence of the golden desert.

Weeks later Yao Yung entered the King's palace with the Ninetail. He was asked for a reward. It could be gold, jewels, anything. But he said, "These animals aren't monsters. We are. We hunt them. So, let's stop and give them the life they deserve."

The King's eyes shone with pride and admiration. He raised his arms and declared, "This will be done immediately, for Yao Yung has shown us the New Tales of China's Silk Road."

Tablets in the Museum

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ho, Yan Kit – 11

Growing up, parents used to tell their children stories of caravans full of treasure and ancient manuscripts lost in the Asia Han Dynasty's Silk Roads. Centuries after, countless brave archaeologists have ventured out into the desert in hopes of finding the treasure, most proved unsuccessful, some even never to be seen again. Against all likelihoods, however, a group of four brave archaeologists made the journey in 2025 and came back with amazing findings.

As the intrepid four walked aimlessly across the seemingly endless "sea of death", Taklamakan desert under the blazing sun, their breaths became more and more frequent. The explorers were four tiny black dots in the endless desert, only visible if you squinted at them.

The eldest, Chen, was at the point of fainting. He was the optimistic one in the group, always cheering them on with words of encouragement, but even he was starting to lose hope. They had been out in the desert for 5 days and had zero progress in finding treasure. He didn't speak, but when the group neared a jagged outcrop of stone casting a sliver of shade, he simply sank to his knees.

"According to the research I did, merchant caravans were used to transport goods to and fro for the East and the West. These caravans are full of treasure such as silk, jade and ancient manuscripts, if we find one, we'll be rich! These treasures cost at least millions!" cried Yang. Everyone ignored Yang, thinking that what he said was too good to be true.

They were taking turns drinking from a bottle to quench their thirst when Lee suddenly shouted, his hands frantically clawing at the earth, sand flying everywhere. "Over here! I've got something! I think it might be a treasure! Come and help me uncover it!" The other three weren't expecting much, as Lee's "discoveries" were always false alarms, but at Lee's insistence, they slowly crawled over to help uncover the colossal thing. With their trowels and their shovels, they dug at the earth for hours, their hands stained with dust and dirt. The sun came and left and it was soon dawn.

Slowly, a curved wooden form emerged, blackened by age, then another, joined by rusted iron fittings. Before them lay the skeleton of an old caravan, its canopy long gone, ripped away by the harsh desert wind. The damaged caravan seemed to groan in protest as it was dug out. Zhang leaned back against his elbows, breathing a sigh of exhaustion, visibly worn out after working under the harsh weather for so long.

As they pried open the deformed door, it gave way with a loud creak and a burst of dust. Inside the dusty, old caravan was a pile of ancient tablets, carved from a precious stone that seemed to be obsidian in concentric circles and intricate symbols that were incomprehensible by archaeologists. The pile of smooth tablets was laced with centuries of grime and dust, left untouched for aeons. This discovery made everyone discouraged. They were all expecting precious jewels and antiques, not some rocks with weird symbols they didn't understand. They were all very tired of working so hard under the sun only to find some random tablets that were probably useless.

Yang simply sank to the floor and held his knees to his chest. In his disappointment, Chen kicked at one of the tablets and scowled. "All that hard work for nothing!" he muttered under his breath. "Stop! It's all we've got, and these "rocks" don't look like normal rocks to me. It might be something precious!" protested Lee. "Lee's right. These tablets are the only things we've got now. If we don't find any other treasures, these tablets will be our only hope. We won't be trusted for fieldwork again in the future if we don't bring anything back to the laboratory." said Zhang with a determined look on his face.

In the end, the four decided to keep looking for more suspicious objects in the sand in hopes of finding something precious. Of course, nothing was found.

Weeks later, the rocks were brought to Qinghai for inspection. Inside the laboratory, the only source of light was the dual-monitor. The pile of tablets were placed right in the middle of the table, the ray of light from the monitor sliding over them. There was also a visual replica of the tablets on the left screen, the right side covered in indecipherable code. Kuang's fingers flew across the keyboard, trying to match the symbols on the tablets to ancient

writing, cultural symbols and so on. After thorough research, Kuang discovered that the symbols on the tablets were used for communicating between merchants to convey intricate information.

The Silk Road was not only for trading treasure from different countries but also helped carry religious beliefs and unique culture to other places. This causes countries from both the East and the West to experience new things and discover more about the different practices and lifestyles of people of other countries. The Silk Road was a lot more than just a road for people to trade goods. It served as a connection between the East and the West for them to understand people that grew up from unlike places and understand their opinions and perspectives, improving as a whole individual along the way.

After confirming that the tablets are real and not counterfeit, the museum accepted the tablets and paid the four brave men a good amount of money for their findings. The tablets are now in the museum where they are displayed for everyone to see. The four men were promoted to site director for their outstanding work.

A Silk Road Cultural Journey

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Kwok, Hei Yu – 9

“Ding!” The bell to the end of school finally jingled. Evelyn and Peter bolted out of the school gates and dashed back home. They wouldn’t be in a hurry if they didn’t have a project to finish about the Silk Road!

Evelyn and Peter started researching about the long-known system of trading that began in China and connected Asia, India and even Europe! Although they didn’t know the information they found could bring them trouble...

A shot of blue light shone through the screen and Evelyn and Peter were whisked away to a place they had never seen.

“Where is this place?” asked Peter, trying to spit out the sand from his mouth. They landed in a desert. In a distance, Peter could spot rainbow mountains. He felt very dazed, so he motioned his sister to come. Somehow Evelyn recognized this place. She was sure that she had seen it before, but she just couldn’t recall where she saw it!

“Ah!” A light bulb instantly appeared. “We’re in Ancient Times when Silk Road had been built! Let’s walk forward and see,” exclaimed Evelyn. While they were walking, the temperature was rising slowly. It was visible from all the sweat from Peter’s forehead. They passed the stunning blue lake in Tianchi, Xian, the famous Mogao Grottoes and many more signature landmarks with stunning views. “Come on up! There’re people in front. May be they are people from Europe!” Evelyn observed.

The first group of people they encountered were a group of Mongolians who desired soft silk in exchange for the precious diamonds they possessed. Evelyn turned to Peter and mouthed, “We don’t have them!” But Peter was helpless and he did not know how to speak their language.

At that moment, a teenage girl, no older than 14, mesmerized by the glittery diamond, came up to them and gave the Mongolians some silk. But once she received the silk, the girl inquired “Are these diamonds fake?”, gazing at the Mongolians suspiciously.

“W...well, of course not, these are real, madam,” one of the Mongolians with a beard stammered.

“May I have your name then?” the girl asked.

“Ben,” he replied. “Ok, the jewellery is fake, so give me back the silk!” the girl demanded and snatched the silk away from their hands. When the people reacted, the girl had already run ten meters away from them, but the Mongolians raced up to her and snatched the silk back.

The girl’s name was Synthia. She was very depressed because she was sent by the king to exchange some precious diamonds as ornaments for the palace. She was very angry too. “Let’s make a plan to get the gang of people to pay for our precious silk!” Evelyn suggested. As they started discussing, the sky turned into a light shade of pastel pink, painting a stunning picture over the horizon. After that, an egg yolk coloured sun shone bright over Silk Road, then light slowly faded into darkness.

The next morning, Peter hatched a plan. “We are heading to Xian for exchanging cultural ideas.” When Evelyn walked, a stiff breeze touched her lightly on her cheek, so it made walking under the scorching sun slightly better.

When they reached Xian, a young lady was selling Persian artwork in a corner, and the one that drew most attention to people around was an intricate painting with people playing different traditional instruments with a noble

possession sitting on a dressed elephant, surrounded by emerald trees and clouds as soft as cotton. It was blended with detailed miniatures and it caught Evelyn's attention.

She stepped forward and asked, "Excuse me, can you give me the painting while I give you silk?" The young lady looked up and smiled. "Of course! I can teach you how to weave the pattern on your silk, instead of giving the painting to you, because I have to save this if anyone wants me to draw it." The lady explained the steps in detail to Evelyn and while Evelyn was being tutored, Synthia and Peter were tracking any clues if the Mogolians were following them.

After Evelyn had finished her silk patterns, they headed back to Tianchi.

"We must be careful now. The Mongolians must have made up a plan, but I have been searching the hills and I found where the Mongolians live!" Peter exclaimed.

The Mongolians home was up on a hill. It wasn't very noticeable but it was made of red brick. The house looked as if it had been shattered to ruins because around the house, there were some furniture remains and brick pieces and inside the house was a table, some bread and water, a chair, a bed made of cotton and bricks, and on the bed was a blanket that hid Synthia's silk underneath! She was so amazed and joyful and distracted by her joy because she didn't realize that the Mongolians had entered.

When she realized, she hollered "What do you want, blisters?". She held up the silk and continued. "Do you people know that how this silk was made? I had to travel on foot to walk for days till I reached an open pasture with wool sheep and use all of my money just to buy it, and I still have to refine it!"

Beads of teardrops trickled down her cheeks, but Synthia wouldn't stop. "Then I had to make more silk, until my arms were sore! I also had to walk here for like 5 days already! Then, it's exchanged with fake diamonds!" Synthia broke down and wept.

"Sorry, we were forced by the emperor. He said if we didn't get silk, everyone would get executed. I'm very sorry," Ben apologized.

"Fine! But you must never steal again. And I will take back my silk," Synthia grunted.

At that moment, the blue light came out again.

"Synthia, we have to go. It's been fun meeting you! See you again!" Evelyn waved.

Synthia smiled, and the siblings vanished in a blue shade of light. As Evelyn reached the ground, she thought of Synthia's bright smile, as bright as a star.

Camels On the Silk Road: Tales of Trade

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lau, Ellerie – 10

“Move it, you lazy camel! Hurry up!” threatened the merchant, holding a whip that seemed to be made of fire. My head was spinning from the heat as I staggered forward on the scorching-hot sand. I tried to catch up to my best friend Mantou, who was trailing up front with the others in the caravan, but my head filled with daydreams about my herd, free to wander while I suffered with heat and devastation.

“If he had to carry 600 pounds of goods every single day, he would complain too!” I know I shouldn’t, but I couldn’t help cursing the merchant. “Stop complaining, Fuzai!” Mantou bellowed. “We will soon arrive at Dunhuang, the best oasis town! You can drink as much water as you want!”

Ever since my great-great-great-great grandparents, our herd had been trained to carry heavy loads of luxury goods like lightweight silk, precious jewels, delicate tea, and flavourful spice across the Gobi Desert. Each journey took days if not months, and it was exhausting, even for us camels.

A cool breeze soothed my overheated soul. I looked up and admired the beautiful Milky Way. Just as I was drifting into dreamland, I heard a scream. The rude merchant who had handled me was bitten by a snake while sleeping! The guards of the caravan hadn’t noticed the hissing of the Gobi Pit Viper as it slithered away into the deep dark. The shudders of the man only reminded me of how dangerous the desert was.

“Fear not! We can use acupuncture to stop the spread of the venom and the pain!” a medical practitioner exclaimed, pulling out some needles. At that moment, our caravan leader took out a small vial of shiny clear blue liquid. “Wait! I have this potion with healing powers from the last trade, that for sure will save him. Let me help!” Well, that merchant was lucky. Even though he was particularly mean to us camels, he was fortunate enough to get the best help from all the kind souls on the journey.

When I awoke the next day, the whole oasis was in an uproar. As it was nearly Chinese New Year, a huge market was bustling with excitement, where merchants from different regions could buy and sell their goods. Tons of caravans loaded with diverse treasures approached, settling down at Dunhuang.

I caught a strong whiff of spices, sneezing as I walked, hearing a merchant crying out, “Get your exotic spices here! We have saffron, cardamom... name it and we have it!” As I looked around, I caught a glimpse of some ladies gathering near a stall, dabbing some pink powder on their cheeks, and sniffing the strong aromas of perfumes. Nearby, another stall was stocked full of colourful, flowy silk garments. We walked along the streets, passing a stall stacked high with sweet pomegranates, grapes and melons. Every stall had its own unique touch, making them festive and joyful, ready for the New Year.

After the merchants unloaded the treasures from their far-away homelands, the other camels and I quickly formed a bond, eagerly sharing about our travels and stories under the bright sun. “I just came back from Turfan, where our caravan got lost in a sandstorm, and luckily found our way back!” a dusty-looking camel named Chén boasted with recognisable pride. “Well, I’ve been to Urumqi! We got attacked by bandits.” another camel cried with serious wide eyes. “No you haven’t!” Chén protested. Eventually the bickering grew so loud, it clashed with the music and laughter from the lively New Year market.

When the merchants finished selling their goods, we loaded up and continued on the journey back home, recharged by the break. Suddenly, I felt it. Mantou felt it. We all felt it; I saw the hairs on my fellow camels prick up in fright. It was the biggest, worst, sand-stormiest sandstorm I had ever experienced. A huge vortex of swirling sand and wind swept through the desert, swallowing our spices and tea leaves up.

“Don’t panic,” our leader shouted over the tumbling noise, looking at his herds’ worried faces. “We can figure this out! Everybody take cover under the camels!” We stood still for quite some time, feeling the heavy, dense sand hitting us.

By the time the sandstorm stopped, we realized we were lost in the dunes of sand that were towering over us. I felt a pull toward the north, and I walked toward it. “Huh? Stop walking!” the rude merchant hissed at me. “It’s the

camels' instinctive sense of direction! Come on, everybody! Follow Fuzai!" a clever young man at the back said. He reminded me of my true owner, Chu. Mantou and I had been in his herd before we were whisked away for the adventure. He was kind and caring, smart and witty like this young man. Even though he was always in a rush, he always found time to hug and chat with me and my camel friends.

We walked what seemed like forever, our tired hind legs dragging behind our sore backs. I glimpsed something that made my heart race. Could it be? I thought, my pace quickened. In the distance, I saw a faint outline of a man waving. It was my Chu! I was not the only one in a rush. The other camels also quickened their steps, and the merchants began laughing and cheering. "We're home! We're finally home!"

This journey had a lot of challenges – scary snake bites, huge sandstorms – but it was filled with good times too! Like the bustling New Year market, new friendships, interesting stories, and there was pride. I felt proud, knowing that I helped exchange important goods and cultures, linking the East and the West. I'm thrilled to be part of the grand journey along the Silk Road, bringing people together and sharing food, stories and ideas. Off we go!

The Ten—Minute Time Slip: Back to the Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lau, Sin Tung – 9

Last Tuesday morning, my parents brought my sister and I to the Hong Kong Palace Museum to see the “A History of China in Silk” exhibit. I couldn’t wait— but I was expecting a quiet hour of understanding a part of China’s history, not getting sent back to ancient China...

I was standing somewhere in the museum, staring at a 1000—year—old Buddhist statue from the Silk Road. The museum was quiet, but suddenly, the air around the statue began to shimmer and glow as bright as the sun. I blinked, and when I opened my eyes again, the glass display case was gone—and so was the museum. The cool, smooth museum floor had somehow become hot, rough, and dusty. A spicy, unfamiliar smell filled the air, and right next to me stood a large, two—humped Bactrian camel.

I stumbled forward, my shoes sinking into the warm, orange sand. Around me, the silent museum had been replaced by a large racket. “Fresh melons! Sweet dates!” Shouted a man wearing a dusty linen robe. Behind me, another big, shaggy camel let out a loud grumble as its owner loaded heavy crates or shimmering green silk onto its back. The air was thick with the aroma of roast lamb meat and strong, peppery spices that made me sneeze. Everywhere around me, there were things I had only seen behind glass in the HKPM: glittering gold jewelry, colourful rolls of fabric, and delicate glass bowls. I reached for my camera to take a photo, but my bag was empty. I was truly stranded in the middle of a bustling caravan stop, and nobody was wearing a smartwatch but me.

Then, I started to worry. What if I couldn’t go back to the modern time I was in? What would happen to me? At that moment, I also realized that I looked so different from all the ancient Chinese. Only I had on a T—shirt and jeans. I started to brainstorm ways to go home. Suddenly, a camel that I had passed by before slowly approached me. It licked me in the face, and I felt something queer: it was a bit like magically floating in the air. The next moment, I was back at the museum. I had spent an hour walking around in a desert, but it seemed that I had gone for less than ten minutes. Most importantly, I was back in the present. Hooray!

During this short journey, I learned a lot about the Silk Road. Without it, we wouldn’t have any of the soft, furry blankets and coats we have now, and you wouldn’t find any of China’s precious silk anywhere else. All kinds of goods were traded, for example tea leaves, porcelain, spices, precious stones like sapphires and diamonds, strong horses, gold, silver...

Beyond objects, big ideas traveled too. Religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism spread with monks and missionaries. Technologies like paper making and compass navigation moved from East to West. Art and languages blended, creating new styles and scripts. People didn’t just share goods—they shared stories, inventions, and dreams.

The Silk Road reminds us that curiosity and cooperation can build bridges across the globe, and that ideas can travel and influence nations. Social exchange is powerful.

If you think about it now, it would be challenging to live without the things we have because of the Silk Road. But then, how did people centuries ago manage without them? It’s hard to say—but their resilience paved the way for the world we know today.

The Road that Carried More than Silk

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Lee, Ying Kiu Sophie – 11

Dr. Li Man stared at the glittering glass, its surface reflecting the dazzling museum lights. The detectives behind her murmured, baffled. Their head researcher, renowned for her conciseness and efficiency, had been silent for thirty minutes, studying an ancient relic labeled ***“The Silk Road Map: Tibetan Empire”*** on its name plate. What could this trade route found over centuries ago possibly have to do with the horrific and catastrophic terrorist attack that happened precisely 57 hours ago, the case they were sent to investigate?

The old, decaying map itself was an abundance of ink — mountain ranges like sleeping dragons, rivers like silver threads and the delicate network of the Silk Road sprawling across, connecting empires. Li’s eyes traced a specific route westward, a path that had once carried silk, spices, and technology. Now, she believed that it also carried a secret warning.

She snapped out of her trance and marched up to the museum keeper, Qian Ya. “Open this case and give me the map. Now.” She demanded with urgency.

“Are you insane?” Qian blurted out. “This map is a treasure, passed down by our ancestors from generation to generation. This very map is the reason why we could live so safely and happily, with ties between cultures and traditions. I can’t just hand this to you!”

“There is a bomb, right beneath us,” Li stated matter-of-factly, her voice low and lethal. “It will destroy your museum, along with everything and everyone in it. There will be more than just a scratch on this map and all the other artifacts here if you don’t comply with my orders. Open this case immediately.”

Qian’s face paled with fear into a ghastly, ugly mix of purple and white. With trembling hands, he unlocked the case. Li pocketed the map and turned, surveying the grand hall. Her gaze settled on a decorative brick wall filled with vases of flowers and plants. She pressed on two unremarkable bricks. With a sudden *clank*, a compartment door slid open, revealing a dark ebony safe with three extremely complex locks.

As the team gaped in disbelief, Li observed the map closely. Then, she ripped it into halves with a flourish.

A chorus of shock erupted, but it died instantly into a sense of betrayal when they saw Qian Ya’s face. No horror, no nothing, only a cold, spreading smirk.

“Took you long enough, Dr. Li,” he hissed, venom in his voice.

“You broke your promise to this community, that you would preserve and protect these ancient relics with your life,” Li said, her voice steady and unwavering. “Not only that, but you also harmed many more people than you should have. You killed 20,000 people, I won’t let you kill more.” From her sleeve, she produced the *authentic* map — switched earlier from a secured archive. She held it before the safe, her eyes darting between the painted landscapes and the three locks.

“The Silk Road wasn’t just a trade route,” she explained, her fingers flying over the first lock’s dial. “Our ancestors were profound astronomers and strategists. They encoded warnings within their cartography, believing history’s patterns would repeat eventually.” She rotated the second lock. “The ‘stars’ they foresaw? They weren’t literal celestial bodies, but allegories for future dangers. They hid the cipher in the land itself.”

She pointed to the map. “See these specific bends in the routes? Their angles correspond to numbers. The depths of river fords and the heights of mountains form a code. Our ancestors predicted that the very channels built for unity could be exploited for destruction, marking the vulnerable points — like this museum, built over a key ancient consecution.”

Li input the final sequence. The safe door swung open, revealing a wired explosive device. She deftly dismantled it.

Later, as a howling and screaming Qian Ya was arrested, the exhausted detectives gathered.

“But how did you *know* it was Qian?” One of the curious detectives addressed the elephant in the room.

“The map was a fake,” Li said. “A near identical one, but in the original, the ink for the Silk Road’s central path is mixed with a unique mineral that hasn’t been found in 200 years, visible only under a scanner’s specific light. This copy lacked it. Only the keeper of the artifact had the access and expertise to execute such a switch.” Her ‘hunch’ had been built on that single, scientific discrepancy.

Dr Li Man sighed, looking at the genuine masterpiece. China’s Silk Road has been a vital conduit for trade, allowing merchants to transport luxury items like silk and spices, while also serving as a channel for the spread of major religions, scientific and technological advancements. Its legacy, however, was not just in the treasures it moved, but in the wisdom it preserved—a wisdom of connection, foresight, and the enduring imperative to protect the threads that bind civilizations. In the end, the ancient route created for commerce had, centuries later, carried a message that saved countless lives from one disaster after another.

Dawn of Trade, Echoes of the Past: The First Travellers Along the Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Leung, Choi Mei Gloria – 11

The tale of the first travelers of the Silk Road began in the bustling city of Chang'an in a time long before the modern age, when the world was a vast, uncharted expanse, and the lure of distant lands and untold riches sparked the imaginations of courageous travelers. It was a heroic and adventurous story which started on a young merchant, who uncovered the dawn of trade and the realm of discovery which stretched all the way from Ancient China to western Asia.

Around 140 BC, a young merchant named Chen was motivated. He was fascinated by the stories about exotic lands and rare commodities passed down through generations. Inspired, Chen gathered a group of farmers, merchants and travelers to exploit the unknown. Their ultimate goal was to introduce their silk to western people and to make a big profit on it, and at the same time to learn the culture of the western countries and to form a strong alliance with them on behalf of the Han Government. They also planned to go all the way to Dasmacus to exchange the technology in metal-work to improve their military equipment.

They set off one fateful morning, fully loaded with silk and tea, as the sun broke free from behind the mountains. They knew that their journey would not be easy because their path ahead was packed with dangers and risks: unforgiving mountains, scorching deserts and hostile territories were lying in wait. As they advanced westward, they encountered the tapestry of diverse cultures and landscapes. The Gobi desert was a crucial yet treacherous path where they faced despatch weather, including extreme temperature swings, harsh winds and scarcity of resources. The ground was bare as concrete with only dust and sand. Occasionally, they got frostbites and heat strokes. After helping each other to overcome their problems, Chen and his crew formed a strong bond of trust and faith.

The biggest risk for Chen was not the desert or the weather, it was Xiongnu, a huge group of nomadic warriors well known for their mounted archery and ferocity who invaded and harassed the Han Empire frequently. The entire Gobi desert was under control of Xiongnu. They would surely be robbed without mercy if they were found by Xiongnu in the desert where a shelter was hardly found. Chen's worry came true on the third day after they entered the desert. He was woken up by the horses' neigh at midnight. He found that they were surrounded by hundreds of Xiongnu warriors with unsheathed swords and arrows on their bowstrings. Chen calmly told the warrior leader that they were going to present silk products to Xiongnu King. Then he took out several jars of sorghum liquor for the warriors and asked his crew to make some food for them. The warriors enjoyed the liquor very much and they sang and danced cheerfully. After a few moments, the warriors all dozed off as sorghum liquor was very strong. Chen and his crew packed their luggage quickly and took away all the horses to avoid being chased and recaptured by the Xiongnu warriors.

As they continued making their way towards Damascus, they encountered snow-capped Pamir mountains, fertile river valleys and scorching vast deserts which were connected by sprawling steppes and grasslands. The scenery was breathtaking, yet difficult to tread. Chen and his crew tackled obstacles after obstacles to achieve their goal congruence. After months of intensive navigation, Chen and his crew finally reached the capital city of the Seleucid Empire, Damascus. They received warm reception from the Seleucid King and his secretaries. Famous for their steel, metallurgical techniques and highly advanced weaponry technology, Chen showed his admiration for the sharpness of the Seleucid sword and wanted to do trade with the King. The King happily agreed to it because he too admired the tea and the luxurious silk.

The next day, Chen went to the palace and wanted to implement the trade with the King. Surprisingly, Chen was rejected by the guard even though they knew that he was the emissary of the Han Empire. Chen was told by a senior secretary of the King that the Xiongnu diplomatic group arrived last night who wanted to interrupt the trade. Chen collected all the soldiers from the crew and waited until midnight. They set fire to the dak of the Xiongnu diplomatic group who were deeply sleeping after a feast with the King. Only a few warriors could escape and Chen and his soldiers killed all of them. The King was left with no excuses, and Chen's crew did business with him successfully. They sold their silk and tea and made a lot of money. Chen employed several seasoned metal-work technicians and bought a lot of refined iron. Chen signed a treaty of alliance with the Seleucid King on behalf of the Han Empire. Cultural and technological knowledge, goods, and ideas were exchanged and recognized, and had rippled in glory through the complex pages of ancient history.

In the bustling market, Xian and his group marveled at the colorful goods aligned in stalls. They tried and tasted local delights, sweet dates and scrumptious roasted lamb legs. The unique experience offered them a new opportunity and experience, and Xian knew that they had just sown the seeds of a brighter, thriving future.

Weary yet exhilarated, Xian and his crew returned to Chang'an months later with their triumphs and epic stories. They brought back not just silk and silver, but also a wealth of new-found knowledge of the world beyond Ancient China. Their heroic adventures fostered a spirit and atmosphere of ambition and curiosity of distant lands and intercultural exchanges, which led to the golden dawn of trade and the glory of the Silk Road.

Acorn to Oak; Echoes on Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Leung, Claris Ching Hei – 11

China's Silk Road had always been lively and full of movement extending from the bustling streets of Xi'an to the breathtaking domes of Samarkand. Every year, thousands of travellers, traders and philosophers journeyed along this road. Liang was not any different, embarking on this journey by joining a caravan leaving Chang'an at the young age of 18.

Liang was raised in a modest, little town in China and he had always been fascinated by the ebb and flow of people. As a child, he had spent countless afternoons under the dazzling rays of sun watching caravans pass through the city gates, alongside camels lumbering clumsily by, carrying huge bags of spices and silks on their backs, igniting a fire of fascination inside him. When he finally got the chance he had been dreaming for at the age of 18, with a seasoned trader offering him a chance to join his caravan and explore the Silk Road together alongside other travellers, a sense of both excitement and apprehension tangled together like grape vines in his chest. Such a precious opportunity to visit the legendary Silk Road could not possibly be wasted, could it?

On the morning that marked the start of this adventure, the sun rose over the distant mountains, casting a golden halo of light over the caravan that seemed almost magical, like a blessing sent to them by God, ensuring them peace and joy. Surrounded by the incessant chatter of his fellow travelers and the rhythmic sound of hooves pounding against the earth, whipping up a storm of dust, Liang felt a surge of energy run through his spine like a lightning bolt, eager to find out what was out there waiting for them. As time slowly trickled by like drops of water, he realized that the journeys were full of countless obstacles. He and his fellows had to spend innumerable days in the desert accompanied by the sweltering heat and the sands which reflected the determined sun shining ruthlessly upon them, surrounded with the strong scent of perspiration.

Travelling through extreme weather across isolated terrain also didn't help make matters better, but it was most definitely worth it as he learnt something incredible in every step he took. When he arrived in Dunhuang, their first destination, he was astounded upon seeing walls decorated with stunning paintings of gods and heroes, the vibrant hues catching his eyeballs and recalling their own history.

Carefully tracing the intricate strokes with his fingertips, he felt a shiver of connection with all who had passed there. Even though the desert had punished his strength, being able to admire these breathtaking murals was more than a sufficient reward for his endurance.

As they moved towards the West, the arid deserts became lush, velvety grasslands with the crystal-clear sky stretching endlessly above like a humongous blue cloth on a canvas. When he arrived in Samarkand, he tasted mouthwatering bread baked in traditional clay ovens, the crispy crust crunching on his teeth, along with the rich flavours of the herbs that danced on his tongue. Apart from the different experiences, people he met along the way also helped him grow and understand the amazing world around him better, with a scholar with a long, silvery beard sharing ancient philosophies and a skilled merchant generously unveiling to him the astonishing secrets of being a trader. All these conversations provided wonderful insights for him and opened his eyes, broadening his view of the world.

As he continued along the path of China's Silk Road, Liang grew more accustomed to the rhythm of this colourful world, each step infusing him with knowledge, helping him grow in multiple aspects. After reaching the city of Baghdad, Liang watched scholars debating ideas under the cool shade of ancient trees.

He listened to a scholar with fingers stained with ink share passionately about how Mathematics was the key to unlock the hidden secrets of the universe, while another argued that it was more important to understand why these patterns mattered and how wisdom meant more than pure calculation. Their debate went back and forth from one idea to another, demonstrating to Liang how wisdom can be changed into a lively dialogue. Apart from goods being

exchanged and sold, the same was done with ideas on the Silk Road, making Liang feel part of a vast dialogue and eager as ever to absorb as much as possible from the endless sea of wisdom.

Despite the trip quenching his thirst for knowledge, there were also days when Liang couldn't help feeling a bit homesick. He longed for the appetizing aroma of his childhood dishes to waft through his nostrils and to see the familiar faces he loved so much once again. Everything and everyone was missed dreadfully, from the traditional sweet and savoury Chinese chewy dough balls dipped in condensed milk, to the comforting and loving nature of his parents.

Through all the homesickness, Liang bonded even closer with the other travellers on the caravan, sharing stories, meals by the fireside and providing consolation to each other whenever they felt down in the dumps. Liang learnt how to find peace within himself and to ease his burden by sharing his worries with others, helping him grow stronger, from a tiny little acorn to a large, mighty oak, both mentally and physically.

When he returned to his hometown, he was no longer the curious little boy who loved to perch on the wall, watching people travel along China's Silk Road, with his eyes full of pure admiration and respect. He still had the same spirit, but after all these years, he had grown both physically and mentally and that spirit was now tempered by experience and knowledge passed down through numerous generations, after having experienced the magnificent expedition himself.

He had witnessed the different cultures in countries along China's Silk Road, with people from different races, genders all connected through China's Silk Road that crossed deserts and mountains.

The Journey of Hope and Culinary Discovery – An Unforgettable Experience

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Leung, Shavonne Yizhi – 11

“Li Hua! Do your job properly! It has been a million years! Why isn’t my food ready yet?” yelled our merchant leader Chen. It’s no wonder he’s grouchy, on top of his life savings, he had borrowed tons of money for this journey. Although we had just finished trading for some spices in Bharat, we couldn’t get the jewels we needed to make this voyage profitable. I am Li Hua, a lowly cook for these Chinese merchants. I joined this expedition hoping to learn cooking skills and new ingredients from different cultures and cuisines.

Following Emperor Wu’s command to open up trade, we departed China two months before and journeyed south, but to our delegation’s dismay, we were only able to obtain turmeric, cinnamon and black pepper. From the foreign merchants, I learnt about these spices and their properties, but I seldom get to use them when cooking for the caravan, because those are the merchants’ profits.

One chilly night, in the mountains near Kyrgyzstan where we set up camp, the wind howled like a wolf and my fingers froze holding the wooden spoon while heating up jiaozi for dinner. I spotted some people hiding in the bushes out of the corner of my eye. I walked closer and noticed a group of five, as miserable as frost-bitten apples. I shouted for Chen’s attention. It seemed like these drifters were not used to the extreme cold.

“Please, Sir,” I pled, “can’t we spare some of our food for these people?” Chen refused at first, but after some hassling, he agreed, only that he would deduct the cost from my pay. For a split-second, I hesitated to sacrifice my hard-earned money, but my conscience took over.

I crushed some black peppercorn and sprinkled some turmeric and grounded cinnamon into a pot of bubbling chicken broth. Finally, I sliced in some ginger. As it simmered, the soothing aroma filled the air and gushed into my nose. I tasted a spoonful. It was just the right amount of sweetness and spiciness. The soup soothed my prickly throat and warmed my stomach, instantly shielding me from the cold. I served the soup to the wanderers who held the bowls with shaking hands. As they slurped, their eyes lit up. The soup was like a magic potion and they felt better right away.

My entourage began preparations to break camp. Time was running out and our supplies wouldn’t last much longer. “Kind sir, where are you heading next?” asked the wanderer who wore a long blue tunic. “May we tag along? We’re heading back to our hometown.”

I told him our situation. He raised his eyebrow, stroked his thick beard and said, “Jewels? I’m Ali Khan from Taxila. Maybe I can introduce you to some jewel merchants there.” Chen thought there was nothing more to lose anyway, and another trip would delay the punishment from our creditors, so we headed south.

We embarked on the arduous journey to Taxila. Arriving at the city, we walked through a bustling marketplace where merchants were shouting and bargaining. A strong redolence of chilies hit me like a carriage. It felt like heaven. “No, Li,” I told myself so I wouldn’t get distracted, “we are here for the jewels, not the spices.”

“Let me show you Taxila’s gemstones,” said Kahn cheerfully, like a fish back in its pond. He led us to a store, “You can trade for these with your silk.” We were completely dumbfounded. The midnight-blue lapis-lazuli, dreamy pearls, glistening diamonds, jade and emeralds blinded us with their radiance. The storekeeper who was at first apprehensive, bowed deeply when he saw Khan and exclaimed, “Sir Khan! What brings you here today? Let me bring out our premium geodes!” I couldn’t process the situation, and in the midst of confusion, I blurted out, “Ali?

What's happening? Are you the owner?" Khan laughed, "Sorry I didn't tell you earlier. I am an Adhyaksha, a minister in charge of trade. I was on my way to make some agreements with other cities when we were robbed." All this time, I chatted with him like a friend and called him by his first name, but he was a person of such high status, and I was just a lowly cook?

Chen cracked a scintillating smile, the first time in months. "Those precious gems are available to trade?" He asked, thinking this trip might finally succeed. "Of course," said the shop owner, "Friends of Sir Khan are friends of mine."

Khan turned around to me, a radiant smile plastered over his face. With a trembling voice he said, "Thank you, Li, for saving our lives. If it weren't for you, we would still be in the mountains, stuck in melancholy until death. What do you want as a small gesture of appreciation?"

"Just glad I could help" was what came out of my mouth, but my eyes betrayed me, as I kept gazing at the spice store outside the window. Khan left and returned with a case of spices of all different textures and colours. With butterflies in my stomach, I tried to hide my excitement, but the grin on my face made it unconcealable. "I haven't seen turmeric so smooth in my entire life!" I exclaimed with joy. Khan then suggested we sign a trade agreement, so our cities would always be able to trade with one another. Of course, Chen agreed.

Leaving, I shook Khan's hand and set off back to China. Khan's grateful voice trailed behind, "Thank you for your incredible soup. This was a journey of hope and culinary discovery. Thank you for the unforgettable experience!"

This is the story of Li Hua. To this day, modern-day Pakistan (the Kingdom of Gandhara —where Taxila was located) and China continue to have a good trade relationship, established years ago, thanks to people like Li Hua. People who are adventurous, assiduous, and unflappable take on arduous tasks, always ready to lend a hand, and build bridges between different nations.

Chang'an, Tang Dynasty

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Sin, Yuet Yee – 10

The Gobi wind howled as Jia tightened her silk scarf, dyed with her family's secret — Jade Phoenix Tears. The storm's breath carried grit that stung her cheeks, each gust reminding Jia of the perilous road ahead. Behind her, Wei urged his mare forward, pale from fever but determined.

"You can still turn back," he murmured.

Jia touched the pouch at her belt, heavy with shimmering dye. Wei coughed, then handed her a silk-bound diary etched with a phoenix. Before she could thank him, he vanished into the storm.

Jia lingered, clutching the diary. Behind her, the spires of Chang'an dissolved into sand. She raised her eyes to the horizon, storm-grey irises flashing like steel.

"I'm coming, world," she whispered.

University of Hong Kong, 2025

Luna Ling unsealed a clay jar, her hands trembling. Inside lay a silk-bound booklet, its phoenix tail missing. She gasped — this was no myth.

Flipping through brittle pages, she read Jia's words: *"Wei spends his whole day inside the tent now. His fever is getting worse. I do most of the weaving and dyeing. Father only knows how to sell, not make. I wish Mother was here. At least, merchants bought our silk."*

Her grandmother's voice echoed: *"Jade Phoenix Tears... it is your legacy."*

For years, Luna had been dismissed as chasing shadows. Professors called her obsession "romantic folklore," classmates laughed at her midnight library vigils, and grant committees rejected her proposals. Yet she pressed on, combing archives, translating fragments, and piecing together forgotten trade routes. Every failure had sharpened her resolve.

Now, holding the diary, she felt vindication surge through her veins. The ink shimmered faintly, as if alive, and the name Jade Phoenix Tears glowed like embers. She recalled the countless nights she had whispered the formula to herself — nine rare flowers: Puya, Jade Vine, Bluebell, Acropyle, Bluecurls, Gentian, Himalayan poppy, Sea holly, and Teal orchid. Each bloom was a puzzle piece, scattered across continents, united only in legend.

Her phone pinged: the Heritage Museum demanded she surrender the diary. Luna clenched her jade hairpin, the only heirloom her grandmother had given her. "They aren't getting near this," she whispered.

Suddenly, the hairpin fused with the cover, forming the missing phoenix tail. The letters shifted, glowing with hidden fire: *In Tung Lung Island.*

Luna's breath caught. The diary was not just a record — it was a map, a voice from centuries past guiding her forward. She pressed the book to her chest, heart racing.

"What is in Tung Lung Island?" she murmured. "Tell me, Jia."

Samarkand Market, Tang Dynasty

On the Silk Road, Jia's fourth day was a blur of heat and noise. The desert sun pressed down as markets swirled with foreign tongues and the scent of cinnamon, saffron, and cardamom. Merchants haggled over jade and brocade while caravans unloaded treasures from distant lands. The marketplace stretched like a living tapestry, stalls bursting with color: bolts of Persian brocade shimmered beside baskets of Kashmiri saffron, while glass beads from Byzantium caught the desert sun. The air was thick with incense, roasted lamb, and the tang of citrus carried from far-off orchards.

Children darted between camels, their laughter mingling with the cries of merchants praising their wares. A storyteller recited epics of Alexander beneath a fig tree, his voice rising above the clang of coins. Music drifted from a corner — lutes and drums echoing rhythms older than empire.

In the shade of her tent, Jia's loom bloomed with midnight silk. From her pouch she drew a vial — Jade Phoenix Tears. A few drops turned her mixture into radiant teal, glowing like flame.

Outside, the market roared on. Jia clutched the vial, knowing that in this vast web of trade, even a single drop of dye could change destinies.

Tung Lung Island, Tang Dynasty

Two years later, Jia returned home. Wei was healed, and her family celebrated. Yet the Silk Road still pulsed in her memory — caravans of silk and spice, coins clashing in foreign markets, voices weaving a chorus of cultures. It had been more than commerce; it was a bridge between worlds.

On the beach, Jia poured souvenirs into the sand, her silk Ruqun swishing — sweet-smelling cinnamon, a rug, a moonstone necklace.... "It's all in the past now," she murmured, though the road lingered like a song. Jade Phoenix Tears was a fragile treasure, capable of shaping fortunes across empires.

Then the phoenix's tail fell from the diary — a jade hairpin. She etched words onto both: *In Tung Lung Island*.

With quiet ceremony, she sealed the diary in a clay jar and cast it into the sea. The hairpin she kept, a promise for the future.

"Someday," she whispered. "Someone will find it — and learn how the Silk Road carried not only silk and spice, but legacies written in dye and flame."

Kowloon Bay, Kowloon Peak, 2025

Guided by Jia's clues, Luna traced the diary's map to Kowloon Peak. Digging into the mountain soil, her shovel struck something solid.

She unearthed a flask etched with shimmering runes, its contents long dried, surrounded by relics unseen for centuries. Breathless, she realized: the journey, the diary, the hairpin — all had led her here.

She had found it.

Sir Run Run Shaw Hall, 2025

"...So let us carry forward that legacy: to keep asking questions, to keep connecting across borders, and to keep listening to the voices of history that whisper through the sands. Because in every excavation, in every discovery, we are not just studying the Silk Road — we are walking it anew.

Remember, the Silk Road was never just a path across deserts and seas — it was a bridge across time, reminding us that every discovery is a step in humanity's shared journey.

Thank you."

The hall erupted into thunderous applause. Over a thousand people applauded Dr. Luna Ling's famous speech about her discovery — Silk Road trading items from the Tang Dynasty.

Luna smiled, slowly descending the stage steps. She looked skyward, her jade hairpin glinting.

"Thank you, Jia Ling."

The First Journey

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Solomon, Natalie Yen Wing – 9

Daddy, can I go to the toilet?”

The blissful morning silence, deep in a tourist cave, was interrupted by the whiny squeak of Aria’s teary-eyed sister. That was Helen alright. Unfortunately, it really was Helen and not an imposter, what a shame, Aria thought at the time. No “please” or anything, but she didn’t need to, Helen was the favourite. Not Aria. Never Aria. Instead, it was always Helen this, Helen that. Aria hated her sister, who she thought was whiny and annoying.

“Of course, dear,” said her father affectionately. “Anything you like. Aria, take her to the toilet. Walk outside, turn left and then straight ahead. Be careful with your younger sister, alright? Remember to open the door!” he added patronisingly, a mocking tilt to his voice.

Aria was annoyed at him for having tasked her to take Helen to the “potty”, but truth to be told, she was also annoyed at the world for letting Helen be her sister. It’s not fair, she thought. Clearly I’m better, but Helen’s the favourite! If you love her so much, why don’t you take her yourself? She sighed and rubbed her temples, wishing the world would swallow her up.

Little did she know what was about to happen.

They were at the little toilet stall now. Helen shrugged and sat down on the floor, legs crossed. Looks like they made a journey just so Helen could have a nice, little sulk. Exasperated, Aria leaned on a nearby painting of a glinting dragon. But just as she brushed it, the darned thing fell off. Wow, that is some shoddy architecture, thought Aria. But behind it was a secret tunnel, and Aria thought she saw a forest in the dimly lit entrance.

A loud voice belted, saying, “If you don’t recover what’s lost in three hours, you will lose everything.”

Time seemed to slow down, and their legs carried them through the doorway to a forest. Aria was scared. This must be a hallucination, a cold voice cackled inside her head. She wanted to believe it, but – no. This was real. She knew it.

Helen, beside her, was beyond terrified.

She muttered, “I’m sorry for my sins. But I’m scared! Is there a God up there? Help me! Please!”

But she hadn’t even finished the sentence when she fell through a hole.

Fear gripped Aria. Real fear. She may have hated Helen, but she didn’t want Helen to die. Taking a shaky breath, she jumped into the crumbling hole as well.

For a moment they were swallowed by silence. And then Aria hit the ground just in time to see Helen gaping at her. Apparently, she hadn’t expected Aria to help her. Aria stood up with a wince, and they headed to a mystical glint of white, their only hope. But one thing was clear: they had already wasted a lot of time. They had to be quick. Their three hours was burning fast.

The luxurious glint of white turned out to be silk, shiny and smooth. Aria, who had hurt her leg while falling onto the floor earlier, was aching and exhausted. Meanwhile, Helen was walking with a spring in each step, still following the long and loopy trail. It was so loopy that at one point, there had been a river, but the Silk Road had just

meandered around it. They had been travelling on the Silk Road for a long time, and were getting used to the silky floor when they reached a magnificent palace.

The palace was bone white, and draped over the bars were pieces of icy, blue, satin. This might be what's lost, Aria thought. There's so much of this weird stuff it could be stolen from. She gestured to Helen and they pulled and pulled, trying to retrieve it. But...

Suddenly, they were standing in front of a queen.

The queen glared at them, eyes glittering with anger. But then – she pointed at her smooth, sleek dress. It was hypnotic and beautiful, but it looked so strange to Aria.

“You see this? It's called silk. Oh! I forgot. You idiots don't know what it is. Huh. I stole this from those Chinese people who found it, washing their memory away. I built my whole life on it. Without it, I'd be nothing at all. Nothing! Many hunters have searched for it, but they didn't succeed, and nor will you!”

She turned away. Helen was gibbering in fear, and would be no help whatsoever. It was up to Aria to save the day.

The queen had turned her back on them, and was currently yelling at one of her guards for surfing on his phone.

“This modern era we live in,” she muttered crossly.

Meanwhile, the other guards were doing their best not to laugh. It wasn't working.

With the others distracted, Aria edged closer to the queen. She grabbed all the silk off her, leaving a body with the buzzing skin of bugs, and ripped it up into tiny shreds. One, two, and suddenly, one hundred shreds. Aria wanted revenge for trying to hurt her. The silk fell on the floor and the queen screamed and collapsed, revealing her true form, a one-thousand-year-old monster. The old lady managed one last glare to Aria, before disappearing into dust. Like the lady said, she'd be nothing without it.

Suddenly they were in the bathroom again, spluttering and coughing. Helen and Aria grinned at each other. There was a warm, peaceful glow between them. They had made it. Basking in pride, they ran back to their father, who was waiting in the cave.

“Sorry we ca-” Aria started.

Their dad simply shook his head, astounded. “You were only gone half a minute,” he said, “Did Helen even go to the toilet?”

The two sisters glanced at each other. This was going to take some explaining!

Aria and Helen were the first people in the new generation to discover silk. And two enemies became two friends.

The First Journey – Jade’s Great Adventure

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tang, Ivana – 10

During the time of the great Han Emperor, there lived a brave young boy named Jade. He was sixteen, tall and strong, with black hair, bright eyes like shining jade, and a big, friendly smile. Jade was very curious, clever and kind. He loved horses, maps and stories about faraway lands. Everyone in his small village near Chang’an said, “Jade is the boy who can talk to the wind!”

One day, the Emperor wanted to make friends with people in the distant Western Regions to protect his land from the fierce Xiongnu enemies. He chose a special envoy named Zhang Qian to lead a dangerous and risky mission. Zhang Qian needed helpers who were good with horses and maps. The village elders pointed to Jade. Jade joined with one hundred brave men.

The group set off at dawn with camels and horses, carrying rolls of beautiful Chinese silk, gold, iron tools, painted pottery and sweet fruits as gifts.

The journey was very long and hard. They crossed big rivers and climbed rocky paths. They encountered many challenges: strong winds, cold nights, hunger, and wild animals. One day, they were caught by Xiongnu warriors. Jade and his friends were kept as prisoners for years. But Jade never gave up hope. He learned their language, made friends with some kind people and waited for the right moment.

Finally, after ten long years, Jade escaped with a few companions. They rode fast across the hot Taklamakan Desert, where the sun burned like fire and the sand moved like waves. They drank very little water and ate dry bread. Jade kept saying, “We must go on! The Emperor needs to know about the wonderful world outside!”

At last, they reached a green valley where the Yuezhi people lived. The Yuezhi welcomed them with warm bread, juicy grapes, and sweet melons sweeter than honey. Jade had never tasted these before. “These fruits come from far west lands,” the Yuezhi leader said. Jade’s eyes grew. He saw strange round fruits called pomegranates that burst with red seeds and walnuts that tasted rich and nutty. The people also showed him beautiful glass bottles that shone like jewels in the sunlight—something Chinese people did not know how to make it yet.

Then came the most powerful moment. When the military commander caught a glimpse of the wonderful horses, he told Jade that he could expand the Silk Road so that they could get more great horses, food and jewellery, make money, and not just sell silk but also jewellery. Jade saw the strong, fast horses called “heavenly horses” because they ran like the wind and sweat blood when they galloped hard. These horses were much better than the ones in China. Jade thought, “If we trade our soft silk for these heavenly horses, our army will be stronger, and everyone can travel faster!”

On the way back, Jade and his friends carried new treasures: a few heavenly horses, bags of grape seeds, alfalfa plants to feed animals, and stories of faraway cities made of stone. They also brought ideas about new ways to make strong bows and about trading markets where people from many lands met.

After many more dangers—crossing snowy mountains and hot plains—Jade finally returned to Chang’an after thirteen years. Only a few men came back with him, but they brought exciting news. The Emperor was amazed! He listened to Jade’s stories for days.

“There are rich kingdoms in the West with wonderful things!” Jade said. “They have grapes that make sweet wine, melons sweeter than honey, and horses that fly like dragons. They want our silk, which is soft and shiny like moonbeams. We can trade and become partners!”

The Emperor smiled and said, “You have opened a new door to the world, Jade.”

Soon, merchants heard about the safe paths and started their own journeys. The first traders packed long lines of camels with rolls of beautiful Chinese silk, painted pottery, iron tools, and tea leaves. They travelled west, following Jade’s path to many places.

When they reached Central Asia, they met traders from Persia and India. Everyone was surprised and happy. The western people gave Chinese traders strong horses, sparkling glass bowls, colourful wool carpets, and spices that made food taste delicious and like magic—cinnamon, pepper, and cloves. Chinese merchants tasted new foods like bread baked in round ovens, cheese from goat milk, and dried apricots. They learned how to make paper stronger and how to grow new plants.

Jade grew old, but he never forgot his adventure. He sat in his garden, eating grapes from the seeds he brought back, and told his grandchildren, “The first trip was hard and risky, but it was the start of something amazing. The Silk Road is like a bridge made of friendship and courage, connecting hearts across mountains and deserts.”

From that time, the Silk Road became a path of wonders. Foods like noodles mixed with western spices, inventions like paper that spread everywhere, and creative ideas that made the world brighter—all began because of brave people like Jade and Zhang Qian who dared to take the first journey.

However, the Silk Road was not just about things to buy and sell. Wonderful ideas travelled, too. Buddhist monks carried peaceful teachings from India to China, and people learned new ways to paint, make music, and build temples. Artists drew pictures of strange animals and faraway palaces. Doctors shared herbs that healed sickness. Everyone shared stories around campfires under the stars.

As more joined the journeys, the Silk Road grew. Small villages became busy markets. Cities like Samarkand and Bukhara became places where East met West. People spoke different languages, wore different clothes, but smiled and traded together.

And so, the East and West exchanged not just goods, but dreams, kindness, and new ways of seeing the world. The Silk Road was born, and it changed everything forever—because one brave boy with a huge smile said, “Let’s go and see!”

Commented [1]: Please do not change me to "Can View".
Thanks!

Threads of Silk, Shadows of Sickness , and Sands of Time

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Tong, Yui – 9

The Silk Road wasn't any normal road. I knew that the moment I stepped onto the trading route, where the ground was pressed by hooves, wheels, and countless journeys. It wasn't one road at all, but a network of routes—threads of stone and sand stitching East and West together.

It carried goods—silk, spices, stones. Stories traveled here. Prayers were whispered here. Religions traveled here, passed from soul to soul like a forest fire leaping from branch to branch, tree to tree. But the Silk Road also carried sickness. Illness moved along it like an unseen passenger, riding on breath and spreading through crowds.

My name is Avice, daughter of a trader from the eastern lands. Since childhood, trading filled my life: sorting spices, counting coins, gutting and skinning the occasional animal. My father said a good trader needs two things—sharp eyes and patience. My mother added a third: caution.

Mother didn't let me step onto the Silk Road. "It's for your own good," she would say. "The Silk Road is full of bandits and desert."

But she couldn't keep me forever. I grew older, restless as a caged bird hungry for freedom. And when I was fifteen, my parents finally allowed me onto the route that had shaped their lives.

We loaded our goods onto camels and rode west, aiming for the Parthian Empire. Our caravan was small: my parents, me, five other traders, and two hired guards whose faces never relaxed.

That comfort did not last.

A sickness had struck our region before we left—smallpox, the disease families feared more than drought. At first it seemed far away, the way disasters do when they belong to someone else. Then it reached roads, markets, neighbors. It began with heat and aching bones, then a rash that rose and spread until skin looked burned. Some survived. Many didn't.

My father fell ill during the journey.

According to the map, we had to cross the Taklamakan Desert and skirt the Lop Nur region. Taklamakan sounded like a warning even when whispered. An older trader muttered, "If you enter, you might not return," as if to keep bad luck from settling on his tongue.

There was no water except what we carried. No food except venison, sweetcorn guarded like treasure. The desert taught me quickly it had no interest in bravery. It did not care who you were.

A month in the desert changed us. My lips cracked. My skin darkened. My father grew weaker, and my mother's eyes sharpened. When the last dunes fell behind us, mountains rose ahead—jagged like broken teeth. The caravan exhaled. One trader smiled and wept at once.

But our troubles were just beginning.

The mountain paths narrowed until camels walked single file. Winds shrieked through the passes, stealing warmth from our bones. Rocks shifted beneath our feet; the air thinned until every breath felt borrowed.

Then came bandits.

Our guards tensed. The traders tightened their grip on bundles. My mother pulled me close, her fingers iron around my wrist.

They did not rush. They let fear work slowly. They waited until we entered a narrow pass, leaving no escape. Then they appeared—men wrapped in dusty clothes, faces half-covered, eyes bright with greed. Their leader stepped forward and spoke calmly, as if offering trade to an old friend.

“Pay for passage,” he said, “or leave your goods and walk away.”

The leader’s gaze flicked to our camels, to the silk, to my father’s pale face. “The sick travel too,” he murmured, half amused. “Bad luck follows you.”

I understood that danger was not always an attack. Sometimes it was a choice forced on you—what to give up, what to protect, what to risk.

The bandits took our coins, then demanded one bundle of silk. My mother tightened her grip, ordering me silent. My father swallowed and nodded. Pride is costly on the Silk Road. Survival costs less.

The bandits vanished into stone like ice.

Near the Parthian towns, we rested in a shallow cave along the hillside. We had barely settled when a boy appeared—thin as a twig, shirt torn.

“Travelers,” he said. “Have you come from the east?”

My mother nodded.

He spoke fast, as if speed could soften the words. “The pox sickness... it is here now. Smallpox. It came from caravans and crowded markets. People are sick. People are dying.”

My mother pressed coins into his palm. “Go. Buy food. Buy soap if you can. Stay away from crowds.”

“The gates may close,” he warned. “They say caravans bring death.” Then he disappeared down the rocky path.

In town, barely anyone came to our stalls. The wind carried sickness through the Empire. There wasn’t a single smile.

A week after we arrived, the news came: the Silk Road was closing. Our guard returned from the gate. “They’re stopping caravans. Some roads are blocked. Some posts won’t stamp travel passes.”

“Because of bandits?” someone asked.

“Because of the pox,” he said. “Too many innocents died.” He paused. “And there’s another reason: sea routes. Ships can carry more than camel. Merchants will send goods by ocean instead of bringing them across deserts.”

“So the road is closing,” I said, “because it’s sick, and because it’s old?”

“Because it’s dangerous,” the guard answered, “and men follow profit the way thirsty travelers follow water.”

I was packing when the jade in my hand slipped and fell onto the floor. Outside, I saw the boy—talking to men with accents like his. And I recognized their voices.

They were the bandits.

I wanted to confront him. But the thought of my sick father held me back. I gathered our supplies, heart torn with betrayal, and hurried to our cave.

We left sooner than planned. My father was weak, my mother feared being trapped behind closed gates. At every inn we listened for coughing the way you listen for footsteps.

When we finally arrived home, dirt-caked and thin, my mother sank to her knees at our doorway. I thought it was gratitude.

Then the news reached us. The Silk Road had been shut down in many places—caravan posts closed, travel papers denied, routes abandoned. People said it was temporary, but their voices didn't sound convinced. Smallpox had taken too many, and fear finished the rest.

Years later, I sit by the hearth with my grandchildren crowded at my knees. They beg for stories of a road. They want to know the feel of silk sliding through your hands like water, or the way a desert can swallow a caravan and leave no grave.

And when they ask where the Silk Road is now, I speak the truth: the road lived as long as someone remembers it—passing from branch to branch, tree to tree, until the last voice falls silent.

Untold Stories of the Silk Road—The Journey of Juliette Rose

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

Once upon a time, in a small village nestled at the edge of a vast desert, lived a young girl named Juliette Rose. With eyes full of curiosity and a heart bursting with dreams of adventure, she often gazed at the horizon, imagining the wonders that lay beyond her humble home. Her father, a wise merchant, often told stories of the legendary Silk Road—a great tapestry of trade, culture, and mystery that connected distant lands. Lila's fascination with the Silk Road grew stronger each day, fueling her desire to explore its ancient paths and discover the secrets they held.

One dawn, armed with a small bag of supplies, her favorite compass, and her unwavering determination, Juliette set out on her journey. She was eager to traverse the Silk Road, to meet new people, see wondrous sights, and perhaps even encounter the magic her father's stories hinted at. Little did she know, her adventure would be far more extraordinary than she could ever imagine.

As she traveled through bustling caravan towns, lush oases, and vast deserts, Juliette encountered many wonders. She traded with merchants for art and spices, met new friends and enjoyed festivities like spiritual dances and opera, creating beautiful and unforgettable memories that will accompany her for life.

One morning, while resting near a shimmering oasis, she saw a creature unlike any she had ever seen before. It was a luminous fox with fur that sparkled like stars, and eyes that shone with ancient wisdom. The fox introduced itself as Yara, a guardian spirit of the desert. Yara told Juliette that the Silk Road was a path not only of trade but also of magic, guarded by creatures unseen by ordinary eyes. Yara offered to accompany Juliette for a while, guiding her through the desert's treacherous sands.

With Yara by her side, Juliette learned to read the shifting dunes and find hidden water sources. As they journeyed, Yara shared stories of the magical creatures that protected the trade routes. In the mountains, they met a majestic griffin named Zephyr, whose feathers shimmered with the colors of dawn. Zephyr was a guardian of the mountain passes, capable of soaring higher than the clouds and seeing beyond the horizon. He told Juliette about a secret cave filled with luminous crystals that held the memories of all travelers who passed through.

Eager to see this wonder, Juliette followed Zephyr into the mountains, where they discovered the glowing cave. Inside, the crystals hummed softly, echoing the voices of those who had traveled before. There was a specific voice that Juliette heard very clearly. The voice told her that it had failed to protect its loved one during a journey, and how it had never forgiven itself for it. It said that it hoped that by staying here, in the cave of crystals and magic, it could guide the future travellers, give them wisdom and sagacity to stop them from making the wrong choices like it did during their odyssey. Inspired, she realized that her journey was part of a larger tapestry woven through time and magic.

Further along her path, in a bustling marketplace in a vibrant city, Juliette encountered a strange, gentle creature called a Drakeling—small, dragon-like beings with shimmering scales and kind eyes. They could breathe fire but only to warm their friends or light their way. The Drakelings told Juliette about a hidden temple deep within a jungle, where an ancient artifact called the Heart of the World rested. This artifact was said to grant the purest of hearts the power to heal and bring peace.

Driven by her adventurous spirit and desire to bring goodness to the world, Juliette decided to seek out the temple. With the help of her new friends—the fox Yara, the griffin Zephyr, and the Drakeling kin—she navigated through dense, enchanted jungles filled with whispering trees and glowing flowers. Along the way, they faced challenges: riddles from mischievous spirits, illusions that tested her courage, and rivers that flowed backwards. But Juliette's determination and kindness helped her overcome each obstacle.

Finally, they reached the hidden temple, carved into the side of a great mountain covered in moss and vines. Inside, the Heart of the World pulsed with a gentle glow. As Juliette approached, a guardian spirit appeared—a majestic, winged lion with eyes that reflected the universe. The spirit challenged her, asking why she sought the Heart. Juliette replied honestly, saying she wished to use its power to help others and bring harmony to her world.

To prove her resolve, the guardian said Juliette must confront her fears and summon inner strength, engaging in a series of trials that test her courage and purity of heart. As she faced mischievous faeries and enigmatic sphinxes—creatures embodying strength, wisdom, and cunning—the guardian observed her dedication and sincerity. Through acts of kindness, bravery, and understanding, Juliette gradually earned the guardian's trust, proving that her desire for peace was genuine.

Moved by her sincerity, the guardian granted her access to the artifact. Juliette gently touched the Heart, feeling warmth and love radiate through her. In that moment, she understood that true magic was born from kindness, courage, and a pure heart. She promised to protect the magic and share her newfound wisdom with others.

With her quest complete, Juliette began her journey home, carrying the lessons and magic she had gained. Along the way, she shared stories with fellow travelers and helped those in need. Her adventures had transformed her from a curious girl into a wise young explorer, a bearer of the magic of the Silk Road.

When she finally returned to her village, she was greeted as a hero. But Juliette knew that her greatest treasure was the magic she carried in her heart—the magic of kindness, courage, and adventure. From that day forward, she continued to dream of new journeys, inspiring others to believe that no matter how small they are, they can make a difference in the world, just like the magical creatures she had met along her path.

And so, the girl who once gazed at the horizon became a legend herself—a symbol of hope and adventure, forever woven into the timeless tapestry of the Silk Road.

Seekers on the Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Yuk Fei – 11

YiLi was tired. Exhausted—beyond—belief—kind—of—tired; drained—of—all—energy—by—the—reckless—Taklamahan—sun tired. Her feet burned on sand; the slaves panted from walking forever with merchandise on their backs. Dead girl walking. She had trained herself to endure like the camels: ignore arthritis and bone—dry throat while carrying massive loads. If you've ever walked months straight, you'd know the torture. If not, one might call it "pain beyond imagination". As one walks toward eternity, the mind wanders. Precious moments, now lost. Only pain, tearing you apart as sanity fades. Even as a fighter, YiLi floated away...

YiLi had lived a tough life. Born to a poor Chinese family, her parents were murdered by soldiers—she lived, but haunting memories of their last breaths stayed deep inside. She went into slavery in Mongolia, hoping to find a cure for her NaiNai's kidney disease with the herb *Cordyceps sinensis*. She had sworn she would traverse the Himalayas, where it grew, and find it or die.

Oh, how she missed the grandma she might never see again! Every moment with her would become nothing more than memories that would eventually fade away, like her freedom once sold. Sold to be sold; that's the fate of little girls, ain't it?

Just as she was lost in a labyrinth of thoughts, a scream pierced the air. "Sandstorm!" That one ugly word. Because—

Shewasgonnadieshewasgonnadieshewasdeadsheasdeadsheasgoingtodiebutshemightratherdiethanlethernainaiadownbecause therewasnothinglefttolosewithouther.

[Translation: You cannot survive a sandstorm.]

Suddenly, the world around her erupted into panicking camels, shrieking slaves, and flying merchandise.

Amidst the chaos, YiLi broke free

and

ran.

She was insane, driven by something... deep down.

The sandstorm was closing in now, threatening her last breath...

She ran until she fell into darkness.

Day 6 of conquering the Himalayas.

Gusts of wind tore the clouds apart, lashing at her frail body. The Himalayas themselves seemed to tremble. YiLi crawled out of her tent. No sleep with the thought of snow leopards and the risk of never waking up from mountain altitude sickness. The Himalayas stretched below her—the gate to Tartarus if she fell—but she was climbing up to heaven. Satan was not taking her today.

A year had passed since she escaped the Silk Road and her miraculous survival from the sandstorm. Back from the dead, she searched for a way to get *Cordyceps sinensis* for the sake of NaiNai. She had even persuaded Himalayan monks to give her the maps for finding the herb once and for all.

Now she was so close, what she longed for seemed like a mirage...

The thought of NaiNai cured kept her warmer than her best clothes.

She hoisted herself from the ground and turned towards the Himalayans.

If you know you're going through hell, keep going. You got this.

Perhaps she had underestimated the mountains. Her limbs were frostbitten and bruised. Every part of her body screamed in agony. She was not going to give up now, even if she was going through hell to get to a heaven that might not exist. Bare skin on ice—capped jagged rocks. Scars all over her face, stinging bitterly.

Just a bit more, she thought, but her optimistic thoughts disappear as quickly as her tears turn into shards of ice. Beads of tears d-r-i-p-p-i-n-g. Then uncontrollable sobs.

What a failure, all this time! She had come so far to fight her final battle she was bound to lose... Eternal suffering was written in her fate.

No time to cry. You are NOT going to die. I am YiLi and I seek the *Cordyceps sinensis* to cure my nainai. Up you go!

Left foot. Right foot. Her legs shook terribly; she felt like vomiting as she ascended unsteadily. Never had she trekked in snow before, barefoot and underdressed on the brink of death. She was ever so near to the summit now. Why would God put the most precious things in the most difficult—to—reach places? Just so he could be entertained by the suffering ofickle humans?

Her High Altitude Cerebral Edema was kicking in; she stumbled on the narrow pathways and tripped over a stray rock. Too dizzy to curse herself, she plopped down to drink the remains of her long-frozen water (who would've expected summer to be -57 degrees Celsius?). Pathetic.

"This is not your time to go, my precious one..."

YiLi glanced up, suddenly alert. A familiar voice. Her grandmother sat beside her, smile stretched on her face. Gentle hands stroked her hair, and YiLi could have sworn she felt a sliver of warmth.

"So brave, so loyal... Don't give up, will you?" She whispered, gesturing her to follow.

As they ascended, YiLi noticed a trail of footprints fallen behind NaiNai. She sighed contentedly, all pain diminished. Peace.

She didn't know how or when, but when she looked backwards, the trail disappeared.

"YiLi... help..."

She spun around wildly, seeing NaiNai sprawled on the ground. "I might not make it, my granddaughter. I'm sorry. Whatever happens, I love you. Forever."

Slowly, NaiNai became fainter... and fainter. YiLi's blood turned to ice. "Go."

YiLi tore through the paths, ignoring her aching joints. The world was spinning as she pumped her legs harder to leap up and catch the edge of rock with her fingertips...

Please don't leave me...

She yanked herself upward, crashing into a slab of rock.

The summit of the Himalayas was where a farmer's-girl-turned-slave stood proudly, not accepting a thousand reasons of defeat. Then her eyes widened. There it was: a patch of the heavenly plants, swaying gracefully in the wind.

My dear one, what you see can be truth—yet could it not just as easily be a vision within?

Epilogue

After years, YiLi returned home. Her NaiNai was alive; a doctor had taken care of her so that the kidney disease didn't worsen.

The magic of the *Cordyceps sinensis* worked and YiLi's dream finally came true. YiLi and her NaiNai lived happy and healthy lives together.

And yes, a happily ever after is quite nice, is it not?

Tales of a Connection : The Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Yu, Wing Shun Heather – 10

Han Dynasty, 138–126 BCE

Zhang Qian sighed, leaning against the cedar tree in Uzbekistan. His eyes were solid iron; his gaze fixed on the palace in the distance— an Indian—style building topped with cerulean blue domes, intricate patterns on the walls. He heard the scraping of bark and turned his head to find his friend against the tree too. “What’s the matter? We’ve succeeded at our mission so far.”

“Ganfu, you always seem to know when something’s off. I can’t help but think that anything can go wrong. Uzbekistan leader could refuse to cooperate, we could be spotted by the Xiongnu, or…” Not wanting to jinx all the possibilities, Zhang trailed off.

Ganfu placed a reassuring hand on his buddy’s shoulder. Ganfu wasn’t a man of big speeches, Zhang knew, but he was still grateful for the gesture, and it gave him confidence. “After all we’ve endured,” he said, straightening from his slightly slouched position, “the Heavens won’t let us perish yet, we still have work to do!”

His faithful friend shrugged, clearly having his doubts, but he said nothing. Zhang was thankful that Ganfu never stopped being his own loyal companion, especially given their shared hardships.

Zhang remembered vividly, years ago in his twenties, a messenger wearing royal garb had summoned him to the palace of Emperor Wu in the darkest hour of the night. There, in the main hall, perched on a statuesque throne, sat the resplendent Emperor Wu. “I have a job for you,” the Emperor began in his booming voice. “I need you to travel to Yue Zhi Guo to pledge an allegiance between our countries. Convince them to help us defend against the terrorization of the Xiongnu, for we are in times of great need.”

Along the way, there had been hardships: Zhang and Ganfu had been captured by the Xiongnu while sneaking through their territory. They had been imprisoned for years until they managed to escape.

When they finally arrived at the Palace of Yue Zhi Guo, the emperor refused the proposed alliance fearing for his own kingdom. Zhang was disheartened at the emperor’s cowardice, but he could say nothing more and left the palace. Although Zhang had failed at his mission, his diplomacy effort did not go unrecognized. Zhang eventually returned home where he received orders to travel the same route and open a trade road with the countries he passed along.

“Earth to Zhang!” he heard Ganfu called, and he was immediately jolted back into the present. “The king of Uzbekistan would like to see you.” Zhang, realized it was sunset, looked at his friend gratefully, nodded and they set off.

As the sun covered them in a radiant glow, the duo were like two strands in a beautiful tapestry of connection: Zhang was the golden, glowing strand, representing courage and vision of the Silk Road; Ganfu was the silver one, the embodiment of unwavering loyalty and support. Without one or the other, the tapestry of the Silk Road would forever be incomplete.

Year 2060, Hong Kong

Fifteen year—old Sienna Mei shifted anxiously in her seat, her piercing grey eyes focused on the politicians and soldiers of Bolivia and China standing facing each other. The breeze somehow carried their bickers over to Sienna’s ears.

“I’m extremely sorry but our deal cannot proceed as planned due to recent natural disaster in our country!” the Bolivian politician whispered.

“But we had an agreement,” the Chinese politician with sleek black hair pulled back into a painfully tight bun said, pointing to a piece of paper she had prepared in advance. Sienna sighed inwardly as the two politicians continued to

quarrel. *This argument better be over soon*, she thought. Sienna and her family, along with the audience, were seated outside the Silk Road trade station in Hong Kong, a place where important ceremonies are usually held.

Shortly, the situation escalated. A sudden loud noise from a nearby construction site amplified tensions, with soldiers from both sides drawing weapons. Sienna watched with unbridled horror as all soldiers glared at each other with the rage of a thousand suns. *This can't go on like this*, she thought desperately. *We should be reaching this agreement in peace. And to fight here, of all places...*

Without thinking, she raced down to where the ranks of people were standing. "Stop!" she wailed, thrusting herself in between the ranks of the furious armed politicians. "Why are we fighting?"

"Young lady, get out of harm's way," one politician gruffed. But Sienna stood her ground. "Can't we resolve this peacefully?" "This quarrel is between us—" the other politicians said, but Sienna cut her off. "and here, of all places. Don't you know that the road is a symbol of unity between us all? And yet you're here breaking out a fight?"

Sienna noticed some softened expressions, so she pushed on. "The Silk Road bridges cultural difference, no matter how weird they might seem, a silly argument like this should not put off the bond that we feel between countries. This was started by Zhang Qian many years ago. He and I have the same heart that beats for unity. It breaks my heart to see you guys argue here, and I'm sure it would break our ancestor, Zhang Qian's as well. I believe our unity is best symbolized by tea. Take Jasmine Tea for example, combining tea leaves with flowers to create a better whole. Isn't that textbook teaching? Combining our divergences to make ourselves stronger?

"Silver disputes are trivial compared to the spirit of the Silk Road! So put down your weapons, for the legacy of unity, symbolized by the Silk Road, lives on through us."

Though some were annoyed at being lectured by a teenager, many felt a shift within themselves, motivated by the spirit of the Silk Road. Peace, love and unity prevailed as they laid down their arms.

Flames on the Silk Road

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Zhu, Hoi Huen Emma – 9

Flames on the Silk Road

"Sister, please," Lan begged, grabbing my sleeve. "We can't leave Chang'an! If people find out what we are, we're doomed. It's safe here. Strangers think we're monsters! And we have no plan, no money. Where are we even going to go?"

We were Speerlies — we could call fire with our thoughts. Long ago people said we were gifts from the sky. Now the rulers in Chang'an wanted to use us as weapons.

I was fourteen. Lan was ten. Before our mother went west on a journey of business, she told me, "You must protect your sister."

So I tried to sound brave.

"Lan," I said, "Mother told us she was going to Dunhuang, a far place with the huge stone features carved into cliff rocks. Now we go there, too. We'll be safe."

"But we have so little money," Lan whispered.

"We have Mother's hidden silk. We will sell our silk. And we have each other!" I tried to smile. "We actually have a little. I helped someone once, remember?"

Lian blinked, "You mean...?"

"Zhang Qian," I said.

Now, we needed that help.

Suddenly, someone knocked at the door, three fast, two slow, Mother's secret signal. Lan squealed in excitement, "Is it Mom?"

"You must be Huen!" a short, strong woman with a long braid yelled the second she saw me.

"I am May. Your mother sent me to find you. I was separated from your mom. This city is no longer safe, and we have to go tomorrow."

My heart stopped.

"Do you know what happened to Mother?"

"Do you?" a shivering voice whispered.

I looked back. Lan was hiding right behind me, tears glistening in her eyes.

"She's not Mom," she murmured.

Suddenly I felt a pang of empathy.

The next morning, we headed out promptly, and when I looked at the door, a small sac sat near it. A note came with it, with someone's messy handwriting scrawled all over it:

To my fireflies:

Here's the money you may need. And I've also decided to give you some camels. All the best. STAY SAFE!

"Ready to go?" May asked us.

"There," May said, pointing to the sand dunes in front of us, "The Gobi Desert."

"Wow!" was literally all I could say. The Gobi stretched out all wide and rugged. It was mostly bare rock, gravel plains and sands. Life didn't seem to be welcome here at all.

"Stay sharp," May warned, "we've got a very long, exhausting journey ahead of us."

May was right. Day one was awful. Day two was worse. Day three was a teeny tiny bit less horrible... Until one day, we ran into them.

At first, they were just a dark line rising on the horizon. Then suddenly they were close, riders in thick fur coats and long boots. The Xiongnu!

"Hand over your goods!" they roared.

I heard a loud "Huen!" from somewhere, then realized that someone was gripping my arm really tight. Lan! Right, it was her!

Her eyes were huge. "Please," she whispered, voice shaking, "Fire! Please!"

"No!" I hissed. "They'll know."

"We'll die if you just stand there without doing anything."

Your turn, I told it. *Show them what we've got*. The god responded with glee. One by one, the riders went down.

When the last rider fell down, my legs gave way. I collapsed, face down into the sand.

"So you really are Speerlies," May stared at me and gasped.

I lifted my head, sand stuck to my lips. "Is that... bad?"

"Nope! It was the best thing that has ever happened to us. You saved us all."

The next couple of days went easier, since we started spotting oases. Ten days later, we finally made it to Dunhuang.

An hour later, May came to our room in a lodge and brought us good news, "I've found Mark. He's in a small inn near the barber's."

I headed towards that inn with Lan and May immediately.

When we got there, we saw an old man with a short beard drinking tea in a quiet corner.

"Hello. Are you Mark?"

"Yes, who are you?" he looked up and smiled.

"I am Huen, and this is my sister Lan. We are the daughters of Lady Lily."

His face changed at once. It's a mix of joy and regret. He stood up slowly. "Lady Lily's daughters," he said softly, "Sit, please."

"Your mother was one of the bravest I have ever seen. Some say she has died. Others say she was taken West by the Parthians as a prisoner." His voice went quiet, "I'm sorry."

At this moment, Mark rose and went to his room. Lan peeked over my shoulder to see. It was a small, wrapped bundle.

I unwrapped it with shaking hands. Inside was a roll of narrow silk with a simple map: Chang'an, Dunhuang, a line west. At the far side, in Mother's neat handwriting, were two words:

Silk Road

Lan touched the ink.

"She wanted us to see this," she whispered.

Mark nodded.

"I head West again soon," he said, "to the lands of the Parthians and maybe beyond to the Roman world. It's dangerous. But if you wish, you may come with my caravan. I owe your mother my life."

May watched us.

"You can also stay here," she said gently, "Dunhuang is a good trade city."

I turned to Mark. "We'll come," I said, "We'll help with the caravan. We can trade silk. And we'll use our fire to protect, not destroy."

He smiled a little.

"Then in three days, we ride," he said. "Rest. Prepare. The road ahead is long."

That night, Lan and I stood on the city wall, looking at the dark desert.

"Are you scared?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "But I'm also excited."

She slipped her hand into mine. "As long as we go together," she said.

"Together," I answered.

It was the path we were about to walk.

The New Tales of the Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Chan, Chun Sum Samuel – 11

It was a cold day in the city of Antioch. The restaurant that Fung was in was bustling with traders who were passing by on the silk road.

Fung was travelling to India from Beijing. He was going to sell the silk made in his hometown, and he had finally reached Antioch, where he would be selling his silk. Fung, who loved eating, had already discovered the tastiness of mutton kebabs and Mongolian Manti, both of which he found delicious.

After his meal, Fung went for a walk in the most famous bazaar in the city. There were so many delicious snacks that Fung didn't have time to try all of them. One of the snacks, though, surprised him. It was very spicy. It was so hot that Fung had to drink three cups of water to kill the heat.

The following days, Fung spent his time selling his silk and discovering new food.

One day, while exploring the city, he came across a restaurant called 'Heatwave Cuisine', where many people were lining up for samples of its famous dish, the 'Alexander Kebab'. Fung got curious and decided to try the dish, and it deeply amused him. It was very special – the mutton was savory with a hint of spiciness. The pita bread, on the other hand, gave a sweet and soft taste. It was just scrumptious.

Fung couldn't resist going into the restaurant to eat a few more dishes of the kebab. For the following days, he went to the restaurant each day for dinner.

After a week, it was time to leave Antioch. When he was packing his luggage, it dawned on him that he wouldn't get a chance to eat the 'Alexander Kebab' anymore. He was very upset.

Suddenly, an idea struck him – 'Why don't I go and ask for the recipe?' So, he went to 'Heatwave Cuisine' and asked to see its manager.

"Good morning, sir, how can I help you? My name is John!" said the manager.

"Good morning. I find the 'Alexander Kebab' of your restaurant very tasty. Would you mind giving me the recipe?"

John shook his head. "No, this is our secret recipe. We do not give it to others."
"Please? It is so yummy! I can give you some money for it!"

John thought for a while, and finally nodded, "Fine!" Fung was so thrilled that he started dancing.

The following day, Fung finally left Antioch, heading back to Beijing. One day, he was about to reach the city of Samarkand, he heard someone behind him shout, "Hey! You! Get off your horse and come over here!"

Fung looked back and saw a squad of soldiers wearing heavy armor and holding shields, swords and crossbows.
"Why should I?" asked Fung.

"You have taken the secret recipe of the 'Alexander Kebab', and we have to arrest you." Tying Fung's hands on his back, the soldiers took him back to Antioch, where he was brought before a court.

"Chan Fung, you are being arrested for stealing the secret recipe of the 'Alexander Kebab', and you will go to prison for six months," announced the judge.

"Please! I did not know it was a secret recipe! Let me go!" cried Fung.

The judge thought for a while. "Hmm... perhaps. But you need to do something for us Romans."

"Yes, sure! I am good at cooking. I can cook for all of you!" Fung begged.

"Hmm... yes, but who would you cook for?" said the judge in approval. "Hmm... maybe Lord Commodus? He is coming to Antioch for a tour," he suggested.

Fung was scared out of his wits. "For the emperor of the Roman Empire?" he muttered, his hands shaking. The judge nodded.

The next day, the head of the royal kitchen introduced him to his place in the kitchen. His job was to cook stir-fried food and bake bread.

Finally, the day that Emperor Commodus would come to Antioch came. Everyone in the royal kitchen was busy. The head of the royal kitchen had decided that each cook could choose a dish to present to Commodus. Fung thought for a while about what to cook. Suddenly, he got an idea. 'I should cook some Chinese dishes, as the emperor couldn't have eaten them before! So, he made his favourite food from his hometown – sweet stir-fried mutton. Fung spent two hours preparing it, hoping he would impress the emperor.

When he took out his dish and presented it to Commodus, he was so afraid his hands were trembling, and his heart was beating so hard probably everyone in the feast hall heard it.

When Commodus ate it, a frown spread across his face. Fung was so frightened he almost wet his pants. All of a sudden, Commodus smiled. "This is lovely!" he said. "How did you make it?"

Fung was so joyful he jumped up and down. "The cook in my favourite restaurant in Beijing told me that the key to this dish is the amount of sugar," he told Commodus, who nodded in approval. "I will tell this to my royal cooks in Rome. I hope they will cook some food as good as yours!"

When Commodus finally left, the head of the royal kitchen said to Fung, "Fung, you have done well, and the Lord has granted me 1000 grams of gold. I will grant you one wish to repay you. What do you want?"

Fung exclaimed, "Really?" The royal cook grinned. "Would you please let me go back to Beijing so I can have time with my family?"

"Of course!" promised the royal cook.

So, it was that Fung packed his luggage, made his way back to Beijing, and lived happily ever after.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Lam, Kasper – 10

In a time yet to come, there lived a scientist named Jon and his assistant, Nancy. One day, while Jon was experimenting as usual, he realised something strange. Whenever he used one specific method, a blue orb would appear, and then it disappeared after a few seconds. It felt like a glitch in a video game.

After a few more experiments, the orb lasted longer and grew bigger. It became so big that a human could step inside. Jon felt fascinated. He put on his safety gear and put his hand inside. He didn't feel anything. His hand passed straight through. Yet, he felt a breeze of wind brush against his skin.

Jon called out to his assistant, "Nancy, I think I might have made a portal!" he exclaimed.

Nancy walked over to see the portal, and they both agreed to go through it. They prepared carefully, and Jon slowly put his hand through, then his body, leg, and head. Nancy followed behind.

After Jon and Nancy entered the portal, Jon said, "Wait, I recognise this place, it's the Silk Road! It is a network of trade routes that connects China and Europe. Trading means buying and selling. If not for the silk road, different countries couldn't get what other countries had, like silk from China and salt from Poland. They did not only trade items, people also used the silk road to preach to others about their religion, for example, Buddhism, Atheism, Christianity, and much more."

Nancy was getting bored of this conversation, she almost dozed off, but Jon kept speaking, "The first person to ever journey across the Silk Road is unknown."

"Well, since we're here, why don't we go find him?" said Nancy, cutting him off in an annoyed tone.

"Good idea!" yelled Jon, "but first I must figure out a way to store the portal."

After a long minute, Jon shrunk the portal and shoved it into a bag. He said, "I'm ready! Looks like we are in Rome. Let's find a camel and start from here!"

There are over forty different countries, and they decided to travel through them all to find that one person who was the first to journey through it.

Hours later, they tamed a camel and put a saddle over it. Nancy was terrified of it. She disliked animals a lot, especially dirty ones, and in her eyes, camels were the dirtiest kind. They started riding to the next country. The burning sun made their skin feel like it was on fire, and the lack of clothing made them freeze during nighttime. Not only cold but also scary, the bright full moon caused them to think of a werewolf jumping out to eat them.

Halfway through, they realised they were running out of food and water. After realising that, every minute started feeling longer, every second felt like hours. The desert was so dry that their lips started to bleed, and their skin turned pale. Jon's stomach was grumbling like he owed it something, and a few minutes later Nancy's stomach was doing the same.

A little while later, maybe it was a bit longer than a little while, they rented an inn to stay in for the night. Jon stocked up on food that could last for a whole month. Nancy bought some drinks to celebrate that they had survived the near-death experience. Jon, looking half drunk, said, "Alcohol taste different in the past!"

"No, it doesn't. You're just drunk," exclaimed Nancy.

The next day, they continued their great expedition. They kept riding their camels across countries of all varieties, deserts, forest... but many of them were deserts after going to their fifteenth country. They got lost, but fortunately, there was a stranger, and Nancy knew fourteen languages. They spoke to the stranger, and after knowing

where they wanted to go, he realised that it was the same place he was going to! So, he joined them. His name was Alex. With their newfound companion, they kept riding on the camel.

After they rode for a very long time, they needed rest and settled down in the middle of nowhere. Suddenly the ground seemed to shake, they thought nothing of it, probably just due to not having enough sleep, but something felt wrong. The shaking started to intensify, it started to shake even more. And then they realised that this was no hallucination.

“Run! There is an earthquake!” Alex said in his language.

Trees fell around them, and they barely escaped. They kept running, knowing that until the shaking stopped, they were not safe. But then, Nancy tripped on a stick and fell. Alex and Jon tried to help her up, but it was no use. Without hesitation, Jon slung her onto his back and used all his might to run, and they barely got away from that horrible disaster.

Weeks later, they reached their last few countries, and Alex had already arrived at his destination, so they said their goodbyes and parted ways. After that, everything went smoothly, but one thing was wrong, they still couldn't find the first person to journey the Silk Road! Because of all that, they were devastated, but they decided to give up and went back home.

When they got home, they were sad and decided to take a break from their jobs. Jon bought a newspaper, but something was off, the headline of the paper said, “First Person to Journey the Silk Road!” He read more and realised they were the ones who did it, and they changed the timeline of history forever. This was both their most wonderful dream and their worst nightmare at the same time, but they were happy about it.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Lau, Chiu Tung Natalie – 9

Millions of years ago in ancient China, there was a wise but strict ruler named Emperor Wu. Emperor Wu lived in a luxurious palace with soldiers guarding it. Emperor Wu also had lots of servants who kept the palace neat and organised. Emperor Wu's wife, Empress Ling, gave birth to two children – Lila Wu and Trevor Wu. Lila and Trevor were both brave and kind. Sadly, their mother died three years earlier, leaving the children to grow with their father. Emperor Wu wanted China to grow stronger. He initiated the China's Silk Road trade. In his palace, he kept a special room with silkworms, which made the valuable silk.

One day, Lila was walking around the palace. She heard her father shouting at the top of his lungs, "I will repeat it for the last time, KILL THAT SILKWORM RIGHT AWAY! It looks so small and discoloured. It won't be good quality anyway."

"But, sir..." the servant tried to persuade him.

"YOU MUST OBEY MY ORDERS!"

Lila was thunderstruck. She dashed to him in the blink of an eye and said, "Please calm down, Father. Please don't kill it!"

"So, you're going to take care of it?" Wu asked.

Lila nodded hesitantly.

"Okay, if it looks better, give it to me or the servants. I need to produce a lot of silk today," sighed Wu.

But before Wu could say anything, Lila sprinted to the palace garden with the silkworm cupped in her hands.

The palace garden was filled with lush, green grass, a swing set, and a huge tree covered in mulberry leaves and some decorations. Beneath the tree lay the tombstone of the Empress. Emperor Wu, Lila and Trevor visited the tombstone once a week.

Lila got back on track. She picked up a mulberry leaf and fed it to the silkworm. "It's okay. This is just a mulberry leaf. There is no need to be afraid," Lila comforted.

The silk worm ate the mulberry leaf slowly, pausing now and then to hiccup.

"Wow, I never knew silkworms could hiccup!" Lila thought to herself as she waited for it to finish the leaf.

When the silk worm was done, it no longer looked strange or useless. It looked like a normal silkworm! Lila decided to return it to the silkworm room.

Before Lila could wave goodbye, the silkworm spat out some raw silk. The raw silk spun by itself, and in less than ten seconds, a sparkly rainbow cloth shimmered before her eyes! Lila was awestruck. She had never seen anything like it in her whole entire life! Lila wanted to keep it safe, so she kept the silk in her pocket.

The weather was perfect that day, so Lila decided to go for a walk in the park. When she arrived, she saw a dog that was badly hurt. The dog had a very big wound. "Hmm... I only have this piece of silk. I'll use it on the dog then!" Lila thought.

Suddenly, the wound disappeared before Lila even put the silk on it. "Huh? What happened? Is this some kind of magic?" she whispered.

The dog suddenly became extremely energetic. It kept on jumping around, as if thanking Lila for healing it. Then, the dog ran off.

Lila skipped back home cheerfully. “So, the silk has healing powers!” Lila thought. But when she returned to the palace, she was no longer skipping or jumping around happily. She couldn’t believe her eyes! Emperor Wu was crying. He was truly crying. Lila had never seen her father cry, except for the time when her mother died.

“Father! Why are you crying? What happened? Are you okay? Is our country being attacked?” Lila questioned.

Wu shook his head miserably and said, “No. It’s just that... that... Trevor kept coughing up blood just now. He’s terribly sick! He might die!”

“What? This is an emergency! Did you summon the royal physician? Where is Trevor?”

“Room... upstairs...” Wu sobbed.

Lila ran as fast as her feet could carry her. “Is he okay?” Lila asked, biting her lip anxiously.

“Not quite,” sighed the physician.

The Emperor came into Trevor’s room. “Even money could not save his life, my dear,” he said.

Suddenly, Lila remembered! The silk with healing powers! Slowly, she waved the piece of silk gently. She felt the silkworm in her hands... but Wu’s loud voice broke the intense silence.

“Trevor’s revived! Yay! Yay! Lila! Trevor’s not dead!” the Emperor continued cheering.

“Wha... What happened?” asked Trevor, his eyes barely open.

“Long story,” laughed Lila.

That night, they celebrated with fancy cheesecake and a fireworks celebration by the harbour. That was the best night of Lila’s entire life.

This story spread everywhere, and news of it flooded throughout the country. Today, the 3rd of October is a very important day because it is Lila’s birthday. Lila became famous in history, and people called her “The Life-Saving Silk Heroine”. And all of it happened because of one little silkworm.

The New Tales of the Silk Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Mak, Hei Wang – 12

Every single time I see my sand-covered jade pendant, I am reminded of some old friends of mine. Although I'll never be able to meet them ever again, it was nice to know and bond with them.

It all started when our school announced an educational trip, where everyone would go explore and learn about the almighty Silk Road.

The Silk Road as the topic of the museum made me a little disappointed at first, as I always thought to myself, "Why do we have so many museums for so many different things in history? Can't we have everything in history gathered up in one ginormous museum, so we don't always need to go to specific museums for random things in history? It's not like the Silk Road is so special anyways..."

I put up a grumpy and pissed expression as I resented the very idea of going to another museum and hopped onto the bus that drove us there.

Once we arrived, I stormed out of the bus and entered the grand entrance of the museum. All the classes started splitting into groups, and my class was sent to the 'Eastern and Western Goods' section, where we saw all the things merchants used to help their journey, valuables, and eye-catching works of art they would trade for profit.

I ignored most of the things because they seemed boring to me, but then I saw a beautiful rug adorned with marvellous patterns and jewels. Its beauty didn't matter to me, though. It was in that very moment, the wind blew mildly and made the displaying rug move a little, which revealed an aquamarine-coloured light shining behind the rug.

The moment I pulled the rug away, the chilling air greeted me as I looked around the room. It was silent and peaceful, with a golden shimmering bowl in the centre. In the bowl was a turquoise dragonfly ornament floating gracefully in the water.

In the room, the most intriguing item was, of course, the bowl, so obviously I approached it and tried to grab the dragonfly ornament. But the moment I touched the dragonfly, everything became dizzy. Sounds were starting to swirl in my head. I couldn't bear it anymore. Slowly, I lost consciousness and the ability to move.

A loud thud woke me up, people were groaning and complaining, and animals were grunting. I slowly started to get up and look around. Everything was different, it wasn't that room anymore. I was surrounded by objects: pottery, sculptures, rugs and mats, a mandolin, jars of different spices, and many more.

I figured out that I must be in a wagon, I saw an opening and went out.

Then, a man came up to me. He was muscular and fit. I asked the man in confusion, "Uhm, can you tell me where we're going? I'm scared, as I touched a dragonfly on a bowl and it sent me here."

He gave me a strange look and replied, "We are on the Silk Road, and we are going to the Parthian city of Hatra to trade with the Parthians to earn some profit. Whatever you said sounds ridiculous! Don't complain anymore, as we must concentrate on the journey. Call me Captain Zheng Lee if you need to."

I had to accept the hard truth that I could never return home ever again. I started to miss school, my family, and my friends. It just made me feel more upset than ever before.

As we kept going, we started to hear footsteps of a few dozen people approaching. Zheng took out his spear and looked around carefully. Suddenly, a loud voice boomed, "Give us all that you have, or give us your life! Now surrender before anyone gets hurt!"

Bandits quickly surrounded us and raised their weapons. We were outnumbered! But Zheng didn't give up, he and a few others charged to fight the thieves. It ended in failure, with all of them retreating and the bandits getting closer. There seemed to be no hope.

Just then, I dug into my pocket, desperately hoping to find something to get us out of this mess, and only found a flashlight. A thief tried to stab me, so I dodged and shined the flashlight right into his eyes. He instantly shivered in fear. I kept shining the light at all of the thieves, and they all started to panic, leaving us all alone.

Hooray! Everyone praised what I had just done, even though they didn't know what a flashlight was.

After a few hours of walking in the desert, we finally saw the city and felt a great relief. At last, we could be safe!

A teal and turquoise-coloured dragonfly flutter vividly around us. I decided to follow it, and I saw a gorgeous golden bowl, where a jewel-like dragonfly rested delicately on the water.

I knew what this meant, so I said that it was time for me to leave. I went up to the bowl, laid my finger into the water, and a cold rush of air went through my body. I fell to the ground, unconscious.

When I woke up, I was in the aquamarine-coloured room. Everything was the same, from the bowl to the entire layout of the room. I went up to the golden bowl again, but this time nothing happened.

I pulled away the rug that blocked the entrance and exited the room in confusion. I continued the rest of the day looking at different sections of the museum with my classmates, wondering whether it had all been a dream or not.

On our way back, I was still thinking for an answer. That was when I looked into my pocket, it held a sand-covered flashlight and a jade crane pendant. My heart started beating faster, not because I was afraid, but because I was joyfully surprised to figure out that maybe I had just become a time traveller.

The Jade Road

Diocesan Preparatory School, Ng, Yui Yan – 11

In the smoky gloom of their Chang'an workshop, Mei, nearly nineteen, clutched a tiny piece of uncarved jade. Her father, Ling, had spent his very last coins on it. A hot wave of guilt washed over her; she should be building their future, not costing it.

Her brother Kai, also on the cusp of nineteen, stared at the stone, his eyes sparking with a desperate idea. "Father! Your silk is the finest in the city. On the Silk Road, we could trade it for a fortune in raw jade!"

Ling's weary face hardened with a fragile, terrifying hope. "I must go," he whispered.

"No! You can't!" Mei cried, her voice tight with the fear of an adult who understood the dangers.

Kai stood tall, his jaw set. "Then we go together."

Mei looked from her brother's determined face to her father's eyes, which held a light she couldn't extinguish. Her fear was a cold stone in her stomach, but her love was a stronger tide. "Fine," she said, crossing her arms. "But I pack the supplies."

Into the Silk Road

A week later, they stood before the towering Jade Gate. A dusty guard smirked down at them. "You're going the wrong way for jade," he laughed. "It's supposed to come to you."

Kai's confident smile faltered. Ling's hand trembled as it touched their silk. That night, under a vast, cold sky, Ling pulled them close. "After tomorrow," he said, his voice thin with a terror he tried to hide, "we cannot turn back."

When they woke, they slowly walked through the gate and into the endless desert.

The desert was a cruel oven. A month into the void, a sandstorm rose and swallowed the world. "Please, someone help us!" Kai screamed into the roaring wind, his bravery crumbling into panic.

Suddenly, a brilliant, calm light split the gloom. Mei shielded her eyes. A figure emerged from the stinging dust—a man with kind, ancient eyes. "I am Serapis," he said gently. "God and protector of Alexandria. Follow me."

A hope, fragile as a bird, fluttered in their chests.

The Oasis

At the miraculous oasis, Ling wept with relief as he drank. Serapis smiled. "Your courage has carried you far. I will send you to my city." He drew a glowing seven-pointed star in the sand. "Step forward."

Kai nodded, his face a mix of awe and fear. Mei, ever practical, grabbed the camel's reins, her eyes wide with wonder. Ling bowed deeply, his gratitude overwhelming. Together, they stepped into the light.

The Great Trading Hub of Alexandria

They stumbled into a narrow alley in a city of wonders. Kai's mouth fell open. "Look!" he gasped, pointing to a stall glittering with deep blue lapis lazuli, rich crimson saffron, and raw green jade.

A smiling man named Farhad approached. "Let me help you, friends from the East." Relief made Ling too trusting. "Yes, please."

At the stall of the merchant Borz, the man flashed a gold-toothed grin. The deal was done swiftly: all their precious silk for a locked chest. Borz swore it held five large jade stones, a pouch of lapis, and another one of the finest saffron.

That night, huddled around the chest, their excitement was a living thing. This was their future. Mei held her breath as Kai lifted the lid.

Her face fell. Kai's turned red with rage. "Scammers!" he roared, kicking the chest of worthless river rocks and dyed pebbles. Ling sank to the floor, all hope draining from his face, leaving him hollow.

Tears of hot anger burned Mei's eyes, but she blinked them back. "No," she said, her voice quiet but fierce. "We fight back." She remembered the stern Market Inspector.

Before the Inspector's great scales, Mei did not speak. She placed a heavy fake rock on one brass tray. Then, from the hidden pocket in her sleeve, she carefully took out the one real, thumbnail-sized piece of jade from Chang'an. She placed it on the other tray, her hand steady, her gaze locked on the official.

His eyes widened in understanding—the profound difference between false weight and true value. Then they narrowed in cold anger. He stormed off, guards at his heels. Justice was served. They left with fair compensation: a small, honest parcel of true lapis lazuli, saffron, and jade.

Back Home

Two years later, they were home. Ling looked around their old workshop, now filled with the vibrant treasures of their real trade, a proud smile finally reaching his eyes. "We did it. We got the treasures, these could change our lives forever."

"I'll sell it all!" Mei chirped, dancing.

"Wait!" Ling said, his voice soft. He sifted through their hard-won jade and picked up three perfect, green stones, each the size of a dove's egg. He held them like sacred things. "We keep these. To remember how brave we were. To remember the road."

Mei and Kai nodded, their faces glowing with earned pride. In their workshop, now filled with a new, unshakeable hope, the three pieces of jade didn't just shine, in their perspective, they glowed with the memory of their courage, a silent promise of the bright future they had earned, together as a family.

The Silk Road Adventure with The Princess and the Silly Silk Toad

Discovery Mind Primary School, Carlin, Riona – 9

A long time ago a Chinese princess married the king of Khotan, a land far away on the silk road. The king and his people had never seen the marvellous fabric called silk. They desperately wanted to learn its secret. Anyone who tried to smuggle silk worms or their cocoons out of China would face a very harsh punishment.

The young princess knew how much the Khotan people longed for silk. She had an idea! As she was preparing to leave she hid several silkworms and mulberry seeds in her hair. After a long journey on the silk road the princess arrived safely in Khotan where her people were able to weave their own silk.

On the way she met a friend Amina who was an old silk weaver who taught her the art of weaving. “Every thread tells a story”, she said, showing her how to create beautiful patterns. The princess learned that patience and creativity were essential in her craft.

On her journey, she encountered a young boy named Amir who sold spices in a bustling marketplace. He was shy with a warm smile. The princess invited him to join them. Together they discovered the different flavours of spices. Amir taught her to respect and appreciate the diverse cultures she encountered. “Every spice has its own story” he explained – “just like us!”

One day as the princess was wandering through a vibrant bazaar, she stumbled upon a peculiar stall featuring a sign that read meet the legendary silk toad. Intrigued, the princess approached the stall and found a large toad perched on a pile of silken pillows. A quirky old man claimed the toad had once travelled the silk road itself! Really? The princess said, raising an eyebrow confused. This toad travelled the silk road? “Oh yes”! The vendor insisted. “He hopped from town to town, delivering silk and stories and he’s been known to croak the finest tales!” The princess giggled. I bet he has a lot of ‘ribbiting’ adventures to share! As she walked away, she thought I wonder if the toad has ever gotten lost on the silk road? The princess laughed at the thought of a toad navigating the silk road and hopping from one market to another, probably confusing spices for flies!

One day she got lost in a vast desert. The sun beat down on her. She was thirsty and tired but the princess remembered the lessons she learned from Amina and Amir. With determination she used stars to guide her way. Finally, she stumbled upon an oasis and drank some water. She missed her friends a lot.

On her journey she witnessed breath-taking views and landscapes. She even met people from all walks of life. Each story she heard was about adventure and friendship which she could relate to but she missed her friends back home.

Years passed and the princess grew into a curious and mature woman. She narrated stories about the silk road to the people of Khotan. The villagers listened in awe. The princess then returned home.

Years passed since the princess returned home from her grand adventure along the Silk Road. The cherry tree in her backyard had grown taller, its branches heavy with blossoms. The princess still gathered beneath it to tell stories to her mom and her friends. One morning, as they helped their mother hang new silk curtains they had woven; a gentle breeze drifted through the open window carrying with it a faint whisper. Did you hear that? The princess asked, tilting her head. It sounded like someone calling her. After every passing second it came clearer “find the Jade Compass...follow the whispering wind...”, Then there was a small knock at the door. The princess opened it, there stood none other than the silky toad wearing a tiny silk cape.

“Ribbit! Good day, traveller,” he croaked. “I was delivering silk scarves in the mountains when the wind told me to find you!” The princess burst out laughing! The wind talks to you now?! “Of course it does!” The toad replied. The

winds trust me.” The princess exchanged amused glances with her mom and listened. The toad explained that a mysterious Jade Compass had gone missing. It was a compass to guide travellers not by direction, but by purpose. Without it, many traders and caravans along the silk road had begun losing their way. We must help! The princess said eagerly. If the compass brings people together, we have to find it! Her mom agreed too. So, the princess with the silly silk toad hopping proudly at her side set off once again.

They travelled through bamboo forests that swayed like emerald waves, across silver rivers that shimmered beneath the sun. Each place they passed through seemed to whisper clues in the wind; a hum here, a sigh there. The Jade Compass was out there waiting to be found.

One evening, as the princess and the silly silk toad rested by the stream, they met a musician named Li Wei who played a flute carved from jade. His music danced through the air like ripples on water. “The wind carries messages”, Li Wei said softly, “but only those who listen with hearts can understand them.” The princess closed her eyes and listened. She could hear the faint whispers weaving through the melody, “climb the hill where the cranes rest...there truth shall be found...” Next the toad tried. He closed his eyes and after one second he said, “I can’t hear anything!” He whined then Li Wei said try again later. The toad nodded.

The next morning, they climbed a hill. At its peak stood an ancient shrine guarded by statues of stone cranes.

Resting atop it was the Jade Compass, glowing softly.

Just as the princess reached for it, the ground shuddered. A swirling windstorm rose from nowhere, filling the air with blinding dust.

It’s the Whispering Wind! Shouted the princess. It’s testing us! “Ribbit! I did not sign up for dust in my eyes!” cried the toad.

Remembering Li Wei’s words, the princess grabbed the toad hand. “Remember the compass guides those who are united.”

They closed their eyes and stood firm, trusting one another. Slowly, the wind softened, then faded away. When they opened their eyes, the air was clear. The Jade Compass now glowed more brightly, as if it recognised them.

The princess lifted it carefully.

On the way back home, the Jade Compass began to hum softly whenever the princess or the toad helped others. They had discovered that the compass didn’t point north or south at all. It pointed towards good deeds.

When they finally returned to their village, the princess lifted the toad up and he put the Jade Compass on the cherry tree where it glowed every night just like their friendship.

The Silk Road Crystal Adventure

Discovery Mind Primary School, Fu, Hei Tung Heily – 10

One day 2 best friends called Mei and Lian were having the most boring day until...SCIENCE CLASS!Because Mrs.Numberry the science teacher was the coolest, popular teacher in Girls Academy.Mrs.Numberry wears a huge sparkly white coat with safety goggles around her orange curly hair.Mei and Lian were taking notes until...BOOM! A huge magical portal appeared which sucked Mei,Lian and Mrs.Numberry! Before they were sucked all the students ran as fast as a cheetah straight to the door but Mei,Lian and Mrs.Numberry were too late.POOF!They were suddenly in a small van “ Finally you guys woke up!”Mei realised it was her dad! He didn’t change at all! They were so confused until a small letter flew right on Mrs.Numberry’s lap. It said “If you want to go back,you must find a lavender coloured crystal! Inside has a portal hidden in its shadow.You must break the crystal to create the portal!”

“How do we find this crystal?!” shouted Mei “Wait a sec I’ve seen this crystal in a book during my lunch break.Uhh it’s in Chang An’s Dragon Tooth field but we need to get past 10 Guards!”explained Mrs.Numberry “Behind the letter has instructions and a map.”said Lian. It said “Pass 10 guards by exchanging valuables then defeat the boss to get the crystal.”They didn’t know why there were two X’s. It was supposed to show the boss and the crystal but they were clueless!When Mei’s Dad (Morrison is his name)was actually 1 of the 10 guards!He told the ladies about it and they were shocked!Right after the story a young merchant called Li Wei,he was selling silk because his family had too much silk and needed money for his family.

Mrs.Numberry asked “If we buy all your silk will you help us to go to Dragon Tooth field?!” “Of course!” said Li Wei “As long as you buy my silk , I am glad to help you!” Morrison thought that it was a great opportunity for help and trading! So he paid a thousand dollars for a whole camel of silk! Then Li Wei went in the car and Morrison started driving to Dragon Tooth field. When they arrived at the first guard no one was there because Morrison was the first guard,so they passed by smoothly. Then the second guard was guarding the door,Lian gave him 50 pieces of silk to go inside. Then soon until they reached the boss, he wasn’t normal! He’s Mei’s great grandfather! He turned himself into a dragon with one huge tooth in his mouth! That’s how it was called “Dragon Tooth field. ” His name is Carlos,he’s known as one of the most dangerous dragons in the world! All of them were frightened but not Morrison; he had a protection bracelet from Carlos way before Mei was even born! When Carlos saw the bracelet all he did was nod then...THE LAST DOOR...OPENED!!! Everyone was astonished!

Inside was a beautiful garden with cascading waterfalls all around! When Mrs.Numberry looked at the map and she realised they had to stay here for a few nights! Meanwhile... in Girls Academy there were countless scientists trying to find out what happened! While Mei,Lian and Mrs.Numberry were eating a delicious vanilla cake that Li Wei made back home. At night Carlos showed them a dorm that they could sleep in! They were very grateful.

The next day they drove half way to the crystal until...a really bad storm occurred. It was so strong that it broke a tree branch into half!! Due to the storm they decided to not move and just stay in the car. All they ate were cookies and bread,which weren’t going to fill their stomachs so they just slept to stop making them think about food all night.

After the storm they found a farm with lots and lots of vegetables that they could cook! When Mei touched the carrots a trap went on her! When the farmer got the alert he thought he caught a thief! But when he was there he realised it’s just a young child who was trapped! He helped her up and untangled her. When Mrs.Numberry came, Mei was already untangled,she said thanks then brought Mei back to the car. The farmer thought they were hungry so he gave them a basket full of crops and veggies. After the farmer gave the crops they cooked a quarter of the veggies then they had an actual dinner until they were full.

The next few days they travelled and ate and slept the same for 2 weeks! "My! My! We have been here for 2 weeks! Time has gone by so fast I wonder how many days we've been gone in the real world?" said Lian. But no one responded to her. Until an evil god appeared he wanted to buy Li Wei to make him marry his sister Ria! The evil god's name is Gor! Before they could say anything Gor already got Li Wei! Then he left. POOF! Li Wei said "Don't find me!" Before he went with Gor! They didn't want to leave him but they decided to move on.

At last they found the crystal but Mei's greedy uncle John was guarding the crystal wanting to steal it! But he was weak so they easily defeated him and finally got the crystal! Lian took it and threw it on the ground then the portal appeared. They said goodbye to Morrison and to their journey, then they got pulled back into their class where reporters started interviewing them.

The End!

Travel Through Time

Discovery Mind Primary School, Isabelle Morgan, Zoey – 9

Once there was a girl named Meili. She was from a small town called Hotan in China. Meili was sweet, and she used half of her energy being nice and helping people! The other half was used for dealing with her parents. That was hard for her because her parents were cruel and heartless! Meili was very good at weaving silk, but sadly that was yet another disadvantage in life. Since she was so good at weaving silk, she was forced to weave silk for her family's silk shop. Okay, maybe not the family's silk shop...more like Meili's silk shop! Because Meili did all the work. Except for the front desk – the only reason she didn't work there was because her parents wanted everyone to think they did it all. So, they took all the credit!

One day Meili was weaving silk in the attic as she looked at her desk to see how many scarves and clothes she weaved, she saw a book glow. As she got closer to the book, she realized that it was her favorite book! It was all about the silk road. She sat on her bed as she opened her book. The light that glowed very brightly started to fade away and Meili started to worry. "What will happen after I open the book fully? Will it be something bad or dangerous?" Meili asked herself as she continued to open the book. When she fully opened the book...

...Meili was transported back in time to the silk road!

Meili found herself in the busy streets of an unrecognizable town. She was confused walking down the street, so she decided to go towards the shops and ask for help to see where she was. As she was walking towards the shops she didn't recognize any of the places or people. She was walking to a shop, and she asked the lady working there "Where are we?" The lady replied, "we are in Vaishali, India!" She replied surprisingly because usually people come up to her to buy something not to ask for directions or anything like that. Meili then asked the shop lady "What year is it?"

"It's 1453, of course," the woman said. Meili thought about this for a while, then it hit her. That was the ending year of the silk road. She knew this because she knew every detail of the book.

Meili decided to look at shops and see what they were selling. The shops were selling some cool stuff, but she didn't have any coins so she couldn't pay for anything even though she wanted to buy almost everything. Since Meili couldn't buy anything, she decided to go away from the shops and check out what else was there. While she looked Meili saw a bunch of kids playing and went to ask them if she could play but she couldn't understand a word they were saying because they were speaking another language. "I think it's Prakrit," Meili thought, as she remembered her book.

Meili asked if any of them spoke Chinese and luckily a boy named Atri did and translated what the others said.

"They said sure come on and play, oh and my name is Atri, this is Idnra and that is Narada, they're my best friends!" Atri said.

Meili told Atri her name and when Atri translated it back to his friends, they all thought the same thing.

"We think you aren't from around here, Meili. Are you?" he said.

"No, I am not," she replied. "I am from Hotan, China. It is a small town, and I love it there. But I'm not from this year either. I am from 2453, about one thousand years in the future." Atri translated again, and his friends all said what Meili guessed was "WHAT!" at the same time. "Yes, it's true," Meili said. "I somehow got transported back in time to the silk road. From a book!"

"Ummm... that sounds CRAZY!!!" Atri said.

"I know!" replied Meili.

Since Meili's new friend Atri thinks that Meili and himself could be good friends, he nods at Meili in a sign of knowing. He for some reason trusts what Meili is saying. Meili was surprised when Atri agreed with her, but she was also happy he did.

Atri asks Meili what she likes to do in her spare time. Meili answers by saying "I love weaving silk."

"Well, you're lucky. Because I know the best spot in town where professionals weave silk. And it's probably not like that in the future," said Atri.

Meili was excited when she learned of the professional silk weavers. So, she said “Please, can you take me there? I want to see them weave!”

“Sure, I’d be happy to. Let’s go.”

Meili and her new friends travelled for twenty minutes to see how people weaved silk. When they got there, Meili saw how they made silk, but was curious about what they used. She asked Atri “What do they use to make silk?”

Atri responded, “By using loomed woven fabric”.

Meili watched in wonder as the people made the beautiful silk and whispered to Atri “This is the most spectacular thing I’ve ever seen.”

One of the weavers noticed the four kids and said “Hey, do you like weaving?” and the four children looked at each other surprised.

“Yes!” Meili yelled.

Then the weaver said “Well, my name is Haseen, since you seem so interested, why don’t I teach you how to weave silk?” They all happily agreed. Haseen said, “Come on over here, and I will teach you.” They followed Haseen and he showed them how to weave a beautiful silk scarf.

“Who wants to try first?” he asked after he was done. Meili and Narada raised their hands at the same time, but Meili let Narada try first. After, Haseen realized that he needed some help, so he said to the kids “I’ll be back in a minute, I’m just going to get some friends.” After three minutes Haseen returned with three friends. All four kids were paired up with the weavers and each learned how to weave.

At the end when the weavers finished with Meili, Atri, Narada and Indra they left with the weavers saying come back any time and they said they would. But Meili knew she had to go back home to her and couldn’t return. She sighed and asked her new friends to take her back to the place they met.

“Sure,” they said sadly. When Meili got back to the market she saw someone taking her book. She panicked because she believed that was her only way back home. She chased after the person and shouted “Stop! Thief!” At that moment, the person looked over their shoulder, and Meili realized it was....

...to be continued.

My Unforgettable Silk Road Experience

Discovery Mind Primary School, Jarvis, Emiko Skye – 11

Let me tell you about my magical experience. It all started one morning when I was searching for a present for my mum's birthday on Amazon. I saw this interesting product that said, "silk scarf from 2000 years ago". Soon after thinking, I decided to get that silk scarf for my mum's birthday, even though I didn't believe it was from 2000 years ago.

The next day the silk scarf arrived, I could not wait to see the scarf if it looked as beautiful as the one in the picture on Amazon! I opened the box excitedly when suddenly smoke came out! I could not see anything! I walked my way into the smoke and saw the most unexpected thing....

I was not at home or my country, so... Where was I? I was so confused! I had no idea where I was or how I got there! My heart was pounding and I was panicking! I looked around, and it looked so different to my home country.

I saw a lot of shops and people trading goods. The strong smell of spices drifted through the air; it made me want to have some. It was a very crowded place, so I started walking through the village. On one side of the village, there was a very small but very nice-looking shop in a market. I was looking forward to seeing if there were any clues about where I was, or anything interesting in that shop, then I saw this beautiful silk scarf! I could not believe it; it looked exactly the same one that I bought for my mum's birthday!

I really wanted to buy it; it looked so beautiful. I asked the shopkeeper how much the silk scarf was. The shopkeeper did rather look confused, and as he stroked his very long beard, he announced "I will trade this silk scarf for spice". After he said that, I felt like I was in the silk road times! Maybe I was, but I was thinking to myself how impossible that would be.

I really wanted that silk scarf, so I decided to go on a little adventure through the village to find some spices and somehow get that scarf. I didn't have anything to trade with, then I noticed that I still had my green tea candy that I bought when I was walking back from school.

While I was walking, I found a camel standing by a tent. I was a bit anxious, but the camel didn't mind me climbing onto its back. Amazingly, I didn't fall off, and although it was a bit bumpy and smelly, I managed to stay on.

I stopped and asked a few people if they would like to trade some spice with my green tea candy, but nobody wanted to trade with me. I didn't give up.

I found a girl who looked about my age. She seemed to be interested in my green tea candy. I walked up to her and she very kindly traded with me! When I passed her the candy she had a big smile on her face! I said, "thank you" and quickly went back to the camel as I was so excited to get that beautiful silk scarf!

While I was riding on the camel, I had to pinch myself to see if I really was in the silk road times. It seemed impossible...at least that's what I thought.

Deep in thought, I didn't notice a guy with a sword coming at me with a menacing look on his face. I tried to make the camel go faster. It was too slow! The guy who looked like a bandit targeted me! The more the bandit came closer, the more I felt worried and scared. The bandit came close and quickly grabbed my spices, I was so surprised that a bandit could rob me in broad daylight and take my spices without hesitating to be caught by the police or any law enforcement body!

I felt very angry and petrified. I had spent ages looking for some spices.

Luckily some guards chased that bandit and grabbed hold of him. I went up to the guard not expecting him to give me the spice, but surprisingly he did! I got my spice and went on my camel once again hoping no one would rob me of this one thing that would help me get that scarf.

As I reached the shop, I once again asked the shopkeeper to trade that beautiful silk scarf. He gave me the silk scarf, and I gave the shopkeeper the spices.

As the shopkeeper handed me the scarf, the second I got it smoke came out again like the last time I traveled. After a few seconds, I was back in my country and back at my house standing right in front of the box that had the silk scarf

in. I was not as scared as the last time I travelled since I knew what it was going to be like, but I was still careful just in case something happened again.

Suddenly, I noticed that the silk scarf that I was holding had mysteriously disappeared. I suspiciously opened the box once again and there was the silk scarf! Was this silk scarf that I had bought on my adventure?

Finally, I started to wonder about the adventure and all the strange things that the people were doing, like trading. Was I really in the silk road times or am I imagining things?

The next day was my mum's birthday. As she unwrapped the present, her eyes lit up as she said thank you. "This is soo beautiful and exotic" she exclaimed! "Where did you get it, from the silk road times" she joked. I smiled politely and thought to myself 'if only you knew mum.'

To this day I still don't exactly know if my silk road experience was real, it will remain a mystery.....!

The Golden Times On the Silk Road

Discovery Mind Primary School, Panneer Selvam, Nethra Shree – 11

Hi, I'm Ling Lang, and I'm here to tell you about my times on the magnificent Silk Road, a historic trade route that connected the East and the West, so get some hot cocoa and get ready for a dreamy ride..!!

One Sunny day, I was playing with my friends. My brother Coby came and said, “ Ling, Mom is calling you. She has something significant to say”. “Coming”, I said and ran into the house.

“Come, Ling, sit down”, said Mom. Dad and Coby were already there.

“Know, my dad and I have something to tell both of you”, she said.

We have been invited to sell our silk clothes, ceramics and glassware from here to the West Side cities and countries.

It is going to be a very long journey, so we decided to take you both with us,” said Dad.

“Pack your bags, we are leaving in one week and travelling on the Silk Road!” Mom said.

I was bursting with excitement about our upcoming adventure on the Silk Road..!

We packed everything, and our caravans were ready to travel. It was the end of the Spring season. One fine day, we all started. Our first destination was from Xian to Lanzhou, which is close to the “Great Wall of China”. We were going to travel along the Great Wall. It was going to be the first time. Spring was absolutely the most beautiful time to visit the Great Wall!

It was a bright day at the Silk Road. Spring was terrific, all the birds were singing happy songs, bunnies were hopping around, and there were lots of flowers; their fragrance filled the air. I was enjoying that moment.

“Look, there is the Great Wall!” said Coby, eyes wide, gazing at the majestic world wonder. I was left speechless – it was truly a sight to behold!

I decided to sew all the scenes and everything I saw on beautiful silk clothes and make a silk dress.

We reached Lanzhou and took some rest. There, my parents sold many ceramics and clothes.

Our next stop would be Dunhuang, which was a little far from Lanzhou.

We observed that Spring had ended and Summer had started, with the hot sun! But there were also beautiful things, like sunflowers beginning to bloom— they are my favorite flowers too!

We stopped at every lake for a swim to cool ourselves down. We saw lots of animals running around and playing, and some birds started collecting and storing food for the upcoming seasons.

Sometimes we stopped in shadowy places, and my brother and I played with those small creatures and enjoyed it.

After a few days of travelling, we entered the “Gobi Desert”. If we cross that desert, we will reach Dunhuang. The Gobi Desert is a significant part of the Silk Road, acting as both a natural barrier and a crucial trade corridor connecting China and Central Asia. It was a very long ride and very hot too..! The temperature can reach up to 45 °C (113 °F).

But despite all the hard times, we finally made it to Dunhuang. There, my mom and dad sold lots of glassware.

Then we started travelling to Hami, which was quite near, which was a good thing because it was almost Autumn and we could spend some extra time collecting fruits and vegetables for the winter. We decided to take a route that goes through a little village. There we could get some things for winter.

In that village, we saw many friendly people who wanted our products and exchanged their rice, wheat, wood, and other things that would help them survive the winter. We had enough things, sold many of our products, and it went great. A lot of people in Hami loved our products. We saw the Queen, and she bought some of our silk clothes, too!!

Our second last destination was Turpan, and to get there, we had to travel a bit through the Tien Shan Mountains. It was still autumn, but by the time we got there, it was winter. I could already feel the ‘chillness’ in the air and could tell that it was going to be a super cold winter. On the way, I helped mom make ‘sweaters’ and ‘scarfs’, while Coby helped dad make ‘boots’. We sold some and kept some for ourselves.

Soon, it was Winter, and finally, we reached our last destination, Kashgar. There it was snowing!. We built a snowman in the snow and enjoyed it a lot. Drank goat head soup and tea. Everything was going fine until one night, a 'snowstorm' came along!! We had no idea what to do or where to go. We were about to give up. Suddenly, we heard a voice that said, "Come here, you can take shelter in our house ". There was a tall man who was ready to help in that critical situation. He took us to his place. There I met a little girl named Ming. We quickly became friends. The Storm finally lessened in 2 days; we had to start our travel. But I did not want to leave Ming. I decided to give her the dress I made, filled with memories of the Silk Road. "Ming, you are my best friend, and your family saved our lives. So, I want to give this dress which I made and sewed the things that I saw over 6000 miles from our place." I said, holding the dress. She smiled and said, "Thank you so much..!! It is so beautiful and I will keep this forever as a memory of our friendship..!!" But...

That's when I woke up from my dream. Yes, it's true all these happened in my "dream"..!! I really enjoyed the dream on the Silk Road —hope you all did, too!
One day, my dream will come true!!

China's Silk Road

Dulwich College Beijing, Hung, Valerie – 10

The sun shined beautifully on the Hexi corridor, it was so bright, I could barely keep my eyes open. The fine dust floated everywhere, on my clothes, in my eyes, and somehow in my mouth. I kept trying to spit the sand out of my mouth. but it didn't help much. The precious silk banner was hidden upon my robe. Every time my fingers brushed the torn edge my heart rate increased, sometimes i wondered if someone could hear my heart beeping through the silk banner. I kept worrying that someone would notice me touching it too much, but i knew i had to fix it.

Our camels walked in their slow bumpy way. They made slow grumbling noises that sounded like they were complaining about the hot weather; i could relate to that. The wooden carts squeaked behind us— always the same squeak, like a tired voice repeating itself. I can imagine the carts saying, “Are we there yet?” like little kids do. When we finally reached Taklamakan dessert, the ground changed. I felt the softest sand under my tiny feet. The wind blew across the dunes, and made this strange humming sound, a strange catchy rhythm. I didn't know deserts could make music. It wasn't creepy, but it sent prickles down my neck. We finally reached the Taklamakan Desert, and the ground changed. The sand was so soft and warm, it moved under my feet so smoothly. The wind blew across the dunes and made a strange humming sound, a strange catchy rhythm. I never knew deserts could make music! It wasn't eerie, but it sent prickles down my neck.

At night, we slept under the night sky, bursting with stars. They were brighter than any lantern festival back home. Sometimes I stared at them and wondered if the dragon on the banner— if he were real— would come to life and enjoy and stare at the same stars. I know that sounds unreal, but after so many days of carrying that banner, it felt like the dragon was watching me.

As we went, we had to climb the Pamir mountains, it was harder than anything I'd ever done. The air was so thin that my breaths were so shallow, like i could never get enough in. The paths hugged the cliffs, and I tried really hard not to look down, because when I did, my legs wobbled on their own. Every night, we crowded around the fire, rubbing our hands to gather warmth. I pretended to fix a seam on my sleeve, but really, I was stitching the torn banner. Every time someone walked past, my heart jumped. Each stitch had to be just so tiny and careful, like i was sewing a secret into the cloth.

When we finally got into the Ferghana Valley, it felt like stepping into a painting. Everything was so green and alive— trees with full leaves, grass that swayed in the wind, and little streams that sparkled like shinny strips of silver.

In King Arslan's hall, my hands shook as i unrolled the banner. I was scared I'd mess it up and drop it. But the silk fell open perfectly. The dragon I repaired looked strong again, its claw holding the stars just right. I saw the king's eyes widen, and for the first time on the whole trip, i felt proud of myself instead of scared.

Then the king showed us his famous horses. They ran across the meadow so fast I could barely keep my ones on them. Their hooves thundered like drums. King Arslan invited us to stay for a whole week, and suddenly I felt like an emperor on a grand adventure instead of just a messenger.

I spent most of my time in the stables. That's where I met Guldana, a gentle mare with soft, warm eyes. She loved apple slices and kept tickling my palm with her nose. I couldn't help giggling every time. The groom taught me how to brush her coat, wash her legs, and clean her hooves. They said I was a quick learner.

The markets were loud and full of smells— spices that made my nose burn, bread that smelled sweet, smoke from grills, and perfumes that reminded me of flowers. I traded my little jade charm for a wooden whistle. I missed the jade, but when i blew the whistle and heard its soft, clear note, I liked it right away. The children there played games

with stones, and it made me think of home. Then someone gave me sour milk to try, and I made such a terrible face that it made everyone nearby laughed, even me.

When it was time to leave, King Arslan gifted two magnificent horses to our emperor. One of them was Guldana. The head groom handed me her rope and said, “She trusts you,” My heart thumped so hard I thought he might hear it. I felt proud but also scared— like when someone suddenly believes in you more than you believe in yourself.

The journey home felt different, I checked Guldanas’s hooves each night, found her the best grass, and comforted her when the sandstorms frightened her. I told her about the cherry blossoms in spring, about the lantern festivals that lit up the whole street, and about the warm, soft buns my mother made. Slowly she relaxed, and so did I.

I couldn't believe it, but we arrived in Chang 'an! People crowded around us, pointing at the foreign horses. Then i saw my parents. Their eyes first landed on Our beautiful Guldana, then finally on me. They didn't say anything— they just hugged me tight and smiled.

That night at home, everything smelled familiar—silk, sandalwood, warm lamps— but there was something new too: the smell of hay and horse that clung to my clothes. This journey has been so memorable and special to Anastasia.

The Silk Road Adventure

Dulwich College Beijing, Leung, Andre – 10

The sun was just rising over the sandy Gobi Desert when twelve-year-old Araon tightened the rope on his small camel. Today was the day he had been waiting for his very first journey along the Silk Road with his uncle. The marketplace buzzed with life. Traders from far-off lands crowded the dusty paths; some wore flowing, colorful robes, while others carried heavy bundles of food and goods that filled the warm morning air with sweet, rich smells.

A long line of camels and travelers moved slowly across the desert. Araon stared in amazement. How do they keep going in such heat? he wondered. For a moment, he felt like he'd stepped into another world. Strange and musical languages danced through the air. Nearby, a bustling town stood at the edge of the Gobi Desert, its streets alive with chatter. The smell of spicy dishes and sugary treats drifted around him like invisible clouds. Everything felt new, bright, and unbelievably exciting. He tried to remember the paths through the desert and the signs of water just as his uncle had taught him. Araon felt the thrill of a real adventure beginning.

As they approached the town, Araon noticed people carrying baskets overflowing with fruits, vibrant rugs, and shiny silver-grey pots. Camels groaned and nudged each other, and merchants shouted loudly, calling for people to trade. The noise was almost overwhelming. Araon's eyes widened when he saw a man juggling bright oranges while another roasted sweet bread over a tiny fire. His uncle chuckled at his astonished face. "This is just the beginning," he said. "Wait until you see the whole market!" Araon could hardly believe it. He had never seen anything like this in his entire life.

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind swept through the market, sending dust swirling into the air. Araon sneezed and stumbled, almost crashing into a camel. Voices rose everywhere as people tried to calm their animals and find their way through the confusion. Araon's heart pounded. This place was nothing like his quiet village—here, surprises lurked around every corner. His uncle grabbed his arm firmly. "The Silk Road can be tricky," he warned. "You have to watch carefully and stay alert." Araon nodded, his eyes wide with both fear and excitement. This adventure was going to be full of unexpected moments—some thrilling, others a little frightening.

Carefully, he followed his uncle deeper into the town. Araon brushed his fingers over soft silks that shimmered in the sunlight, breathed in the spicy-sweet scents, and admired piles of colorful fruits. A friendly merchant noticed him staring and held out a handful of dried apricots. "Would you like some, little traveler?" the man asked with a warm smile. Araon nodded eagerly. The chewy apricot melted in his mouth, and he giggled with delight. It was the tastiest thing he had eaten on the Silk Road so far.

A little farther ahead, Araon spotted a group of children about his age playing a lively game with sticks and stones. One child waved him over. "Do you want to play with us?" Araon hesitated, his knees trembling slightly, but slowly he stepped closer. Soon, he was laughing with them, trying to follow the rules. Even though he didn't understand every word they said, he understood their smiles—and that was enough. For a while, he forgot all about the crowded market and the blazing desert sun.

While they played, Araon noticed a struggling camel carrying an enormous, colorful rug nearly too heavy for it. The rider tugged the reins, trying to guide the animal through the crowd. Without thinking, Araon rushed over and held the rope gently to steady the camel. The animal's warm, rough fur brushed against his hands. The rider smiled gratefully and nodded in thanks. Araon stood taller, feeling proud. Even in a strange and unfamiliar place, he had found a way to help.

As Araon and his uncle walked toward the end of the busy market, he couldn't stop looking around. Everywhere he turned, something new caught his eye—a man juggling brightly colored fruits, a woman selling shiny silver coins that glittered under the fading sunlight, and a group of laughing children chasing a rolling ball. Araon smiled, wishing he could join them again. The whole place felt like a giant living story, and he was right in the middle of it.

When the sun finally dipped beneath the horizon, his uncle called to him.

"It's time to find a place to rest."

Araon took one last look at the lively market. He breathed in the sweet and spicy scents one more time, then followed his uncle away from the glowing stalls. He felt tired, but joy warmed his chest.

That night, lying on a soft mat under the sparkling desert stars, Araon replayed everything he had seen—the people, the animals, the colors, the sounds, and his new friends. He smiled to himself. This was only the beginning of a grand and unforgettable adventure along the Silk Road.

The Road of Memories

Dulwich College Beijing, Ma, Abigail – 10

“Oh! What’s that I see?” Jone asked, tapping Dean’s shoulder.

“Don’t know,” Dean exclaimed, “I’ve never been here as well!”

They both trudged their way through the thicket of bushes and came to a stop. In front of them was a marketplace with all kinds of exquisite valuables. People were crowded around stalls with all kinds of valuables that weren’t in other countries. Smiles like a boomerang, Jone and Dean dashed towards the marketplace, snuggling their nose into everything they encountered. But little did they know that they were on the most famous Silk Road.

BUMP!

Jone and Dean crashed into a stalking camel who was carrying tons of merchandise on its hump.

“Watch where you’re going!” Grumbled the camel, shoving Jone and Dean out of its way.

“Okay!” Jone, who was quick to temper, exclaimed sarcastically, still standing there as still as a statue.

Dean dragged Jone away from the insulted camel and went back to the marketplace.

“Jone! Remember why we arrived here in the first place?” Dean called, “Let’s build a ship so we can find the mythical creature.”

You see, the reason that Jone and Dean had come here was that their king had told them that there was no such thing as a creature with a slim body, a Chinese dragon head, ate money, and had the tail of a peacock and eyes on the feathers. Jone and Dean were determined to prove him wrong. So they traveled to find the creature and got messed up in a few storms, then stumbled across here.

Jone and Dean walked along the endless marketplace, they were searching for wood.

“Hello! What are you seeking?” A man wearing a stitched jacket stood grinning at Jone and Dean.

“Oh! Hi, we were just looking for wood, we want to build a ship.” Dean replied, looking up hopefully at the man.

“Of course, just what you’re looking for. Teak, t-e-a-k, boys, it’s a fine wood and perfect for constructing.” He pulled out a long and large piece of fine wood. Jone and Dean nodded at each other, what luck! The man smiled, pleased with his accomplishment. “We also trade spices and other wood such as sandalwood, ebony, rosewood and many others. You are going to need a lot of teak, why don’t you borrow my wagon?” The boys thanked the man and turned to set off, but the man yelled at them. “Hey, you don’t just get something for free, on the Silk Road, we trade. You need to give something in return. War horses, gems, and others, all are fine.”

Jone and Dean stared at each other. Uh oh, they didn’t prepare anything. “Perhaps you could have our horses. They are well fed. Let us retrieve them.” Jone answered politely.

The man patted the horses. “Okay, I think they are good. Bye! Be safe!” The man waved them off.

“Okay, next we need stuff to make our sail, probably linen or cotton.” Dean announced.

“Ciao boys, can I help you?” Jone and Dean turned around and saw a man in a white toga lounging.

“Hi sir, we are looking for some linen or cotton to make a sail for a ship.” Dean answered politely, smiling radiantly.

“Ooh! Nice, I trade linen and cotton! Lucky you. I suppose that you need a lot since you are making a sail, right? You can keep my bag and store the linen and cotton there! Oh, and don’t forget, you must give me something back.

Silk from China, Spices from India, Jewels and gems or metals.” He eyed the two boys like an alligator that hadn’t eaten in months. Greedy, Jone and Dean thought.

“Okay, here, we have gems, enough?” Jone quickly handed over a handful of glistening jewels that he and Dean had discovered on the way. He wanted to escape from the sight of the greedy Roman immediately.

“Yes yes yes,” the man nodded. “We also trade metals, glassware, wine and olive oil, coral and amber and others. You are welcome any time you want.”

“Uh, bye.” Jone hurried away, they were finally away from that greedy Roman. Now that they had gotten wood and cotton, all they had to do was get silk, they needed new clothes.

“Good afternoon! What do you need?” A man wearing a robe with wide sleeves greeted.

“We are looking for silk, we want to make new clothes.” Dean smiled.

“Oh, of course gentlemen! We have plenty.” He stuffed his hands into a big bag and got out a ton. “Here, now I would like horses, jade, spices, or other metals. Not to hurry, but please could we go faster, you can see that the line is stretching miles behind you, sorry. Oh, thanks for the jade, we also trade tea, porcelain, paper and others, bye!” He squeaked. Jone and Dean could hear him squabbling to some other customers, surely silk was so special?

How nice it was, sailing across the QingHai Lake –though Jone and Dean didn’t know– on an own handcrafted ship while reciting memories of learning new knowledge on an endless path. The Indians traded spices, wood and others for war horses and jewels. The Romans traded linen, cotton, glassware, wine and olive oil, and others for Chinese silk, spices, and jewels. The Chinese traded silk that everyone desired, tea, paper, porcelain and others for horses, jade, spices, or other metals. What precious memories! Oh, and there is also the Cambodians who traded nutmeg and cloves and many many others that we didn’t have time to share. Well, it looked like Jone and Dean have set foot on another island, would they find the mythical creature and prove the king wrong?

The Monument of Forgotten Wisdom

Dulwich College Beijing, Sun, Jasper – 10

The bustling streets of Byzantium sparkled under the aqua-blue sky. The Hagia Sophia Cathedral overlooked Bosphorus, the bridge of the east and west. Yet, away from the city's clamor, the Underground Palace harbored a secret.

Water ripples reflected upon the marble roofs. The sturdy pillars stood silently under the surface. A colossal stone glimmered a cold and faint sheen. It seems like the monument was frozen in time. What history did it carry?

Tasconia was a descendant of the Sogdian merchants who had traveled to the city of Byzantium via the Silk Road. The Sogdians valued inclusiveness, weaving connections across cultures. However, he was regarded as a pagan. Thousands of others in the city share his fate, but they lived in the shadows, hidden in every corner, yearning for peace.

The fate hung by a thread. A royal decree echoed through the squares: **"CITIZENS OF BYZANTIUM! DURING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROYAL CISTERN, A PAGAN MONUMENT WAS DISCOVERED. IT SHALL BE DESTROYED AT NOON TOMORROW! ALL PAGAN INFLUENCE MUST BE PURGED FROM OUR KINGDOM."**

After the miserable news, the Chinese, Sogdian and Persian communities felt heartbroken, the relic left by their ancestors was not just a stone. It was part of their culture, the embodiment of their ancestors' wisdom and the spirit of the Silk Road. Could they simply let it be reduced to dust? But would they easily give up their quiet life just for a stone monument? They hesitated.

But Tasconia refused to despair. He wanted to create an inclusive community where everyone no matter what country or religion, could coexist harmoniously as a whole, which was also the spirit carried forward from the Silk Road.

A chaotic bicker echoed throughout the dim basement. "Hey everyone, stop arguing! Let me tell you a story. Chinese herbology medicine cured my grandfather's wound and saved his life. The Arabs helped him walk out of the sandstorm. The citizens of Byzantium fixed his compass for leading the way. That all happened a century ago, on the Silk Road. We are all connected. Even if we sacrifice everything, we must save the monument to prove we belong." Tasconia's voice cut through the noise.

The remaining people around the dining table fell silent, nodding. "I still remember the sense of the Persian spices from the Silk Road, it seems like I got Déjà vu." "What shall we do everyone? The monument will be destroyed tomorrow noon! We must think of the solution." one slim, tall person announced. "But there's only about 20 Hours left." another person noted. "The monument is way too big; the only solution right now is to split it into several pieces and send them towards different directions." Tasconia declared, with his eyes burning in determination. "Meet you guys at Bosphorus grotto tomorrow evening!"

The glowing moon shimmered under the teal ocean. The group of citizens arrived at the construction site. A ginormous crate appeared in front of their eyes with a tremendous stone monument sitting solidly in the center. Enduring the ache inside their cold hearts, they started drilling through the stone. It was the only method of hiding it as soon as possible. The clamour noise of destroying raised their sense of nervousness, which forced them to work speedily. The sun was starting to rise; the stone was hidden away in the labyrinth of the city. It was an impossible mission.

"ATTENTION CITIZENS OF BYZANTIUM, THE PAGAN MONUMENT IS MISSING! A 10 SOLIDUS PRIZE TO WHOEVER FINDS IT!"

Police scoured the city. But immigrants separated into different directions. Some shuttled back and forth through the marketplace whilst some climbed on top of the roof's tiles. They knew the city's secrets better.

After what seemed like forever, the Police Team finally gave up on chasing and returned back to their normal life.

However, the Royal Construction Program had some problems with leaking. The water from the ocean leaked into the underground palace, threatening its foundation. The King of Byzantium called for skilled aids, promising any rewards to those who could save the structure.

“Shall we take on this brilliant opportunity? I mean we have the engineering skills from the East. We can fix the palace.” The rest of the group nodded in agreement; it was a plan indeed!

They stepped forward. Utilizing ancient hydraulic techniques from the Silk Road, they sealed the leaks and stabilized the pillars.

“God bless you group of intelligent citizens. May I ask, where did you learn these magnificent skills?” The King of Byzantium asked the group of pagans. Tasconia stepped forward courageously. “Your Majesty, we came from different corners of the world and we are the ones who took the monument, because it was part of our culture, bearing the knowledge of our ancestors—the very knowledge which are just saved your palace.”

The king’s face darkened. “You stole from me?”

“We just saved a part of ourselves. Tasconia said softly. If you were a completely different person in a country, wouldn’t you feel left out and alienated? Wouldn’t you cling to the one thing that reminded of your home?” Tasconia’s eyes filled with tears. “It carved skills and knowledge, which told us the sense of belonging and inclusiveness, passed down from the Silk Road. The only reward we ask is to allow the stone remain in the palace, serving as the foundation of the great pillars. Let them support your empire, just as we wish to.”

The king silenced. He looked from the ‘pagans’ to the stabilized arches, thinking about what the so-called pagans meant to the country.

Water ripples reflected upon the marble roofs. The sturdy pillars stood silently under the surface. At the base of the columns, a colossal stone rested, glimmering a cold and faint sheen. The monument was frozen in time, holding the weight of the history and the spirit of unity.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Dulwich College Beijing, Xu, Celine – 8

It doesn't matter if you believe the story that I'm about to tell you because you won't be the first one to think I'm a crazy girl who has lost her mind. But I know I need to share with others the unique experience I had with the new Silk Road—the road that saved my life.

My name is Lexi, by the way, and this is the story of a girl who was tortured by a ghost, got saved by an old spirit, and the health of the Silk Road.

Ever since I was a little girl, I've had this weird disease that kept haunting me. You know those scary creatures you see people dress as during Halloween? Yeah, like zombies and ghosts? Well, here is a nice surprise for you: I can see them every single day!

Nobody believed me when I asked for help. They all thought I was crazy. Even my own parents struggled when I told them I didn't want to go to school because I was scared of all the creepy ghosts and monsters. My dad, a top psychologist in Beijing's best mental health hospital, would say something like, "Stop it right now! There are no ghosts in Beijing. Just go to school." I would have no choice but to walk the dark path by myself, with random scary scenes playing out right next to my ear.

Here is something I haven't told you yet: while I will still die on the hill that most ghosts are angry, annoying, evil, and scary, there are some exceptions. He was still annoying, but he was definitely not scary. In fact, he saved my life as a part of the original Silk Road.

The first time I saw Chen was when I was in the hospital from taking too much medicine. I was hopelessly trying to find a magical cure for my disease. Since my parents didn't seem to care, I felt I needed to take matters into my own hands. Apparently, that didn't go well and I ended up with a lot of medical problems.

Then I saw him: a tall man wearing a worn padded coat made of cotton and leather boots. I remember that he was friendly, with a smile on his face. "Are you just here to scare me?" I asked. "I have seen so many ghosts that are much scarier than you." He seemed very surprised when I said that. "I'm just here to help you, miss. It looks like you're in pain."

From that point on, Chen was always by my side. He explained he was part of Zhang Qian's expedition team exploring the original Silk Road. He would often tell me interesting stories about this amazing ancient trading route that crossed vast deserts and connected our country to faraway Europe.

"Do you know what the best part about the original Silk Road is?" I remember Chen asking me without giving me time to answer. "It is learning about new cultures from people of different countries. We were treated to amazing, delicious food we never had before. We also traded many goods from our home country, China, with European travelers." He showed me his typical Chen smile after he finally finished his long tale.

Even though we had known each other for a while, I was still annoyed by his presence, mainly because other ghosts still bothered me when he wasn't around. So I rolled my eyes at him. "So what? I don't really care about the Silk Road and its cultural diversity. I just don't want to be bugged by scary creatures anymore. That's all I want."

I don't know why I was so frustrated. Maybe it was because Chen was so kind and would never get angry at me, but I still remember the sad expression on his face. A second later, he gently patted my head. "You have to understand how important it is to connect with different parts of the world." He paused like he was making an important decision. "Go look for the new Silk Road, Miss Lexi. I'm sure that will help you solve your problem."

That was the last time I saw him, and that was when I realized I missed him and considered him a true friend. So, I decided to research Silk Road.

I am telling you right now that decision literally saved my life.

I soon learned that this new Silk Road is known as the Belt and Road Initiative. Established by the president in 2013, its goal is to connect economically strong Europe with Asia. This not only benefits trading but also improves trust between countries. Ultimately, it aims to make the world a better place.

At first, I was confused because it didn't seem related to my weird sickness. But then I discovered the Health Silk Road. It is a key part of the Belt and Road Initiative aiming to improve public health in different countries. It was especially promising during Covid-19 because it provided vital medical supplies like masks and vaccines, saving countless lives during the pandemic.

When I saw this, my fingers stopped typing. I remembered exactly how difficult and challenging the Covid-19 period was for everyone. If this Health Silk Road could help us through that, I thought, maybe it could bring the miracle I had been waiting for.

So, I applied for a Belt and Road Initiative program for patients with special needs. I was sure no one would believe me, but in just three days, they signed me up with a doctor far away in Europe.

And the rest is history. Within a month, with the medicine that Doctor Oliver provided delivered directly to my door, I was no longer bothered by any scary monsters or ghosts.

I still remember the excitement I felt. I started screaming into nothing, "Thank you Chen, for saving me." And then I realized I could never see him again.

Silk Road Merchant Spirit: Bob's Big Dream Journey

Dulwich College Beijing, Xu, Clark – 10

The streets of Chang'an were still full of cheers for Zhang Qian's return! The explorer told everyone that Western countries and Europe loved Chinese silk and ceramics so much—they even paid super high prices for them! This made Bob, a merchant from Xicheng, very excited. Ten days later, he started a caravan called “The Grand Silk Caravan.” Over 100 people joined the team, and they packed lots of soft silk and beautiful ceramics. Bob's dream was simple: sell these Eastern treasures in Europe and make a lot of money!

To stay safe on the dangerous Silk Road, Bob asked Zhang Qian's good friend to be their guide. Zhang Qian's younger brother led the caravan, and they set off on the long journey.

But trouble came soon! They hadn't gone far when a huge sandstorm hit the Taklamakan Desert. The team quickly built a temporary camp to hide. But just as they got ready, the storm stopped. They had to pack up and keep going. On the hot Gobi Desert, the sun was burning. Suddenly, a group of Xiongnu riders appeared. They caught the whole caravan and kept them in prison for over a week! In the dark prison, Bob never gave up. He talked to his teammates secretly. One stormy night, they ran away and rushed toward Europe.

After leaving the desert, they faced a new problem: no water! Many people fell down because they were too thirsty. Bob had a plan—they shot birds flying in the sky and drank their blood to stay alive. But bad luck came again: another group of Xiongnu raided them, took all their food. Luckily, they hid the silk and ceramics well—those precious goods were safe!

Then tall snow mountains blocked their way. The top was super cold, and there wasn't much air to breathe. Bob tried to climb during the warm day, but the mountain was colder than he thought. They had to go back. After resting, they tried again. It was so hard—every step made them feel dizzy from lack of air. But they finally reached the top!

After so many hard days, Bob and his team finally reached Europe! At first, the locals didn't like them. They said bad words and even pushed the team members. But when they touched the smooth silk and saw the pretty ceramics, they changed their minds. These Eastern treasures were so amazing! Everyone wanted to buy them. In just two weeks, all the goods were sold out!

With a wealth of gains, they set off on their return journey. When Bob rode into Chang'an with his teammates, no one knew him at first. But when someone shouted “Bob!”, everyone cheered! They threw a big feast for him. At the feast, Bob told everyone about his adventures—how Europeans loved the silk and ceramics, and how his teammates fought hard. He raised his cup and said: “To my friends who stayed on the Silk Road, and to the road that never gives up!”

Someone asked Bob: “What's the best treasure you brought back?” Bob smiled and said: “Not gold or silver. It's the roads we walked, the friends we met, and making the Silk Road a real story!”

Bob gave half his money to the families of the teammates who died. He also helped build a bigger caravan with other merchants. They prepared more food, warm clothes, and tools to stay safe. “The Silk Road shouldn't be only dangerous,” Bob said. “More people should travel safely and share treasures!”

As Bob got older, he couldn't go on the journey anymore. But he became a famous “guide.” He wrote down all the routes, dangers, and local customs in a book, and gave it to every new caravan. Western nobles loved the silk and ceramics from Bob's caravan. Everyone talked about “Eastern Bob” along the Silk Road.

In Chang'an, Bob often sat on the city wall, looking toward the Silk Road. He could almost hear the camel bells and smell the flowers Annie loved. His dream didn't end—more and more people walked the Silk Road, and Bob's story was told for many, many years.

Silk Road Pigs

Dulwich College Beijing, Yan, Yuqi – 9

One hot summer morning, in the Silk Road city of Kashgar, traders shouted happily trying to sell from their caravans to the gathering crowds. The smells of fresh bread, roasted nuts and different spices drifted through the marketplace, but not so far away, not everyone was happy!

In a small, mudbrick house lived three little pigs with their Grandma: Selfish Sam, Worried Wilbur and Cheerful Charlie. The three pigs were often arguing. Selfish Sam was always keeping things from the others, Worried Wilbur was always fretful, whereas Cheerful Charlie just wanted everyone to be friends! One day, their wise Grandma, tired from hearing them squabble, gave them each some gold coins. As Grandma dropped them into each pig's hand she explained,

"Take these coins and buy what each of you think is best for our family."

With that, the pigs snorted and headed out of their house and made their way to the Kashgar city gates, where they looked ahead at the Silk Road and began their adventure.

After a few days of trotting, they arrived at the desert oasis town of Turpan. It was famous for its vineyards and everywhere the pigs looked, grapes were growing. Selfish Sam waited for Charlie and Wilbur to rest in a nearby muddy puddle. With them busy, he snuck away to the marketplace and spoke to the seller,

"Hey there! Give me all of your grapes! They look delicious!" Sam handed over his gold coins that Grandma had given him and strutted back to his brothers. When Charlie and Wilbur saw him return, his face was purple and messy. Sam shouted to them as he wiped the grape juice from his snout,

"These grapes are delicious! They're the best thing we could buy! I'll keep them safe for the journey!" Wilbur and Charlie sighed. They both knew Sam wasn't going to share them!

The next day, they traveled to Hami! When they arrived, they saw sweet, juicy melons everywhere! Sam and Charlie sprinted to the market, but Wilbur was busy worrying like always.

"There is so much desert and it's so hot! I really need some water!" he mumbled to himself. He marched to the market and filled his backpack with barrels of water! He was still gulping the water when he returned to Charlie and Sam.

"Those melons look fresh, but this water is fresher! I'll keep it safe for us, so we don't run out!" Sam and Charlie sighed. They both knew Wilbur would be too worried to share the water with them in case there was none left!

After some more time traveling they finally arrived at Dunhuang. They looked around and saw sand dunes everywhere! Just then, a crazy looking pig suddenly appeared running right toward them!

"Hey! Don't stay out here for too long! There is a sandstorm coming! Get what you need and find a nice place to hide!" Sam and Wilbur both snorted. They weren't worried. Sam knew he had grapes, and Wilbur had the water. Charlie looked around. They didn't have anywhere to stay, but luckily one marketplace was selling tents.

"Hey there! Can I buy the biggest tent in your shop with these coins?" Charlie asked. The shopkeeper smiled and handed over a tent. Charlie walked back to the others, but he found they were arguing over who had bought the best thing. Sam decided without food they couldn't survive the storm. Wilbur said without water they couldn't survive the storm either! Charlie, annoyed by them both, decided to set up his tent and get inside.

Before long the storm began. Sam was munching on his grapes, but he wasn't smiling like before. The wind was howling and sand was getting in his mouth and making him feel sick! Meanwhile, Wilbur was sipping his water, but his tummy was grumbling. He was starting to feel bad too! The stinging sand was getting in his eyes! Charlie, who had calmed down, was safe in his tent from the bad weather. Unfortunately, Charlie's mouth was dry and his tummy was grumbling too! It was then when he thought of Grandma's words and how she wanted what was best for the family!

Charlie poked his snout out of the tent and shouted "Sam, Wilbur, get in here!" The two other pigs ran and rolled into the tent. They were squished together like puzzle pieces!

"Each of the things we bought on its own is nice, but if we share them all with each other things will be so much easier!" They all looked at each other and looked at what they had: the tent, the grapes, and the water. Without saying anything else, they zipped up the tent and ate the delicious grapes and gulped the water down together. Before long, they were all asleep as the sandstorm swirled around outside.

Hours passed before finally Charlie snorted himself awake. He pulled down the tent zip and looked outside. The weather was incredible. Blue sky and a beautiful rainbow. "Things are much easier when we work together. I guess that's what Grandma wanted all along!" Sam explained, offering another grape to them both.

"You're right," said Wilbur, "I don't need to worry when we work together!"

Charlie looked at them and smiled. Later that day, they packed their things and began the long walk back to their home together, chatting happily and looking forward to telling their Grandma about their trip!

Silk Road

Dulwich College Beijing, Zhao, Austin – 9

At the crack of dawn, Mei crept quietly to her father's ox-cart and stole two handfuls of tea. Quickly, she sprinted away like a thief making off with gold and headed toward the Silk Road. After hearing countless tales from her father and other merchants about its wonders, she had long dreamed of joining him. But every time she begged, he refused and scolded her, insisting she was too young and the road was far too dangerous.

At last, she decided she would attempt the journey herself. She took a donkey from the shed and set off, until she suddenly remembered she had forgotten the map. Sighing heavily, she turned back, rushing so her father wouldn't discover her missing. Luckily, when she returned, he was still asleep. But just as she slipped inside, he stirred. Perfect timing, she thought. One second later and I'd be caught. She decided she would let her father leave first, then follow twenty minutes later using the spare map.

Once her father left, she took the ragged map from the shed and set off once more. Her Silk Road journey had begun.

When she reached the first checkpoint, she found herself surrounded by merchants speaking in unfamiliar languages and the scents of baked goods, dried meats, spices, and animals swirling through the air. Mei's head spun, it was exciting but overwhelming. She began to understand why her father had warned her so strongly.

Before the thought could settle, something tugged sharply at her hair. Mei spun around, startled. A small pony stood behind her, chewing on her hair as though it were hay.

"Thaila! Stop! Get back here!" a boy yelled as he ran toward them, completely out of breath. He grabbed the pony's reins and pulled her back. "Sorry! She ran off again. She's impossible to catch. Are you okay?"

Mei nodded, still wide-eyed.

The boy, about thirteen, managed a sheepish smile. "I'm Alexander."

"Mei," she replied. "Is she your pony?"

"Yeah," he sighed. "She escaped while I was feeding her. I've been chasing her all morning."

They laughed together, and Mei felt herself relax. When Alexander learned she had come alone, he joked, "Guess we're both sneaky kids, huh?" Mei grinned, maybe this adventure wasn't a bad idea after all.

"What goods did you bring?" Alexander asked.

Mei pulled out the bags of tea. "Just these."

Alexander thought for a moment, then held out the pony's reins.

"For helping me, and for being a friend," he said. "Out here, friends are important."

Mei stared at him, confused but touched.

Before she could speak, a familiar voice shouted through the crowd.

"Mei!"

Her father pushed through merchants, his jacket flapping, face pale with worry.

"I told you to stay at home!" he scolded, breathless. "Your mother sent word saying you were gone!"

Mei looked down at her feet. "I'm sorry..."

Alexander stepped forward immediately. "Sir, she stayed out of trouble. I made sure of it," he said confidently. "She even helped me catch my runaway pony."

The honesty, and the attempt to defend Mei, softened her father's expression. His breathing slowed.

"I understand you really wanted to come," he said gently. "And I accept your apology."

Relief swept over Mei.

"And what's your name?" her father asked, looking at Alexander.

"Alex," Mei answered for him. "He's from Greece."

"Well then," her father said, "say goodbye to your friend. We're heading home."

Mei mouthed, Thank you to Alexander.

Alexander mouthed back, No problem.

Even though she had to leave, Mei walked away smiling. In just a short time, she had made a friend she would never forget.

New Tales of China Silk Road

ESF Beacon Hill School, Law, Mila – 8

It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining brightly in the blue sky. There lived a little family called The Wong Family and in the sweet family lived little Victoria. She's brave, She also always a little adventurous. She's not afraid of anything! The little sweet family counted on little Victoria to get food and water because her family was poor with ragged clothes and an empty bucket for money. One day Victoria wanted to go outside to hunt for food and water "Mom! I'm going hunting!" "She shouted" "Okay! Just don't stay out for too long!" Replied Mom. Victoria turned around and ran out into the magical forest. She turned back to get the damp bucket too fill up with water. "Sorry! Forgot the bucket" "She shouted back at the tent. Victoria ran back out in to the wild. Victoria ran and ran till she found crystal lake. She scooped up a giant plop of water and went back.

Chapter 2 – The first lantern

On the way back Victoria ran back to her tent. But suddenly five trees of the mystic forest shuffled in front of her. Their tree trunks were crooked and leaves were so glorious. As the trees blocked Victoria's way she stepped back "Who are you!" "she hollered" "Show yourself!" "We are the gods of this forest!" "The voice boomed. The sound was so loud the fox in the forest went flying. "We saw your every move. So swift." "So? What do you want?!" Victoria said bravely. "I don't want, I give you the wishing lantern. It grants wishes but be care—" Victoria stopped what the god was saying. Then she bowed, She grabbed her new lantern and ran back to her tent.

Chapter 3 – Map to finding the mystic gem

"Guys! Guys!" Hollered Victoria "Look!!!!It's a lantern!!!!!!!"Every body in

her family looked at her holding this wonderful object. "Oh wow Victoria." Mom said sarcastically "How great use of leaves, pinecones and sticks." Victoria's smile dropped. But tried pretending to be joyful. "It is a wishing lantern!" Victoria said "It grants wishes, and it's—" "Her dad stopped her and said "Woah woah woah! Vic, did you just say it can grant wishes?" "Yup!

"Ok. Now that is cool!" Said Mom "Really!!!!?" Asked Victoria "Yup!" Said Dad. They all paused for a second. "Hold up!" "Shouted Victoria "We can be rich!!!!!"The family cheered & cheered, day and night.

One night Victoria woke up. She wanted to try something. She tiptoed out of her room and in to the rich living room that her mom wished for. She then took hold of the lantern. She rubbed the lantern until it glowed In the dark and she whispered to the lantern "I wish there was a map that was lost in the forest that led to a mystic gem!" Then she tiptoed back to her room. Victoria slept till the morning light shown through her window. "Good morning!" yelled Victoria. She quietly ate her breakfast "WAIT A MINUTE!" She hollered "I'll be back in a few hours, ok byeeeeeeee!!!!!" "What the..." Said mom. Victoria ran and ran through the forest. Once again the gods of the forest shuffled in front of her "Ugh. What now gods?!" She yelled "I see that you have made a wish, well go that way and you will find a map." Said the god with a calm voice "Kay Kay thanks" Said Victoria. She headed for the map and turned away from the gods. Then she saw it. A majestic roll of paper sitting upon a rock, Victoria gleefully walked to the roll of paper, she took hold of it, when it floated on to her hand, the roll of paper left a trail of pink flowers "woah." Said Victoria. She slowly opened the roll of paper. What she saw was a rustic, old looking ancient world, but with new looking gold edges. But something was wrong, the map seem to

glow, golden. The golden trail spreaded until Victoria was glowing too. Her purple eyes turned golden with power. She floated in to the air, Her t-shirt and silver skirt turn to a golden dress, she look to her hands, a golden wand has formed. She had a ancient map of power.

“Woah!” Said Victoria, she looked at herself. When she looked at her hand. There it sat, the Mystic Gem!

The end...

Discovering the Belt and Road

ESF Beacon Hill School, Yuan, Lucas – 11

Albert, a scientist determined to fix the world's problems, was traveling from Hong Kong to Washington DC, to visit his brother. As he was packing, he noticed some rotting food. "Ugh!" Albert groaned; he'd forgotten to put his sandwich in the fridge, now it was spoiling.

As he boarded the plane, his first flight out of Asia, he was excited! He browsed the entertainment system and found a news channel which looked really interesting. CNN was investigating food preservation, and interviewing a UNICEF worker about Third World problems. One big issue is how much food gets wasted in countries where people are starving, just because it couldn't be used quickly enough. As Albert watched, his brain was buzzing, and when the program ended, he took his notebook and sketched some ideas. He felt like Leonardo da Vinci! His inventive brain was in overdrive. His first design was a box that runs on solar power, but it wasn't practical. Everyone would need one and the cost would be huge.

He sat quietly thinking, and another idea came to him. "Perhaps, instead of containing the food to preserve it, it could be treated chemically to stop it from rotting," he thought. "Maybe something like a harmless spray which would keep it fresh!"

He suspended his thoughts during landing, until he met up with his brother. In the car, he went through his ideas with Ernest, who was a scientist too. "I think this could be something big," he shared. They talked about it throughout the journey and the next day they sourced ingredients for the spray. They researched chemical formulae in Ernest's library, and after much trial and error, they found the perfect mix. Then they looked for a suitable container and visited all the shops in Washington. Nothing!

"Agh! We are stuck!" Albert exclaimed. "We need some inspiration," Ernest replied. On YouTube they looked at possible options. Then Albert started designing containers, each one more unusual than the last. Eventually he designed something they both liked. It was a pen-like container which worked by clicking the top up and a fine spray of product would spurt out from the tip. This design was portable, easy to use and cheap to manufacture. It was also refillable so could go on being used.

They decided to try fountain pens as containers, drained the ink and cleaned them thoroughly, and then added a mechanism to shoot out the product. "Oh, Wow! This is a great idea, but how do we market it?" Albert asked. "Seriously, you haven't heard of the Belt and Road Initiative? It's the best way to transport goods between countries. For ten years the Chinese Government has been building roads, bridges, train lines, shipping lanes etc so that international trade can really grow. It's also called the New Silk Road, and the government wants to help entrepreneurs like us by providing options for selling and moving products to new and established markets. I'm sure we can use this opportunity with our spray."

It was decided that Ernest would explore the marketing while Albert finalised development. Ernest called the Trade Department to ask about the Belt and Road. "Hello?" the secretary answered, "Can I help you?" "I have a new product for developing countries and I want to know which Belt and Road routes are available to Africa." The lady passed him onto another department where a manager explained several options of land and sea routes which could be used, and how to apply for help.

Meanwhile, Albert was busy in the laboratory making up batches of chemicals and testing them to discover the most effective combination. Then he filled some pens to test the effectiveness of the spray container, and everything worked brilliantly. By the end of the day, he had made 50 samples to help with their marketing. He then investigated factories which could manufacture the product, and found the perfect one. The brothers invested \$100,000 into the factory to enable them to employ extra workers, and production got underway.

Ernest's next job was to contact charitable agencies to find buyers. He contacted UNICEF but they were not interested. Ernest didn't give up; he called the International Red Cross, who also declined. Next, he tried World

Vision, also without success, but finally the Save the Children Foundation got really excited by his idea. They agreed to meet him for a demonstration of the spray and finally ordered 50,000 units to be shipped to Ethiopia. Ernest returned to the Government to apply for sponsorship of their invention. When he had explained what it was, the response was very positive; "Of course we will sponsor you with such a life changing invention." Soon afterwards their company was awarded a large grant to help with establishing a regular supply.

It took several weeks and a mountain of paperwork before they had finalised everything and the product was packaged up and delivered to the transport company for shipment. Ernest again contacted the government who were very keen to publicise what they were doing. It was decided they would send a publicity team to Africa with the brothers to receive the shipment when it arrived at Save the Children. They would all be there when the first units were given out, and film would be sent around the world.

This happened exactly as planned; it was a triumph for Albert and Ernest, and great promotion for the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

Next, was letting the world know about their product, so it could benefit more countries. Ernest called a Billboard seller, purchased space and designed a poster. Albert created a website to sell their product; he was an expert at that and got it working quickly. Orders for the spray came flowing in. The company became a global sensation and the brothers knew it was due to the Belt and Road.

Three Merchants

ESF Beacon Hill School, Tang, Maxine – 8

A worker gently pulled a silkworm cocoon from a bush of leaves. He examined it and put it in a basket. The man passed the basket to another worker. The man submerged the cocoons in a pot with boiling water. Another walked through a hallway. He looked around a bright room. He spotted a man with a braided moustach.

'I've got strands for you to weave!' The worker called.

The worker with the moustach took over the pot and wove it together. Then the man put in a pot of water.

'Dye this strand red!' He shouted.

A small man rushed over and carried it away.

The worker walked into a room, then he sat on a stool. The man took out rubias and put it in water.

'Put this in the silk merchant's bundle.' He yelled.

A worker took the silk. He carried it onto a platform. The man surveyed his surroundings and found a pile. Next to it stood a merchant.

'It's ready!' The worker called.

The merchant looked at the worker and walked to him. He took it. Then he signaled the other merchants to follow him.

Soon...

'We should get rest.' The porcelain merchant yawned.

The porcelain merchant agreed. They looked around and saw a hut. The silk merchant pointed there.

All three merchants scurried into the hut. The moon rose. The merchants slept.

The next morning the porcelain merchant woke everyone up.

'We should go.' He said.

They led their horses into the Taklamakan Desert. A gust of sand poured over them.

The bronze merchant hid behind his trolley. The porcelain merchant crouched low. The silk merchant was fat. He stood there, like a shelter. The sand flew back to the ground.

'Let's continue.' The bronze merchant suggested.

The porcelain merchant moaned.

The silk merchant winked at the bronze merchant. They kept on walking. The porcelain merchant looked up. He caught up.

The silk merchant carried the porcelain merchant on Duffi. Duffi's the porcelain merchant's horse.

He fell asleep. They arrived in Baghdad at 12:00 am, while the sky grew purple, all men made a fire.

'Did you find an oasis yet?' The bronze merchant asked.

'No.' The porcelain merchant said.

Neil neighed. A group of bandits heard it and scurried to the merchants.

'Give us your goods and we'll set you free!'

The silk merchant smushed all of them. 'Next time, don't neigh that loudly.'

They kept traveling. The sun set.

'An oasis!' The porcelain merchant cried.

All men zoomed towards the oasis. They filled their pouches.

'Let's go.' The bronze merchant suggested. 'Let's have 1 dumpling.'

They ate 1 dumpling.

'A flag!'

India.

They arrived!

Once they found their way, a man came to the bronze merchant.

'Bronze for seeds.'

The bronze merchant agreed. He strode to his horse. Then, a woman arrived at the porcelain merchant.

'Gold.'

The porcelain merchant nodded. The merchant walked to the bronze merchant.

'All your silk for silver.'

'Okay,' The merchant replied. The girl traded and skipped away.

The Troublesome Three

ESF Glenealy School, Sly, Esme – 10

Lucy, Leo and Liam were staying at a holiday house on the Silk Road with two other children, Noah and Flora. The children decided to explore the house. Liam went to the kitchen. It was boringly normal. The only interesting thing was a silk quilt over a chair. It had clouds on the outside, embroidered rings and right in the centre was a dragon. It twisted and turned. It didn't have wings, so Liam thought it was a Chinese dragon. He headed upstairs, and into his room which was amazing with gigantic bunk beds and drawers painted a dazzling sky blue that looked like they were made of ice.

The first night nobody could sleep but eventually everyone drifted off until only Liam was awake. He was thirsty. Liam snuck downstairs. Where the most wonderful thing was about to unfold. Liam heard an odd scraping noise; it was quiet at first and then got louder. At the kitchen door it stopped. Liam stepped into the silent kitchen. He glanced around. Then the scraping came from the cupboards. He crept towards the sound. Suddenly a little blue dragon popped out.

"Bothering blisters! That was giving me a headache!" he cried.

It was the little dragon from the silk quilt. Liam stared at the little blue dragon as it flew round and round finally meeting his eyes.

"I was supposed to be a secret and then I was hungry and had to eat, and then you came in and I couldn't get back to the quilt in time..."

"Well sorry for bothering you" Liam stammered "I hope I don't interrupt you again..." Liam paused.

The little dragon started mumbling "Oh dear, I don't think you understand!! Once a person sees a dragon, they will always be able to see it! Oh dear, oh dear....." and the poor little blue dragon started to panic, buzzing away.

"Wait! "Liam whispered, "whatever do you mean?"

"Oh well..... I might as well tell you.... You see, long, long ago the Silk Road was full of dragons of every shape and size. We would help life grow and every dragon had a power. One very silly dragon had the dangerous power to share anything as well as many other powers. He could double things, make them grow and even levitate them. So, one day he doubled and shared his power. Not with a dragon but with a human. The human took advantage of her power and used it for terrible things. When we tried to stop her, she locked us in silk quilts and distributed them all over China via the Silk Road. Only when it was night could we come alive out of quilts. Finally, when she died, her powers returned to the earth and into the dragons."

"Who was that dragon? Liam asked.

"That silly dragon was, actually..... Me. May I ask you something? What's the date?"

Liam replied quickly "It's 2009 October 14"

"oh no,....." the dragon said "That means it's the last year to free the dragons! If we don't do it by the end of this year the dragons will be trapped forever"

"What can we do?"

"We have to get many people all in one place".

"Well, that's easy!"

"But we also need lots of the DRAGONS at the same place" he loudly whispered.

"How are we to do that? Also what's your name?!"

"Well we need to find a shop that sells quilts and my name is Jack." With that Liam rushed upstairs.

By morning, Liam had a plan. He climbed out of bed and headed down to the kitchen where everyone was having breakfast. Liam sat on a stool and ate silently, deep in thought. The days and nights flew by as Liam visited Jack the dragon daily. One morning when they had nearly completed their plan, Liam went to the market with Flora. Liam slipped away and rushed to a silk shop which was filled to the brim with different kinds of silk! "How are we going to find anything here?" Liam muttered.

A small lady answered his question for him: "Looking for something?" she asked in a high-pitched voice.

“Oh-err” Liam blabbered “I’m looking for dragon-themed quilts”
“Ah please follow me.” and Liam followed her into the shop.

Liam came out with three full bags. Once home Liam headed up to his room to hide the bags until the big night. The plan was to have hundreds of people at a party in town. There Liam would lay out all the quilts and all the Dragons from the whole of the Silk Road would rise out.

Finally, it was the big night. Liam ran down the moonlit staircase to find Jack. To his amazement there were thousands of dragons in the kitchen and garden, soaring and spinning all around. Liam finally found Jack and pulled him aside.

“We have to tell all the dragons the plan.” Liam told the little blue dragon.
“Ok! You do it. I’ll get the dragons” Jack replied cheekily.

“Ready?” Liam asked. “Let’s go!”

They barged in and the crowd fell silent as though they didn’t know what dragons were. Liam felt an urge to get out of the party, So he ran with the quilts. He didn’t tell the dragons but they saw him. When Liam finally stopped, he was outside of the town. It was starting to get light. He lay down the quilts over the Silk Road where the dragons finally found him.

“I’m sorry” Liam whispered, but as he said it, a bright light dawned all around. From everywhere, dragons started rising out of houses, farms, and silk shops. They flew around in circles, darted in and out spinning all around. People came out to watch. As the sun rose higher, the little blue dragon, Jack, came over.

“You did it!” he whispered. And from that day on, dragons lived all over, helping the crops grow and watching over the Silk Road.

Silk Road's Magic

ESF Glenealy School, Ip, Sau Hong Lester – 10

“Mum!” I shouted, “I’m going out to play with Edward! Will be back at 6 o’clock!”
“Okay, be careful!” Mum replied. I grabbed my little brother’s cuju ball and headed out to my best friend’s house. I felt a small breeze, and it started to rain little drops down, bouncing up and down. I felt a small shiver run down my spine.

Not long after, I heard a cheerful voice coming out from one of the houses.
“Hi Noah! Let’s play hide-and-seek!” Edward suggested.
“Sure!” I said. We had a fun time hiding and scaring each other when we couldn’t find the hider. We sometimes hid in bushes and sometimes we even climbed the fence! We played so much that I started to feel bored, so I shouted that I didn’t want to play the game anymore.
“Edward! Where are you? You better come out!” I shouted.

Silence.

I called his name several times, but there was no answer. He was a mischievous friend, so I assumed he was still hiding and tried to find him. But he was nowhere to be found.

I started to go on the main roads to find him, but soon, all in front of me was the Silk Road. I always wanted to go to the Silk Road, it is not just a place, but a place between worlds. People would sell unique goods to others, usually paper, silk, and spices. I heard they spread beliefs or religions, like Buddhism, and people from the East and West shared foods and art. Their inventions, for example paper-making and compasses, always amazed me. But it had many people there, and there would be kidnappers and thieves.

I knew I was an adventurous person, so I kept going. I needed to be careful, but you see, when I got excited or a bit nervous, I was quite careless. That’s when a speeding donkey hit me to the side.
“Ahh, eek!” I screamed as I came crashing to the ground.

I spotted something on the ground and looked at it with curious eyes—a silk cloth embroidered with a tiny gold-coloured flower pattern. I took it and asked the traders,
“Excuse me? Is this yours?”
They shook their heads and impatiently told me to leave.

As I started to head back home to tell my mother that Edward was missing, I realised I was lost.

Scared.

All in front of me was a desert. I walked further and further, until the Silk Road became a tiny dot. Suddenly, a blow of wind hit me. The clear view of the sand mountains soon blurred away into a foggy sandstorm. “What bad luck,” I thought and murmured. The wind howled against me like I was an invader, and blew so strong as if it was wrestling me. I couldn’t hold back. I felt something tug my clothes.

The silk cloth!

I gasped. My eyes widened with amazement. It started to glow as if it understood me. It suddenly flew into my hand, and it turned into a long-sleeved shirt and a thick cloak to cover my face from the sand. After a few more minutes,

the storm ended. Whew! I was quite amazed that the people who came to the Old Silk Road had survived these terrifying storms. It was a miracle that the silk cloth had magic.

After all that, I was still lost. I was nervous, it was dangerous, but I still adventured with discipline. To rest, I sat along a river to clear up my mind. I couldn't help but look at the beautiful view. However, something felt wrong. The warm bright colours of the sun rays turned dark blue, and the sky had a dusty, dark look. I felt a drop of cold water come down. And more and more. It was raining, and I thought of something to use so that I could get cover.

Musa leaves.

Musa leaves were so big, they could even fit me and a small dog!

I thought of the silk cloth. I held it out and prayed it would turn into a musa leaf. It did. It bobbed up and down, stretched out, and turned colour. I held it up above me.

The rain stopped, and the leaf flew out of my hand, bobbing up and down in midair, turning back into the beautiful cloth. The cloth went towards a tunnel. I followed it until the end came out, and the cloth suddenly wrapped around my hand and pulled me so hard that I flew. The wind smacked me in the face, but it felt amazing. All was well until the cloth stopped pulling me as I came to an abandoned house. I curiously opened the door.

Squeak!

I peeked. Edward was tied onto a chair with people surrounding him and giving him food, struggling to get out. His face told me that he was terrorized by the people.

"STOP IT!" I heard him scream.

"Why? Don't you like it here? The food? You will soon be our family!" the kidnappers said.

"Edward!" My voice

cracked. I rushed in without a care, the cloth flying out, extending its length, wrapping around the kidnappers and pulling them away from me. I untied Edward from the chair. We held each other's hands, and the cloth quickly pulled us up again, flying back to our home.

"How did you know I was here?" Edward asked.

"Because of this cloth! It was magical," I replied with a grin.

"When we were playing, I hid in a cargo box. The jerks found me and took me. "You were so brave!" Edward said with a hint of tears in his eyes.

"Thanks! The cloth tied them up!" I said.

"Well... see you soon!" Edward said.

"Yup," I replied.

As we went back to our home, where we belong, with Edward's face in his mother's arms, I thought about everything that had happened.

You know, I might soon become the friendly hero around the town.

A Poetry Anthology About The Old Silk Road

ESF Glenealy School, Miles, Conor – 10

INTRODUCTION

The old silk road was a trading route used for exchanging goods like precious metals. It also spread technology, culture, religions and even diseases! It was about 4,000 miles. The silk road

started because of a greek man known as Alexander the great who was thought to be the best general of all time. He had conquered Persian forces in Egypt. Then defeated another army sent to stop him at Gaugamela in what is now Iraq. They bravely marched into the heart of Asia and took over city after city. Building new towns and roads along the way. Alexander died June 323bc. Alexander's advance helped connect the east and west. Goods, religions and literature were already flowing. Rulers in India even started to command orders in several languages. Soon the historian Sima Qian began to gather information about the world way beyond the barren desert. On the silk road most trade took place from town to town and between a local community and another. But rare precious items like jewels, pearls and even food, were quite expensive and created good profits that made long, tiring journeys worth it. Items to sell were carried by camels, though the heat and lack of water made it deadly. One of the most important items traded was silk. It was a delicate and extremely difficult to make. Silk would not just make you seem rich if you wore it but was also sometimes considered money. It was particularly popular with nomadic tribes who spent their summer and winter living on steppes tending their sheep, horses and livestock.

CHAPTER TWO

Spices, silk, jewels and gems

It was a place where ideas soared

Lots of religions connected together

Kings and emperors walked on the paths

Rings of gold were also sold

Oh the tragedies it has been through

And don't forget the black death.

Do you think you would have bought something there

The old silk road has people have built the

Impacted everyone who silk road by taking over

Has walked on the paths towns and building roads

Can the work ever stop
Are people making us do this on purpose
Might we stop carrying silk and goods.
Everyone treats us like servants
Look into the past of the silk road
See how us camels have been in pain

The old silk roads (yes there's more than one) have always been really long.lots of nooks and crannies along the way
get to the silk first don't be delayed.diamonds gems and jewels for amazing prices, and don't forget to buy tasty
spices.The old silk road was made a long time ago so there's not much we really know.

OUTRO

In September 2013 the president of China Xi Jinping said that he was launching a silk road Economic belt.It might
have been made a long time ago but it's still influencing people today.

Primeroses Amazing Tour Of The Chinese Silk Road

ESF Glenealy School, Putt, Prinrose – 9

The Silk Road in China stretched from Shanghai to Istanbul (previously called Constantinople). Travellers along the road got to see many interesting and wondrous things.

Hello, my name is Primrose and I will be your tour guide for a short tour of the Silk Road exploring **five** amazing sites and legends. Pack your bags quickly and let's get going!

Let's go guys, don't forget your belongings as we are heading to Chang'an!! Welcome to the home of music on The Silk Road. Chang'an, also known as Xi'an, is famous for two types of music – the first one is yanyue and that type of music is banquet music and hundreds of musicians and dancers would perform to this type of music. The Yanyue music made people feel alive and ornate. The second one is Zhongyue and that type of music is bell music for rituals. There were also music schools and musicians trained there for **years**! Here are your tickets, today we are heading to see some musical performances and check out these two styles of music here in Chang'an!

Are you guys getting hungry? I'm going to take your tastebuds on an adventure to Lanzhou to meet your new craving – the best beef noodles on earth. **I** don't even like beef and I still like them so... you **HAVE** to try some. Okay? good. Wait a minute What makes Lanzhou noodles so special? Well good thing you asked because i am your lady! These noodles are hand pulled in a special formation that makes the noodles delicious and **very** chewy. If that isn't interesting enough, popular myth says that Marco Polo brought the idea of Lanzhou noodles from China to Italy making the Italians think that they could make an even better version which we call pasta at the moment!

Hope you are all full because we are now going to go to Dungan, the place of religion, trading and it is also famous for its Mogao caves. Let's dive into the subject of the Mogao caves. There is also legend that goes with it... long ago a young monk named Yao zun crossed the Gobi Desert at dawn, tired and near despair he glanced up to the cliffs above and he estimated to see about a thousand glowing buddhas lit up on the cliff and they all spoke silently to him in these words "build a sanctuary and let everyone who dares to pass the Gobi Desert stay there". So he started building a cave with trembling hands and a heart beating very fast. He worked day and night to make the sanctuary and as people passed they added to the cave with murals, writing, sculptures and manuscripts. Step inside today and you will see 8 caves, one of them is called the "Cave 17" which is also called the library cave and it was where thousands of manuscripts were found. You will also see lots of painted statues, some of them are even lifesized!

Get your sunglasses and sunscreen on, we are about to head to a land of legends! The Taklamakan Desert. And guess what this time we're going to ride on camels! This place is also called 'the angry Taklamakan Desert', well at least that's what I call it. Legend says that a king was riding on his donkey through the Tarim Basi, a fertile and prosperous land. On the sides of his donkey he had big bags of sand and then a demon came and scared them and the donkey made the king fall off its back. Then the donkey's big bags of sand unwrapped and the donkey ran over the whole grassland covering everything in sand turning it into a desert with the demon trapped underneath. If you are very quiet, you might even hear the demon's roar for freedom.

Well I hope you have brought some money, because I am about to take you to The Silk Road's shopping aisle! Welcome to Kashgar. Did you know that Kashgar was one of the most important trading hubs on the entire Silk Road and the most popular things to trade there were spices, silk (of course!), jade, gold, glass, tea and even horses? As legend has it, Kashgar was once guarded by an amazing Green Jade Gateway to the market. The only way to enter was to share something more than wealth. Once a merchant tried to enter the city, but he couldn't enter and eventually he shared bread, water, stories and ideas and the gate finally opened! To pass through the gates you have to share ideas of the heart and respect all cultures equally. Isn't that a good idea!?

I'm sorry to say that this is the end of our tour of The Chinese Silk Road. I hope you had fun and learnt a little about The Silk Road legends and stories and share these stories with your friends and family. See you on our next journey!

Chinese Silk Road

ESF Glenealy School, Royall, Molly – 9

The Chinese silk road is about some women and Asian trade routes active from the second century BCE until the mid – 15th century. Spanning over 6,400 km. A group of women trekked along the dessert carrying some silk to get some money they had to cross the Taklamakan Desert there were Hungry Ghosts Spirits of the dead who could not move on, often said to haunt lonely roads and deserts and to try haunt people and demons or animal spirits that transformed into human form, sometimes tricking travelers to not be there and to keep away from the Chinese silk. In the Classic of Mountains and Seas, mountains along the Silk Road were said to be guarded by strange creatures—half-animal, half-human.

The woman went across the mountains to find some rare herbs that could cure her village's illness. And she also went to go find some silk for the Chinese villages. The woman crossed the Silk Road to find a silk said to shimmer with moonlight, but every step drew them deeper into whispers of demons that haunted the desert winds the girls and they traded silk for horses for them to ride in the desert since their legs got really tired. The “demons” of the Silk Road were symbolic beings—part folklore, part cultural exchange—that gave shape to the dangers and mysteries of long-distance travel. The girls went through a lot of things. They tried very hard to go through the demons whilst they have been hunting for food they have also been trying to find some water. They found a place to stop by for the night so they can have some rest.

In the morning one of the women found some silk to bring back to the villagers in their home town. They also found some food and water so they wouldn't be too thirsty or hungry so they kept some in their bag and went off again. One evening, as the sun bled into the horizon, they reached a ruined watchtower. It was said to have been built by travelers long ago, a beacon for caravans that had vanished into the sands. Inside, they found carvings of strange beasts—half-dragon, half-bird—etched into the stone. The women wondered if these were warnings or blessings. They lit a small fire, and the shadows of the carvings danced across the walls, reminding them of the legends told by their elders.

The next morning, they encountered merchants from faraway lands. The men spoke in unfamiliar tongues, but through gestures and trade, the women exchanged silk for dried fruit, salt, and a map marked with rivers and oases. This was the true heart of the Silk Road: not only goods but stories, languages, and beliefs flowing across thousands of kilometers. One evening, as the sun bled into the horizon, they reached a ruined watchtower. It was said to have been built by travelers long ago, a beacon for caravans that had vanished into the sands. Inside, they found carvings of strange beasts—half-dragon, half-bird—etched into the stone. The women wondered if these were warnings or blessings. They lit a small fire, and the shadows of the carvings danced across the walls, reminding them of the legends told by their elders.

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The women tucked it safely away, grateful for the kindness of strangers. As they continued, the scent of saffron reminded them of the bonds formed across the road. Days later, the desert gave way to rocky plains. Strange footprints appeared in the dust—too large for any human, too sharp for any animal they knew. Legends spoke of spirits that guarded treasures, and the women wondered if they were being watched. At night, they heard low growls

echoing across the stones. Yet when dawn came, nothing appeared except the endless road. Perhaps the guardians were testing their courage.

Eventually, they reached a river marked on the merchants' map. Its waters shimmered under the sun, and the women rejoiced, filling their bags and washing away the dust of travel. Days later, they reached a river. Legends said it was guarded by a serpent spirit, half-fish and half-dragon, who tested travelers' bravery. The women offered silk at the riverbank, and as they crossed, the waters calmed, allowing them safe passage.

That is the story of the chinese silk road

The END !!!

An Assignment For The Silk Road

ESF Glenealy School, Taylor, Annabel Jacqueline Wen – 10

I check my schedule for my last lesson. Great, my least favourite subject the boring ol' history in other: Torture. History' just another boring thing in my life. Lack of fun makes me want to dissolve in the air and never be found. I walk my way to the classroom and sit in my seat placing my backpack on the floor. The bell rings, meaning that class is about to start. I turn my attention to the board waiting to start the lesson that I'm going to survive for the next HOUR.

Our teacher Ms Wheeler walks to the front of the classroom and turns on the projector screen, she claps her hands to get our attention: "Good afternoon everybody and welcome to another amazing history lesson with myself. The topic is about China's fascinating Silk Road history." My ears perk up. Hey, maybe this will actually be interesting! I think that because my Grandpa always tells me about it. Ms Wheeler continues: "Today I'm going to let you do your own independent work. The task is that you need a paper about which silk road, you guys can start your own research and I need a paper about it by Thursday, 1 days from now so get working because I want it done to the best I can." Ok, this is going to be hard, but not impossible, maybe this is going to be as boring as I thought. I started researching it from its founding to its conclusion. Time flies by and before I know it I have to go home. I pack up my things and my notebook filled with pages and research about the Silk Road. I walk out of the classroom and feel happier than I did before. "I might actually be able to get a good grade on this paper" I think as I smile to myself.

Back at home I'm sitting in my room at my desk. Luckily I don't have any other homework other than finishing this paper and I've done most of the research I need. So I get straight to typing on my laptop and start typing.....

China's Silk Road by Brittany Wong

China's silk road was established over 2,000 years ago in 130 BCE, China's Han dynasty. It was primarily used for trading items such as silk, horses, spices, and gunpowder. Unlike its name the silk road wasn't actually one road it was network of many different paths that were interconnected. It is connected to the Mediterranean from China's Xi'an. Most of the routes stretch to about 4,000 miles (6,400km) but some longer ones stretch to about 9,000+ miles (14,000km). This legendary road was also a route explored by Marco Polo, a famous explorer that traveled with his family from his home in Venice (located in Italy) to China using the many networks of routes the silk road has. He started his journey in 1271 and arrived in China in 1275. He returned to his hometown in 1295 after staying in China for 17 years. His famous book wasn't actually written by him but by a cellmate from jail when they got captured from the rival Italian city Genoa at the time. Rustichello da Pisa a writer who was the cellmate of Marco Polo wrote his stories in the now legendary book: The Travels of Marco Polo leaving a long lasting legacy inspiring future explorers. The Silk Road was also a challenging route to pass due to the harsh weather, lack of water and difficult navigation without modern tools. Since the scorching sun shined down on the burning desert, locals started saying: "You can go in, but you won't come out." Diseases were spreading quickly across the silk road too. Robbers were also very common to reduce the risk of robbery. Travelers got together and joined caravans with camels or other animals.....

I took a pause, my brain was now empty. I checked the time on my watch. 9:01. My leftover dinner was pushed to the side. I was exhausted. I mean I never tried so hard for an assignment before. But this was finally actually something I wanted to do.

The silk road ended in 1453 CE. While the whole "Original" silk road is no longer there, people can still experience it by visiting modern cities all across Asia. Some cultural sites of the silk road are also preserved by UNESCO and routes like the Pamir Highway are now routes that give epic road trips. In conclusion the silk road carries a history of China's ancient trading routes and is now a legacy to newer generations like us leaving the future to learn about the Silk road.

Wow, my eyes are so tired I can barely keep them awake. But despite that I'm so happy with my assignment and also super fascinated about all the history I learned about today. Maybe I could visit the Silk Road one day.....

One more day of school passes and now it's Friday which means Ms Wheeler is going to give back our graded paper. Unlike 2 days ago, I'm actually excited for History class. I sit in my seat waiting for the lesson to start. Ms Wheeler comes in and says her hellos then she finally gets to the paper. One by one she slowly hands them out and I can't stop my heart jumping around. Finally she reaches me and gives me a smile as she places my paper on my desk. I take a deep breath and look at the corner of my printed out paper. Oh my gosh! I got an A! I'm so happy that on the walk back home I'm dancing feeling amazing. At first I didn't like history but turns out it's just the mindset you set yourself to. Learning about the Silk Road also excited me a lot and I'm actually inspired to go! My daydreams take me away and I feel better than ever.

The Silkey Road

ESF Glenealy School, Wayman, Vittoria – 9

There were once two men who were really rich but started off poor. They traveled across the desert and sometimes across the ocean. They met on one of their travels to east Asia and they saw how many goods they both had and on their way they did see people who had not had as many goods because they did not travel here often and did not know the best paths to avoid robbery and getting lost. So they both stopped and one of the mans (whose name was Alexander from the Greek) emperors and we both know the best paths to cross safely, how about we create a safe way to travel across China and East Asia to Europe and the Middle East so other people will see the good trades of other people and religions?" Then the other man (who was called Han from China) said "why should we do that? For all these people they have not had the same experience of what we went through. It would be unfair that they get to be all right without risking their lives but yes I do see your point of making a road or routes." Then Alexander said "Yes I do agree with you that it is unfair but it will save our kind so they don't get killed when they cross here to trade goods." Then Han said "Sure why don't we try?"

So they planned it out and then they thought it was a good idea so they asked the greek king to put army forces more around and they explained their idea to him he asked a few questions then eventually said yes. So now they had to ask the Chinese Emperor if he liked the idea. They traveled really far but did not find any trouble because they took the safest roads which they discovered themselves and thought that these routes could be the roads that they will use as their road for everybody to travel safely. Once they arrived in China they went to see the Chinese Emperor to share their plans with him. He thought it was a good idea and agreed to it right away but he asked a few questions about how they should do it, when they should do it, who should do it and other things like that. So they set to work their plan right away but they didn't hear about the really strong wind around the path they wanted and that it would hit one more time but no one knew when it would come in again. So Han and Alexander put their plan into motion. They would need to convince everyone to come with them and then they would need to go on the path they chose but they did not choose a name for this road. They were almost ready to leave when the sky turned dark and the air became very cold. A huge wind started to blow across the desert, stronger than any storm they had ever seen. The people were scared and some wanted to give up, but Han and Alexander shouted: "Stay together! Follow us and don't leave the path!"

The wind blew away some of their tents and it was difficult to see because of the sand, but since they stayed on the safe path, nobody got lost. When the storm finally stopped, they saw that all the silk material they were carrying was all over the palace covering the desert and creating a new path. Curious, Han and Alexander started following it; they understood that something magical had happened.

Han smiled and said: "This road seems to take us somewhere new. Do you think it is safe for us to take it? Alexander replied: "Let's follow, but just the two of us, in case something bad happens."

So Han and Alexander left the others and started walking on the path, walking till they reached an oasis with water, food and treasure. There was an old wise woman who welcomed them and said: " thank you for coming to visit me, it has been a long time since I had received visitors. Which way did you follow, can you show me on the map? I got lost ages ago and cannot find my way home. It's nice but I wanted to go back." They showed the path they thought they had followed. There was no name though. "What is the name of the street asked by the woman?" Alexander thought for a moment and answered, "Let's call it the Silkey Road, because it will carry people to treasures and food" From that day on, traders, scholars, and travelers from many lands used their road and since it had a name, people could easily find it on the map.

The Big Splash

ESF Glenealy School, Wei, Kaira Yulin – 8

Chapter 1: Splashing

The sun was bright and the sky was clear. Luna and Slay were playing their favorite game: Dragon Race. Luna, a fast silvery-blue dragon, was winning. "Catch me if you can!" she shouted.

Slay flapped his wings harder. He was looking at Luna and didn't see the giant statue of Saint Nicholas in his path. CRASH! Slay hit the stone arm and began to fall. "Help!" he yelled, spinning toward a large lake.

He hit the water with a giant SPLASH! His wings were too wet to fly, but they caught the wind like the sails of a boat. The wind pulled him across the lake and out into the big, wide sea. Luna and Skyla flew fast to catch him, but a sudden storm turned the sky black. It blew the dragons asleep in the pouring Rain, and a giant wave swept all three dragons deep into the ocean.

Chapter 2: The Island and the Chest

When the storm stopped, the dragons woke up on a brand new island. They were stuck! Their wings were buried deep in holes in the sand.

"I have a plan," Slay said. He showed them how to use sharp sea shells to dig the sand away. After a lot of hard work, they managed to wiggle free. "Yay!" Luna cheered. "Let's explore!"

They found a dark cave hidden behind some palm trees. Inside, sitting next to a dusty spider web, was a heavy wooden chest. Skyla pushed the lid open. It was full of gold necklaces, shiny coins, and even Real gold! They were excited, but they knew they couldn't stay. They flapped their wings and flew back into the sky, letting the wind carry them away.

Chapter 3: The Silk Road

The wind blew the dragons for a long time. Finally, the blue ocean turned into yellow sand and green hills. They landed softly on a dusty path.

"Where are we?" Luna asked, sniffing the air. It smelled like cinnamon, ginger, and roasted nuts.

They were standing on the Chinese Silk Road. Big groups of men walked past them. The men carried heavy bags filled with colorful silk blankets and sparkling jewels. The people in the market wore beautiful robes that shimmered in the sun like dragon scales.

The dragons walked into a small town nearby. Everywhere they looked, there were amazing things to see. One man was selling "silk," a fabric so soft it felt like a cloud. Luna touched a piece of bright red silk with her claw. "It's so smooth!" she whispered.

In another stall, a woman was selling tea and spices. Slay sneezed when he smelled a bag of black pepper. A-choo! A tiny spark of fire came out of his nose, making the merchants laugh. The people here weren't afraid of dragons; they thought the dragons brought good luck!

A kind traveler gave the dragons some flatbread and sweet dates to eat. "Thank you!" Skyla said, even though the traveler couldn't understand dragon-talk.

As the sun began to set, the sky turned orange and purple. The Silk Road was busy and loud, full of music and bells ringing in the street's. The dragons sat on a hill and looked at the long road that went on for miles and miles.

" Slay "We are very far from home," Slay said, looking at the gold coins they had brought from the island.

"We are very lucky ," Luna said, watching the lanterns light up in the town. We can see the Great Wall, eat new foods, and make new friends."

The three dragons huddled together as the stars came out. They didn't have a map, and they didn't know the way back yet, but they weren't scared. They had each other, a bag of treasure, and a whole new world to explore. Their adventure was just beginning.

The Silk Road

ESF Glenealy School, Wong, Jing Ji – 9

Today, I dropped out of the sky on the back of a giant mutant robot tarantula–shark, and it felt incredible.

It all started when my dad asked me to buy some milk for our cat. I got lost and met my pet cow, Cowy. Cowy ate a hotdog stuffed with grass. We went to The Milk Road, where we played with 6.7 billion cows. We accidentally went to Macau because it sounds like “My Cow”. We were attacked by the King of The Milk Road, and locked him in a giant sewer.

Dear Reader, are you still with me because things are about to get exciting! Cowy and I ventured out of the sewer and found a mysterious machine. The door of the machine read: “PRIVATE. Enter at your own risk. Destination: Silk Road.” I thought, “Ayo, that sounds like The Milk Road! Let’s use it.”

“Cowy, I’ll go first. Come in right after, ok?” I knew it was dumb to go in alone because I might get attacked without my trusted cow. But there was absolutely no space for Cowy. Even for me, it was difficult to squish into the machine. So, I went in and, guess what? There was alien–like technology to use this time–travel machine and go back in time.

The second I got in, I time–travelled to the first destination on the machine (the beginner’s level). I opened the door and I was in Baghdad circa 1258. Genghis Khan was leading his vicious army to Baghdad. I was so scared, and I realised there was a 24–hour lock on the button for the time–travel machine.

That really wasn’t good, so I just watched the battle as I hid behind a giant metal box. It would be really bad if Genghis Khan spotted me right now, and he actually nearly saw me when I was hiding behind the metal box. He looked, and I jumped to the other side of it. That was lucky. Dear reader, you may not know about the Silk Road. The siege of Baghdad was a huge event; we were going to try and stop Genghis Khan from destroying Baghdad.

When Cowy arrived, he immediately saw me hiding behind the giant metal box and threw the time–travel machine back in time so that there would be no proof of us existing to Genghis Khan. Cowy asked, “What happened? We have to stop Genghis Khan, right?” I said sarcastically, “No offense. But obviously! Didn’t I just tell you the plan like just before?” Cowy replied, “No, you didn’t.” So I apologised, “Sorry! This is the plan. First, we have to hide behind him. Help me look out for the exact second that he is about to destroy Baghdad. When the time comes, immediately go to the sky and make your poo as meteor–like as possible so that he gets distracted and thinks it’s a god. Remember, fly as high as possible so that he can’t see you.”

Dear reader, you may be wondering why Genghis Khan believes in gods, but during this period, the Mongolians believed in the sky god Tengri. So, he really thought it was Tengri, but it was actually Temu Tengri. Genghis Khan was really scared and paused for a moment. I made my move; I threw all my packets of poo over him. While he was distracted, we completely raided him and finally helped Baghdad beat Genghis Khan up and finished our first adventure.

Hold up, I haven’t told you about the tarantula–shark yet! I’ll tell you another story about the Silk Road and how we saved the world again! This next adventure is about the Battle of Talas. Dear Reader, you may be wondering what the Battle of Talas was about. It was about countries fighting each other to control the Silk Road. The main armies were the Abbasid Caliphate from the West and the Tang Dynasty from the East.

Firstly, we hid inside a battle bunker for a long, long time and watched the fight until the turning point happened in the Talas River where the Turks betrayed the Chinese! We saw Abu Muslim al–Khurasani and Ziyad ibn Salih

trying to kill the Chinese on the Talas river, so then we made the plan. “Ayo Cowy, you need to become friends with the giant tarantula–shark robot hybrid, which you already have from the secret sea operation. Ride him while I distract the other leaders right when they are about to defeat the Chinese, and then explode out the sea so hard that all the power of the water distracts them, and then we can beat them up!”

Cowy did just that. When the Turkish and Arabic soldiers were distracted, we used our tarantula–shark, which can actually fly because it’s a robot. I also had perfect Plan Number 2. I told the tarantula–shark to let us ride on him and he said, “Ok, sure!” We took off to the skies like a flying cat chasing a flying mouse.

Then I told the tarantula–shark to poop. As he’s made out of mostly metal, he pooped out giant metal chunks (a few miles wide) and flattened the whole Abbasid Caliphate army, and we saved the day again!!! Dear Reader, you may be wondering how come the giant tarantula–shark’s poop is so big. Well, let me assure you that the tarantula–shark at maxed–out strength is around a few hundred kilometers in circumference.

After saving the day once again, we returned to The Milk Road for (around) the tenth time. Hold up, wait a minute, there’s still more to go! I suddenly remembered that my dad had asked me to buy milk, so I went to the supermarket on The Milk Road where they sell the freshest milk in the world! Dear reader, I hope that, by listening to my story, you learn to never give up, to be curious, and do what you want to do, not what other people tell you to do if you can choose. That’s it, bye!

Talisman

ESF Kennedy School, Cain, Angela – 9

2,154 years ago, there was a girl named Jing. Jing's favourite thing was precious stones; rubies, emeralds – anything that was shiny.

However there was one thing that bothered Jing more than anything. And that was her family. Her family was so poor that they couldn't even afford a tiny bowl of millet – the cheapest food of the time! Sometimes when daydreaming she would dream of her family being wealthy, a family who could afford food, water and clean clothes. When she looked at her family's present life she knew it was impossible and then she should stop daydreaming and get to work. She knew her routine: climb up the mountain, get water from the stream, return home, go to the butcher, beg for some leftovers, go home, eat, sleep and repeat. But she kept on pursuing her dreams.

One day, when Jing returned home from the stream, her grandmother told her that the Emperor had built a new road called the Silk Road, which was actually lots of roads connected from different countries including Kapisa, Jalalabad, India and Persia. Her grandmother also told her about the precious stones from those countries, especially the rare lapis lazuli from Persia. It has a shining blue hue and little gold sparkles, which is fascinating. Jing longed to travel along the Silk Road to find some lapis lazuli, but she knew her parents would never let her. Yet she is still determined to do it, somehow, somehow.

After some deep thoughts, she decided to sneak into the Emperor's palace one night and gather supplies. Just as she was about to leave, she felt drawn to something, as if it was pulling her toward a room. When Jing was in that room she glimpsed at a glowing piece of paper with a riddle on it.

The riddle said *only the ones who see the gold in the gloom shall find it*, “Hmm... gold in gloom ...like...like...like a lapis lazuli!” cried Jing! Just as she touched the riddle there appeared a map and another legend!

The legend said, *whoever touches lapis lazuli shall be granted a wish*. “Wow” muttered Jing “A wish... any wish...”.

Suddenly she had an idea... What if she snuck out of China and braved the journey along the Silk Road to find lapis lazuli in Persia? She had wished for a nice life so when she got back home, her wish would have come true! As Jing was looking at the map a glowing message suddenly appeared on the piece of paper, it said *those who brave the journey face danger...* something about that sentence... something about those words made Jing suddenly not want to cross the Silk Road... *it's not as easy as it seems*, whispered her consciousness. Jing shuddered, she still wanted to cross the Silk Road but the question was...how?

When Jing came back she struggled to decide whether to stay at home or to travel to Persia, finally she decided she would begin her search for the lapis lazuli. In her bag she had packed some coins that she had saved, her friend's dusty whistle, her cousin's waterskin, along with some food. In the night she rode off with her friend's horse. If only she knew the dangers of the silk road she would not have gone.

After a few weeks of walking Jing was in a shady oasis when a bunch of bandits jumped from the trees to ambush her. “Give us the horse!” One of the bandits said gruffly. Jing thought quickly, could she scare away the bandits? Quickly she reached for the whistle, it made a *FWEEP!* noise. “Retreat! Now!” said the bandit anxiously and the bandits quickly backed off. Jing hands trembled as she clutched the whistle, her heart still pounding from the encounter. She couldn't worry about it all day, so reluctantly continued.

Jing arrived in Dunhuang when a sandstorm suddenly hit. Jing pulled her scarf over her face as the wind whipped sand everywhere, making it impossible to see. She stumbled toward some rocks for shelter and noticed something strange – a dark opening between the stones that the sand had uncovered. Jing's heart raced with excitement and fear. Should she trust this mysterious passage? But the storm was still raging outside. She was already lost but she decided to go inside the cave. As Jing stepped inside, she gasped. Ancient symbols covered the stone walls, glowing faintly in the dim light. The tunnel stretched deep into the mountain, with cool air flowing from somewhere far ahead.

“Who built this?” she whispered, running her fingers over the carved markings. They looked like they'd been there for centuries. Hours later, Jing saw light ahead. The tunnel opened onto a mountain path, much closer to Persia than she'd expected. She stepped out, amazed.

“This saved me weeks of travel!” she whispered, looking back at the mysterious passage

Finally, after months of travelling the silk road, Persia was in front of her eyes. It took her a while to find a map, get to the mines, then she had to search for the lapis lazuli, but finally she spotted the deep rich blue and shimmering gold of the lapis lazuli.

Jing was ecstatic! She knew she mustn't waste time. She had to get home! Quickly she made her wish, the wish for her family, the whole reason Jing had braved the voyage along the silk road.

The odyssey back home was much less rough than the way there, first of all she didn't run into any robbers and she was less stressed now that she had the lapis lazuli.

Jing was overjoyed to be home. She stared at her home for a long while, and realised her wish didn't come true, finally she spotted her mother, out in the muddy fields. “Mom!” she yelled bounding across the field. “Jing...” her mom whispered, Jing hugged her tightly, she had missed her mom so much! Finally she had to let go, “We thought you were dead! I'm so glad you're back,” her mother cried, tears streaming down her face. “OH MY GOSH! IT HAPPENED!” Jing shouted. She watched in amazement as her mother's ragged clothes shimmered and transformed into an elegant velvet dress. Around them, their tiny house stretched and grew enormous. Jing explained her journey to Persia and the magical wish. “My brave daughter,” her mother whispered, “I always knew you had courage.” her mother said through tears of joy, “And you brought back more than just magic — you brought back hope.” her mom whispered, sobbing with joy.

The Silk Death

ESF Kennedy School, Chan, Cara – 10

“Grandma, can you tell us the story of the silk road?Please!!!” Xin Yin ask

“Hmm,maybe tomorrow night” I replied

“Pretty please,please” Xin Yin pleaded

“Okay,first let me tuck you in” I replied

Eighty years ago:

I put my ear against the wall listening to my mom and dad argue about whether to send me away to trade on the silk road since father was too sick and old, and mother had to take care of him. A lot of people in my neighbourhood are broke like us. Mom finally gave in and asked dad how he was going to find some money. One second, two seconds later, I stepped in, I told them I would go even without their permission, they finally agreed after some persuading. Dad said I could go under one condition, that I had to stay safe, I nodded ,and meant it. I went to pack. I only packed my rabbit doll that my mom made for me, some clothes, and some possessions to sell. I was going off tomorrow.

The sun was bursting through the ragged curtains. It was seven o'clock in the morning. I chose my favourite dress (a pink robe with a pink dress), as I ran to the dining room I smelt hot rice and seasoned vegetables. I quickly ate the good hot food.

Mom handed me a bag of food, while I was thanking her. She and dad bid me farewell.

I was off for a big journey.

After walking hours under the hot sun in the streets of China, I finally saw new things, cacti, sand, some many more new things, sooo frustrating.

A boy my age came up to me and asked me for some food. I felt bad for him so I gave him some of my food. He had black chinese hair and a brown robe, and looked like he was poor too.I asked for his name while giving some of my bun.

“Rui Hao” Rui Hao answered

“Yan Yan” I replied

Soon after that we were officially friends...

The sun was barely shining when I woke up, it was going to rain today.

After I got dressed, we headed off. I suddenly stopped, Rui Hao looked at me, I read his face, *why did you stop?* He read mine...

“It's okay,” he said while taking my hand.

After walking a few more hours we finally reached our destination, Kashgar, the smell of different foods crept up to my nose. A kind woman taught me to say 'salam' as a greeting. I tasted sweet dates for the first time – nothing like the fruits back home.

I took my boxes of tea and silk from the camel that had carried them.

As I entered the city I asked if anyone would like my goods. A rich looking boy (wearing rich jewellery and a colourful silk gown) came up to me and bought my silk for a thousand gold coins, because he said that it was fine, fine silk. I couldn't stop smiling as I tucked the money out of everyone's view. Rui Hao came running up to me and we chatted about how much we had earned.

“I've earned 100 gold coins, impressive right “ asked Rui Hao

“How much?”

“1000 gold coins” I answered proudly

After we had ridden for 2 km under the torturing sun, I heard a loud voice

“Stop and listen everyone! We have been informed that we have to stay at the closest village, because a sickness called the Black Death is spreading,” the caravan leader announced. My body froze. I was looking forward to going back to China but because of the black death I now had to wait.

“We will now depart to the closest village” the caravan leader continued

I tasted the salt while doing my laundry with tears on my lips. *Why did god have to betray my why not when i'm so close* I thought

Suddenly, Rui Hao came up to me and thankfully didn't ask why I was crying, but instead hugged me tightly as the salty flavor slipped into my mouth.

The blazing sun was keeping me up. Sleeping helps keep the pain of missing my family away. Rui Hao was dragging me into a small room. There was an old woman that looked like she was 80 years old. She was wearing a set of dark colored clothing.

“Sit,” the woman gestured.

I sat down with Rui Hao.

“Okay I am here because that boy over there said that you were feeling down all the time and that is not acceptable in my village,” she said. I held my tears back as long as I could, but soon enough they trickled down my face. The old lady told me that she will be teaching us how to make pottery. She handed me a big blob of clay and taught me step by step how to make a bowl. It was very frustrating when I didn't get it. After a few more lessons I started to like them.

It was a typical day because I felt like I was missing something...

“Happy birthday” Rui Hao exclaimed

“How did you know?” I asked confused

“You told me”

I felt my mouth going up to touch the corners of my mouth. I felt grateful for Rui Hao for remembering my birthday. The whole day I was partying, and celebrating.

“Your birthday gift is to go pack” Rui Hao said

Confused, but obeying, I went to go pack.

When Rui Hao came I asked why I was packing, he smiled mischievously, and told me to go to sleep.

The next day when I was going for a walk...

“Your actual birthday gift is to go home” Rui Hao said...

“Whao, soooo cool” Xin Yin exclaimed

“Good night” I said

“Good night, grandma”

“I'll tell grandpa Rui Hao to come tuck you in” I said quietly.

I felt the corners of my mouth go upward, I was feeling lucky that I chose to disobey my parents.

The Indian Trade

ESF Kennedy School, Kuchin, Zoe – 10

One crisp morning in the Indian palace grounds, King Raj was very worried about his young wife Queen Pavmarati. She was getting weaker day by day and the doctor was very worried for her.

Kiran and Arun, the King and Queen's favored slaves, had been desperately trying to research medicines for the Queen.

“Haan!” (yes in Indian) shouted Arun, awakening her from her restless sleep. “I found it! The perfect cure for a deathly sick Queen.”

Hearing his shout, King Raj came bursting through the door snatching the book Arun was tightly clutching in his hands.

“Ah yes, perfect, go and gather all the ingredients together immediately” ordered King Raj, but, he said to the slaves, you will need to go on a long and dangerous journey to find them.

“Five cloves of ginger, one fenugreek, two teaspoons of black pepper, three perfect cloves that stand out, five cardamom and the best tumeric you can find. Turmeric and black pepper are very important ingredients and you can't miss them out, because the medicine won't work without those ingredients.”

King Raj continued, “Kiran Arun, go to the stables immediately and ride the strongest horses. I want you to travel up to the Himalayas across Kashgar and Merv. You should then arrive in the best port in the world for spices – Damascus, Arabia. I want you back within 9 months. Remember whatever you do, don't lose the Turmeric or the black pepper. Go now – ride like the wind!”

One month later, Pavmarati became pregnant. The doctor said, “If you don't get the medicine made in the next 8 months you might not get a healthy child.”

As time passed on, letters were sent to Kiran and Arun. They were four months into their trip and still hadn't got to Damascus yet. Queen Pavmarti was four months pregnant now and she was worried. So was the doctor. Only four months left.

Just after four months in Kiran and Arun's journey they landed in the markets of Damascus. Oh my! It was so very busy. It smelled of flowers, spices, sweets and so much more!

“We have reached our destination,” cried Arun!

"Finally" sighed Arun in a tired voice "what do we need to get?"

"Three perfect cloves that stand out, five cloves of ginger, one fenugreek, a couple teaspoons of black pepper, turmeric and some cardamom."

They found the perfect spices just in time as the market was closing. They needed to find somewhere to stay for the night but with a tight budget so they would have to be careful with their money.

The next morning bad news came in the Indian Daily newspaper. "We are under attack" yelled Arun, "we will have to stay here longer!!"

"Oh that is bad luck" replied Kiran. They had received an important message from King Raj the night before and having had the bad news today, Arun and Kiran were getting worried.

"You know from the letter..." Arun spoke slowly, "the letter said that Queen Pavmarti is with child and the doctor said if we don't get back with the medicine within the next 8 months from when the letter was sent, which was 4 months ago, then she and the child may not live."
"Then we set out today!" Kiran hollered.

On the way back to India, Arun read the Indian Daily again. "I haven't misread this right?" Arun asked, puzzled.

"No, I think you have read this correctly" replied Kiran, reading the news himself. While he read the newspaper, his face went paler than milk.

"You never told me that there were going to be bandits on the way back. You never told me that this was the kind of attack you meant!" Kiran said.
"Sorry" said Arun glumly "I didn't know it would be this bad".
Kiran set off, riding fast with clouds of dust raising up behind him.

Arun went to catch up. But as he neared Kiran, he could hear galloping horses coming from behind. Clouds of orange dust were forming from the bandits. As Arun looked back he could see curved swords and poison dripping from their arrows.

"Kiran look out!" As Kiran was the holder of the spices, he was the one who had to make sure he was very careful. He didn't want to lose the spices that they had traveled so far for.

Thump thump, thump thump was all Kiran and Arun could hear. Whilst being blinded by the dust and deafened by the galloping hooves and shouting, Kiran was still holding on tight to the spices like it was something that mattered.

"Why do the spices matter more than I do?" said Kiran to himself.

“Faster faster” screeched Kiran and the horse went faster. When they got out of the country, they were safe. The bandits had gotten tired of chasing the pair and retired back to Damascus. Unfortunately for Kiran and Arun, the bandits had managed to steal the turmeric and black pepper.

So they went back to Damascus and searched for the spices once more. They tried to trace down the bandits but failed.

“We’re done for.” cried Arun.

“Or not” said Kiran “Look there’s some”. “Come lets take them and go home” replied Arun

When they finally reached the palace gardens, after 7 long months of travelling, the horses and themselves were exhausted. King Raj came out, his face full of worry and hope.

“Did you find everything?” he asked desperately, taking the precious spice bag from Kiran's tired hands.

King Raj rushed into the kitchen with Kiran and Arun following close behind.

“Quickly, mix the black pepper and turmeric first, those are the most important” ordered King Raj as he threw the cardamom, ginger, three perfect cloves and fenugreek into a boiling pot of water. The kitchen filled with warm spicy smells of the ingredients they had traveled so far to find.

Within minutes, they had prepared the golden medicine with the six ingredients. King Raj carefully carried the steaming cup of medicine to Queen Pavmarati’s bedside table.

“My love, here drink this slowly” he whispered

Over the next few days Queen Pavmarati began to improve little by little. She could soon eat little bowls of rice without feeling sick, by the end of the week she could eat mild curry, but she was still very weak and spent most of her time resting in bed.

Soon, she had a baby girl! named Diya who was born strong and healthy. The proud parents rejoiced and sang the good news from the rooftop.

The Battle of the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Lee, Sophie – 9

In a palace in Xianyang problems were arising...

“So a group of men attacked you and your Indian trading partners while you were selling silks?” Cixi questioned dryly.

“Yes, your majesty. We were trading our silks for cinnamon and black pepper, when a group of bandits assaulted us. Now our silks are scattered with sand, and torn beyond repair!” he exclaimed.

“Do you know who attacked you?” striking green eyes pierced into the merchant.

“They were masked, your majesty, but they said that the time had come, a new empress must be chosen or the silk road would fall.”

“A new empress?” asked the voice behind her that belonged to her general Bai Qi. “I will prepare for war” declared Bai Qi, leaving the room.

The merchant stared fearfully at Cixi. “Will there be more attacks?” he inquired worriedly, hands shaking.

“Don’t worry, we’ve got this under control,” assured Cixi.

The palace had been busy over the last two months. Bai Qi had managed to install security, create an even stricter training regime for the palace guards, and began to plan a battle strategy.

However, it still didn’t stop the attacks. More disturbing reports of assaults along the road were being whispered. Families were starving, because merchants were too afraid to journey across the perilous road. The exchange of silks for spices had come to an end.

Below she could see Bai Qi, his soldiers marching.

“Your majesty,” muttered a bony figure behind her. Cixi jumped in surprise!

“When’d you get here?” she asked her adviser, laughing.

“There seems to have been another attack,” the figure announced.

“Normally I wouldn’t be here to tell you, but the attackers are getting bolder, targeting protected merchants and non-protected ones and they always know where the goods are, like they have inside information. We have lost an abundance of different spices like nutmeg and chili, and silks we were planning to use for the annual Jubilee.”

“WHAT!” exclaimed Bai Qi, apparently overhearing the conversation “Those guards were top ranking! How do a few untrained men beat them?!”

“As I said the men knew exactly what our soldiers would do.”

“Meaning someone would have told them.” Murmured Cixi thoughtfully. As they glanced down they could see the horrifying figures of the injured guards lying on bamboo stretchers.

“Wait, isn’t that Jen Wong” Cixi whispered. Jen Wong was Bai Qi’s youngest brother. Cixi remembered him to be a small whirl of excitement, he and Bai Qi had always been close. Which explained the look on her general’s face, but then Jen Wong whispered something only Cixi could hear but it was unmistakable and made the world around crumble.

“Hai Ming, why?”

Hai Ming was the brother of Bai Qi and her cousin, they’d never got along. Cixi remembered from her earliest memories Hai Ming being bitter and cruel.

All those bitter memories, all the hatred and scorn, now she knew why, and she could waste no time exposing him, but first there was someone who needed to know first.

“Bai Qi! Where are you?”

“Right here, your majesty,” came the familiar deep voice.

“I need to talk to you. Meet in my study,”

Normally Bai Qi would have asked if it was urgent but the look on her face must have told him not to.

“Of course.”

As they walked there she used the time to decide how to tell him, your brother is the one trying to overthrow me, but how could she explain that his brother was responsible for this?

Soon, they’d reached her study, full of elaborate arched ceilings and leather books containing everything Cixi would need to know .

Except how to tell the truth to Bai Qi, she thought ruefully. “Bai Qi, Jen Wong told me something, about who’s in charge of the rebellion.” She could feel Bai Qi tense.

“It’s Hai Ming.”

“You betray your people, you deserve to die.” He said.

At the same moment in a mysterious location.

“We attack here.” Said a figure stabbing a knife into the map.

“That will draw them away from this point.” He said gesturing to a tower.

“Then we kill the empress, and Hai Ming will rule everything.”

Back at Xianyang palace.

An explosion rocked the palace shaking the golden pillars, the palace maids screamed while soldiers rushed into the garden.

Suddenly she was alone. She stood up her royal red gown swishing across the floor.

Wait, she thought she felt something creeping along her spine then she heard the cold drawling voice that came from all her nightmares.

“Hello cousin.” Hissed Hai Ming with a knife in his hand, then he lunged .

Cixi’s eyes flashed with the ferocity of the golden tigers embedded across her gown, she stepped sideways and stabbed her heel into his shins the startled growl told her she had hit her mark, but as she pinned him to the ground she suddenly remembered that he was two times her size and had a knife.

Then pain lanced through her wrist. This is not how I’ll die!

She thought her heart pounding then she heard the clatter of feet on wooden floor boards, the shout of a deep voice echoing in the hallways.

“I’ve waited a long time for this cousin, You have always been the golden child while I was tossed aside, this is your end. China will be ruled properly for the first time in years, and you will become nothin—

“Or not,” finished Bai Qi. Hai Ming’s blade fell, Bai Qi tackled him. Sword at the throat “let me end this.”he growled, desperation in his eyes.

“No!” shouted Cixi, “We’ll gather the court.”

At the court room

“Hai Ming, you are accused of attempted murder of the empress, rebellion, have you anything to say?” Cixi asked.

Hai Ming laughed, “Defend myself against you?” Snorted Hai Ming Scornfully “The empress of China, my cousin, I would have made China great I would have brought back the days where everyone cowered by the very mention of us!”

Cixi sighed.

“If you have nothing to say then I sentence you to eternal banishment! All in favour?” Declared Cixi. Everyone raised their hands.

“Let it be known that the silk roads are now open!” shouted Cixi.

It was Cixi’s twentieth jubilee all her subjects dancing joyfully along to the music on beautiful Persian carpets, sparkly silks draped luxuriously ,with different food, cardamom and pepper scattered over tables.She felt contented ,the trouble with Hai Ming was over, and she would rule for many years to come.

The Mystery and Exploration of spices

ESF Kennedy School, Leung, Ivan – 9

One vibrant, bright sunny day, two brave boys, Tianyu and Weijie decided to travel through China's famed Silk Road. Their ultimate goal was to grab some plants to make a delicious seasoning to enjoy themselves. Although they were confident, an unpredictable curse had been waiting for them.

Tianyu was a very kind person, and he loved holding doors for people. Moreover, he was generous with his time, patient, considerate of others and also thought how to make others feel better. Tianyu was famous because of his dedication to many things like music, art, and being a chef. He loved exploring more than anything else.

Weijie was courageous and never gave up when things went wrong. Weijie was very strong, but when it comes to trust, he was not very good at it.

They arranged to meet up at the Zhuhai International Airport. Weijie took a train to the airport. Weijie left the train and waited for Tianyu who was running late. Tianyu felt a bit guilty, because he wanted to arrive sooner so Weijie did not need to wait. Anyhow, Tianyu arrived eventually. They went through immigration and straight to their departure gate.

"The plane trip from Zhuhai to Beijing is about 3 hours and 14 minutes, and honestly, it is very short," said Tianyu. He was right. It went by in a flash.

The journey was just about to get started and they were bursting with the thrill of it! They started their journey on the treacherous, mysterious, and ancient Silk Road.

Weijie also brought on some canned fish and red beans. They started off investigating and smelling plants, but their hope began to fade. They didn't find any good spices so they had to wait. Hours and hours passed, and they had to eat dinner. All they had was just some canned fish and red beans. They gathered on a red carpet, next to beautiful trees that were glowing green. They slept there.

Their sleep passed in a flash, and Weijie was the first to wake up. Then Tianyu woke up, and they continued searching for great plants. All of a sudden, Tianyu managed to find a plant that was strong, slightly peppery flavor, and a traditional choice for poultry and stuffing! They grabbed as many as they could and they started moving. As things just started to rank high, the worst was yet to come. They quickly passed by a very steep hill. It was hard, they had to forcefully push themselves through, but it all worked. They also stumbled across a seemingly good plant, which was an aromatic, pine-like herb that pairs well with meats and vegetables. Tianyu: "Time for lunch!" Lunch was some wildberries on top of canned tuna and red beans. The lunch meal took around 48 minutes to finish, and they continued searching for the spice ingredients. They ended up collecting a handful of Sage and Organo. They finished dinner, brushed their teeth, and slept.

At night, the curse started invading. No one still knows how this curse happens, why it was made, how it was made, and how it works. Despite this, by the morning, sunrise arose and they soon realised what had happened. Tianyu woke up first, and he was still pretty confused about how this had happened. He felt a bit worried, but he could not find it anywhere. He also realised that all of the plants they collected were missing. Tianyu: "How could this happen? How could someone steal our plants? The tent zipper is inside and we zipped it, right?" Although they had a depressing loss to all their hard work in collecting plants, they had to find what had happened.

The two of them quickly packed. They decided to go on a detour to find a side quest, to break the curse. Tianyu remembered the paper they found on the way. They hoped to continue their journey to the west and find what had

happened. After they passed by some trees and oaky wooden planks that fell and caused obstacles in the road, they eventually passed it and moved on to the next, challenging obstacle.

They had to pass a hill. But, it was not your ordinary hill, it was a muddy and slippery one. The mountain's name was called **Rocky** Hill, which was named because of the amount of rocks there. Tianyu and Weijie passed the hill by using rocks as footholds, and whenever Tianyu counted "1, 2, 3", both of them tried to push to the next foothold. It was tough going. Many trees were blocking the path. Mud was also sliding down to the rocks, causing it to be harder for a grip. They were stuck there for a very long time.

Lunchtime passed, and they were still not done. However, Tianyu looked at the high cliff, and he did not want to lose all of this progress. After a brutally long time, they finally managed to do it. They reached the top of the mountain. It was a flash to go down the hill, but they had to be careful not to trip onto some rocks. Then, it was a straight road to the west. They were so happy, because they had finally passed the hill. They quickly ate lunch, their stomachs were not immensely hungry anymore, and their giant side-quest will come to an end soon.

After they ate lunch, they found a clear, bright path ahead. They went through trees, broken logs, bumpy roads, and also some narrow paths. They walked ahead for about an hour or so, waiting for any hints. Then, they found another paper. It said: "The breaking of the spell is near." It was enough for them to relive. Their destination was close. Which meant their destination was just a tiny step away. All they had to focus on was to break it and use the plants they had today to make the spice. When they arrived, they quickly found the curse. To their surprise, the curse was a spell on paper. With Weijie being brave, he ripped the paper. Although their initial plan was to make the spice, they could not find any place to make it. However, they did break a curse, which made them happy enough.

A Silk Thief

ESF Kennedy School, Liu, Isaac – 9

August 24th, 1594

I'm Shu Li, known as a robber or, as everyone calls me, a *bad* guy. Of course, I try to ignore them even if it's true, but that's what I need to do. I have an extremely ill mother, all she does is lie down and sleep, while I cook, clean, and provide money. I'm barely scraping by. The only thing I can do is steal. I like to take silk. Silk is worth more than anything. Only the people living in Hangzhou, a few miles away, have silk though. I usually steal food in my village because it takes about two hours to walk to Hangzhou. My village, Zhenjiang, is surrounded by beautiful rice terraces and tall mountains. It's quite a close-knit village and news travels like wildfires so I need to be more careful when stealing. I usually keep a low profile when I'm walking around other people.

Lina is the only one who understands me, she's my partner in crime and also my best friend. She understands how hard it is now that the Silk Road is not used anymore. I remember when I used to have a full belly from all the food from other countries and getting really excited over how cool the toys and machines were. I remember the collaboration between China and many other countries, but ever since the cheaper sea routes were introduced to the world, everyone has seemed to move on and forget how wonderful the Silk Road was.

Lina is coming over to my cottage today to plan a new heist. Rumor has it that there is an extremely wealthy man in Hangzhou, named Mr. Fang with a wardrobe full of silk. Our plan was for one of us to go undercover as a maid in Mr. Fang's mansion, steal a piece of silk from his wardrobe and run away. As soon as I heard the knock on my wooden door, I rushed down the tiny corridor and I welcomed Lina into my cottage.

"Hey Lina, come on into my room." I say "I've got a good idea."

"Sure" Lina replied casually.

We entered my room quietly so I wouldn't wake up my mom. I looked at her, feeling the pain she must have been feeling. My room was very small and a cramped space. The walls were damaged and it had one window. We sat down on some stools and I explained the plan as detailed as possible, after my explanation Lina thought for a moment.

"Who's going undercover as a maid?" She asked.

"You are," I replied.

"I'm going to do it? Tomorrow?" She asked to double check.

"Yes," I told her.

We chatted a little bit more about the plan and Lina left. I stare at the wooden stools that me and Lina sat on, listening to my mother's labored breathing. I sat on my bed thinking, is a robber the only thing that people would think of me, I was only doing it to help my mother. I lay in my bed, hugging the blanket tight. I was excited and very nervous, this heist could change my life.

August 25th, 1594

"Shhhhh!"

"What?"

We were outside the mansion that Mr. Fang owned. Lina was dressed in a big flowy black dress with a white apron on top. I quietly crept up to the massive door.

The architecture of the mansion was really impressive, there was a giant window reflecting the bright sunlight. The statue outside the mansion was peculiar. I knocked on the door and pulled Lina next to me.

“Smile,” I whispered.

“We've rehearsed the whole scene a million times. I've got this,” Lina replied.

The door creaked open, a short and young maid answered the door.

“You may wait in the waiting area for guests,” She said as she bowed.

I sat down on the velvety chairs, mesmerized by the beautiful furniture, the paintings on the walls were very fancy. There was one person I kept seeing in every painting. It was a tall, Asian man with a very curly mustache, he wore a black suit and a big grin spreading across his ears. I guessed that it was Mr. Fang.

Suddenly, the man I saw in the paintings walked through the big door.

“Are you Lina? The one that interviewed to be one of the maids? ” He said in a posh accent.

“Yes,” Lina said politely.

As we followed Mr Fang through the wide corridors, I wondered if she would actually get the job and would be able to steal a small piece of silk. Lina was escorted into a room while I waited outside. A few minutes later, Lina came out smiling and winked. I gave a small smile, trying not to blow my cover.

“ You can start today,” Mr. Fang said and turned.

Lina mouthed to me, “ I've got to clean his room.” and walked to his bedroom. I feel so happy, I'm not surprised if I look like a statue. A maid escorted me out and I walked back home, thinking about what Lina's doing.

August 25th 1595

I wait outside the humongous mansion, my feet taping the rock road. My heart was pounding in my chest and I felt like my ribcage was going to break. I looked up, checking for the millionth time if Lina was jumping out the window. Five minutes had passed but it felt like five hours to me. I suddenly hear a voice shout “STOP!”, a few birds perched on the nearby trees fled. I hear Lina scream and I want to barge into that room and tear those people apart. One minute, two minutes... I have to control myself not to punch the front door. A moment later, I see Lina's long flowy dress dangling from the bedroom window, I sigh a breath of relief I didn't know I was holding. She jumps down and lands perfectly on the road.

“How was it?” I excitedly asked

“ Great! I got a piece of silk!” She exclaimed

We both scream, jumping up and down, I feel like I just survived a tornado.

“ I talked to Mr. Fang and it turns out, he's nice!” She says

“ Let's walk back home.”

“Sure”

Crossroads

ESF Kennedy School, Roskam, Clay – 9

I'm Haoran. I live in Chang'an—the starting point of the Silk Road. I am a slave who lives in a slave hall. Basically, all the children who were born to slaves, orphans or considered by their parents to be “disgraceful” are sent here to do the nobles' dirty work. Now, let me tell you of the dumbest and at the same time the smartest choice I ever made. It is also how I discovered true happiness and sorrow.

One morning of my miserable life, I was asleep but suddenly, a searing pain shot through my shoulder. ‘Get up, scum or you won't get breakfast.’ I groaned, thinking I knew that voice. I turned over, but instead of smelling the fish breath of Hui, the hall warden, I saw my friend Hai. ‘Stop, that's not funny!’ I cried out, pushing Hai off the bed. ‘Ow, did you need to do that?’ Hai shot back. I jumped up, ran to the mess hall, where I shoveled down the disgusting congee mess and ran to the fancy building across the courtyard.

‘You're late!’ A voice boomed as I stepped into the courtyard. ‘Sorry, Master,’ I said to the slave warden, chief of the operation. I walked to the board that showed the slave jobs. Hai was assigned to sweep the floor. Under my name, it said ‘get peaches for Madam Jing.’ I ran to get a coarse leather bag that would keep the peaches safe. ‘You better get there two hours before sundown or Madam Jing will get angry!’ barked the warden.

I quickly ran through the packed grid of Chang'an, nearly getting trampled by camels and barely missing monks going to their monastery. I sprinted down the street tossing hellos at the fruit-sellers, leaping over a half-buried wagon and skidding to a halt in front of the West market. Even though I had seen this many times the sight still astounded me—cinnamon and freshly made bread filling the air. As I slowly walked through the market, I saw merchants selling glorious jewels, leather, and beautiful coral in hues of green, red, and blue. But I kept my focus on my task.

When I asked a boy where the peach stand was, I saw some strange foreign merchants with olive skin, green eyes and almond shaped eyes. I walked by and I heard whispering coming from the strange men. These were foreign merchants who came to sell their wares along the Silk Road. I also saw a flash of light in one of their hands. When I walked towards them, they all scattered. In my stomach, I had a bad feeling. I could feel my palms getting sweaty. I shook it off—there was nothing I could do, I'd just get in more trouble. Then I gave the boy a coin, found the peach stand, bought the peaches and started slowly walking home.

As I left the market, I saw the men again! I quickly looked away, lest they recognised me. It was then when I found, covered in dust, the flash of blue light. I quickly used my sleeve to wipe away the dust. It was a magnificent blue sapphire, glowing by the lights of the dying sun.

That was the light that I saw the man holding! I gasped. This jewel should be presented in the palace, not found by a mere boy. The jewel had an almost irresistible feeling about it. Then, the men finished talking and I scooped the jewel up. It had a feel to it different to any other thing I had ever touched, cool and heavy. As I slipped it into my worn and tattered coat, I suddenly was hit by a jolt of pure terror. As the men came closer, I bolted and ran all the way back, where I gave the peaches to the warden. ‘Just in time for dinner, snake’. ‘Yes, Sir’, I replied meekly.

That night, with Hai's snoring filling the dormitory, I couldn't sleep a wink. I pulled the blanket over my head and slowly took out the jewel. It immediately filled the tiny space with radiant blue light. When I held it, I gazed at it in wonder as I realised this jewel was worth more than any gem in the emperor's treasury. Then, it seemed that there were two voices arguing in my head:

We should sell it, we could buy our freedom!

But, we should give it back to the men, it is obviously very valuable.

‘We could buy a camel and saddle and leave Chang'an’.

‘What about our friends, we can’t just leave them here at the warden’s mercy’.

We’ve been trying to get this chance for ages, we can’t throw the chance away’.

The voices echoed over and over in my head as I slowly drifted off to sleep. But, in the middle of the night, I woke up suddenly. I couldn’t let this chance get away. I crept out of the dormitory with my only possessions: an old mat, some extra food, several coins, and the jewel. I ran to the market, where I realised there was a flaw in my plan – I didn’t know where to find them! I looked around hopelessly, looking for a clue.

I saw an inn and decided to check inside. As I went inside I asked the innkeeper if he had seen men with green eyes and brown skin. ‘Yes, I have!’ He pointed me to their room. I knocked on the door. One of the men answered. ‘Who are you?’ ‘I’m Haoran, and I think I have something of yours’. I pulled out the jewel and the man gasped. ‘You found it!’ ‘Come in’, he said warmly, as he called to his friend, ‘Farhad, there’s someone that says he found Safir. ‘If it is true, then we should repay him,’ replied Farhad.

I walked in and glanced around warily, taking account of the room. It was clean and plain, with a painting on the wall and 4 bunks. ‘So, sit down and pull out the jewel!’ They exclaimed. I pulled it out and there was no disbelief anymore. Farhad took the jewel. ‘Well, what should be your reward then, Haoran?’ ‘How about this, do you want to be my apprentice?’ ‘I would treat you fairly’. ‘Yes definitely!’ I cried. ‘Okay , we will leave now’. Later, as I rode upon a camel, I looked back on Chang’an, the place that had been hell and heaven to me.

‘Are you ready?’ Farhad asked gently.

‘I can’t wait to get started’.

The Journey of the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Shi, Florence – 10

Hi, I'm Xiaoyu and this is a brutal recap of the worst experience a person could ever have. It was 1348, and back then the black death had just been active for two years, so most people didn't want to cross the Silk Road. I didn't either, but because my dad was sick and my mom was too old, I had to so my family could eat next month, even through i was petrified.

I woke up in the grand palace of Chang an. The glory of the palace grounds was all around me, but I barely acknowledged them. Today was the day. Today, me and my fellow merchants would set off on the journey to Hami along the silk road. Traveling along that path was actually considered to be an **honour**. Pfft, it's really just forcing low pay merchants to risk their lives for the sake of giving the emperor what he wants. But alas, if I spoke a word about it I would have my head chopped off, as I very well know.

As soon as I stepped outside, two guards grabbed me and escorted me like a prisoner into my caravan with considerable force. My team was already there looking just as miserable as me. They looked surprised to see me, a girl among 4 men. The guards wasted no time. We were soon escorted out with just some flour, water, vegetables and silk cocoons. They expected us to make our own silk. As soon as we left the palace, the guards pushing our cart stepped back and motioned for one of us to start controlling the horses. When no one responded, they dragged me onto the poor horse as a punishment for being "tardy", even though I arrived a few minutes before the deadline. As we journeyed further on, I began to understand why they used the word "punishment". Whipping the horse made my arms sore, and the sweltering heat was threatening my consciousness every second I sat there.

My friend Chunxi took over after I vomited for the third time in an hour, and watching him take on the lethal conditions was enough to make me vomit again. Finally, the sky turned dark, and Chunxi pulled us over next to a small stream where some other carts were already parked. Soon, everyone but Faxu was asleep.

The next day, I woke up practically drowning in my sweat. We were going through the Himalayas when the caravan was hit with a thick cloud of snow and the temperature went from scorching hot to freezing cold in about two seconds. Faxu, who'd forgotten his jacket by the river, shivered in his thin robe. Riyan was having a hard time seeing through the snow while driving, and we were shaking left and right in the blizzard. Faxu's condition got worse, and he collapsed, blue in the lips and barely breathing. We couldn't focus on him for long though. A big wave of snow blasted straight into us like a bulldozer. I looked through the window, but my focus snapped back to where a loud bang echoed through the caravan, and snow poured in through the cracks, landing on top of us and burying us in snow. Faxu stopped breathing.

I woke up on the third day, and slapped myself for falling asleep. "Morning," Riyan said when I poked my head out of the caravan. "How was it outside last night?" I asked, not wasting any words. "Scary, like really scary," Riyan shuddered. I couldn't tell if it was the experience, or that it was cold, although it definitely was. The thought seemed to awaken my senses, because a blast of cold entered my body that instant. Later, Jixuan came out and we went back inside. As Jixuan started whipping the horses, we jolted forward and started moving faster than my stomach would've liked. As we bumped and shook along the narrow path, it got warmer and warmer until the fog scattered and the breathtaking view came into sight. The end of the great wall. A beautiful sight, as it meant we were almost there. Just then, the caravan jolted to a stop and I heard people shouting outside.

Robbers. Nasty, dirty, brutal robbers had caught sight of us and attacked, thinking there was going to be some great loot. They took one look at me, then burst out laughing and said, "Surrender now, weak girl, and we'll let you leave!" Jixuan hurriedly pulled out a dagger from his belt. I grabbed our biggest knife and swung it around like mad, catching one of the bandits by the leg and making him yelp in pain. The robbers scattered, but I could see them hiding in the bushes, so I kept my knife held high. The noise woke Riyan. He screamed when he saw the knife.

“Relax, I was just defending us from robbers,” I said. He still backed away like a scared little kitten. Then we all noticed Chunxi’s blisters.

Chunxi had contracted the deadly black death. We all scrambled onto different sides of the caravan with our food and water that was mostly eaten anyways. After tossing Chunxi some carrots, we closed the door from the outside and tried to breathe. It was only a few minutes, but it felt like hours before we were able to get Jixuan's attention and tell him the bad news. But after a few more suffocating hours of hanging there, our caravan rattling down the road, I heard Jixuan's voice: “I CAN SEE HAMI!”

Chunxi gasped a split second later before everything fell silent. Jixuan’s legs gave out, and he also collapsed onto the ground with a thud and buried his face in his hands. The air began getting more bitter, and my eyes felt like they had pepper in them. Riyan went to check on him. He was physically okay despite the fall, but mentally? Not so much. At least he didn’t stab himself, although he was thinking about it *a lot*.

Riyan carried him into the carriage while I hopped onto the horse once again. Soon, the sound of other caravans heading there joined us too, and as the herd of caravans grew, the view of Hima grew closer too. The final leap. The final few miles. My heart pounded as Hima's walls came into view. We'd made it through the deadly mountains, but would we make it past the king? What would await us inside the castle walls? Relieved but terrified, I rode past the gates of Hami and into the city. Maybe I'm braver than I thought!

I am Cyrus

ESF Kennedy School, Tam, Silas – 9

I am Cyrus. I live in China and I have divorced parents. They were penniless. I always want to help them but I'm only a kid! I tried everything! Like everything! I asked my friends for money, I tried to get a job (even though I knew I wouldn't work) I tried selling my toys, and the people didn't even care! One day, my mom was suffering from the flu. Then my dad too! They needed some expensive medicine that was 572,000 dollars! The only way I can think of is the Silk Road. I would do it for my parents but it was just too dangerous! Lots of people died there! But... I just had to do it for my parents. I just had to. So I gathered some close friends to see if they agree. Most of them said no. Obviously. Some even thought I was joking! But... a few friends said yes. Those friends were Alex and Aaron.

We had to sign lots of papers and all of them were soooooo boring. They were all just about taking extreme risks and stuff. I just wanna get that past. Soon enough they told us when we could go and we would also get some body guards. So when the day came I was ready to go! But my friends? No. Alex didn't wake up on time so he had to bring clothes to change on the way. And Aaron! Even worse! Actually, no. He just lied about him getting hurt and I told him to take a picture and see if it was serious. Then he sent me a picture and he just randomly put some make-up on! So basically he had to come. He was just being a scaredy cat. But he's actually really big and really scary so I think he'll be fine.

After all that drama we were ready to go. We packed all our stuff and set off to the alarming and dangerous adventure. Well...I mean...it said it was a dangerous adventure so... too bad. I was so confident that I was doing flips and tricks on the road! But soon the danger was coming. I was so close to getting killed! Like this close! But luckily I was doing tricks and I dodged it! We got some weapons with us so we killed him very fast. But that person wouldn't just come out by himself! Assassins usually come in packs! So we were very alert and observant after that shot. We were so scared we even wanted to go back! But we were brave, stayed and kept walking. Soon we came up with a tactic! We would form a triangle and keep our side safe. So I looked at one side and my friends looked at the other side. We were ready for an ambush to happen. But nothing happened. So we let our guard down but it was a really bad choice. Because the ambush started right after we let our guard down. We were surrounded by about 20 eliminators. I told Aaron to do his big scary growl and we would switch to our machine guns and defeat them. So our plan is that Aaron will do his big scary growl and the assassins will get kind of unfocused so they will let their guard down. When he did it, we could change to our machine guns to be more efficient and kill them. So we started in 3...2...1 go! "Roarrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!" Fire! OMG! That was so violent. I honestly don't want to do that again.

We travelled 9 miles and we were really really tired. We arrived at the desert. I researched lots about this desert. It is the most dangerous one in the world. There were some fatal, deadly animals there. The scorpions were even camouflaged! Don't step on it though. I also heard they were poisonous on their body! That is what makes it deadly. The poison can break through anything. Like anything! Even our shoes! Mostly because they're very rusty. But it can even break through a Nike shoe. So we have to be very careful. One touch is fatal. The start was a bit rough, But we got used to it. Oh! I also got us all some hot proof shoes! Our feet won't be hot anymore! Nah I don't want it. Seriously!!! Aaron, I spent all my pocket money just to buy you some hot proof shoes and now you don't want it! Don't tell Alex but I didn't buy some for him. Hahahaha! Fine if you don't want it then I'll just give it to Alex. Nah I also don't want them. !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'm gonna die because of this.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO! What was that? I think it's an explosion coming from the south! We better hurry! Help!!! Did you hear that? I think some cried for help! Well then don't just stand there! GO!

Chilly? What are you doing here? It's very dangerous! I wanted to look for a desert horned viper! I think I stepped on a landmine. My legs are broken! Don't worry, I have a wheelchair in case anyone gets hurt! Where do you get all this stuff? It's from the silk road community. They gave it for free. They also forgot our muscles! I mean bodyguard. Did you even notice? "Nope." Alex you gotta stay more alert!" "Ok ok sorry chill." Hello? I need help here! Gun! Pew! I got her. Wow. She was actually an Assassin! We need to be more careful. Roger that! Alrighty!

We are really close to making it! We can do it! I believe we can't do it. Aaron! If we don't believe in ourselves then we'll never make it! So, oh! We're actually there! I can see it !Yes! Let's Go! WE FINALLY MADE IT! We are the best kids ever! Alright. We still have to go back home. But people say when you go back home, it's not dangerous because you have nothing with you. We just have to hide our money. That's it. We split it into 3 parts so everyone has money. No. You keep the money. But we all took the risk so we split it into 3 parts. I guess that makes sense... Alright! I know what to do while we're here with our extra money! What? Spend some of the stuff we never get to do! Drinks! Fries! Unlimited chips! The trip back home went smoothly. I immediately gave the money to the doctor and they got my mom and dad well again. I remember that moment everywhere I go.

Journey on the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, Ti, Charles – 9

I am Hao Yu. I live in China and I have two neighbors Lina and Wie. We like to go out and explore the outside of the city. Wei is much smarter than me and shares all the knowledge about what we see all around. Lina

One day we came across a strange road and realised it was the famous Silk road. Wei explained that the Silk Road was built by China's people and it was connected to lots of other roads and lots of countries. The Silk Road was actually a network of many different trade routes. It was kind of like a web. It went through lots of cities as well. The path started in China and then it went through central Asia and then the Middle East and it eventually ended in Europe.

The air felt good and it smelled fresh, the temperature on the silk road got hotter and then colder, it felt a little bit spooky on the Silk road. "Hey Wei I just thought if the silk road breaks, would the price be bad or is it not that expensive," said Lina "No Lina if the silk road broke it would not cost a lifetime. It would just affect economic prosperity so it would not affect that much if the Silk road broke?"

Yeah why because there is a mountain in front of us rumbling. A mountain rumbling where? The one right in front of you! Run for your life! ...

After the mountain collapses I feel kind of shaky and that is not because the rocks leave a hole in the Silk Road!

Oh no this is bad it will affect all the cultures and other stuff that are related to the Silk road. I thought that you said that it will not harm a lot of things yeah but with a hole so big it will affect much more, than why don't we just call the construction people, no the silk road is not any road it is actually made of rock sand and grass we cannot just fill the hole with concrete, so you say the silk road is made out of rock, sand and grass says Lina yeah why because the mountain has all those things on it grass on the bottom sand on the top and rock in the middle so we can use all those pieces to rebuild the silk road.

"Lina, you are a genius. We can use the mountain dirt and grass to rebuild the Silk Road," I said.

Four hours later we finally finished and not an reporters or a news person in sight why are you so worried about reporters and news people because they will put it on the news and think we are robbers then an reporter jump out and said wow that was cool you fixed the silk road with chunks from a mountain you are you going to see the judge

You will be rewarded. We went to the judge. The judge said that we will earn some jewels for rebuilding the silk road. But Wei said that it would be better to only be rewarded to go back to China along the silk road to see the view you can see along the silk road.

Then I noticed that the road just goes to other roads split into different routes and you sometimes have to cross something to get on to another road and that is the tale that the time that I was on the silk road travelling learning and experiencing new things.

Then when we were on the road some people jump out of a bush and said give us some stuff sorry said the driver we have nothing to give then we will take anything you have oh no said Wei why I say those are robber on the silk road sometime they will take anything you have so we are in big trouble says Lina you are right suddenly the carriage begins to move it is the driver lets get out of here he says agree the robbers are behind us then we go through a tunnel and come across two roads take this road it leads back to your home I will take the other road to go back and tell the judge we run on the road for a little while until we see our city then the robbers show us end of the line kids one of them they take one step closer and then another just then we hear a noise it is the driver with some soldiers on his side the robbers run away back into the desert then we got back to the city but then we realized that this is a

different city in China we live in another city in China I say so then a familiar voice shows up Meilin ! I say, what are you doing here says Meilin we are lost can you help us? Yes I will give you the coordinates to your house and you can go home. It turns out that our houses are two days away. Why don 't you stay here? My mom can call your mom and the next day you can be on your way back home.

The next day a carriage showed up again and this time it dropped us up right at the front door! We went to my house to explain what happened on the silk road and they said that next time we can bring a map to the places you are going so you can come home anytime you want even though you are lost in the country so next time I am not going on the silk road ever again I think it is a dangerous place in China so I like to stay somewhere near my house where it is safe unlike Lina and Wei still like to be outside the city looking at new things. Sometimes they play with me because I do not go out so often now and then. Now I like to chill in my house so I feel more safe and I am not going on the silk road again .

Wan Hao Ran's Adventure

ESF Kennedy School, Wang, Jayden – 9

Hi, my name is Wang Hao Ran and I live in Chang An, a small beautiful town in China. Lots of wonderful nice, and if you owe them they won't be angry. My family is small, there is only me and my dad left. My mom died of cancer and my brother died when he traded spices for food, but he got shot by an arrow because a trader thought he was trying to cheat him. My father and I are poor and we need food to survive. My dad is thinking of letting me trade some traditional spices for food so that we can survive the rest of the future, or maybe something good will happen in my trading adventures.

The next day my dad woke me up and said, "Haoran quickly collected all the black peppers and the star anise."

"But why?" I said.

"Because today will be your first day of trading in the silk road," said my father.

"But dad, you know it will take like a month to go there, trade and come back," I said. My father shook his head and waved bye.

After a few weeks on the Silk Road adventure I met my first trade. It was a man who wanted one bag of star anise for ten pounds of cow meat, when I asked what his name was he said that he is not allowed.

In a second I said yes, at first I thought it wasn't worth it but then I realized that we need food, so I yes that trade, and I know from him is he is from somewhere in India, and it is hard to pronounce but then he said his cousin knows the Indian emperor and he said that I can make some money by selling the spices to the emperor and doing that I can make more money and I don't have to walk too much on the silk road to find another customer that buys my spices, but then I notice how can I spend India rupee in China, so I ask him if he has any ideas, he said "maybe you can buy something in India that China do not have and if you sell it in China you can make CNY and do so you can buy food for your father and you,

"I said "wow, I did not even know thank you for your help,"

"your welcome," he said.

After walking for two weeks he finally brought me to India. After I step on India for the first time it feels like I have gone to a new kind of place and I heard a new kind of language. But the most embarrassed thing is everyone is staring at me like staring a new student at school, a few moments later we went into the emperor palace and we saw his cousin next to the Indian emperor just a few seconds the emperor said with an Indian accent

"what are you here for, and who is this man next to You"

and then he said "and is he even from India?" "your majesty he is from Chang an a small town in China he came to sell some amazing spices from his home town" my friend said

"Are you sure his spices are edible?" the emperor said.

"Your majesty, my spices are one hundred percent edible, there won't be any harmful things" I said to the emperor.

The next day the emperor bring us to the most powerful city in India and it is called Agra, it was the most beautiful city I have ever seen and it has so many fresh food and at soon I saw a delicious food that had caught my eyes, and I heard it is called curry and it sound very tasty so I ask my friend to help me ask, so then I can try to taste it. After a few minutes my tasty curry was finally here and to be honest it kind of looks like the chef has put leftover foods in it and just mixed it with rice,

but my friend said "taste it friend I promise it will taste good as it looks." I took my first bite and it was absolutely amazing. It tasted spicy but because in my home town I plant spices so I am not afraid of spices, after a few spoon of delicious curry, I finally finished my curry. Then the emperor brought us to Agra's most famous marketplace called Golden Days market, and then he said that I will make lots of money selling spices here, but first the emperor said that he did not want me to sit on the floor so he decided to build me a tiny cabin for my shop so that people think that my spices are clean, so it is easily that people will buy lots of my spices,

The next day I have sold like almost have of the Star Anise and have of Black Peppers,when I went to my shop I found a long line and it was like a giant snake peoples saying that they lived my spices and they wanted to buy some more, after a few hours I finally finished selling my spices ,then my friend told my that maybe I have to go back to Chang An ,but first I had to spend all my money in India and I can bring the stuff I brought in India and I can sell it in China, so doing that I might get rich.

The plan me and my friend think of that we should go around Golden Days market and find something that Chang An does not have and when I bring it to Chang An people will be interested because they have never ever seen such thing, when we are walking around my friend suggested some cow meat but, I said “friend we all know that Chang An have meat so, no”

When me and my friend passed this silk shop I found this blue silk that had caught my eyes , so I spent all of my money buying the blue silk ,and when I came back from that toilet I could not find him but left with a note saying. “Bye Friend you have to go now bye”

It took me a few days and I finally when back to my village and when my father saw my he rushed, and hugged me with tears,

At last I became the richest man in my village,with all that hard work.

The Mystery of the Lost Invention of the Silk Road

ESF Kennedy School, William, Sit – 10

Detective Wong was searching frantically for clues, his fingers sifting through sand like busy bees. Five days. Wong had five days to find the murderer before Roman General Lucius declared war on China. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius had been assassinated, the Romans claimed, on the Silk Road near Xi'an under China's watch.

Fear grew every hour. Soon, Roman legions could be marching toward the ancient capital. China assigned their best detectives and scholars to investigate. Wong and his team were now on the harsh Silk Road searching for clues. The only problem for Wong was that vicious sandstorms had rapidly covered up all the evidence and footprints; firsthand witnesses had already departed with their caravans, and those who remained spoke a hundred different exotic languages.

Then, a breakthrough! Wong's teammate, Li, found a pugio—the Roman dagger said to have been used in the murder. Earlier, a Roman medic had drawn a connection between the pugio's distinct blade and the wound on the Roman Emperor's hand which was also stained with neon green sap. Wong gasped as he examined it. On the blade was a strange, bright green stain, sticky and unnatural. Nearby, they discovered faint footprints in the sand, barely visible from the sand blown over the tracks, which they followed until nightfall. Exhausted, they decided to set up camp.

At dawn, Wong woke up to the tent filled with scattered supplies and a note written in Latin nailed onto a tent pole. It read: *"Stop investigating... Or else..."* The message was evidently a threat, but also a clue. The killer was Roman because the note was written in Latin.

As their resources were running low, Li went outside to search for food but screamed as he left. Wong rushed out to investigate, but there was no sign of Li.

Racing against time, Wong and his assistant Ping continued following the footprints from the night before, which miraculously survived the night. The trail led to a marketplace and, following a rumor, to a restaurant with a secret door. They hid in the dark, hearing voices.

Eavesdropping, Wong heard the voices chuckle that "Wong would never find the murderer". They stepped out from the kitchen. One of them was wearing a tunic that had a bright splash of red and the other person was... Li! Wong felt a wave of sadness and betrayal. Wong and Ping jumped out and arrested them. The next day they brought Li and the red-stained man back to Xi'an. That night, Wong handed the culprits to General Zhang for interrogation.

Next morning, General Zhang delivered bad news: the culprits were just decoys and the real murderer was still on the loose. So Wong and Ping had to return to the harsh Silk Road to try to find any remaining clues. Wong thought back to the strange neon green stain on the pugio and shared the memory with Ping.

Ping's eyes widened as he whispered "I haven't heard such a thing since my grandfather's tales! Grandfather spoke of the Lost Invention—the Fifth Wonder of China. Not paper or gunpowder, but Shen Nong's Tears, a liquid that could heal any wound. But if it met corrupted blood... it could summon a sickness no doctor could cure."

A memory stirred in Wong. The Great Court spoke of the deadly plague that was ravaging Rome—the Antonine Plague. It had begun just as Emperor Aurelius traveled the Silk Road.

The puzzle pieces shifted in Wong's mind. What if this was no murder?

Interrogating the decoy, Wong demanded, “Who hired you?”

“General Lucius!” the man spat. “He wants the two foreign merchants silenced before they can talk! They’re hiding in the Valley of Echoes. General Lucius doesn’t want the truth to get out!”

Wong and Ping set off immediately for the Valley of Echoes to find the two foreign merchants and finally uncover the truth of what actually happened to Emperor Aurelius. Wong discovered the two merchants, the Quintilii brothers, hiding in a cave. Maximus, who spoke perfect Han, and his younger brother Condianus, who was deaf and mute, his eyes wide with fear. Maximus told Wong the story of Shen Nong’s Tears. The Quintilii brothers were in a Chinese pharmacy trading spices and gold for a secret yet powerful ancient elixir. They then returned to the imperial Roman camp on the Silk Road where they tried to trade the elixir with Emperor Aurelius.

Emperor Aurelius refused to use the elixir to threaten his rivals or use it in war. Maximus and the Roman Emperor began to argue but Condianus saw guards drawing their weapons. Thinking that Maximus was in trouble, Condianus lunged with his pugio to protect Maximus but ended up slightly grazing Emperor Aurelius’ arm. Maximus, shocked, stumbled and dropped a bit of the bright green elixir on Emperor Aurelius’ wound. While the cut itself was nothing, Maximus cried, by sunset, the Emperor burned with fever. The plague... it was as if the elixir had awakened a sleeping demon in his blood.

“We didn’t murder him. We caused a terrible... accident.” Maximus destroyed the vial to prevent further disaster, erasing the Fifth Invention from history.

As Wong tried to absorb this, the cave entrance darkened. Silhouetted against the sun was General Lucius and ten Roman soldiers.

“You have the criminals,” General Lucius boomed. “Hand them over, Rome will deliver justice.”

However Wong stepped in between the Romans and the cowering brothers and said “The only crime here is your cover-up, General!” Wong’s voice echoed through the valley. You knew the Emperor died from the plague that already haunted your camps. You could have buried this accident to keep peace. Instead, you hunted these brothers to silence them, so you could blame China and start a war. You were looking for an excuse to conquer China and steal from our land! You are not serving Rome but betraying it.”

The Roman soldiers glanced at each other, uneasy. The truth, once spoken, was a weapon sharper than any pugio.

Wong returned to China not with murderers in chains, but with the two orphaned merchants under his protection and a sealed scroll for General Zhang. In it, he told the full story of the accident, the lost elixir, and General Lucius’s treason.

Wong gazed at the road, now buzzing with traders from empires far and wide. It was not a path for spies and killers, he realized. It was a fragile thread connecting East and West, and his job was to protect it. Not with a sword, but with the truth.

The Enchanted Key

ESF Kennedy School, Wong, Chloe – 10

Thursday, 2nd October, 2013

Dearest Diary,

Today, Miss Lee instructed us to complete a project about Ancient China. I borrowed detailed books about the Silk Road from the library, and Mrs. Betty was delighted to recommend a stunning collection. One book, *The Silk Road: Everything You Need to Know*, captivated my eye. It was a maroon leather book that glowed in the sun with beautiful patterns of trading people in hues of forget-me-not blue, snow white, and speckles of gold. Each pattern added a charming melody that painted a vivid picture of Ancient China.

In contrast to the book's beauty, I found a dirt-covered porcelain key, embedded with flower and mulberry patterns in one of the pages. It seemed to conceal hidden secrets. I wondered what else this breathtaking book could hold.

Friday, 3rd October, 2013

Dearest Diary,

Today, I was cleaning the porcelain key. After brushing off the dirt, it revealed a radiant side. The carvings turned into colors of blue and white. The rust became a glowing gold. I gasped in awe, pondering how lucky I was.

As I brushed against an intricate design of a crystal globe, the aroma of cherry blossoms wafted up my nose. I leaned closer, intrigued. Lost in admiration, I accidentally dropped the key onto the maroon leather of the book. It landed softly, and suddenly, the room began to spin. A glowing light opened a hole in the air, pulsating warmly and illuminating the library. My heart raced as a crystal globe was sucked from the air, bathing me in luminescent rays. Before I could comprehend, the globe sucked me in. Everything became a whirl of colors before I succumbed to darkness.

Saturday, 4th October, 2013

Dearest Diary,

I seem to have been time-traveled back, and only you, dearest diary, have come with me. I found myself in a vast, sunlit landscape. Beads of sweat dripped down my face as the sun beat down on me, and the sky stretched majestically like a tsunami.

The taste of gritty sand lingered on my tongue. To my surprise, I was wearing a traditional Chinese robe that shimmered in the sunlight.

I was in the barren desert! In the distance, I spotted people on camels, eager to journey westwards with bags filled with shimmering silk and medicinal herbs. Captivated to learn more, I followed them, my heart pounding with excitement. However, a blast of wind slapped my face, and the gritty sand got into my eyes. Weak from dehydration, I fainted and crumpled to the ground.

Sunday, 5th October, 2013

Dearest Diary,

I awoke to a cool breeze gently touching my face. A group of travelers was beside me, holding a sponge soaked with pristine water. The gritty feeling had vanished, replaced by cool water. Groaning and rubbing my eyes, I sat up and asked, "Who are you?" The travelers, dressed in filthy robes, seemed intrigued by my attire but shook their heads. Realizing this was ancient China, I repeated my question in Chinese. Their worried faces relaxed into smiles.

They told me about their ambition to discover a route toward the west for trade. “We would like you to be our translator for the trip,” they asked. Determined to make new friends, I agreed. As we began our journey, I felt a sense of belonging.

That evening, we gathered around a fire built from spare wood. For supper, we shared bamboo shoots, rice, and tea. With every bite, I admired their meal as a celebration of friendship. They presented me with a jade bracelet, its deep green hue glimmering in the firelight. Overwhelmed with gratitude, I thanked them and wore it proudly.

Monday, 4th October, 2014

Dearest Diary,

We arrived in Central Asia. The grand trading ceremony had come, with excitement palpable. As the sun shone brightly, I took a deep breath. With the travelers’ encouragement, I translated for the soldiers at the gate about our goods, though a hint of terror lingered. Would we be sent back or allowed to trade? I bit my lip in tension. However, the soldier broke into a welcoming smile. Thanking him, we navigated through the vibrant markets.

I gasped, admiring the vivid tapestry of human connection. The markets buzzed with life, merchants called out, and spices filled the air. The travelers communicated eagerly, trading for goods like gold, silverware, fruits, and glassware in exchange for our silk. I witnessed the beauty of collaboration and cultural exchange. After our successful journey, we planned to visit the royal palace.

Tuesday, 5th October, 2014

Dearest Diary,

After a successful trading event, we were invited to meet the emperor and empress. As we entered the grand hall, my breath caught. The palace was adorned with intricate carvings and vibrant tapestries. Majestic flowers adorned the walls, and a scent of books lingered.

The empress walked in gracefully, her raven-black hair flowing like silk. She congratulated us and rewarded my friends. Their joyful faces lit me with happiness, but I felt a hint of sadness, remembering I wouldn’t see them again. Sensing my feelings, the empress invited me to live in the palace and visit my friends. Eager to learn about Chinese culture, I agreed.

Wednesday, 6th October, 2014

Dearest Diary,

I visited my friends often, teaching them languages. In return, they shared exciting stories. After bidding farewell, I explored the royal garden filled with flowers. While humming a melody, I stumbled upon a white porcelain key, identical to the one from the library.

Heart pounding, I picked it up and found a sign that read “60 B.C.” As I touched the key, a brilliant light enveloped me, and the world dissolved into colors. In an instant, I returned to the library, the book lying open before me. Confused, I looked around. My gaze fell on my wrist. The jade bracelet glimmered, a reminder of my journey. A smile spread across my face as memories washed over me. Inspired, I began to write in my notebook, promising to visit my friends again.

The Journey of a Traveller

ESF Kennedy School, Wong, Hayden – 10

Alice shuddered as she recalled the story her dad had told her about bandits on the Silk Road. The journey she was about to face was treacherous and scary. She remembered the words her father had once said to her.... ‘beware the sharp knives that terrorize the Silk Road. If you find your calmness, you will survive.’ Alice kicked the ground in frustration sending a cloud of dust and pebbles into the air; why did her dad always speak in riddles?

“You’re not still scared about the story dad used to tell you about are you,” sneered Gerald, her older brother, the leader of a big group of travelers, “get packing, we’re leaving at dawn.”

As the sun rose from the mountains, Alice felt as if her belly flipped upside down, she still remembered what her dad told her “are you coming or not?” a voice boomed, bringing her back to the present, Alice realised that the other merchants were waiting for her, with a flush of embarrassment, she hopped on her camel and quickly caught up with the others.

Night fell as they neared the Persian city Damacus, her brother tingled the coins that he would give to the person in charge in return for protection from the bandits. As they neared the city an old man stumbled out of the city wearing rags, his eyes red, “beware the Sharp Knives young woman” he croaked, but a sharp push from Gerald sent him tumbling back into the city, but Alice wondered—two warnings couldn't be a coincidence.

“Never speak to my sister like that!” growled Gerald.

As they approached a city, Alice felt her brother tense beside her, “what’s wrong”? Alice asked,

“Nothing,” her brother replied, as they approached the city. That “nothing” became a big problem, the city had no people, there was food still on plates, dogs running around but no sign of people.

“That’s odd,” said Martin, one of the oldest members in the group. I traveled to this city many times but this time, they are not here? Look, that fire is still burning and there are still noodles in this pot.” Suddenly, bandits rushed out of the buildings and surrounded the merchants. Alice stiffened when she saw Sharp Knives sewed into the back of all the bandits, during the fight, Alice got hit with a club and she was unconscious.

Alice woke up tied with the other merchants. Gerald came up to her and whispered, "we need to escape," and slipped her a knife. The merchants began discussing ways to escape.

“Maybe we should all attack all at once and overpower them," suggested Tim, a younger merchant.

”No,” replied Martin, an older merchant, “some of us are hurt or too old to fight.”

That night, a woman bandit approached, startling all the merchants "I'll help escape if you pay me what it is worth in silk and gold," she offered.

“We agree,” replied Samuel.

“All right, listen carefully," the bandit said, “In three sunrises I will come to collect you and we will escape.”

Three sunrises later, every merchant was ready to escape; they had their saw knives ready and prepared for the signal to go. Then at midnight, the bandit quietly tiptoed across the corridor and whispered to the merchants “time to go”, she led the merchants across the hallway, down under a cellar and into the back door.

“What about our jewels and silk?” asked a merchant frantically.

“Don't worry,” she said, “I put all your valuables outside before you escaped.” When the merchants paid the bandit, they left with a final goodbye.

“We are lucky to have this bandit who is willing to help us,” said a merchant, the others all agreed.

That night when Alice was getting in bed, her brother came over. “What is it?” Alice asked,

“I want to give you a gift,” replied Gerald. He held out a shiny necklace with glimmering pearls and gold

“What is it?” Alice asked.

“It's a good luck charm” replied Gerald, “I want you to have it, I am sick tomorrow so you will lead the group” he said.

A rush of fear surged through Alice but she swallowed it and said with a shaking voice, “I will do it.”

The next morning Alice led the group into the road, “we are nearing our final city the famous chinese capital Xi An so everyone should sell their goods there, understand?” said Alice.

As the sun came to the top of the sky, Alice saw something shimmering in the sand, she rode over to it and found a lot of abandoned carts and treasures, what luck! When Gerald saw the heap of abandoned treasures, his eyes lit up with excitement, he called to the other merchants. When the treasures were split evenly amongst the merchants, they continued on towards the city.

As Night came, her brother slowly approached her again “what's happening?” asked Alice.

“The merchants and I have discussed and we have agreed to stay in this city,” he replied.

“Why?” asked Alice.

"The bandits might follow us home," Gerald said. "We should stay in this city and use our riches to start new lives."

As night fell, Alice understood that they had made the right decision when she saw shapes slinking outside the city's big gates, all wearing the painfully familiar logo. Although her heart ached about staying in a completely different city, she realized something had changed inside her, she was no longer the scared, naive little girl instead, she was a brave and wise merchant that faced the mighty Sharp Knives and survived.

Because of her wisdom and experience, many merchants came to her city with news of bandits, asking for guidance and methods to avoid or escape bandits. The lessons from her dangerous journey saved many merchants from the wrath of the bandits.

The Quest for Silk

ESF Kennedy School, Zhang, Cassie – 9

The room was filled with an irritating sound. Ruoxi quickly picked up the phone to answer.

“Hello?” She answered.

“Hi, my name is Lihua. I would like to order a silk dress please.”

“Just one moment, we might have a problem, in Mongolia we don’t have silk.” This is Ruoxi, a talented designer, who owned a shop called Moonlight Sewing Shop. The shop has gone down in history for years and years. Ruoxi had just got an order for making a silk dress. She explained to the customer that there is no silk in the country that they are in, Mongolia.

The next day, Ruoxi met her sewing master and they talked about how she could go find silk. In the end, they decided to go on a trip to Chang’ an where silk was invented. Her master told Ruoxi that she might meet a lot of challenges on the way and suggested bringing a close friend to overcome some of the challenges that they might face in the future. When Ruoxi got home, she immediately called her best friend Meilin. They had been friends forever, and Meilin was a very professional tailor. They collaborated all the time, and this trip would be the same.

They set off the very next day carrying everything they needed for the 1–2 month travel on horseback. Ruoxi’s hands trembled as she gripped the reins. “Don’t worry,” Meilin tells her, placing her hand on Ruoxi’s shoulder. “We’ll face whatever comes together.” They said their goodbyes to family and friends then set off on their first herd of horses. Their first stop was Karakorum, the capital city of the Mongol Empire and an important trading hub. Merchants would often stop there to get fresh horses or camels and that was what Ruoxi and Meilin were doing today. They had been traveling for 3–5 weeks on horseback and they were exhausted. After a little rest, they went to see The Great Kahn’s Palace and it was so fascinating! Both Ruoxi and Meilin had agreed on a plan that they were going to have a good night’s sleep, then wake up bright and early to set off on the rest of their journey. It was time for the hardest part of this trip, travelling through the Gobi Desert. This was the desert when travellers had to cross this huge, dangerous, and hot landscape.

Ruoxi and Meilin were half way through their trip in the desert when Ruoxi suddenly shouted out that she was seeing that the sky was turning a false, orange–tinged dusk and was becoming dark as the dust blocked out the sun. Meilin started to panic, she told Ruoxi that this was one of the signs of a sandstorm. This meant that a sandstorm was about to approach them. They quickly turned around and tried to locate the nearest oasis where they could wait for the sandstorm to pass. Ruoxi found an oasis that was just 1 hour away, so off they went. They arrived at the oasis 45 minutes later and rested under a lush palm tree. The friends decided to set off 5 hours later so that they could get enough rest and so that the sandstorm could get out of their path.

The best friends set off once again carrying all the supplies that they would need for the 10–15 day trip from the edge of the Gobi desert to Dunhuang. They both figured out that even at the edge of the Gobi, it was still very dry and rocky. After travelling for 5–7 days, Ruoxi told Meilin that she thinks that they had to be careful with their water supply. Meilin also told Ruoxi that she noticed walking on this path was way easier than the desert because there were more landmarks to follow, occasional water sources, the path was more well traveled, and sometimes they could buy supplies from small settlements. When they arrived at Dunhuang, they started planning on when to set off again tomorrow. After an hour and a half of talking, Ruoxi and Meilin decided to set off again tomorrow right after breakfast.

Meilin and Ruoxi loaded their bags to head to a place called Lanzhou. On the way, Ruoxi and Meilin talked about what they thought would be in this magical place. After a few days, they finally arrived at Lanzhou. Lanzhou was where traders could find local products like wool, and medicinal herbs, the city also became a meeting place where people from different cultures shared ideas, foods, and customs with one another. Lanzhou really mattered for the trip

along the silk road because the city provided fresh water from the Yellow River, food, and supplies for tired travelers and their camels. It is also because it was a place where traders could rest, and repair their equipment. When both of them closed the doors of their caravanserais they were both smiling brightly because the next stop would be the destination, Chang'an. For this part of the trip they would be traveling by horse, for 1–2 weeks if travelling quickly.

After two long weeks of travel, they finally reached the gates of Chang'an! "We made it!" Meilin gasped, her eyes wide with wonder. The moment they entered the bustling city, a sweet fragrance filled the air – jasmine and sandalwood from the markets. Colorful silk banners fluttered from every shop window. Once they had settled into their small hotel room, Meilin collapsed onto her bed. "Just a quick nap," she mumbled. While her friend slept, Ruoxi sat by the window, watching merchants from distant lands haggle in the streets below. *How will we ever carry enough silk back to Mongolia?* she wondered. When Meilin woke, they rushed to the silk market. The shopkeeper unrolled bolt after bolt of shimmering fabric. When they touched the silk, it felt like liquid moonlight flowing through their fingers. "Now I understand," whispered Meilin, "why people travel so far for this magic." When Lihua saw her beautiful green silk dress with flowers on the collar, tears of joy filled her eyes.

The Silk Road Journey

ESF Quarry Bay School, Chan, Hazel – 9

It was the day after Isabella's 15th birthday. As Isabella walked through her father's warehouse, she saw people with some smooth fabric used for making clothes. They had come to Italy to sell their silk from their homeland: China. The next day, Isabella saw lots of horses. "They were the people who was selling the silk again." Thought Isabella. she wanted to talk to them but remembered how her dad used body language to talk to them, so she used body language to talk to them. Isabella was fond in it. She sat down and planned to leave and went on an adventure.

The next morning, Isabella heard the selling team were heading back to China. But she knew that "girls are not allowed to travel", but nothing would burn her down. She dreamed of traveling all around the world, thru the desert, snow mountains and cities. Isabella decided to pretend to be a boy to join the group. She would be the first girl to travel on the silk road. She made a wood sculptor of herself and a letter to her father and hid it in her bed, hoping her father would understand her.

On that night, Isabella was shivering but nothing stops her determination, she didn't sleep and just waited for the traders to come, she swooped in and pretended she was one of them. The first place they went to was turkey who eyed their team with suspicion, they only let them through if they give silver or gold. The road was a ribbon of dust and danger. The weather was dry and hot. They were in a Desert! Isabella saw some strange creatures. Their shape was funny. They were hairy furry with one or two lumps. They didn't drink much water. Isabelle wondered what they were, and she was told that were Camels! People could ride on them. They went on their journey to the next stop.

SUDDENLY, some sand was flinging people started to scream" sandstorm" it started getting bigger until it was ginormous. It was like a mini tornado! They covered their nose, eyes and mouth. Finally, they got through the tornado! Isabelle relieved. The next stop was Samarkand! The place was eye caching! The blue tiled mosques gleaming like jewels, markets were spices piled higher than a man's head. After another month, the first sight that stole Isabella's breath was the Great Wall, like a road that will never end, it built with stone and brick, endless and unyielding. They passed through and entered a city. Everywhere temples rang with bells, a field like green stairs, irrigating wheels day and night. Isabelle followed the team to their living place. They settled and enjoyed the food there. Isabelle was amazed.

The next day, Isabella walked around the town. As she walked through, her long legs tower over everyone else. Her sparkled like a bright blue sky on a clear day, drawing everyone's attention. She tried to make friends with the villagers and they were very friendly. She learnt how to make silk. The ladies tended the trays of worms with gentle hands, boiling the cocoons to unwind the endless filaments. Isabelle learnt very hard from them. She also got a chance to visit the green fields and worked there. These terraced landscapes mirror a giant staircase carved into the mountains. All these marked into her heart. She had no regret to come here. Isabelle stayed there for years. She loved the place. She came here as a curious visitor, but leaving with a heart full story, bursting with memories.

The Silk Road journey

ESF Quarry Bay School, Chang, Hailei – 10

“Papa wake up, I want to play!” “Huh, wah – what’s happening, oh you want to play? Ok let’s play catch!” Before waking up, Zhang Qian was dreaming on how to get back to China. You see, a long time ago, Zhang Qian had a mission ordered by the great king to trade things with the western region . “Go trade our silk with the western people for some goods.”

“Yes my good lord right away,”

Zhang Qian trekked for weeks and months until he finally reached the west. During the journey it was quite troublesome, robbers tried to steal things from his horse, the weather made it seem impossible to get to the destination. After he arrived, Zhang Qian was enslaved and married to a local woman and had a son. Zhang had seen an uncountable number of seasons change over a decade. From the snow pouring down from the sky, to the warm air feeling as gentle as a mothers touch, to the shimmery sensation of the sun’s sizzle and the living decay of leaves, Zhang Qian’s memory of his past life felt like they were someone else’s.

That night, Zhang Qian couldn’t bear it anymore. So he quietly sneaked out when everyone was sleeping and started his own journey. He walked through thorns with nothing but his bare feet, climbed mountains with his limbs shaking, walked through deserts without any water. Finally, after one year, he was near home again. In the Fergana Valley, he saw horses standing tall in rows looking like proud soldiers. Zhang Qian found the yuezhi but they didn’t want to conquer and form an alliance. Zhang was trapped again, but by his mission’s failure. So he stayed there and learned about the country’s trades with Persia. Observes the different goods from different countries like the coins from Rome, the cotton from India and the glass from Alexandria. Zhang Qian learns that the batiria trades with Persia because they want their grapes to make wine.

Zhang Qian now has to present what he has learned from the country to the emperor.

“Mr.Zhang, what alliances have you made?”

“None Minister, But—”

“What? I can’t believe you were away from China and you haven’t made an alliance!”

“But minister, when I was out of China, I found out information about the horses in the Fergana Valley!”

“We don’t need that stupid information about horses.”

“Look Minister, I’ve had enough of you not listening to me. I will tell you everything that I have learned.”

He threw the map onto the table and pointed out the different countries and what had been traded, not just by conquest but by opportunity.

“Alright Zhang Qian, you have proved to me that you truly have gained a lot of knowledge since you were in different countries. You are truly the greatest strategist ever. You are free to go!”

“Thank you dear minister!”

And with that he walked out of the room.

When Zhang Qian got back to the palace, the emperor recognised Zhang’s intelligence; he recalled him and the minister’s conversation earlier.

“ Zhang Qian, what have you learned through all your years out of China?”

“The Enemy is not a people but isolation itself.”

The Emperor, impressed, ordered Zhang to plan the next missions for younger generations. Zhang stood with his son in the gardens, taught him the stepad constellations and told his son on the route of how he got to the different countries and what he traded with them. “So first I went to the Western Regions to trade them for their goods but then I got imprisoned by them but fortunately I escaped. After when I escaped I had a long journey but I arrived at Fergana Valley and got trapped again but by my missions failure.” So Zhang Qian kept on telling his son what challenges he faced, what adventures he conquered and what he learned throughout his journey over the last couple

of years. He put his arm around his son's shoulder and gestured with his arm towards the lands and hills in front of them: "The Han dynasty can become the center of the world not by conquest but by connections."

The Legend of the Silk Road

ESF Quarry Bay School, Chung, Stephanie – 10

A girl named Chung Cai En was on the back of her horse writing in her journal. She compared the never ending waves of sand to the vast ocean and how the scorching sunlight sizzled her skin like the chicken they had for lunch. It was the first time her parents, who specialised in delivering jade to different trading posts, agreed for her to come along. During their journey, they came across another caravan with 3 members inside. There was a boy named Ramin and his family sold [spices](#). As the sun started to set and the moon started to glimmer in the sky, the two caravans decided to camp together.

When midnight struck, strange sounds started occurring and footsteps grew louder. Bandits. They came with torchlights. Covered and concealed with cloth, they brought chaos to both caravans. While they were searching for valuables, both pairs of parents told the children to take theirs and flee. Ramin and Cai En ran as fast as they could with tears streaming down their faces. They heard screams and turned to see their parents getting killed with their throats cut by the bandit's arrows. "I have to go back!" Ramin shouted desperately. "You can't! It is too dangerous. They will kill you" Cai En argued. Ramin collapsed to his knees, clenching the sand tightly in his fists with tears in his eyes.

They carried on their journey to seek help. They ran for as long as they could into the blackness of the night. They covered a long distance and finally found a place for them to camp. As they were settling in, Ramin started blaming Cai En, "It's all your fault I could have helped my parents fight," protested Ramin. "I saved your life, you would have been dead by now," Cai En said harshly. "I could have at least gone back and said my last goodbye" Ramin fought back. "If you went back you would have died the moment you returned!" Cai En replied through gritted teeth. Ramin was lost with words and the two of them kept a distance from each other.

When the night was quiet and thoughts felt loud, Ramin approached Cai En and said, "I was angry and blamed you for not letting me save my parents but now that I think of it, I was wrong. Thank you for saving my life," Ramin said sincerely. "I will forgive you under one condition," replied Cai En with a smile returning to her face. "Ok anything as long as I can get your forgiveness," Ramin said. "I want you to give me some spice," said Cai En cheekily. "Okaay.." Ramin replied suspiciously. He handed a spice to Cai En and they laughed together and shared many stories they had. They laughed till morning and were ready to set off to find a way home and stock up on supplies. Ramin accidentally tripped on a rock and scratched his knee and elbow so Cai En pulled out some leaves and herbs to try and help him. Hobbling in the scorching sun, they let out wails at the sight of an oasis. They drank.

After feeling replenished, they gathered all their supplies and headed back to the Silk Road. Cai En and Ramin were walking when Ramin started feeling unwell. Cai En spotted an abandoned watch tower. Cai En checked on Ramin and said "You have a fever." "We must continue," Ramin replied. "You must rest," said Cai En. So Cai En gave him some soup with some herbs. As the sun started to melt and the moon came up, Ramin started to drift off to sleep and Cai En started making some food for dinner. She cooked rice with herbs and seaweed. Cai En slapped Ramin awake. He was so startled he accidentally knocked over his dinner and it spilt everywhere.

The next morning, Cai En stood staring at death's jaws. A snow leopard was sniffing intensely at the spill. Cai En quickly threw some spices to chase it away. Ramin woke up and saw Cai En throwing their spices outside the window. Without finding out what had happened, he immediately blamed Cai En for sabotaging his spice. "Why did you throw away all my spice?" he accused while pointing at her. "I had to! There was a snow leopard, it would have eaten us alive," Cai En explained. Ramin frowned and wearily replied, "We should go."

The two children laboured through the desert and dunes until they spotted the familiar silhouettes of two caravans. One with a Persian banner, the other Chinese. Hope and pain leapt into their chests. "Help us!" their shouts cracking their throats. "We can take you home," the caravan leaders said. Then the Persian leader added, "But nothing is free on the Silk Road, your fare is a story. Tell us one true lesson you learned." Ramin spoke first, looking at Cai En. "I learned that courage isn't just fighting. It's also... letting someone save you." Cai En nodded, holding up her journal. "I learned that a story needs more than one voice. My words are just one spice. His are another. Together, they make something new."

The leaders smiled. That night, by the caravan fire, Cai En opened her journal to a blank page. She wrote the title at the top: "The Legend of the Silk Road." She handed the pen to Ramin. "You start," she said with a smile.

The Blackest Cure

ESF Quarry Bay School, Hung, Stella – 10

It had been six days since Chao's sister had caught an intense fever and cough. Her fingers and toes had gone black, as her bones grew more brittle with each passing day.

"Ying! Your fever is worsening!" Chao winced as he laid a damp cloth on her burning forehead. He lifted a herbal tea to her lips. She gagged and spat, before coughing violently, her lungs crackling. Chao's thin eyebrows bended into worry. Ying's eyes were heavy and sullen, skin paper thin. Her once plump, smooth face had sunk in.

"Mama..?" Chao uncertainly uttered, finding her in the next room. "May I go to the Silk Road? It's her only hope." Without a word, she silently slid the jade bangle off her wrinkled wrist and pressed it into his hand. Chao's hands shook, holding the jade as the coolness washed over him, taking in the moment with a breath.

"Thank you." he weakly murmured with a lump in his throat. Chao tucked the bangle into his pocket as he made his way to the shared bedroom with Ying.

The sun had barely batted an eyelid as he shouldered his bag, a hushed cry stopped him.

"Where are you going?" Ying murmured.

"I'll be back with medicine. You'll be better." he said with a forced smile.

Chao landed a soft kiss on Ying's sticky forehead. Ying gave a crooked smile, before slowly dozing off like a whisper taken by the wind. His black innocent eyes took one last glimpse at Ying before the door clicked behind him.

Chao bit his lip as he approached the hopes, tales, and rumours that laid in the West.

He trudged as the sun melted the sky and wandered into the abyss of nature. After hours of ploughing through, he saw clumps of sand that clipped through the grassland. A lone figure stood in the distance.

"H-Hello?" Chao called.

The merchant cocked his head noticing the young frail boy. Giving a toothed smile, the unfamiliar man reached an arm out. Footprints marked the sand as Chao skeptically approached him. The merchant pulled out a leather bag dripping with lukewarm water.

"Do you have any medicine?" Chao shyly asked. Plucking up the courage, Chao quietly admitted his mission.

Sympathetically nodding, the man gestured for Chao.

"Walk with me," he said. "I don't have a remedy, but I have wisdom." Chao's eyes glowed with curiosity. He handed Chao a smooth airtight claypot. "A remedy is useless if it's already spoiled by the time you get home," he said with a wink.

Together they travelled sharing stories until they reached the bustling city of Samarkand. People chattered, huddled around different stalls. The merchant slowly led him to the nearest bimaristan, where a wise hakim sat on a ledge.

"For the black sickness?" the hakim's rough voice grunted.

The hakim looked him up and down, before walking to the storage room, emerging with two pouches.

"Myrrh and Frankincense. They fight decay and fever."

Chao bowed gratefully. The hakim pointed to the mountains, "Go south east, and you will find a buddhist monastery. They may teach you more."

Trekking through a rocky footpath, he noticed wildflowers and moss painting the rocks until he reached the quaint and isolated Buddhist monastery clinging to the cliff like fingernails. Monks welcomed him inside. As tea smoke danced in the air, the monks inquired into Chao's presence. They all sat cross legged on the rug, listening to Chao explain his sister's symptoms. Half of the men whispered away like water towards a door, as half stayed and ushered him to come sit closer with them. They taught him breathing and meditation to calm terror and pain. Monks flowed out of the door, holding pastes and herbs.

“Rhubarb to purify blood.” one said.

“Saffron too,” another chimed in.

Chao gratefully accepted the medicine as he placed them inside his hollow claypot. An elder monk placed a hand on his shoulder, “Seek the place where all knowledge meets further west.”

Chao walked for days in search of the monk's words. He reached a city of dusty bricks and domes – Baghdad. There, his eyes feasted upon the great library. Inside, he read Greek texts, Persian scrolls, Indian treatises, and Chinese manuals. Chao slid his fingers across the powdery parchment of each text which described the same fight, but with different words. A librarian paused as Chao spread out his ingredients.

“You do not lack tools, you lack the recipe. Unite them.”

Chao's eyes reignited with hope and so continued his journey.

He found himself in a hectic market by a glimmering sea – Constantinople. An apothecary with sharp eyes examined his collection. “You need this powerful, aged vinegar,” the man said.

“It unifies your East and West, for a compound tincture,” he said wearily. Chao gratefully grasped the tincture, until the man snatched it back. He lay his callused palm out.

“Nothing is free child,” he spat. Chao's breath caught, as he desperately rummaged through his belongings. He flipped over a small satchel. His mother's jade bangle landed on his hand. The greedy Byzantine thirstily nodded.

Chao ran. Over dirt, sand, across rivers and through grass, he clutched the claypot to his chest. He burst into his home as dusk fell. “Ying! I'm home!” he exclaimed. The house was silent. His mother sat with her head in her hands. “Ying,” she said quietly and hard.

Chao saw his sister laying in bed, still as ever.

“Hello Ying!” he cheered. No response. “Ying?”

He folded the cloth off her face. Ying's eyes were softly shut, her skin looked like their grandma's porcelain but it was just as cold. Chao's eyes filled with tears, splashing onto his sister. She was gone.

Despite his loss, Chao became known as the “Silk Road Doctor,” the one who combined the wisdom of the deserts, mountains, markets and libraries to fight the Black Death.

The Silk Road had given him the world's knowledge. It just hadn't given it to him in time.

A Cotton Seed on The Silk Road

ESF Quarry Bay School, Sun, Alyssa – 9

The afternoon sun shone down on the Silk Road. Traders took the time to stop and stretch their aching body under the blissful sunlight. Nine-year-old Lizzy sat perched on a splintered wooden crate, her legs swinging, as she watched merchants unroll bolts of silk the colour of summer skies and burnt autumn sunsets. Beside her, seven-year-old Jade clung to the hem of her linen dress and Lizzy's hair as she babbled about the 'fluffy camels' grazing on sparse desert grass nearby.

Trundling from a bustling Eastern city toward the distant, spice-scented markets of the West. Today, the caravan stopped at a sunbaked city, and people were creating clay pots, then baking them in the blazing heat. Little Jade was bursting with questions as they clattered along the busy, noisy stalls. "Why are we here? Where is this?" While her father tried to calm her down a little bit.....

When Jade starts chasing a gorgeous butterfly, she lost her grip all of a sudden. She fell into a river and yelled, "Help! Help!" Fortunately, Lizzy had followed her and jumped into the gushing water to save Jade. Lizzy grabbed Jade's tiny wrists and hurriedly swam against the roaring current back to safety. If Lizzy hadn't been following Jade, the miniature three-year-old girl could've got swept far away into the distance!

When the two shivering girls arrived at the caravan, Lizzy wrapped Jade in her own cloak with camels on it. Then, after Jade changed her dripping clothes, she and Lizzy went wandering through the bustling streets to the open countryside. There, they found something strange and marvellous: A seed. As Lizzy and Jade examined it, they saw that it was the colours of the rainbow, with just a tiny, soft golden glow on the edge. Suddenly, they realized that it was...

A wishing seed!

Lizzy and Jade gazed down at the elegant seed, and in the blink of an eye, Lizzy delicately scooped up the seed and rushed to the caravan. When they got there, Lizzy and Jade went to their bedroom and made their wishes. As the eldest, Lizzy went first. "I wish for two silk cloaks." At once, two beautifully decorated cloaks appeared before their eyes. The girls tried them on, and it fit them perfectly. Lizzy's was a gorgeous light blue, while Jade's was a soft, light pink.

Next came Jade's wish. She wanted two rosewood boxes of rainbow coloured jewels. Poof! The jewels appeared out of nowhere! Jade's jewels were dark shades of the rainbow, while Lizzy's shade of her jewels were light rainbow. They were all pretty, though!

Suddenly, Jade said, "I wonder if this seed can move time forward?". Lizzy wasn't sure, so they wished for two separate guides of how to use the magical rainbow seed. Lizzy cried out, "I've got the answer! The guide says that the magical seed can grant any wish, including moving time forward!" Jade was very happy. She asked, "Should we time travel?" Lizzy thought this was a good idea. "It's a nice idea. But we must be very careful, so let's start from going ten minutes into the future." Jade agreed, and off they went whizzing into the future!

Thump! As Lizzy and Jade descended on the ground, the entire scenery stayed the same. Traders giving and taking, mountains, and the gushing river behind everyone. The pair thought it was too little time into the future, so they decided to go further. They hesitated carefully about this at first. Finally, they decided to go further into the future. Lizzy and Jade said, "Please take us a little more into the future, magical Wishing Seed!" And they were whisked away from the hustle and bustle of the city.....

This time, Lizzy and Jade twirled for about three minutes before they were thrown onto the ground, only the

“ground” was soft. But in fact, they weren’t on the ground after all! They were on Lizzy’s own bed—not her bed on the caravan, but her bed at home! Lizzy said, “We should go back to two years ago. Or else we will miss the big trading day on the last day of our journey!” Jade gulped. “Oh no. I forgot about the big trading day! We should go back.” And so, they time travelled back to two years ago. In fact, they arrived back on the day before the trading day!

Finally, it was the last day of their tiring—but fun—journey. As the two girls traded for lots of things on the Silk Road, they even secretly wished for invisible bags to hide their goods inside—and to trick their friends! They also wore their silk cloaks and held their rosewood jewel boxes, so they suddenly became popular among the busy crowds. But they also wished for things to give to their friends! Some had silk dresses, some had miniature gold locket necklaces, some had marble statues with beautiful shiny silk covering them, and some even had beautiful gold bags filled with sweet, dried apricots, peaches, pomegranates, and dates!

Everyone kept asking Lizzy and Jade how they had so many valuable, rare things, but the pair always kept it a secret. Finally, they stopped asking them and let them just keep it a secret. This is because Wishing Seeds are very rare around the world, and lots of people try to find them, only that they are too hard to be found. Lizzy and Jade didn’t tell anyone because they might all rush towards them and granting too many wishes, and they didn’t want that to happen, especially having spoiled children running to grant their own wishes.....

As they trundled towards home in their caravan, the family thought of their wonderful journey. All of them were then looking at the things they’d traded for other goods. They were all very satisfied with their new collections of objects, especially Lizzy and Jade, because of their magical Wishing Seed.

They arrived at their house, and finally, Lizzy and Jade went to Lizzy’s room, and it was not the same as when they saw it yesterday! Jade’s bed was moved into the free space beside her sister’s bed, with nightstands on either side. Then, Lizzy took out the seed, and for a second both sisters thought back to their fabulous journey. They remembered the trading day and the time travelling. The girls remembered all the things they wished for during their trip, including the cloaks (which they were wearing), the rosewood boxes of colourful jewels, and all the things that they gave to their friends! They also remembered to never go too close to the riverbank, in case they fell in again. As they climbed into their beds, they agreed to tell only their family that they found an amazing, rare wishing seed!

The Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Chan, Rima – 8

The shimmering sun shot down on the villagers face, the sweat poured down their faces and dripped onto the floor. The villagers folded the boxes and made sure the camels were strapped and ready to go. They rode miles and miles until they reached the famous Silk Road.

The road was full of people trading different kinds of things. Like gunpowder, paper, and spices. The people were full of joy from making good deals, and people who are more luxurious would buy Jade, Silk, Lacquerware, and Bronze.

First it was happy and people started trading, buying until there was a fire smell.

Something was on fire!

The sun burned the lacquerware and made a huge fire! The fire spread across the road and the people tried getting water by using the vases they bought but nothing helped, the fire just grew and grew.

Some people tried running away and left their camels next to the fire. People from the Silk Road didn't know there was a fire since they weren't close to the fire so they caught on fire.

Nobody helped, except there was this man called Issac, he had an idea. He said all of the villagers should line up with a bucket of water and someone at the front would grab each bucket of water and do it at the fire so the fire goes out. Everyone listened to his idea and got in line, Isaac was one of the front people and he threw the buckets of water at the fire but the fire was so big that they couldn't let out the whole fire.

People ran home to get away from the fire but Issac stayed there, he stood there like he was the leader of the villagers. Issac just stood there trying the hardest he could to help, people across the Silk Road also tried pouring water on the fire. But the fire was too big and grew fierce and looked like it would never give up. Issac went back to his plan and now people tried pouring the water while they ran and that worked a lot better than being in a line and giving water. Issac realised that the first plan he made was not bad cause lining up was really quick but the technique was not.

Issac arranged the villagers in lines so they could run one by one. Issac also rode his camel over to the over side so he could tell them his great plan. Issac told them to run and pour the water at the same time and to remember that when the other side has arrived at their side they run so it's like they swap places.

Isaac then told everyone to keep going. He told them to stay strong and don't give up just yet they tried their hardest.

Finally the fire is out!

Everyone was so happy and went back home, Issac thought he could be famous.

The Magical Silk Cloth

ESF Renaissance College, Chan, Serena – 10

One sunny spring morning George.C.Anthony, a Chinese person with no Chinese name. For a long time he had weird dreams about himself finding a magical silk cloth. But it did not bother him and he kept working normally until that day. He was called to be the assistant to a wealthy merchant to set sail following the Silk Road from China to Persia. He felt it was a long journey but he needed the money for his family so he agreed. He was limited to pack two sets of clothes for the entire journey which meant he had to rewear some clothes. George packed one tunic, one cloak, and one pair of leather footwear to wear on the day.

The journey would take approximately three months to get to India and another four months to get to Persia and seven months to get back to China.

On the day of the departure his chest was thumping with anxiety while his hands were sweating rapidly like the oceans waves, legs shaking slightly and butterflies stuffed in his stomach. As he bid farewell to his family and walked beside a large Bactrian camel carrying large amounts of goods. Such as, silk, tea, porcelain, paper, spices, dyes and medicine.

While they were hiking on a mountain the wealthy merchant demanded George to pass his water to him, he rambled through the goods to find the water was at the bottom of the basket like a person stuck in a well. In order to not make the silk dirty George had to wear the silk scarf around his neck and get the water. Suddenly, a powerful feeling started to surge through his body like lightning speed! three seconds later George had come back to the present world. The merchant scolded him “What is taking you so long! Even the donkey can do it faster.” George immediately pulled the water bottle out of the bag and handed it to the merchant while apologizing “Sorry sir, I won’t do it again!”

George, not noticing that the silk scarf was still dangling around his neck, fell asleep under a tree at night. He had a vision that the donkey would die if it didn’t get water and woke up silently and got the water. If the wealthy merchant found out he would be killed immediately. He had successfully given water to the camel as quiet as a mouse and did not wake up the merchant.

About 3 months later George arrived in India and was about to start trading goods, knowing how the silk scarf could have visions he hid it under his robe and tied it tightly to his belt so the merchant couldn’t figure out. “One silk scarf for three pomegranates!” boomed the loud speaker.

After all the fuss of trading he started to question that the scarf had powers and how did it know that the donkey would die? George sneakily thought “I will keep this and save it for investing in the future.”

When they reached a plain all the donkeys started to look very sick and hurling all over the place. George almost immediately thought of the vision he had wearing the scarf and shouted “Give the camels water now!” However the wealthy merchant argued “Who said you were the boss huh? But do it anyway since you’ve got a point.” They gave water to the camels and they started walking again. George prayed to the sky “Thank the spirits.”

However, when they were almost in China they encountered a group of road bandits. The bandits demanded “We are the group called the Nine Dragons, give us all your money and we will let you pass.” The wealthy merchant in shock and despair thought about it first. Then he replied firmly but calmly “No” and at the speed of light he punched the first bandit, the others reacted quickly and started fighting. Until George had another vision from the piece of silk and it visualized a big sand storm wiping them apart ferociously one by one.

George immediately shouted loudly “Cover your mouth and duck down!” However, the bandits thought this was a trick and took advantage of it. Just in a nick of time the sand storm struck, sand blowing around as thick as snow and wind as strong as rock hitting their bodies fiercely. Luckily they were safe but the bandits were washed away nowhere to be seen! Fortunately, the goods were safe and not blown away. The crew shouted “All hail George!” repeatedly.

When they got to Persia, they saw streets packed with people as crowded as the waves rushing here and there. It was noisy and disturbing like crows cawing non-stop! It was also hard to get through the massive groups of people without getting stampeded. Suddenly, the general of the empire found out that George was hiding a piece of silk cloth under his long cloak and demanded to give it to him for inspection. Without a choice he pulled it out fearing that the general would figure out the powers. Unfortunately he did and like before a massive amount of energy surged through his body making him fall down! The crowd gasped thinking he had poisoned the general and was about to be arrested! Just in time the general awoke to his surprise and said “what kind of sorcery is this? I will buy it for one million dollars!” George thought this was a dream and slapped himself, but it was all true! He thankfully accepted this honor and shared some money with his companions. They screamed in joy and glee and his life just got better and better.

On the trip home it was smooth and there was no trouble to be found. The crew had traded back pomegranates, fine glasses and mechanical clocks. When George got home he shared the happenings and everyone was so astonished! George and his family lived there in wealth for countless years.

The Shadow of the Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Cheong, Raina – 10

Lilly was thirteen, with shoulder length blonde hair and brown eyes that usually sparkled with mischief, but today they were filled with worry. Downstairs, she could hear her father pacing. Her father was a renowned archaeologist specializing in the ancient Silk Road, a network of trade routes connecting China to Central Asia, Europe, and beyond, where merchants exchanged silk for horses, jade for spices, and ideas across cultures.

Six years ago, during an excavation near Dunhuang, he unearthed the Midnight Stone. Before he could even touch it, the dark magic of the artifact latched onto him, and the Midnight Stone vanished in a flash of light. Since that day, every full moon, he would be possessed. He would lose control, destroying buildings and causing chaos. In the last incident, he had nearly leveled a town square. Thankfully, no one was killed, but the guilt was eating him alive. Lilly had learned to set traps to slow him down, but she knew they wouldn't hold him forever.

Seeking answers, Lilly found an old book in the attic: "Cursed Items of the Ancient World." The book said the Midnight Stone was an ancient relic from the Silk Road, and once someone was infected by the curse, the artifact would teleport itself back to the Silk Road, no matter where it was. Her fingers trembled as she flipped the pages until she landed on a drawing of a pitch black amulet, "The Midnight Stone". The text was chilling: "If the curse is not broken by the upcoming full moon, the dark magic will become permanent, and the possessed will consume the world in shadow." The next full moon was only a week away. Lilly knew what she had to do. She packed a bag with urgency. As she laced up her worn travel shoes, her mother appeared in the doorway.

"Where are you going, Lilly?"

Wordlessly, Lilly showed her the book. Her mother read the passage, her face turning pale. She looked from the book to her daughter, tears welling in her eyes. She understood. This wasn't just about saving her husband, it was about saving everyone. With a heavy heart but fierce determination, Lilly left.

Lilly travelled for days, taking high speed trains and then a rattling old bus that shuddered over the bumpy roads of northwest China. Finally, she arrived in Dunhuang, the ancient oasis at the Gansu Corridor's western end and Silk Road junction, around which the Taklamakan converged, protected by Jade Gate and Yang Passes since Han times (111 BC).

Lilly navigated through a maze of stalls that smelled of roasted cumin and baking naan bread. To her left, merchants shouted over mountains of sweet dried dates and raisins from Turpan. To her right, tourists and traders haggled over hand woven wool carpets and delicate blue and white porcelain that clinked softly in the wind. Lilly pushed past a rack of shimmering silk scarves to get to the antiques section. Here, the noise quieted down. Old men with weather beaten faces sat on low stools, sipping tea from copper pots. They guarded blankets covered in history: ancient coins, shards of pottery, and smooth pieces of jade. And there, tucked between a dusty bronze mirror and a string of prayer beads, was the Midnight Stone. It pulsed with a faint, eerie light.

Lilly approached the vendor. "How much?" she asked.

The man's greedy eyes swept over her. He pointed to her neck. "That."

Lilly's hand flew to her throat. She was wearing a silver locket, the last gift her grandmother had given her before she passed away. It was her most treasured possession. She hesitated, her thumb tracing the cool metal. Then, she thought of her father, and the destruction that would come if she failed. With shaking hands, she unclasped the necklace and handed it over. She grabbed the stone, feeling its cold, heavy weight. She had the cure. Now, she just had to get home.

By the time Lilly returned, the sun had set on December 30th. The full moon was rising. A sharp smell of smoke hung in the air. She ran toward her house, but stopped in horror. The front gate was smashed. Her mother came running from the garden, her face streaked with ash.

“He’s turned, Lilly! It’s too late!”

“No, it’s not!” Lilly yelled.

A roar echoed from the shadows. Her father stepped out, but it wasn’t him. His eyes were pitch black, and a dark aura swirled around him like a storm. He raised a hand, and the ground shook.

Lilly didn't run away. She ran toward him.

“Dad!” she screamed. She pulled the Midnight Stone from her pocket. The book said she had to destroy it while close to the possessed person. She threw the stone with all her strength. “Clack” the stone solid as iron and did not break. Her father blurred into motion, the shadows around him solidified, lashing out like jagged black whips. Lilly dodged, tears streaming down her face. She grabbed a heavy brick from the rubble and smashed it down onto the amulet. CRACK!!! A piercing shriek filled the air as a swirl of black smoke erupted from her father’s chest. It spiralled into the sky and vanished. Her father collapsed to his knees, gasping for air. The blackness faded from his eyes, replaced by his familiar, warm brown gaze.

“Lilly?” he whispered.

As they sat there, Lilly looked at the pile of tar like sand fading in the wind. She thought about the long journey she had taken, following the footsteps of ancient merchants. The Silk Road was built on the idea of exchanging silk for horses, jade for spices. Lilly realized she had made the most important trade of all. She had given up her grandmother’s necklace, but in return, she had bought back her father’s life. The town was damaged, but the world was safe. Like Dunhuang’s resilient cities, they would rebuild against time’s sands.

The Silk Road Quest

ESF Renaissance College, Chiu, Charlotte – 10

Twenty-two mighty centuries ago, a Chinese Empire was at the brink of extinction from bankruptcy. But one risky quest saved the whole empire, starting from one poor girl, who calls filthy sidewalks her home and stealing basic needs from gruesome dealers. But one day everything changed, the poor girl was delightfully enjoying her rotten food, until a guard came marching up to her asking her if she would like to do a “hard quest” for a marvellous prize at the end. She accepted it because curiosity was flowing through her mind, the guard told her to follow him to meet the king. As soon as she heard the word “king” that echoed through her ears, her guts sharpened and beads of sweat came dribbling down her face, but she thinks it won’t be that hard. When they arrived at the magnificent palace, the king explained about the “hard quest” “Since the empire is at the brink of extinction” the king said he had to make a risky move to save the empire from extinction. Or else everyone would be doomed! So the whole plan was to sell silk to two wealthy traders along the route, but it would be an exhausting journey with scorching heat and language barriers. There was no going back so the poor girl had to go, the guards handed her the silk and a bag full of hiking equipment with a map and health needs. When she came out of the temple, millions of civilians applauded for her bravery.

The king almost forgot one more thing, a horse. The horse was going to be her companion throughout this journey, because there were loads of silk that needed to be traded. And it was time for this girl to make history in China, it was time to say goodbye, so they went. There was no obstacle at first, just stiff roads, which was at a good start and a good pace. Just for two minutes, they have already sunken into the real challenges, shallow gaps that were in the route. They passed though without hesitation, and it looked like wind was swift through the forest. So they went rapidly to get to the destination faster. But just as soon as they were almost there, a tremendous tree was laying down on the floor, and it looks like it got blown off by the winds or something else. They had to go over it by using the hiking equipment, she leapt out of the horse and opened her bag. She took out a hatchet and a rope, planning to tie the rope to the hatchet. Then she tied herself onto her waist and the horse, and threw the hatchet to the middle point of the tree. She crawled herself up the rope, but suddenly the rope started, dangling, as dangle as a short rope! She tried her best to not lose her grip. Then she overcame it! But the tree was quite wobbly too, so she put a hook to balance it. Then she began to pull the serrated rope up, with all her mighty strength. She made the horse collide with the tree to make it climb up, once the horse overcame the tree she took back the hatchet and came back down on the patchy ground. And then continued.

After just a few minutes of galloping, they arrived in the first country. Which was actually a blazing stop pit in the desert, which is somewhere near the middle of the silk route, she looked on her map to find the dealer. This place was new to her, unfamiliar dealing sounds, new, mysterious animals and wacky faces. She felt isolated, but she’s always been that way. The map had more details about this trader. The trader was a man, he mostly wears a towel on his head, a splinky moustache and mostly has his camel around, and his favourite drink is a coconut. She searched around like an eagle’s eye soaring through the sky, searching for every detail she spotted. Until she came across someone who looked like the person. She at first, she tried to come up with a solution. First she had to walk up to the trader and try to communicate with common sign languages like a wave, point and mimicking. And the trader which kind of understood waved back, then pointed at her patchy bag. Lifted both of his hands, smacked them together and did a little swaying movement, which was a symbol for trading. Luckily she knew what he was doing, so she put down the bag and untied the rope on the bag. All was filled with fabulous silk, like a golden touch. As soon as the trader saw them, it filled his eyes like he was chosen from heaven. He immediately strutted through his pocket, finding every penny that was worth it. At last he emptied out his pocket and it was an equal trade. The trader waved goodbye and wished her good luck on her journey.

Back to the torrid, cramping desert. Something unexpected occurred, the floor started to crackle. As soon as she realized that she just fell into a trap, the ground began to ripple and was going to collapse like there is a titanic

earthquake crackling every step! She rushed the horse to climb back out and used the rope and hatchet. She gave it a little whirl and tossed it gently to not make the hole worse, then she grabbed an emergency plank and slid it under the horse's shivering hooves. The horse shivered less and went back to the broad ground, she held the rope and pulled the hatchet out of the ground. A few moments later she saw civilization nearby, in her mind, her mood lit a bit. She took out the map again and it was easy, the trader was wearing a red bandana and the only person there was wearing one. She approached, finished, and went home.

The Great Adventurers of China's Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Chow, Marcus – 8

Pitter–Patter!

The cloud was dark. The rain was drumming on the roof. Tom and Mark resignedly stayed in their homes.

Tom groaned, “What an unlucky day! The school’s fun day has been called off!”

At Mark's house, he sat idly and grumbled, “Today is so boring and I've got nothing to do.”

Mum suggested, “Why don't you go to your friend’s house?”

When Mark arrived at the front yard of Tom's house, he pressed the doorbell.

Ding Dong!

The door swung open.

Tom called, “Come in, it is windy outside.”

Mark shouted, “I’ve been running to your house, but I’m still drenched!”

Mark discovered a strange and bulky machine that resembled a box behind the sofa.

Mark asked curiously, "What’s that?"

Tom answered, “I was told that I shouldn’t touch it.”

Tom's mum asked, “Would you like some hot chocolate?” They said yes and sat down on the corner of the house, right in front of the machine.

At that moment, Mark leaned his back on the machine, and they accidentally got sucked inside. It wasn’t a machine at all, but it was a time machine! Inside the time machine, Tom and Mark could see the colourful light swirling across them, it was amazing.

All of a sudden, they finally reached the endpoint. Everything looked so old fashioned and historical.

Mark mumbled, “Where are we and what period are we in?” The monitor of the time machine displayed, “You are in 1275.”

Mark gasped, “What! How do we get back to 2026?”

Tom whispered, “Who knows?” They saw a vast desert, and a man rode a camel towards them.

Mark asked, “Excuse me, where are you going?”

The man answered, “My name is Marco Polo, and I'm going to China to visit the Emperor of the Yuan Dynasty!”

After a little chat, they brought the time machine with them and asked Marco Polo if he could give them a ride back to China.

On the way, the thoroughfare pulsed with frenetic energy. They were fascinated with the kaleidoscope of treasures like silk, tea, gold, gunpowder, paper, metal, spices and much more!

Marco Polo explained that this road was called the “Silk Road”. People engaged in extensive trading across multiple countries.

Tom replied, “This road is convenient for exchanging precious items between the West and East countries!

Mark cheered, “It's fantastic!”

After a while, they arrived at the pit stop.

Tom moaned, “There is still a long way to go. Why don’t we ride in a car? It’s faster!”

Marco Polo wondered, “What is a car? I’ve never heard of it.”

They said, “Are you crazy? You don't even know what a car is!” Marco Polo claimed he really didn’t know.

Mark exclaimed, "Wait a minute, there wasn’t any car at that period!"

Tom said, “Sorry, I forgot!”

A man was listening to their conversation. He interjected and questioned, "What is a car?"

Mark explained, "A car is a vehicle that moves with wheels. The wheels spin around in circles to move." The man introduced his name was Wang Zhen who worked on Chinese characters movable type printing for the Emperor. He elaborated, "I have a new idea for an invention! That is to make a circular tray to hold the thousands of characters'printing blocks. It is more convenient for workers to spin the wheels during word searching and selection."

After that, they walked across the land as they saw a magnificent building.

Marco Polo said, "I think this is where the Emperor, Mr. Kublai Khan, lives." They saw many beautiful silks and jade. They humbly stood straight as the Emperor sat down on a dazzling golden chair.

Tom spoke respectfully, "Your Majesty, we are here to offer you various kinds of spices from western countries and bestow you with some gunpowder. You could add those spices to your food and the gunpowder could make things explode!"

The Emperor asked, "Do you have any requests?"

Mark asked politely, "You own infinite valuable silk, may we have some as a souvenir? We will try to pay as much as we can."

The Emperor laughed and said, "As a kid, I am wondering how much money you can offer me?"

Mark took out his coins and counted carefully. Suddenly, Tom said, "That will take forever." Then, he took out a one-million dollar note and gave it to the Emperor.

The Emperor said, "What is this paper note?"

They said, "These are banknotes. They are used to pay large bills. It is also easier to carry."

The Emperor said, "Wow, this is the best idea people had ever thought of. And, Marco Polo, you are the first person ever to ride from the West to the East on your own. I think you can assist me as a diplomat to get some other good stuff back to our country."

Marco Polo responded, "Thank you for your appreciation."

Finally, the Emperor said, "You all inspired me. You could get whatever silk clothes you liked from the palace."

They took the one they wanted and left the palace. They said goodbye to all and traveled back to the present by the time machine!

On the next school day, the class teacher surprisingly announced to them that they were going on a field trip to the Hong Kong Palace Museum because the Fun Day was cancelled the previous day.

When they arrived, everyone was excited to enter the museum.

The teachers said, "Today, we are mainly going to see the Silk Road exhibition."

They said, "Not again!"

The Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Hsu, Lexi – 9

There was once a young man named Chen Wu that lived in a small village named the Silk Village. The small village was famous for trading silk clothing and different spices. Chen Wu and his grandfather lived happily together and earned money by selling silk clothing.

The Silk Village was beside a long road and the village was in the middle of thinking of what to name the long road. The long road is connected to a lot of different villages but the road is the only way to go to different places and the only way to go through the road is to walk or take a car.

One day a mysterious old man came and told the villagers that there was a mountain nearby and on that mountain there are silk worms that can spin a special type of silk called the slip silk. The silk worm was called silk makers. Slip silk is softer and smoother than normal silk. The old man also said that on the mountain there were a lot of dangerous poisonous insects!

When the mysterious old man left Chen Wu and his grandfather started a meeting with the whole village. He wanted to think of a way to harvest the slip silk without bumping into the insects!

One of the villagers said that they could put some spices at one place of the mountain then the insects would be attracted to the smell and while the insects are going to one place they can go to harvest the slip silk. One of the villagers said that they could put traps all over the mountain. But most of the villagers wanted to go with the first idea so they did!

The next day they all had their spices ready. They all went to the mountain with the spices in their hands. They all gathered the spices and poured them all into one place. Then they all split up into groups to find the silk.

Chen Wu and his grandfather were the first to find some silk! They stuffed the silk into their pockets and went back to the village. The villagers arrived at the village one by one with their big pockets full of silk! And when all of the villagers arrived they put all the silk into one big pile and used the silk to make some clothes and now they could earn money more easily!

That's when the whole village decided to name the road the Silk Road!

The Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Mooney, Samantha – 10

I strolled down the crowded bazaar street of Dunhuang, trousers tucked into my sturdy boots, I kicked up dirt and sand from the Silk Road's endless trail. Each step moved me along the bright, sunny day as a hot wind blew across my face. Sunlight shone off the soft, smooth, glossy, shimmering silk as it draped over our caravan's loads. Sweat streamed down my face, but not from heat alone. I looked around. Something didn't feel right. I have been here for too long not to notice something wrong. Footprints were here since nightfall, too fresh for the wind to hide. I'm thinking, is this serious or not? After all, I could just be mistaken. I can always tell if something is off. And I feel, deep, deep inside, that something's definitely wrong. The new driver's expressions were strange, something did not seem right. His nod definitely whispered betrayal.

I lingered by a spice stall, in interest of some luscious silk and exotic spices from so many countries. The colours, red, orange and yellow, fascinating. While my eyes locked on the new driver ahead, his shoulders hunched too low, avoiding the sun's glare on our loads of silks, spices, and our well-claimed colourful clothes. His dark black shades covered his eyes, but the clouds covered the sun. What is he hiding? As if fearing recognition from watchers. When he paused to "adjust" a camel's saddle, his hand slipped a small cloth into his sleeve. The same crimson shade as the scraps bandits leave after raids. My heartbeat quickened, and my palms started to sweat. No time for questions now, the dunes waited, and so did my proof.

The sun slowly dipped toward the horizon as our caravan prepared to leave Dunhuang. The air thickened with dust and anticipation. I kept my gaze fixed on the new driver, who stayed unusually close to the spice sack, not so close that I had ever seen before. His movements were too deliberate, too cautious. When he paused near a cluster of camel bells, I spotted a faint glimmer of a folded cloth slipped into his sleeve like a hidden signal meant to betray us. I opened my mouth hesitantly to warn the caravan chief before matters struck, but the booming call to mount up swallowed my words before anything could slip out. With a heavy heart, I readied myself to watch the traitor from the shadows, knowing that I was not going to rest or lay back before I had solid evidence.

Night fell, and light faded, wind blew lightly like a calm candle. Camels huddled inward as we brought them in with silk and spice stacks next to them. Their bells were silent under the chief's orders to avoid luring raiders and bandits. I volunteered for the midnight watch, keeping the new driver in mind. Just before we headed into our tents, I received a request. A talk with the chief, but alone, just us.

I approached the chief as the last of the campfire embers faded. "Chief, something's wrong with the new driver," I said cautiously. "There were off-trail Footprints; his hands are hiding something. I fear he's a spy or maybe even working for the bandits."

The chief sighed, brushing sweat aside. "I've heard many fears in my time. Brush it off, can you? We have an even longer day tomorrow," he replied without concern.

"But chief, I have seen signs that we absolutely cannot let go, we cannot afford to make another careless mistake so easily again," I said with so much of the strength that I have been holding back.

"Ok, I understand what you are saying, but we can't judge him until we have absolutely solid proof. Plus, until we see a mistake that's impossible to ignore, we can't do or say anything," he warned. "But if you see another thing, let me know. Rest now, guard. We have an even longer day tomorrow. But I'll keep an eye out. But do watch carefully, but don't waste strength chasing shadows." I nodded, though doubt chewed me up. The desert is a dangerous place; it's hard to make it out, but trust is even harder to find.

I circled the perimeter with my sword loose. Every rustle of wind was a potential footstep. Something rustled in the thick bushes. I tightened the grip holding my sword. I crept around from where the noise was coming from. I spotted the new driver creeping toward the shadows. I stood still, looking at him in terror. I knew this was definitely not good. His crimson cloth glowed in my eyes; he raised it toward the ridge. My jaw dropped, and I sprinted quietly, straight to our caravan chief, looking back at betrayal. My shout died in my throat, but then one false alarm, and the caravan would be gone before even a slight bit of the real threats arrived.

I realised that when I got to the chief, half of our caravan would be gone, so I ran back to the bush behind him. I waited for him to get into the perfect place, and I lunged from the bushes, tackling the driver. The bandits looked at him and began alerting more people. I woke up the camp in shouts, knowing chaos was coming. My knee was pushing down on his back, holding him down.

My weight crushed the driver into the dirt as his flare streaked skyward, igniting the ridge like a false dawn. Bandits poured down like a howling wave, slashing through tents while camels trumpeted and bolted, silk ripping free in streaked chaos. Guards formed a ragged circle around the spices and silk, the chief bellowing orders, but the traitor's signal had doomed us. I jumped onto the driver, not letting him escape. Half our fortune vanished into the night. I clutched the crumpled crimson cloth. And shoved it in my pocket.

The Silk Ink Brush

ESF Renaissance College, Nawaz, Zaha – 9

A lonely man trudged through the sand and stopped when he saw a beggar. The beggar looked closer and saw that the man was a wizard! The wizard asked “My son wants a glass brush. Do you have any brushes?” “No, but the concept of a brush doesn't seem very difficult. Maybe I could make one!” said the beggar. So the beggar took a twig from an old magnolia tree, and then took some tail hairs from a goat.

Then he stood back, admiring his creation. “Here’s some food, you look hungry.” The beggar smiled and then wrote with the brush in the sand

“Thanks”. Immediately after the word sank in the sand something began to reappear. It was a shiny glass brush. Identical to the one the wizard’s son wanted! “WOW!” the wizard said. He gave the beggar a bag of fat gold coins.

“My son will be pleased,” he said. Then the wizard said “I don’t really want my son to be my apprentice.” “He’s lazy, arrogant and he always demands things.” “I have an idea!” “Why don’t you come instead!” The wizard said “But I warn you, my son won’t give up without a fight.” The beggar smiled. “I’d like that.” He said. Then the wizard left. Over time, the beggar began to get richer and richer. He had built himself a house made of jade. And, soon the royal fanfare came to announce the wizard was holding trials to see if anyone could replace his son. As soon as possible, the beggar (Now Rich) raced to the stadium. He stepped through the big black doors and found himself face to face with the wizard’s son. Ahhhh! That was the beggar screaming. He looked up to see a figure cackling. “You should have seen your face!” The wizard’s son said. “Now, now.” The wizard said. “The trials are about to begin!” The commenter’s voice boomed through the stadium. “Your first challenge is what I like to call the “magician”. “You will have to turn invisible”. The beggar firstly put some wax on the sand. Then, he put a candle on it. The combination created a thin sheet of glass that was crystal clear on one side but on the other side it looked completely invisible! “ Oho!” “Looks like we have a winner!” the commenter said. The wizard’s son groaned. “Your second challenge is to identify the poisoned drink!” “Out of all the drinks that have just arrived one of them is poisoned!” the commenter shouted. The beggar was immediately ushered into a dark room with hundreds of drinks.

Three hours later... the beggar picked jasmine tea, his personal favorite. It... was poison. “Now we’re on a roll.” said the commenter said. The beggar realised he had won. From near and far, everyone knew that there was a new grand sorcerer in the silk road.

The Silk Road Shadow

ESF Renaissance College, Pan, Andrea – 9

"Rose! Wake up!"

Rose groggily dressed in her worn uniform and grabbed her ripped school bag. Her family wasn't rich, so everything she owned was second-hand, passed down from her sister, Evelyn. The two sisters looked nothing alike: Rose had long curls and bright-brown eyes, while Evelyn had short hair, round glasses, and sharp black eyes.

Rose headed out, fixing her shoes as she walked beside her sister, who was combing her bob of hair.

In class, the teacher opened a big map and said, "Today we learn about the Silk Road!" She traced the route that camels and merchants traveled and told stories about the caravans and the markets full of shiny cloth. Rose and Evelyn gasped because that was the same road Mom and Dad usually went for trading.

When Rose reached home, she saw Mom packing a huge bag and Dad lifting piles of clothes into a basket.

"What's all this for?" Rose asked.

Dad wiped his forehead. "We're supposed to take goods to the market. But your mom and I have a very important meeting with the merchant council tomorrow. We cannot miss it."

Mom added softly, "So you and Evelyn will have to go instead. Be careful, earn good money. It's a long way, but you're strong girls."

Early next morning, Rose and Evelyn ate a quick breakfast, hugged their parents and stepped into the misty dawn. They trekked non-stop, until the path turned bushy.

Suddenly the sky growled and the rain poured down. Everyone started running for a cover, but Rose and Evelyn pulled their scarves tighter and kept going. Evelyn found a small hollow under roots and rocks, and laid soft pieces of cloth inside to make a bed.

Just as she stretched her tired back, an eerie howl floated through the trees. Both girls tensed. They glanced around fearfully and quickly crawled into the hollow. When the forest grew quiet again, they stood up, not noticing the soft creaks of wheels coming closer...

CRASH! A wheelbarrow rolled straight at them. Rose stumbled, pulling Evelyn into the bushes. Then, everything went black.

When Rose opened her eyes, she was inside a tiny hut with a roof of leaves and branches. Then a loud WHOOSH came from the corner. Thick black smoke billowed over the girls. Suddenly, it lunged at Rose, pulling her down.

Rose screamed as she fell, and a cold hand seemed to grasp her heart.

Evelyn pulled her sister out of the smoke.

"Is... is the shadow gone?" Rose whispered.

"For now, at least," Evelyn said, voice trembling.

A rustle sounded from the bushy roof.

Rose looked around frantically. “Who’s there?”

Evelyn grabbed the sharp stone that had fallen from the roof and held it high. “We’re not afraid!” She shouted, but Rose could hear the strain in her sister’s voice.

Black smoke slithered out again.

“Hello, child,” it hissed, “ Strong, brave, perfect. With your body I could be a guardian again...”

Two slits in the shadow glinted red, lunging again at Rose. Slowly Rose felt her body growing light, like a balloon.

She looked down and saw her own body lying still. With all her strength, Rose dove back into her body. She kicked as hard as she could and the shadow burst out of her body with a roar.

It wrapped around her head next, squeezing tight. Rose kicked again and again, until she suddenly woke and leaped like a tiger. She grabbed the smoky thing, cold but solid, and pinned it.

“Lift the floorboard!” Rose yelled at Evelyn.

Evelyn pulled up the loose floorboard as the shadow writhed under Rose. Rose then quickly stuffed the shadow inside and slammed it shut.

CRACKLE! Golden threads of silk burst from the cracks, weaving and shining until they shaped a tall man made of pure light. When the glow faded, a real man stood there, gentle and surprised, holding one perfect silkworm in his hands.

“You freed me,” he said, voice soft as silk. “Your courage reminded me how it felt to protect instead of scare. Long ago I was the guardian of silkworms along this road... thank you.”

He smiled, turned into a swirl of golden silk, and vanished. The girls smiled and climbed out, hurrying on their journey.

At the trading place the same man saw Rose and pressed a small package into her hands, smiling. It was wrapped in pure gold silk. She opened it, and a small stone lay on the silk, the same stone Evelyn had raised. The stone glowed softly red, the same colour as the shadow’s eyes, but now warm and alive.

Rose smiled.

The girls traded everything their parents had given them, laughing with villagers and chasing kids through the stalls until the sun began to sink.

“We need to get home!” Evelyn said. They waved goodbye to the kind man and started the long walk back, chattering the whole way.

When they got home, the family celebrated, happy that the sisters were back. That evening, while Rose and Evelyn ate with their parents, the stone glowed gently in Rose’s pocket. Far away in the trees, the silk guardian watched for a moment, smiling. Then, the wind blew and the man faded into small threads of golden silk, carrying the legend of the Silk Road in the wind forever.

A Tale of The Silk Road

ESF Renaissance College, Wong, Alton – 9

Percy and Bianca were enjoying their winter holidays in Xian China, a city full of history and beautiful scenery. Their dad was an archaeologist and came to find relics. Percy and Bianca came with him because Percy loves Chinese history while Bianca loved taking photos. They were very excited to see the landmarks and the culture.

After a few days in Xian, they went to an ancient temple to find relics. While their dad was going to the deep levels of it, they explored around it. Suddenly, they found an amulet.

“The amulet was beautifully crafted. Who owned this beautiful amulet?” said Percy. “Let’s take a photo of it,” said Bianca. When Percy touched the amulet, he felt the amulet was getting hotter. Suddenly, BOOM! They got teleported through a strong whirlwind.

Once Percy and Bianca woke up from their coma. They realized they were in a village house. It was simple with old-looking chairs and tables.

After a few minutes, a young boy came in. The boy looked to be about their age and his black hair was tied as a bun.

“Who are you and where are we?” Percy and Bianca looked at each other in confusion.

“I am Tom. You are in Xian. You fell from the rooftop and I saved you. You have slept for three days already,” Tom smiled.

“Thank you for saving us,” said Bianca gratefully.

“Come on. Let’s go out and buy something to cook,” said Tom.

They reached the market. It looked very busy. “Wow, there are many stalls! It feels like we are in a movie!” exclaimed Percy.

“This is the trading plaza of the silk road. My mom and dad are traders, and they are going on a long journey to trade jade and silk,” Tom said.

Percy and Bianca walked around the market. The stalls had many strange things. “Look! there’s a snake charmer,” said Bianca excitedly.

“There is someone selling amulets. Maybe ours belong to him,” whispered Percy.

They chatted as they walked. “Do you know Zhang Qian, the famous explorer? I want to be just like him! I really admire him because he was sent by the Han emperor to explore the West. He is so brave,” said Tom, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

“I heard of him from dad. It took him 13 years to explore, and he brought a lot of Western culture and food to China.” Percy whispered to Bianca.

“Do you have stuff to trade for food,” asked Tom. Percy and Bianca checked their pockets and found candies.

“Eureka!!! I have candies,” shouted Percy

“What’re candies? ”Wondered Tom.

Percy handed Tom a colorful candy. Tom took it with wide eyes and carefully unwrapped it. "Yum! I've never tried anything like this before!" Tom said with delight.

“Let’s trade this for food,” said Tom. Percy and Bianca traded candies for buns and pork successfully.

“Can we take a photo here?” Bianca proposed.

“I don’t know how.” said Tom

Bianca took out a camera. “1,2,3! smile!”

“Ahhhh!!!!” Tom screamed. “That flash scared me!”

Afterward, they returned to the house and cooked the food together. They enjoyed a wonderful dinner in the small house by the fire.

“I miss dad,” whispered Percy.

Just then, the amulet began to glow, teleporting the twins back to the temple. Once their dad saw them, he shouted, “Where have you been?” Percy and Bianca exchanged glances and smiled. It was the best memory ever.

The Manuscript of an Ancient Woman

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Chak, Giselle – 8

A manuscript was discovered near Xi An. It was believed to be written more than 2,000 years ago. The scroll has yellowed and the words are hardly recognizable. Scholars examined it for many years and recently, it was published.

One day, I was herding sheep in the land of my tribe, the Xiongnu. Suddenly I heard a strange sound. The sound of a bell. I quickly rushed to the camp centre to find out what had happened.

People were screaming and shouting. In the middle of the camp, bound to a stone pole, was a young man about a year older than me. He seemed frightened, yet determined. I looked around, everyone seemed curious. Same as me. Just then, silence came. I turned around. The Chief had arrived, and he spoke:

“We have captured an enemy from the Han, and we had decided to honor him with a Xiongnu wife. Also, all women candidates that want to be his wife, please come to the palace tomorrow.”

Everybody was shocked. This had never happened. But there was not a sound. Everybody was too shocked to let out a sound. And then the Chief left.

On the selection day, I walked to the palace and there were only four people there: Saran, Naran, Hoh, and the Chief. He said, “All of you will get a day to spend with him. And then he will choose a wife. Today is Saran.” We were all confused but nodded, and went back home.

On the fourth day after that, it was my turn to meet the prisoner. He had thick black hair and pearl-black eyes.

The first thing he said after we were in the thick green grassland was “Are you from the Han?”

I whipped around and said, “How did you know?”

“You look like a Han.”

“What is your name?”

“My name is Zhang Qian. What about you?”

“Yue. Yes, I am a Han.”

“You said that you are a Han, so how did you get here?”

“I was captured by the Xiongnu. When the Xiongnu struck, I was sleeping. I tried to run but they caught me. I fought but the Xiongnu were too strong. They put me in a wooden cart until I agreed to join them. They had me ride on horseback to the Xiongnu camp.”

He seemed very absorbed and asked, “The Xiongnu is such a powerful tribe. Then why did they let you live instead of killing you?”

“When I asked the chief about that, he said they didn’t kill children. And why did they let you live?”

“Because the chief said he liked my personality.”

Somehow I thought he was not too bad for a husband, and he seemed to think the same of me because his face reddened.

On the next day, I went to the palace, and inside were the same four people from last time.

The Chief announced, "Now we must let the prisoner choose his wife."

He asked Zhang Qian, "Which one would you prefer?"

Zhang Qian pointed to me. "Her."

Ten days passed. We were married.

"Are you happy?"

The question lingered between us.

I nodded, unsure whether the words were meant for him or for myself.

This morning, I woke up and didn't find my husband in bed.

When I found him, he was sitting amid the grasslands, the wind brushing past him.

"What are you doing up so early?"

"Trying to find out which day would be good for my escape."

"What! Why would you escape?"

"I've been homesick all the time. I still remember my mission to the Yuezhi."

I was perplexed.

Should I help my husband or my clan?

Should I tell or not?

I have lived in this clan for so many years and feel loyal to it. But a husband is family?

Should help him? If I let him go, then maybe one day he will free me.

Fine! If he wants to get to the Yuezhi, I will help him.

"What do you want?"

"A map of the world."

"The Xiongnu have one."

He asked, "Will you help me?"

"Yes!" I snapped.

"Then let's get to work!" He said.

I climbed a tree that was right next to the treasury room and dropped through a smoke vent on the roof. In the center of the room I spotted it. The map.

I grabbed the map and quickly hid it under my dress.

Then silently, I walked back to the hut, closed the door, and finally got relieved.

After seeing me, my husband sprang up and said, "Really, you got it?"

"Yes."

My husband hugged me, tears in his eyes, then put the map into a large sack.

"I will make a plan and escape in three days."

I nodded, full of worry.

"Help me make a distraction, will you?"

I shrugged my shoulders and pulled a blanket of hay around me, and slept.

Chaos erupted among the camp and the Chief was screaming, "Somebody had stolen the map!"

Time is running out. My husband needs to go.

I found him in our hut, chipping away at something.

Sparks flew.

When he saw me, he put the thing in his pocket and stood up and said, "I must leave now."

I loaded his sack with food, water, all the things he needed to survive the hard journey.

We walked to the stables trying not to wake anyone up.

Zhang Qian leapt on the horse, and looked back at me with affection.

"I made this for you."

He tossed me something shiny. I caught it and gasped. It was a glittering jade.

In the middle of it, the gold was the symbol of the Han.

"I...thank you." I stammered.

He galloped away on his horse, disappearing into the dust of the Silk Road.

Will we meet again? If so, I will...

The End of One Chapter, The Beginning of a New Chapter

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Chan Ying Sum, Mia – 10

On the streets of Xi Yu, China, a girl battled every day to survive and live. She was abandoned at the age of five, left with only a black robe and a beaded necklace. The child's name was Gu Du, in Chinese meaning alone. For two years, she survived as a beggar, but she realized that the gold and silver coins given to her was not enough, so she pick-pocketed and stole peoples sacks and bags, hoping there was food or more inside.

Many years passed and Gu Du became a fifteen-year old thief. One day, she snuck into a merchant's house, as she searched around she found an open scroll with an important message inside. "Meet at the riverside with your stock, this is our big chance, we shall be travelling the Silk Road on Tuesday, " Gu Du read out to herself

She did not know the full meaning of message, but she had seen the riverside before and she had heard of the "Silk Road". Stories say it was a road filled with wonder, new sights, new sounds, new people. Quietly, she took the message with her and escaped. The scroll sparked excitement with Gu Du and common sense told her that other merchants would also be there at the riverside, this was a great chance to maybe steal things unnoticed.

Gu Du waited and waited, her heart beating as fast as a ticking time bomb. Minutes ticked by and merchants finally came into view. Gu Du's eyes were attracted to the nearest carts. She crept into one of the carts and was astounded by what lay before her eyes.

She saw stacks and stacks of boxes, full of jewellery, water, and food! Before Gu Du could put anything in her stealing sack, a man's voice boomed across the clearing.

"Merchants, let us travel far and away!" He shouted and the sounds of galloping horses echoed around Gu Du as the cart bolted and she was wheeled away from the only place she had known.

Gu Du's cart hardly stopped moving for ten days straight. She had been lying under covers all this time, she was well fed but tired. Gu Du knew they had traveled far and she was in a completely unknown place. She felt sea-sick from the cart moving side to side, as though on a boat. She eventually peeked out and majestic white palaces lay out in front of her.

The houses in China were like insignificant ants compared to these structures!

On top of a grand building was a sign. 'Welcome to Anatolia!' This must be a town somewhere in Western Asia somewhere along the Silk Road. Gu Du pushed herself to leave the cart, explore her new strange surrounding.

"Hey!" A woman with a ragged, brown dress called out to her. "Child, are you lost?"

"No, I am..." Gu Du said, unable to finish her sentence. The woman had dragged Gu Du out of the cart and pulled her into the biggest nearby palace. Gu Du couldn't wriggle out of the maiden's hand. What could she do?

Before Gu Du knew it, she was in a magnificent mansion. Lamps and torches illuminated the whole room with a bright yellow glow. The woman stuffed a dirty rag over Gu Du's Face. "Don't make a sound if you want to live," the woman's gruff voice snarled. The unknown woman attempted to push her forward, but Gu Du kicked her in the shins but the woman hauled Gu Du onto her shoulder and took her into a dark room and put Gu Du down. Gu Du immediately leapt at the woman. They wrestled and fought on the ground and Gu Du was pinned down. The unknown woman was about to strike her when her eyes landed on Gu Du's necklace.

She gasped and staggered back.

"You....how?" the woman exclaimed, clutching Gu Du's wrists. Her black robe was the same as Gu Du's.

"I—I thought it must be a coincidence, the clothing," she stammered. "Your necklace!" She then pulled out her own necklace. Identical, it looked just like Gu Du's.

"What's your name? She softly asked. Gu Du frowned, unable to understand what the woman was blabbering about.

"I'm Gu Du," she cautiously answered, while taking a deep breath and getting ready to bolt out of the door as soon as there was chance. "Gu Du, I'm Jing Ze, your mother," Jing Ze sighed. Her name meant "shadow" in Chinese to symbolise her life as a thief.

Gu Du stared at her, and she could see some similarities. Gu Du had no chance to say anything as Jing Ze carried on speaking. "I don't know if you can forgive me, but please I would love you to join my clan. We would love to have someone like you join us. This could be our chance to get to know each other." Gu Du was unsure, thoughtfully tilting her head.

"I'll think about joining you, but I have a question." Gu Du decided. What is the silk road?" She remembered the words on the message she stole. "The silk road is where people travel, to explore new lands, new people, this road is where many people trade and learning about each other." Jing Ze explained that her clan had decided to explore these new lands, stop being thieves and be merchants. The Silk Road was a chance to begin again and build a new future. "We shall travel tonight. You can join us if you wish. I will leave you to think about it, but I would like that very much!" She bowed her head and walked out, closing the door.

Gu Du was alone in the dark room, but her head filled with so many questions and strange unknown feelings. Could this person really be my mother? Could this Silk Road be a chance for a new life, a place to call home, and a group to call my family?

The Trapped Venetian

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Chong, Matthew – 10

“I was sent here to trade and learn.” said Nicclo Polo to the intrigued villagers from Constantinople. Nicclo was only supposed to stay in Constantinople for a few days but the captivated villagers begged him to stay so they could listen to more of Nicclo’s stories. Nicclo was a considerate man so he stayed for a few more days. But his true goal was to lay further East: to the glittering heart of the Silk Road, Samarkand

After detouring to Constantinople, he finally arrived Samarkand. The moment he arrived Samarkand, he was immediately surrounded by locals drawn to him like moths to a glowing light. Some wanted to trade with him, some wanted to know about his stories while the others sought for his wise advice. After a few auspicious days of trading, he announced to the villagers that he will be leaving Samarkand.

On his last night, a blaring alarm rose all the villagers from their sleep and one of them screeched “ITS GENGHIS KHAN”. Genghis had already obliterated Samarkand a decade ago and it was horrendous. Nicclo was dazzled by the lightning quick movements from the villagers who were trying to defend from Genghis. He knew he couldn't just stand there and watch; he had to help!

Although Samarkand was a place without a strong fortress, all citizens helped defend their hometown otherwise known as the Pearl of the East. Like the battle of Hong Kong, it only lasted 18 days until Samarkand finally gave in.

Genghis was terrorizing Samarkand, seizing valuables from the citizens and blocking people from getting in and out of the city. Sitting on his front porch, feeling defeated, Nicclo still held the belief that there was a way out. That night, he dreamed of leveraging the power of people – protesting, trusting this idea would work. The next day, he bolted out of his bed as quickly as a cheetah then spread his idea all around town. Not long after, the whole city was chanting “Let us FREE”. As pressure built on Genghis, he finally gave in and retreated his army. Trade was reopening and people were finally free to travel again. Once the gates reopened, he left the town instantly due to excessive delayment.

After 23 years of long travelling, he finally returned to the modern city of Venice. He missed many milestones especially like the birth of the revolutionary explorer and his son, Marco Polo.

Amazing Adventure

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Chung, Amanda – 10

黄红回, but he prefers to be called 小明, is a little boy who works in the old family restaurant with his big brother, his mom, and his dad. The restaurant was passed down by his great great grandpa, so the restaurant is very ancient but yet they serve the best Dim Sum in Dunhuang.

小明 dreams to be a trader so he loves it when traders/customers come to the store and tell him their travel stories and adventures. But he doesn't want to become the shop owner because this means he'll have to stay in the shop with all the responsibilities and won't get to travel.

People often ask 小明 why he is so skinny yet so strong because he is a very scrawny, diffident boy but often carries heavy dishes and food in the restaurant. He always replies, "I have a very complicated morning routine."

But that was not the only reason, he just doesn't want to say the whole thing. Every morning, he wakes up at 5am brushes his teeth then gets ready for their first guest while his brother gets free time. His mom gets ready to cook and his dad cleans the place before it opens. Unfortunately, they haven't had lots of customers lately. Less traders are passing through because there is nothing good to trade, so many traders don't bother to waste their time. So when there is a guest, they need to treat them like a VIP guest because they need more customers to come back and maybe even bring their friends. One day, an elderly man comes into the restaurant and orders some Dim Sum. He sees 小明 working and asks about his dreams. After listening to 小明, he starts to tell a story of being a trader. 小明 is very interested and listens very carefully.

"When I was around your age, I really wanted to be a famous trader. But I was like you, a restaurant worker, hopeless, thinking that I needed money. But then one day similar to today, a trader came in and told me, "*You can bring anything to the Silk Road. Anything is possible!*"

Once I knew about the Silk Road, I was really excited. So I told my parents that I was going on a trip and would return after winter. When I was ready, I went to the Silk Road and followed the big group of traders. At the same time, there were many challenges because there were many people, and many bullies were trying to get people to go other ways so there will be more businesses for them.

When I got pushed out of the group, I went a different way and became lost. Suddenly I heard lots of laughter, and it turned out to be another group but a smaller crowd. They were very welcoming except one person called 饭头. He was very mean and wanted me to leave. In the end the group made him let me in the team because they explained everyone may need help sometimes and he might need my help some day. Plus, they had let him in the group so now he would have to let me in.

Soon the group of traders reached the hard part, Mingsha Shan. Traders needed to either climb mountains or go around it. Because I was new to the Silk Road, I went around the mountain. Unfortunately, 饭头 also chose the same path so together we went. We didn't talk much at first but soon 饭头 said sorry about bullying me. That's when we started to get along. It turned out we both worked in restaurants and this was our first trip.

The following day, 饭头 was nowhere to be seen. Our group immediately searched everywhere. Without much luck, 饭头 was gone. I had to gather myself and carry on. When I finally went home my family was very proud of me and glad I made it back home safely. Most important of all, they were proud that I fulfilled my dream."

The old man finishes his story and smiles at 小明, giving him the encouragement for 小明 to find his own adventure. 小明 remembers this old man's tale.

The day has come when 小明 is finally old enough to go to the Silk Road. He decides to make handmade stitched hoodies and some food as things to trade. 小明 follows the big crowd. The walk is very long so he had many daydreams and one of them is about meeting the other traders from other countries. Suddenly 小明 lost the crowd, and he is shaking in fear hoping to find another group. But all he hears is birds chirping, but when all hope is lost, he hears a faint cry “ Help!” “Help!” “Hhhhhhheeeelp.”

小明 runs after the voice. But in the desert, along with the sandstorm, he fails to see his path. Immediately, images of 饭头 flashes his mind. Could he end up like him, lost and missing?

小明 continues further on he sees hair then a man stuck in sand. 小明 quickly helps him out. They start to talk, it turns out that he is 饭头! All these years, everyone believes he was missing. But he has been just wandering around the desert.

Together, they continue the journey towards the Silk Road to explore the incredible sights, and unique biomes. In the end, they head home together. As 小明 and 饭头 walks home together they talk mainly about the man that came to the restaurant/his friend or enemy. 小明 is relieved to have found 饭头 because that is the real treasure from the Silk Road.

City of Suzhou (Silk Road)

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Lam, Adrian – 10

On a cold and freezing morning on 23rd November, 1225AD, a merchant boat from Lisbon, Portugal docked at the shore of Suzhou, China. The boat carried fifteen traders from Lisbon though the sea route of the Silk Road. At that time in Portugal, traders were starting to explore the world through water travel, making them known as the first global explorers. There are so many tales of the Silk Road but this one is about two special boys who had big dreams and embarked on an incredible journey.

Chris and Ronald, two twelve year old twin brothers, were very poor so they spent the last six years working hard and barely survived through the Portugal streets. So they snuck onto the Portuguese ship and sailed to Suzhou. They spent two years away from home in order to trade their glistening silver with the Chinese, hoping to bring valuable things back to Portugal. These two boys may have looked the same but their personality could not have been more opposite. Chris was very audacious, assertive and expressive. He was brave, fearless and also caring. Meanwhile, Ronald was very wary, smart, innovative and introverted.

When Chris and Ronald stepped in the territory of Suzhou, it was the first time they stepped on land in two years. They were a bit dizzy and still felt the waves from the sea. The first thing they smelled was clean fresh air and trees. Chris, who was very expressive, was very excited about the adventures that they were about to experience. Meanwhile, Ronald was much more cautious of this new environment. He immediately was aware they looked different from the people in Suzhou and the Chinese were curiously staring at their pale skin and face.

They found a lot of differences from Lisbon. They noticed there was a little river running through the town and many people would travel on these little boats. The man on the boat used a long stick to push the boat. The next difference they saw were the buildings. In Lisbon, most of the buildings were made of stone mixed with iron but in Suzhou the buildings were made of wood.

The biggest difference was the food. They went to a Chinese restaurant and the waitress gave them a funny looking curved spoon, and two long sticks (chopsticks). They were very confused about those sticks.

“Para que servem estes palitos e para que serve a colher curva?” “What are these sticks for?”, Chris asked the waitress.

The waitress just stared at them like a statue. Without much help from her, they needed to learn by themselves. They observed how the Chinese people hold the sticks in a weird way and ate with it so skillfully. They clumsily tried to replicate it but failed. At last, they just stabbed the sticks in the food and ate other food with their hands, and the whole restaurant stared at them.

Not only was the way to eat the food weird to these Portuguese boys but also the food! Like white bread which has meat inside with a special sauce (Cha Siu Bao) or a ball made out of fatty pork with shrimp on top (Siu Mai) and rice.

Ronald whispered to Chris, “The food looks funny but very delicious.”

“Yeah, it tastes so good,” Chris replied.

Soon they realised the biggest problem was that they were running out of silver to trade and not knowing how to speak Chinese added an extra challenge. But luckily, Ronald was always a good thinker. He thought of different possibilities to make money like trade for more silk to make clothes for the Chinese people and much more. While they were finding a solution, they saw a Portuguese person who spoke Chinese!

Ronald rushed to ask the man, *“Fala chinês e poderia ensinar-nos durante uma semana?”* “Do you speak Chinese and can you teach us in Portuguese.”

“Claro que pode vir aqui e eu posso ensinar—lhe e também tomar um chá connosco.” the man replied.

“Sure, you can also come to my house for a cup of tea.”

When they arrived at the man’s house there were a lot of photos on the walls. The man’s name was David Fernandez. He was born in Portugal, Braga. His dad was Portuguese and his mom was Chinese. He moved to Suzhou with his family when he was three. They came to David’s house every morning to learn Chinese that week. They also fixed the problem of the silver. They used the remaining silver to buy ingredients to make *Bifana* (a marinated pork sandwich) and *Pastéis de Nata*s (custard tarts) . The Chinese people seemed to like it and they made lots of money from it.

They got a lot of trades for the food and used the trades to trade even more things. They got Chinese clothes, Chinese hats and much more. As they could speak Chinese, they were able to trade smoothly and even order food that they like. They could even talk with different people in Suzhou, and tell them all about their hometowns in Portugal. Soon they found out that people in Suzhou were friendly and nice. They also learnt how to use chopsticks and even brought some chopsticks home!

On the last day, the ship came back to pick traders up. They went to their last chinese lesson with David and said farewell. They saw a lot of Chinese people saying farewells in the dock. When the boat started to leave the dock they both shouted *“Zài jiàn!”* in Chinese, meaning “bye and see you again!”

They watched the people fading away from sight, at first they were the size of a door, then they shunk as small as ants, and finally Ronald and Chris could not see them anymore. Chris turned to Ronald and said “Quando for mais velho, poderá explorar todo o mundo, e não apenas a China.” “When you are older, you can explore all around the world and not only China!”

An Unusual Currency Exchange

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Lee, Amanda – 10

“Tang Dynasty is in grave danger. A new fatal disease has been discovered! It is affecting our soldiers and civilians, and causing symptoms like severe headaches, relentless stomach aches and painful rashes appearing in the most embarrassing positions” I was shocked after reading the rolled up message note delivered by the pigeons from the south of the Yangtze River. I leaped out of my hut and rushed towards Xian Palace. I barged into Emperor Hu’s palace quarters. The emperor’s eyes were half open as he was putting on his golden laced silk robe. He always dressed impeccably and looked elegant in any situation.

“Rui Yee, what’s the matter?” he eagerly asked.

I was breathless and speechless. As I struggled to redeem my voice, he calmed me down with soothing words whilst signaling the guards to bring water to me.

He waited whilst I took a deep breath and continued.

“Your majesty,” my voice became sturdier, “this disease is spreading rapidly and brutally. We must act before it affects our capital.” The emperor nodded with a serious expression, and I could see him going from a concerned to a worried look.

In disbelief, he firmly ordered, “Guards, bring Rui Yee a year of food supplies,” and then he explained his intention for me to travel across the perilous land to Persia to find a cure for this dreadful disease. It was recorded in palace library scrolls that fatal diseases have occurred outside the Tang Dynasty, and remedies were discovered in those regions.

Apart from worrying about how much food supplies, and clothing to take on the journey, I’d thought about taking other items that I could use to trade them with as jiaozi was a currency that could only be used within China. I’d thought about taking silkworm cocoons as they were light to carry as opposed to taking finished silk clothing. As this was an important mission, I decided to take some expensive pieces of porcelain as well.

The palace guards escorted me to join a group of travelers ready to set off along the famous Silk Road route. I unloaded one of my sacks containing the tent and started to set up the tent when several travelers walked towards me and informed me that as we are traveling as a group, there is no need to do everything ourselves. That is, we should help one another, the large group will split into numerous smaller groups, and each smaller group will be assigned to do different tasks like setting up tents; making a campfire for cooking; preparing the meals; feeding the horses and camels; getting water from nearby streams.

I’d felt very welcomed as part of the group and did not have to worry about everything. I focused on negotiating techniques and thought about what if other regions did not want to help Tang’s Dynasty.

We traveled from dawn till dusk and set up camp every night. Travelers traded their items carried from Xian and purchased more local items with tales of silver. Months had gone by very quickly. As we approached Persia, I started planning my journey to the great temple to meet their leader. I asked a few others to join me, explaining the benefits in finding the cure. After taking a while to convince them, they agreed, and we made our way to the great temple. As we walked toward the entrance, a doctor was sitting there, dressed in fancy trousers, and looked like he was expecting us, expecting me.

“So? What’s your offer?” he asked with a gentle voice. Instead of responding with words, I decided to show him. I put my rucksack onto the dusty table and waited for a response.

“Porcelain? Hmm...” he thought for a moment. I could see him scanning the items. “There’s more...” I murmured, and he scavenged through the porcelain and found the silk.

He didn’t look pleased about the trade, his eyes squinted on the silk and porcelain, so I tried to intervene. I told him that if he didn’t like the patterns on the silk, I have silk cocoons and he could make and design patterns on his own silk by stretching the cocoons into a bedsheet—like shape, but he showed doubt upon his face. I unwrapped the first layer of silk gently and carefully, his eyes widened, so I stretched it even more. He set his eyes on the newly stretched silk observing every detail. I kept on doing this step by step until I eventually got to a thin silk sheet. He was astonished by the large sheet and accepted the trade. I didn’t want to carry the finished silk and porcelain back to China so I gave them to him as well.

Once I gathered all the herbal mixture I had traded, I hopped back onto my camel. The sun was setting, and the sky turned reddish pink. We decided to join up with the rest of the group and head back to Xian. We reunited with the group in a damp and cold place near an alleyway. We had a quick snack of wheat bread and settled our camels. I hopped onto my camel, ready for a relieving trip back to Xian.

As we arrived back, I jumped off and ran off to the emperor, Ching, a friend that accompanied me all this time, followed and stopped me. “Bye!” she exclaimed, “come visit me sometime!

“Bye!” I replied, knowing I was going to miss her. The emperor, knowing I would arrive this week, was excited to see me back. I showed him the brew and the recipe and explained how we could use it to sell. He gazed at the brew for a long time. He took the brew and told me he would share it with everyone and not sell it. He was proud. I was proud too! That’s how I became a heroine in Xian.

The Amazing Wonders of Ibn Battuta's Adventures

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Lee, Jiwai – 10

In 1327, Ibn Battuta, the tireless explorer from the coastal city of Tangier, stood at the edge of the known world. While history remembers him as the Maghrebi Muslim famous traveler, in this exciting chapter of his youth, he was a young dreamer who just started his adventure with nothing but a velvet pouch of shimmering family heirloom jewels. These gems sparkled like trapped light, filled with diamond blues, ruby reds, and emerald greens. He hoped to exchange them for his legacy that would be talked about for centuries to come.

His journey with his caravan led him from the cold winds of his home Morocco and into the silent, scorching heart of the Gobi Desert. The dunes rose like tsunami waves that could clobber him at any moment. The relentless sun turned the horizon into a priceless glorious sight. He spent many nights huddled by small fires, listening to the howling wind and dreaming of the day he would return home as a hero.

Eventually, he reached a remote trading outpost in the heart of the Gobi Desert. This hidden oasis, with majestic banners fluttering in the dry wind, was the sign of civilization Ibn Butta had seen in weeks. There stood a lavish tent, filled with the scent of lavender and freshly cut grass, where twelve wealthy merchants awaited. These men who wore exquisite silk robes had seen the wonders of the East and West, yet when Ibn Battuta loosened the string of his pouch, the tent fell into a sudden silence.

They gazed at the Moroccan treasures with hungry eyes. Standing tall in his dusty ragged cloak, Ibn Battuta insisted that these gems were for the wealthiest men. To settle the matter, a fierce bidding war erupted. The air grew thick as the merchants screamed at the top of their lungs raising prices higher than the desert eagles. Eventually, the war concluded in an outrageous winning bid of 967 gold dashing coins. Ibn Battuta felt the weight of the coins like winning a grand lottery. With a victorious smile, he tucked the heavy bag of gold into his clothes and gallantly left towards the long road home.

However, the road back to Tangier was full of peril and filled with darkness. While crossing a high mountain, where the rocks looked like the giant troll's broken teeth, a gang of ruthless robbers descended from the cliffs. They moved with the stealthiness of ninjas, overpowering Ibn Battuta and snatching his hard-earned fortune. They evilly laughed as they cruelly kicked dust into his face, leaving him stranded in the shadows of the jagged rocks.

Left with nothing but the dust on his clothes, Ibn Battuta refused to surrender. He knew that bravery and determination were all he had left. With the focus and courage of a fearless warrior, he tracked the bandits by their footprints and the dust from their campfires. He climbed steep cliffs and crawled through narrow gaps as he quietly watched and waited for the right moment to strike.

Finally, they rested in a narrow canyon. Using nothing but his intelligence and a thundering voice of anger to reclaim his gold. He cleverly rolled boulders down the canyon walls, making the robbers believe an entire army was attacking them. During this chaotic confusion, he grabbed his hard-earned wealth and disappeared into the night before they could recover from their shock.

For weeks, sandstorms hit him like thousands of needles pricking his skin, yet Ibn Battuta pushed himself harder than ever before. He shared his canteen of water with his tired camel, whispering encouragement as they ventured across the endless sandy dunes. His mind was filled with images of Tangier – the smell of the sea, the bustling markets – and the warm smiles and hugs of his parents.

Exhausted with his dirty worn shoes, he still smiled triumphantly through his tired sunburnt skin as he finally crossed the final hill overlooking his hometown. He imagined his parents' pride when they saw the gold and the life of comfort he could now provide for them. He pictured his mother in the finest silks and his father resting in a garden of pomegranate trees.

But the street was strangely quiet. The joy of his return was demolished in an instant as he walked up to his house and the smell of his mother's cooking was missing from the air. Instead of his imagined celebration feast, he found his parents depressingly in the courtyard. The courtyard, once full of flowers, looked sad and gray.

"My son," his father's voice trembled. "Your gold does not matter. Something bad has affected our family." His dad froze with eyes staring at the distance.

His parents began to tell him about the spread of the great sickness during his long absence. The mysterious illness attacked the village, and they lost almost everything while he was chasing fame in the desert. They told him the loneliness they felt and the unimaginable fear of waking up every day that their only son would never return from his dangerous Silk Road adventure.

Ibn Battuta bursted into tears as soon as he learned how much they were suffering. His face was full of sorrow. Nothing could mend his regrets, not even his gold. While he was seeking a "legacy," he missed the most important times with his family. The 967 gold coins seemed like a cruel joke compared to the time he had lost. In that moment, his "glory and fame" felt as light as sand. He realized that the greatest treasure wasn't the gold, it was the family that he almost lost.

As the sun began to set over Tangier, long, black shadows spread across their courtyard. Ibn Battuta held his parents' skeletal and powerless hands. He promised that he would never value shimmering gems over a human heart again. Even with all his gold, he knew the road to healing his family's pain would be much longer and harder than any desert he had ever crossed.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Wang, Isabella – 8

As I lay on my bed wondering how to travel to Europe, a tapping noise interrupted my thoughts. It was Rosie, tapping her pen on the table, probably also thinking about something. I lived in China with my three other sisters: Rosie, Jianne, and Lisa. I was Jennie, the youngest, but I was still the best problem solver.

Jianne was the one who stood out most from us. She was the only one born in Korea and had different goals, such as becoming a K-drama actor. She was also the unlucky one; the one who had to say goodbye to Korea, her hometown. After living in China for a while, she wanted to get out and explore the world with us.

So Rosie asked Mom and Dad, "Mom, Dad, can we go to Europe?"

We loved exploring and finding new things, but unfortunately Mom and Dad said, "Sorry, girls, but we can't just walk to Europe. We can go if you girls find an idea to get there."

We silently brainstormed on the sofa for ideas. It was Lisa broke the silence and suggested horses.

We disagreed because horses only could carry us not but our belongings.

Day after day, no one could come up with an idea. We would stay home all day; nothing would stop us. One day, someone came knocking on our door. Mom and Dad hadn't been home for two days because they had to check on Uncle Jung, so we had to stay home by ourselves. Jianne didn't think twice and opened the door. There were no known crooks in our town. Surprisingly, it was Dad's sister and her sister!

I asked her: "Huh? Why are you here, Aunt Ruka, and with your sister? Has something happened?"

Aunt Ruka nodded her head while saying, "Girls, the Japanese are coming in a few days. You must leave as soon as possible. But first, where did your Dad and Mom go?"

Lisa immediately explained everything to Aunt Ruka and her sister Rora, and they understood right away.

Aunt Ruka said, "Listen, girls, when I was young I also wanted to travel around the world with Rora. But we only traveled in the country. Finding new ways can be difficult, but you just have to believe in yourself. That's what we didn't do and later figured out."

We loved taking advice from people, especially our cousins or aunts. The only problem was that the Japanese were going to invade, and our parents weren't home. Rosie was the most scared and screamed, "What do we do? I'm so scared I can't even process this right do!"

Everyone told her calm down and that there was an answer to this. We could come together and think of an idea but we were just too freaked out and scared.

Then Jianne spoke up confidently, "Aunt Ruka can stay, then maybe we can find a solution together. Is it a good idea?"

We agreed to Jianne's idea.

Days passed and we still couldn't find a solution. Aunt Ruka said "My sister is very smart, maybe I can ask her to come over."

We agreed, so Aunt Ruka rode her horse back home. A day passed, and Aunt Ruka came back with her sister Rora. Rora was asking everyone questions, including Aunt Ruka. It wasn't going that well until Rora asked Aunt Ruka something.

"Hey sis, we rode horses, right?"

Aunt Ruka nodded her head in confusion because Rora took a horse with Aunt Ruka! so she asked Rora, "Why did you ask me that? We rode the same horse together! But maybe let's add to that, just camels?"

Rora said happily,

"Yes sis, that's a perfect idea! Thanks for the idea! You might be even smarter than me by now!"

Everyone agreed, and we started packing our things. We packed dozens of things like food, water, clothes, sleeping bags, currency, food for our horses and camels. We all ate our dinner at the speed of light and went to rest for tomorrow.

The next day came, and we woke up at dawn, quickly ate our breakfast, and went to ride our camels. Afternoon came, and we ate some rice that tasted expired but we had to eat whatever we had to refill our energy. It was a boring day, and Aunt Ruka was exhausted after all the riding on our camels. It was almost night when we arrived at the place where Mom and Dad were staying. They were surprised and said, "Why are you here girls? You never told me about anything."

"It's too dangerous back home because of the war, so we came over," said Rosie.

Mom and Dad understood and decided to join us. We ate dinner and went to sleep. The next day, we were going to travel to Europe. We woke up bright and early and set off to Europe.

Days passed, then months passed by slowly we were halfway there. We saw amazing things like merchants trading things such as sparkling jade like emerald rocks from the lake, silk softer than when snow just came down covering the streets. The desert heat was killing us and we were exhausted but never gave up. 2 months passed by slowly, until we arrived at Italy, Venice.

It was a city full of water. Me and my sisters were overjoyed, we also fulfilled our dream of leaving Asia and going to Europe! Jianne was the most overjoyed out of all of us, she excitedly said, "Woah this is cool! Best day of my life! I love Europe I wish to live here when I grow older!"

That sounded like where any of us wanted to stay when we grew up. Well I learnt another lesson that it takes time and patience to do anything and never give up no matter what. Even though our hometown is getting invaded sadly and that our home is lost, it was still one of the best days of our life.

The Adventures of Anthony Jenkinson and The Silk Road

ESF Sha Tin Junior School, Wong, Charlotte – 10

Anthony Jenkinson was a brave English merchant in the 1500s who went on expeditions along the Silk Road trade paths. He worked hard and tiredly for the Muscovy Company. In 1558, April 23, Anthony Jenkinson began his journey to the silk road for some valuable item trades. He had a goal and that goal was to find a direct trade route to the Orient for English merchants, avoiding Mediterranean routes.

His smart, strategic plan was to travel from his homeland, London, to chilly Moscow, down the breathtaking, azure Volga river, across the enormous Caspian sea, then eventually reaching Central Asia reaching the magnificent city, Bukhara.

On the first day of his adventurous journey, he sailed to the biggest country, Russia, securing kind support from Tsar Ivan IV, who granted ample trading rights to the Muscovy Company. Anthony was very happy with this. He had also traveled to Persia to greet Shah Tahmasp I, obtaining special trade terms. After leaving, he later found that the route to the Indian Ocean was blocked by the Portuguese. He then needed to take a longer route. When he reached a scorching place named 'Mangishlak', Jenkinson and his men formed a big caravan of thousands of sunburnt, yellow camels to cross the desolate, sweltering Kara Kum Desert, encountering local rulers and rude bandits along the way. A tragic stroke as Anthony faced deadly storms, and illness to his crew. He stared out beyond the vast, rough seas, thinking, 'When will I ever get to the Silk Road? When will I arrive?' His worrying made him a bit more scared everyday.

One day, bandits came and tried to rob Anthony and his men for his valuable items. Despite all the bandit's efforts, Anthony and his mates defended themselves and the thieves were unsuccessful. Anthony chased them away and continued to the heart of Asia.

After facing more storms and illness, Anthony Jenkinson, along with his men, finally arrived at the Silk Road. He traded his English woolly cloth, jewels, and other manufactured goods in exchange for raw silk, rare jewels and other delectable spices. Raw silk was very rare in England at the time and would be worth a lot of money.

Jenkinson later went to Bukhara and freed 25 Russian slaves. He had also acquired an enslaved young girl who he brought back to England as a "gift" for Queen Elizabeth. Since he was a kind man, Anthony Jenkinson remembered how Tsar Ivan IV helped him on his journey and traded some of his woolly cloth for a handful of unique shaped minerals.

Although Anthony wanted to go to China, he didn't make it. He went back because he found the route beyond Bukhara impossible to pass due to constant warfare and banditry. Local, usual reports indicated that the paths to China were closed by ongoing regional arguments.

There were loads of special and delicate things to trade on the Silk Road. Things such as: Chinese porcelain, (These ceramic pots were in high demand due to its quality and delicate nature.) rare minerals and jewels, paper, gunpowder, (These inventions from China had a massive impact when they spread to the West!) and many more priceless treasures. Unlimited items to trade on the Silk Road but there was one very common object. Silk. Silk was very high priced and valuable on the Silk road because it was a lightweight, high-value luxury item that was in enormous demand, while its production process was a closely guarded secret held by China for decades. That is why the name has the word 'silk' in it!

Beyond physical goods, the Silk Road was a powerful place for the exchange of plans, religions, beliefs, academic knowledge, and art, shaping all the different cultures across the connected regions for centuries. The Silk Road is the heart of the entire trading network for the whole wide world.

Anthony Jenkinson is very lucky his journey has really paid off to end up somewhere as mystical, magical, and merry as the Silk Road!

The Tael Trap

German Swiss International School, Chadha, Ziya – 10

China was thriving, and with that knowledge, the emperor was peacefully relaxing in his palace. The doorbell rang shrilly, and shortly after, his minister of trade entered the room.

“Huang’di, I have a proposition,” said the minister. “It’s about a new Silk Road.” He showed the emperor a map. “This trade route is 30% shorter and faster, but we would need to set up four additional tax booths.” Overall, it seemed like a good opportunity. The minister left jubilantly, having convinced the emperor.

A little girl was looking to buy some sweets, but when she reached the shop, it was closed. She peered in to look for the owner, and overheard someone say, “He actually fell for the new trade route idea. That gullible emperor trusts me too much. Now, I’ll get rich!” She was shocked to see the emperor’s minister. Feeling scared and unsure, but sure that it was the right thing to do, she ran to the palace.

She urgently requested the guards let her see the emperor and was escorted to him. When asked, she hesitantly told him about her encounter.

When she finished, the emperor thanked her. “Your boldness and judgment are commendable.” He rewarded her, and she left.

The emperor pondered over this information. He needed to confirm if the minister was conspiring against him and exploiting his people out of greed. He thought of the proposed map – he could have experts compare it with the original Silk Road. He summoned one of the oldest traders in his kingdom to inspect the blueprints.

“This new plan is just using the side branches of the old Silk Road, but with some parts renamed,” said the trader. “The biggest change is the unnecessary addition of the four new tax booths!” Having confirmed the minister’s malicious intention, the emperor sat down and penned a letter.

A week later, Gui’wang, a man whose family had always been loyal to the emperor, sat in the spacious palace. The emperor explained to him that they needed proof to reveal the minister’s deceit. Gui’wang asked for some time, as they would need to be cautious in exposing the conceited minister.

Executing his plan, Gui’wang approached the Silk Road Transport Centre asking for a job, claiming that he was an immigrant desperately needing money. Always needing naive, non-interfering workers, they immediately gave him the job. Days passed, and the higher officers could see his honesty and diligence in doing his work.

After a couple of months, he was summoned to the main office where a man wearing a fine robe sat across the table. “I have heard good things about you – we always need people we can trust, especially with money. You’ll now help us with delivering the trade profits to the addresses given.” He handed him two envelopes with addresses on them. “Go deliver them now.”

Exhilarated, Gui’wang left. Though sealed, one of the envelopes seemed way lighter than the other and was addressed to the emperor’s palace. The heavier envelope was addressed to a post-box! The taels were being siphoned away, but they couldn’t link it back to the minister. They needed an alternative plan.

The emperor himself made his way to the tax booths, disguised as a tradesman. He told the man working the booth, “I need you to deliver this package to Xi’an. Here’s the money”. He handed 2000 taels to the employee and left. Soon after, Gui’wang was asked to pick up two envelopes and deliver them, just like last time.

Two days later, the emperor announced an evening of wine and dine at the palace for his minister and friends.

Later in the evening, everyone sat to gamble. The minister placed 1000 taels on the table. Everyone stared at the tremendous amount of money, and the emperor spotted a small dot of ink at the corner of one piece.

“Bo’zhang, where did you get all that money?” the emperor asked, feigning surprise.

“Oh, I recently sold off an old piece of land for 5000 taels.” the minister replied lightly.

“And you’re willing to risk it on gambling? That seems dangerous.”

“I’ll take the risk.” The minister shrugged.

Seeing his smug expression, the emperor signalled for everyone to stop and handed out the minister’s taels. “Can you spot something peculiar on these taels?”

The minister started to say, “Huang’di, what is goi—”, but was cut off by the emperor saying “If you wait, Bo’zhang, you’ll find out.”

Just then, a man shouted, “There’s an ink dot on my tael!” Then, everyone started looking for ink, and more affirmative yells could be heard. But they didn’t know why they were there.

“Let me tell you the reason now.” Everyone looked at the emperor as he cleared his throat.

“All of you know that the Silk Road has been changed and has additional tax booths. Even though the minister promised this to be a financially beneficial decision, the overall profit has been far less than before.” He turned to the minister. “The reason for this is that the minister has been gaining most of the profits.”

“I became aware that he was conspiring against me, and so I asked a friend to help me. Also, recently a tradesman wanted to send goods to Xi’an, and the minister permitted it without consulting me. I know this because I was the tradesman, and I gave him the money which you are holding in your hands.”

“That brings me to the reason as to why all the taels have ink on them. It’s because I marked the money from the trade so I could give you proof of the minister’s cunning.” He pointed at the minister. “Guards, take him to the dungeons.”

As the minister got dragged away, the emperor turned to the crowd. “I shall hereby restore the original Silk Road, and everyone who lost their money will receive compensation.”

Once the minister was jailed, the city flourished.

Peace had been restored, and China prospered once more.

Diary Of a Young Merchant

German Swiss International School, Cheng, Anderson – 11

September 1292 in China: Hello, I am Yang Miao and this is my first time on the Silk Road! I am travelling with my father and uncle, who are very experienced merchants, navigators and mapmakers. We are a very successful family: our family funded 2 of the only local academies! This is my first time seeing the Gobi Desert and it is so desolate. It looks like a sea of yellow and the oases are islands. I might get scared, but I want to trade to get very rich, uphold the family name and see the world otherwise this isn't worth it.

3 DAYS AFTER MAIN ENTRY: It really is empty and there are many dunes so the camels need to work hard. I wonder how many of my ancestors walked these paths and survived. Uncle said that some people found dragon (he means Dinosaur) skeletons here. I hope to get lucky and find one. I hope they sell for a lot because the Westerners prize these bones as a medicine ingredient and Arab scientists frequently study them. The noontime sun is turning the desert into an oven, and the heat is making me very dehydrated so my arms are absolutely covered with rashes.

10 DAYS AFTER MAIN ENTRY: I feel like we are getting engulfed by the desert and I cannot tell if east is west without a compass. The night sky is so clear and last night I was counting stars. I saw a shooting star and wished for safe travels.

20 DAYS AFTER THE MAIN ENTRY: There aren't just dragon skeletons here! The paths are lined with bleached human and camel bones. I feel like I am being watched. I wonder how many people died on the way to and back.

Oct–Nov 1292 in the middle of the Gobi Desert: I am guessing we are in the middle of the Gobi Desert from what my uncle told me. We are slowly running out of food and it is quite hot. I finally understand why merchants do not travel in the summer months. I am actually very bored right now and I am doodling all over the front cover of this book. I just drew all the animals of the Chinese Zodiac. Fun fact: I was born in the year of the Horse.

2 DAYS AFTER MAIN ENTRY: I ACTUALLY FOUND 2 COMPLETE DRAGON SKELETONS! NOT 1, BUT 2! ONE IS THE SIZE OF A LARGE BULL AND THE OTHER ONE IS THE SIZE OF A WOLF! I'M GOING TO SELL THE SMALLER SKELETON AND I NEED TO HIDE THESE PRIZES!

P.S. Do not let anyone read the above or they are going to be JEALOUS. No, absolutely ENVIOUS!

10 DAYS AFTER MAIN ENTRY: Oh well, dad found out. He isn't angry but absolutely delighted. He wants to sell both and he promised to get more for me. He later found out this was unnecessary because he found another two. I guess my family is super lucky! However, we have very little food now and I am absolutely STARVED! We also have so little water we have to recycle our body fluids! We only have a few bags of food and I hid the dragon bones in the empty food bags so bandits won't notice. At least the weather is cooling down.

25 DAYS AFTER MAIN ENTRY: It is now snowing and we had to put blankets on the horses. At least we don't have to worry about water anymore! I myself am wearing 4 or 5 layers and we had a snowball fight yesterday. I hope we are near the edge of the Gobi Desert because this has been HELL.

February 1293 in Baghdad: Oh boy oh boy! It has been a long time since I updated. I'm sorry, I was so busy! We are now in Baghdad, the city that has been mentioned many times in the collection of stories "1001 nights", which were supposedly told by a wife to escape death. We are trading silk, tea, pearls, paper and porcelain for spices, swords, food and precious metals. We also sell jade wares, one for 5 silver ingots. We are pretty rich and are heading to Damascus tomorrow and I heard that it is a beautiful city. However, people say there are a lot of bandits en route.

March 1293 in Damascus: We arrived in Damascus safely a week ago and this city is the prettiest I have seen so far! we are trading spices, pearls, silk, tea and gunpowder for more food, swords, rugs and unripe gourds and melons. We currently have the equivalent of 1,001 gold ingots!

Mar – Apr 1293 somewhere in Anatolia (Turkey): We are Heading towards Constantinople and me and dad sold dad's dragon skeletons for 100 gold ingots! Shortly after we got attacked by some bandits and we took out the Damascus swords in self-defence. They then were so panicked that they accidentally took the horse's feed! Not a big problem, considering there is a lot of grass in Turkey.

May 1293 in Constantinople: We finally arrived in Constantinople, and this is even prettier than Damascus! where we traded pottery, jade, pearls, silk, spices, tea, gunpowder, swords, gourds and melons for horse food, sugar, and tons of gold and silver. We then gave 10 gold ingots to the best inn in town for a 7 day stay there and after that we visited the Hagia Sophia. It is MASSIVE and covers a lot of ground, but I remember a pagoda back in China that was 67.31 meters tall. I think that when we get back home, mom is going to be very happy!

Saffron on the Silk Road

German Swiss International School, Chu, Jayden – 11

My seller picked me up and we passed through the gate of the city. Officials roughly searched me and the sack I was in.

“Be careful with that,” I heard my seller mutter.

After passing the inspection, I was brought to the bustling spice market.

Exotic scents emerged from everywhere, the sounds of bargaining drowning out other noises.

“How much for this pot of saffron?” an elderly man asked, pointing to me.

“50 coins for this one,” my seller replied. The man opened me, smelling the scent.

“I’ll give you 40 for it,” he challenged.

“45, no lower.”

“Very well.” The man handed over the coins. My seller quickly counted them. In exchange, I was handed over.

My new owner took me and put me into his small leather bag. Then, we started our journey, getting farther and farther away from my most recent home, Xi’an.

Creak! Creak! The horse drawn wagon wobbled on the rocky track, its wheels shaking with every bump. As I watched the two brown horses, I thought about the past 7 days on the road. It had been a long trip and I had been sold multiple times in various cities. I remembered the first time I passed through the gate of Xi’an. Back then, I had no idea that the world was so big and I was just resting in the fields.

Creak! Creak!

The sound snapped me out of my thoughts. We were nearing another city. I sighed and prepped myself to be sold.

Memories flashed in my mind. The trips through the deserts, the hands that had held my jar, the huge ships docked at the harbours. The horse driven wagon slowed to a stop, my owner picked me up and walked past the gate of the city. I read the gate sign: 'Samarkand'.

As we approached the spice market, I saw huge mosques and colorful clothing. Finally, my owner got to an empty stall in the middle of the market and gingerly set me down on the countertop. He yelled out, "60 coins for this pot of dried saffron!"

Instantly a small crowd of shoppers swarmed the stall.

"I'll pay 65!" one person shouted.

"I'll pay 70!" another yelled out.

Even as more and more people yelled out higher amounts, my owner simply waited. In the end, I was sold for 130 coins, more than what was asked for.

Thump! Thump! Thump! The beautiful white mare was galloping across the vast expanse of land, green mountains and bright colored flowers decorated the earth. We had been traveling for almost 3 days now and I had been flying around in the sack, my jar knocking against the other jars. Up ahead, I saw huge ornate cathedrals and guards patrolling the gates.

"Finally, Constantinople," my new owner said.

"Halt!" A guard yelled, "We need to search you for contraband." My owner groaned and handed me over. The guard harshly removed the cover of my jar and smelled me. "Safe," he said, passing me back. He let a breath out in relief after checking me for damage. We rode into the city but its sights no longer impressed me. Soon, we approached the spice market.

I felt exhausted as my owner found a small stall and set me down with pots of salt and cinnamon. He started yelling, "140 coins for the saffron! 70 coins for the cinnamon! 50 coins for the salt!" Soon enough, a man arrived at our stall. "130 for this saffron."

"137 coins and not any less."

"Fine, I'll buy it." the customer said. Unlike the first few times where I had been excited to go on a new trip, I felt nothing but repetitiveness.

Pound! Pound! Pound! The hooves of the horse smashed against the rock. I thought about the last few days, the journey and the hundreds of cities I had seen. I hoped this was my last city and I wouldn't need to be traded anymore at crowded spice markets. I was tired; tired of traveling, tired of being sold and tired of just used for trade. My original purpose was to be used for food, not just some exotic item that was moved around. I had heard mentions of a city named Venice, where a customer was finally going to buy me and actually use me. I had learned so much about the world, much more than the small town I was grown in. I thought back to the start, where I had been picked from the flowers I grew in. I remembered the drying process and being packed into my jar. I remembered the cities I had been sold in. I had grown so much and now, this was my last journey (hopefully). Pound! Pound! I got ready for the end.

I looked around as gondolas slowly moved people through the city. Delicious food was everywhere. The crystal clear river was peaceful and still as we passed under the bridges. Soon enough, we made our way to the spice shops. Instead of loud negotiating, there were quiet, musical voices that made their way over to us. This time my owner made their way to a shop. The door bell quietly tinkled its welcome. An elderly man with a white beard smiled as we entered.

"Here, Grandpa. Happy birthday! Your gift, saffron from the Silk Road," My owner said.
"Thank you, Grandson."

As I was handed over, I felt a sense of peace. There was no more traveling anymore. I could relax.

The elderly man gently unfastened the straps and peered through the colored glass. He methodically spooned me into hot water and mixed me in with some sugar. As I colored the water and made it tea, I suddenly realised that this was the first time I had left my jar since being dried.

After exactly two minutes, he took a long, deep sip from the teacup, savouring every drop. My journey had ended and I had finally found my purpose.

The Old Road & The New Dream

German Swiss International School, Ho, William – 10

In 2078, Lumeque aliens from the planet Serath-4 landed on Earth for the very first time, choosing Xi'an, Shaanxi, of all places on God's green earth, as a part of their interstellar exploration into civilizations on other celestial bodies.

"The 100th planet we've been to! How many more?" questioned the younger son, Sirsal.

"Actually, we've been to only 67..." his brother, Zirzal, corrected matter-of-factly, consulting the navigation log on his datapad.

Their father, Interstellar Ambassador of Serath-4, Mirmal, placed a gentle hand on each son's shoulder and said quietly, "Boys, every planet brings us closer to understanding."

The Lumeques are unable to speak human language, nor can they read our minds. Yet they possess the remarkable telepathic power to connect directly with the physical world, with cultural heritage sites themselves becoming Earth's appointed envoys, speaking for the planet's history. Upon touchdown, they were greeted by a voice, one of the most crucial parts of both Chinese and world history: the Silk Road itself.

The Lumeques, leaping up and down in their spaceship in excitement, began to ask questions about the Silk Road: "Are you *actually* a road?" asked Sirsal curiously.

"I am not what you think I am," the Silk Road replied. "I am not just a road but a network of countless routes, connecting the ancient world together. From Chang'an, which is currently Xi'an, in the East to Constantinople in the West, I spanned nearly 15,000 kilometers through my extensive arteries that covered almost all of Eurasia. I was the connection between civilizations."

"So... based on your name, I assume that *Homo sapiens*, oh, you call them humans, traded silk through you?" as Zirzal consulted his Serath-4 Knowledge Repository. "Based on our research, silk is a protein fiber created by insect larvae... Wait, we've documented that Earth-humans seem repulsed by them, yet Earth-humans risked death to acquire it? This contradiction troubles our analysis."

The Silk Road chuckled warmly. "Ah, you've seen my name and thought I was merely a silk trading route. Yes, I know, silkworms look horrifying to many, but their cocoon! The secret material that many craved for centuries. But no, silk is just one commodity: the most famous, perhaps, but not the only treasure I carried. Through me, people also traded Indian spices, Chinese tea and porcelain, Persian carpets, and horses from the steppes. It has always been a two-way exchange between East and West. I was the channel through which the world's most precious goods moved."

"Just material goods?" said Mirmal in shock: "And who travelled along your paths to make you so famous?"

The Silk Road responded thoughtfully: "My greatest gift was far more valuable than goods. I carried ideas, religion, mathematics, and philosophy, linking thinkers from the Orient to the Occident. Notable travelers like Marco Polo journeyed through me, changing the world with their chronicles. Ideas flowed through me as surely as silk bolts and spices, transforming how people thought, not just what they owned."

"Were you always a benign entity?" pressed Mirmal, as he reflected upon Serathian history. He knew that nothing was ever so perfect.

The Silk Road's voice was tinged with sadness, like whispers in the dunes of Inner Mongolia, "I wish I could say yes. But the truth is more complicated. Wars were fought over control of my pathways. Plagues spread along my routes, decimating entire populations. The conquests that briefly unified me brought both unprecedented trade and terrible violence. I could not control what humans did with their access to my routes. I watched all this unfold but could do nothing except bear witness. I am merely a reflection of humanity itself, both its greatest aspirations and darkest impulses."

"Why is your destiny tied with China's?" continued Mirmal.

"Because," the Silk Road replied with profound resonance, "China's innovative spirit gave me existence. The Han Dynasty Envoy Zhang Qian mapped my earliest pathways, and the Tang Dynasty expanded my influence further, bringing stability and prosperity to my pathways. It was China's control and expansion during these golden ages that established the routes upon which I was built. My fate and China's destiny are not merely connected; they are symbiotic."

Zirzal and Mirmal blurted simultaneously, "Why did Earth—humans abandon you in the 1400s then?"

The Silk Road's voice grew soft, "I did not die during the 1400s, the Age of Discovery, though many believed I had. My overland route simply lost favor to maritime alternatives. Ocean routes proved to be more efficient for bulk cargo. For several centuries, I seemed forgotten in history's shadows. Yet I merely slept, waiting for the world to recognize my enduring value. In 2013, China deliberately resurrected my spirit through the Belt and Road Initiative. With the rise of China, new infrastructure was built and new partnerships were forged along my paths. I carried on the principles that defined my existence: connection enriches all parties. Exchange creates value. Understanding bridges all distances."

Mirmal nodded, "We detected something extraordinary the humans did! The Chinese Earth—humans recognize that the future mirrors the past." He continued to tell his sons, "We should learn from the Chinese Earth—humans. On our planet, civilization is divided. The young generation of Lumeques fought each other to reap resources and undermine their partners for power. This is the very reason we came to Earth to learn. What a great lesson!"

As the family of the Serathian Ambassador lifted off, their vessel a shimmering beacon against the twilight sky, they carried a profound understanding of our capacity to build connections across seemingly impassable distances, exchanging not merely goods but ideas, wisdom, and perspectives. Crucially, they absorbed vital lessons from China to improve their own civilization back on Serath-4.

The spirit of the Silk Road, satisfied as the vessel rose toward the stars, remained composed, ready for the next travelers. This journey solidified a new Chinese Dream, one that shines as a guiding light for the world: a shared, luminous future for all, born from an ancient road.

Nazani's One-Hump Adventure

German Swiss International School, Luk, Amelia – 8

My name is Nazani. I'm ten years old, which basically makes me an adult in camel years, but honestly, I still feel like a kid at heart.

Right now, I'm on the biggest adventure of my life. I'm part of a caravan trotting along the Silk Road from the Middle East all the way to faraway China. My back is loaded with spices, Persian carpets, and shiny glass bottles.

But I have a bit of a problem.

I'm not like other camels. My mum was a Dromedary (one hump), and my dad was a Bactrian (two humps). When my dad rescued my mum from a sandstorm, it was love at first sight. Fourteen months later, I was born—a hybrid with only one hump.

All the other camels on this trip are pure Bactrian, and they act like royalty with their two shaggy humps.

“Hey, Nazani!” called Zorba, the biggest and meanest of them. “Did you lose your second hump? How will you make it to China with only half a tank of energy?”

“She's a half-camel!” the other camels teased. “She'll never survive the cold!”

I held my head high, pretending their words didn't bother me. “My one hump is better than your two put together!” I said, my voice trembling just a little. But secretly, I worried they were right. The road to China was thousands of miles long, and I was just little Nazani.

One afternoon, the sky suddenly darkened into a blood orange color. The sun disappeared behind a haze, and the wind started howling like a pack of hungry wolves.

“Sandstorm!” shouted Shiro, the kind merchant leading our caravan. “Take cover!”

The wind hit us so hard that we were sent sliding. We huddled against a rocky cliff, trembling as the world turned into a swirling cloud of dust.

While we were hiding, I saw something flapping in a deep crack in the rocks. I nudged it loose with my nose, and it fell at Shiro's feet. He unrolled the tattered piece of paper, squinting through the dust, and gasped.

“By the Great Wall!” he whispered. “Nazani, look! This is a guide to the Secret Jade Route!”

The map was covered in beautiful black ink drawings and characters I didn't understand. “This shows a hidden path through the valley,” Shiro explained, tracing a line. “It avoids the blocked mountain pass. And look at these characters, Nazani. This is a Dragon (lóng).”

I blinked. I thought dragons were scary monsters!

“In China,” Shiro said smiling, “the Dragon isn't a monster. He is powerful and wise, the symbol of the Emperor. See here?” He pointed to another character. “This is the Phoenix (fēnghuáng). She represents peace and balance. We need the strength of the Dragon and the wisdom of the Phoenix to finish our journey.”

My spirits lifted. Maybe I wasn't just a one-humped camel; I could be strong like a Dragon!

We followed the map's secret path. It led us safely out of the sandstorm.

A few days later, we reached the Jade Gate Pass. It was a giant square mud-brick fortress with a wide wooden gate, standing like a guard in the desert.

"This is the official entrance to the Middle Kingdom!" Shiro announced, bowing his head. "Beyond this gate is the Hexi Corridor, the path that leads to the great cities."

We had made it! We were finally in China!

Our first stop was Dunhuang, an oasis glowing like a firefly. The most impressive sight was the Mogao Caves.

"Inside these caves, monks painted thousands of pictures of the Buddha," Shiro told me. The sweet scent of the sandalwood incense burnt by the worshippers made everything feel calm and peaceful.

From Dunhuang, we marched through the Hexi Corridor. In this narrow passage, I had ebony mountains on my left and endless sand to my right.

Zorba was struggling. His two humps were heavy, and he was tired. "I can't... keep up..." he wheezed. I trotted up beside him. "Lean on me, Zorba," I said. "My one hump is aerodynamic. I can cut through the wind for you." Zorba nodded reluctantly. For the next hundred miles, I led the way.

We reached a giant, roaring river that looked like melted clay. "This is the Yellow River," announced Shiro. "The Mother River of China."

We crossed it on rafts made of sheepskin! It was scary, but I remembered the Phoenix—peace and balance—and kept my hooves steady.

Finally, after months of traveling, we saw it—giant grey walls rising out of the mist! We've finally made it to Chang'an!

Chang'an was the biggest city I'd ever seen. The streets were straight and wide, arranged like a fishing net. A bell chimed every hour from a tower to tell the time. The market was a whirlwind of smells and colors. I saw porcelain bowls so thin they looked like eggshells. Shiro called them "white gold".

We unloaded our packs, and the Chinese merchants were delighted. In exchange, we loaded up with bundles of silk that shimmered like water and blocks of fragrant dried tea. The trade was complete!

That evening, as the city glowed with red lanterns and flickering candles, Zorba walked up to me, looking uneasy. His usual swagger was gone.

"Nazani," he grunted while kicking the dirt with his hoof. "I'm sorry I made fun of your hump. You... you did a great job. That map saved us, and you helped me in the Hexi Corridor. Turns out, one hump is just as good as two. Maybe even better for finding secret maps."

I smiled, my one hump wiggling with happiness. I wasn't just a "half-camel." I was Nazani, the Dragon-hearted explorer who crossed the Yellow River!

Just then, Shiro came over with a special reward for my hard work. It was a giant bowl filled with the tastiest honey-soaked dates I'd ever tasted!

CHOMP! I took a huge bite. The dates tasted like victory.

Whiskers on the Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Cheung, Ho Shun Charles – 8

Curling and snuggling up in a cozy basket, licking his paws in a camel caravan, the white furry creature peeked through his green eyes at the desolate and yellowish horizon. Strong gusts of wind stirring desert sand rustling his thin nose, he could smell pepper and cinnamon in the air. His name was Sevibone – a Persian cat with fur the colour of snow, and eyes like green glass. He had been born in Kazakhstan, a country in Central Asia, where his world was filled with wool, spices and gems.

Rogi, a superstitious merchant, believed Sevibone would bring luck. He kept him close and would summon him by ringing the bells slung beside the camels. Sevibone also made himself useful by keeping rodents away. And so, mile by mile, they journeyed from the west to the east over mountains and valleys, along the corridors and endless deserts to Chang'an in China.

The dry, clean scent of sand and camel fur gradually turned into perfume of wet earth, woodsmoke, herbs and aromas. The air grew heavy and the sounds grew dense. Among cheers of the crowds and firecrackers, the camel caravans marched through the canyon walls of Chang'an through the stone gate under the stern gaze of Tang soldiers in bronze armour. With his feline hair and ears standing upright, Sevibone peered from his basket, his eyes wide open. The strange music, the ladies in colourful costumes dancing with flowing sleeves, the laughing children singing an unfamiliar sound, the clink of copper coins from the stalls, this city was buzzing like a hive. Chang'an was a new rhythm for Rogi and Sevibone.

Rogi set up his stall, selling pepper, cinnamon, and wool near the Western market. Sevibone, while mostly dozing in the sun, explored every corner of the city, claiming every rooftop his territory, turning every single thing he saw into his toys, even the ceramic porcelain, which he tried hard to squeeze into for a nap. A wanderer by night, he hunted plump mice in sacks that held more grain than he had ever seen.

Dashing through the alleys, long and short, chasing moths of silk was one of Sevibone's daily challenges. With leaps and bounds, he performed a spectacular, twisting jump to a moth on a lantern in the temple opposite the Western market. Extending his front paws, he shot his claws towards the moth like a furry cannonball. The moth, however, fluttered straight through the cat flap and vanished. Sevibone had no time to figure out where the moth went, but a new, overwhelming smell filled his senses. It was the smell of muddy puddles, canine musk, and strangely, meat. Sevibone froze, every hair on his body standing upright.

Slowly, he looked up.

There, in the courtyard, was Golden Fortune – a massive, brownish dog who lived in the temple. He believed the entire Chang'an, especially this courtyard, was under his protection. He had been lying in his favourite soft patch of mud, snoring peacefully, when a white missile exploded and rolled into his area. For a long, terrible moment, they just stared. Golden Fortune's brain, which worked at a fierce speed, processed the intruder standing in front of him. He had never in his dog's life seen such a white, hairy, creepy creature. A deep, rumbling growl started in his chest, a sound like thunder. The growl woke Sevibone – he was ready to fight too his green eyes locking onto his enemy's brown ones. What they didn't know was that there was an observer.

"Golden Fortune! Enough!"

The human voice was from a young woman, the daughter of a city official living next door. Her name was Moon. She watched Sevibone not only with fascination but with love and admiration. Never in her life had she ever seen an animal so exquisite and so adorable. Slowly, she knelt and extended a hand. Sevibone approached. There was an

unfamiliar scent. On Moon's palm was a dried fish from the Yangtze River. Sevibone's eyes lit up at the first bite—the unique sweetness, firmness, and earthy taste of the fish lingered on his tongue forever.

Sevibone began to visit Moon. They would sit in the courtyard, reading poetry, practising calligraphy or playing with a yarn ball under the tree. Sevibone loved curling at her feet, enjoying the moments of peace and silence away from the chaos of the city. Moon called him, "Jade Eyes", and sometimes spoke to him of small sorrows and quiet joys, her words washing over Sevibone in a gentle breeze.

Rogi's business grew. Long queues were at his stalls from dawn to dusk. His profit was not counted in coins, but in gold.

Seasons turned. One evening, as autumn chill arrived, Sevibone was curling on Moon's lap by a charcoal fire. From the street came a familiar jangling sound—the bells, the command of Rogi. He was leaving. The camel caravans were reformed, bound for the west with a load of silk, tea and rolls of paper.

Sevibone lifted his head. It was the call of the desert, a flash of memory pulling at his heart: the sky full of stars, the taste of sand on the wind, and the galloping of the camels. Moon's hand stilled on his fur. She understood.

"You hear the Road, Jade eyes?"

She lifted Sevibone and carried him to the courtyard gate. Rogi was there, checking saddlebags.

Rogi looked at Sevibone, then at the girl's kind, sad face. He opened his arms. Moon placed Sevibone into the familiar basket, now lined with a piece of silk handkerchief Moon had secretly tucked inside—a pale yellow piece with the Chinese character of her name "Moon".

Then, the caravan began to move. The basket swayed with the old rhythm. The gigantic stone gates of Chang'an passed overhead, and the endless road stretched like a bolt of silk.

Nestled in the silk handkerchief in the basket, Sevibone, the cat who had walked the Silk Road, closed his teary jade eyes dreaming of the silk moths and the human warmth, carrying the desert's sand in his fur, the mountains' chill in his bones, the sounds of a dozen languages in his ears, and the scent of the fish from Yangtze on his whiskers.

Haunting at the Sand Dunes

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ho, Stella – 11

I had just finished an atrocious airplane meal and getting ready to take a quick nap before my flight lands. Anticipation had been boiling up inside of me for the past 2 weeks from waiting for this day to arrive as I embark on my Silk Road Tour. Since my childhood days, I had been fascinated about the Silk Road and its tales. It was one of the most majestic networks of roads connecting different countries in order to support a trading system. Emperor Wu was the mastermind behind this network of roads as he sorted to establish diplomatic relations with countries outside of China. The tour allows me to travel the exact roads that the merchants stepped foot on during ancient China. It was exhilarating for me because I felt as if I was reliving history itself. Little did I know that I would be experiencing this on a literal sense....

The first stop was Dunhuang where the Echoing Sand Mountains and Crescent Moon Spring are located. Both attractions are geographical phenomenons. The journey to reach the crescent moon spring was excruciating and the temperature just makes things worse. The sun hung in the sky like a huge fireball, raining down heat mercilessly onto the desert. I was sweating profusely and my sweat trickled down my face like a waterfall. The terrain that we had to move on was unique as it was quicksand beneath our soles. We had to climb the steep inclination using ladders placed on top of the quicksand. Every pain sticking step brought me closer to paradise and that was my motivation to keep foraging. After what seemed like an eternity, I finally reached the summit of the sand dune. The soft whistling of the wind sounded like a melodious harmony which erased the fatigue from my aching body. I closed my eyes and basked in the serenity of the place. Suddenly, from under my feet, loud and ominous noises can be heard. It sounded like the moans of humans who were on the brink of death. My tour guide told me not to be alarmed as these noises were a common occurrence in this desert, hence the name “Echoing Sand Mountain”. A natural miracle sat in the middle of the sand dunes. A spring in the shape of a crescent moon formed an oasis in the middle of the desert with lush plantation surrounding it. This is not a mirage, even though it defies logic regarding its existence. Rumors were that this spring had existed for thousands of years without drying up. This peculiar place is called Crescent Moon Spring, and it was the place where we would be spending the night in. Over the years, hotels and restaurants were established at this very place in order to capitalize on tourists visiting this place.

After a scrumptious dinner filled with traditional Chinese delicacies, I retired to my room as fatigue was starting to catch up to me. Within minutes of hitting the bed, I was sound asleep.....

Screams of agony and anguish tore through the serene night. Shrill sounds of clashing metal thundered continuously. I jolted awake from the comforts of my bed with my heart thumping in my chest. From the corner of my eye, I saw eerie glows of light flickering. Out of curiosity, I walked towards the window and checked to see what the commotion was. Under the moonlight, I could see silhouettes moving frantically across the sand dunes. I squinted my eye to have a closer look and I was shocked to see two groups of people fighting. What was more astonishing was that they were clad in clothes that were out of time. Some of them were dressed in ancient Chinese armour, some were dressed in long robes cowering behind horse carriages. Another group of people were dressed like savages with gigantic scimitars. The conflict ended with the savages winning the battle easily. The people in the Chinese armour and long robes were either decapitated or mutilated. The gruesome and bloody scene proved to be too much for me and I fainted on the spot.

I opened my eyes slowly and looked around to see a setting that is similar to a hospital. From the corner of my eye, I saw the tour guide sitting in a chair looking at me with a very concerned and worried expression. He asked me what happened and I filled him with the details. I was surprised that he remained calm. He then told me something that caused a shiver to run up my spine. I wasn't the first one to have witnessed the gruesome battle. Thousands of years ago, there was a Chinese convoy that was returning to China from a trade mission with Egypt. In the possession was a valuable gift from the Pharaoh. It was an enchanted artifact called Eye of Anubis which was rumoured to have

powers over the dead. However, the convoy met with a demise midway through their return voyage. They were robbed and brutally slaughtered at where Crescent Spring used to be. The Eye of Anubis was lost in the battle and never recovered. It is said that the spirits of the dead Chinese generals continued to haunt the place, trying to defend the artifact till the end of eternity. My tour guide even showed me a picture of what the Eye of Anubis was supposed to look like.

It has been days since the incident happened and I had arrived home safely. As I was unpacking my luggage in my home, the supernatural story lingered in the back of my mind like a persistent cobweb. As I was rummaging through my suitcase, I noticed a strange looking box at the very corner of my luggage. The box was made from gold and it had an extremely exquisite look. On the surface of the box were rows of hieroglyphs. I opened the box cautiously and staring straight back at me was the legendary Eye of Anubis...

The Dawn of A New Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Law, Chung Ting Nicholas – 10

It was a warm afternoon, and the relentless sun beat down on the Arabian village below. Omar was busy gathering supplies for his two-week trip along the Silk Road. Omar couldn't help but feel a sense of anticipation. His father, Jafar, a respected tradesman, was taking Omar with him on a journey to trade on the renowned Silk Road. Omar's village was famous for its exquisite porcelain and Jafar had packed dozens of porcelain tableware in a large, musty trunk.

'Omar, let's go,' Jafar called out, his voice filled with urgency. The pair climbed into a stuffy, hot carriage pulled by two ink-black horses, their hooves clapping against the dusty road. As soon as they were out of the village, the horses picked up speed, making the carriage rattle dangerously. Clouds of dust trailed behind, leaving wheel tracks in their wake.

Omar lost track of time as he and Jafar travelled up countless mountains and through countless villages and valleys. They spent the next few months chatting and playing in the carriage.

At last, the pair arrived in India. Grand, arching mosques dotted the city, and moonlight parties filled the night. Jafar opened the trunk and pulled out numerous boxes containing porcelain tableware, and a lone passerby stopped to negotiate with him. Later, they bought dinner at a local restaurant selling spicy curry and ate inside the carriage. Omar savoured the mixed spices that made his mouth feel like it was hosting a tasting parade. After eating, Jafar explained to Omar that the Silk Road snaked through many countries such as China, Persia, Arabia, India, Vietnam, and many more places.

Suddenly, a stranger dressed in long, violet robes appeared from behind a mosque. He headed straight for the carriage where Jafar and Omar were sleeping.

"I want to share a delicious recipe with you for two porcelain pots," he said. Jafar agreed and handed over two pots. The stranger sat down and pulled out a faded scroll.

'This is an ancient family recipe for chicken tikka using chicken, butter, and rice,' the stranger explained. 'My name is Jayesh, and I want to pass on this recipe to you. We will need two large chickens, a large block of butter, and one sack of rice. We can find chickens and rice in China, and butter here in India. Should we start?' he asked. Omar nodded as Jafar nudged the horses up. The horses picked up pace, galloping through the hamlet in the dead of night. A few hours later, they arrived at a local spices shop where Jafar traded for a block of butter.

Over the next three months, Omar, Jafar and Jayesh shared stories over the campfire and savoured lots of different local foods. In time, they arrived at a rather peculiar-looking temple with triangular roofs and wooden panels for doors. 'This is China,' Jafar announced as the trio got off the carriage. As they made their way into the temple, Jayesh explained that this temple was China's largest trading hub. The air smelled wonderfully of different scents of spices, food, and ingredients. Suddenly, the freshest, fragrant smell wafted through the main hall, drifting gently from a room on the left. Lost in scents, Omar wandered towards the room. Then, the most astonishing sight met his eyes. Chickens, freshly baked, were laid on a large silk cloth on a wooden table. Different meats such as beef, pork, and lamb were piled high nearby. People scurried around like rats, calling out to each other as they passed. Merchants from all over the world were gathered here, beckoning people and inviting them to trade. The sound of haggling came from the chicken stall, where most people were lined up. Behind Omar, Jafar and Jayesh emerged, both carrying large porcelain pots.

What felt like hours went by, and finally, it was their turn. The merchant greeted them cheerfully and asked, 'How many chickens would you like?'

‘Two chickens, please,’ replied Jayesh. The merchant nodded and handed over two large, bulging bags. They bid farewell and continued on, striding through into an underground tunnel.

After what seemed like an eternity, Omar, Jafar, and Jayesh emerged in an underground cavern. Bright, eye-catching paintings hung on the walls. Fresh, mouth-watering scents drifted through an opening on the left. Omar marvelled at how such a colourful trading paradise could fit underground. Then, he spotted it. In the corner was a Chinese stall selling all sorts of rice. They quickly picked a sack and left the underground cavern.

He was relieved to feel the light, soothing breeze caressing his skin, and the fresh air reminded him of the open garden in his village. He suddenly felt homesick. Soon, they arrived back in the carriage. ‘Excellent, we can go home now!’ Omar cheered. They offered to give Jayesh a lift back home.

For the next few weeks, Omar and Jafar exchanged stories with Jayesh. They shared stories of wild beasts and vile gods. When they had arrived in India, Omar felt sad and didn’t want Jayesh to leave. Jayesh bid farewell and promised to visit them in Arabia. Jafar and Omar waved and sped off.

A few days later, they arrived back at the village. The villagers rushed out to greet them, and Omar and Jafar were lifted into the air. Jafar pulled out the faded scroll and all the ingredients.

‘We found an ancient family recipe that we can all enjoy!’ Omar cheered. One by one, the villagers curiously crowded around the recipe, whispering among themselves. The village head declared a celebration feast, including the exotic curry that Jafar and Omar had found. They laughed and enjoyed the feast late into the night. Before bedtime, Omar reflected on how his adventure had gone and all the new people he had met. He felt overjoyed that he had been lucky enough to embark on this amazing journey on the Silk Road. Then, sleep overtook him, and he closed his eyes.

Xuanzang’s Adventures on the Silk Road to Retrieve Buddhist Scriptures

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Li, Ethan – 8

Xuanzang was the most regular Buddhist monk you could imagine. He lived with three others in a wooden hut in Chang’an. The city surrounded by towering mountains and massive villages, and boats glided on the surface of the thin streams that trickled through the middle of wide, grassy plains. But Xuanzang missed it all, as he was confined to his windowless, boring hut. It was in this hut that the story began, with Xuanzang tossing a log into the pit where dying flames crackled, before beginning to meditate.

After meditating, the monks sat down at the lunch table. One monk said “Oh well, we are just going to wait until someone finds out about the something-about-buddhism, eh?”

The ‘something-about-buddism’ was just a simple roll of parchment with text written by who-knows-what. Of course, whoever wrote it was not there anymore. Some said the person vanished once he/she had finished writing it. Others said the person had died, and to keep it a secret, no gravestone had been placed in the soil.

‘It looks like we will have to wait until a madman breaks the laws of Lord Li the First,’ said another monk.

Suddenly, Xuanzang got the craziest, wildest idea someone that could ever have in a century. He said something that no one would say in his wildest dreams. “I will go.” Before anyone could stop him, he bounded off to pack.

629 CE

Xuanzang had spent at least half a year packing. He then petted his swift, white, thousand – mile – horse, packed some hay, and mounted it. The horse jumped and snorted in greeting and started trotting forward. At midday, they settled down to eat. Afterwards, fully energized, they broke into a run, entering the desert.

The desert was burning hot, hotter than burning hot, baking hot. The sun shone down on Xuanzang, and even his thousand-mile-horse was not keeping up too well. They had to stop five times for water. If this kept up, they might die of thirst almost immediately after setting off. Then a new problem arose that made both rider and horse forget about their sweat-soaked clothes and fur, and their thirst. It was the bandits.

The first bandits jumped out at them, saying “Give us money or we kill you”. Weaponless, Xuanzang could only back away as the fearsome bandits closed in. And they attacked. The bandits charged at them, swords raised, blades well-polished. What Xuanzang did not know about his horse was that it was very brave. It kicked out with its powerful hind legs at the bandits, taking out two. The rest scattered without looking back.

The food supply was running low but Xuanzang was not panicking, since Buddhist monks never panic, and he could convince almost anyone to give him something to eat. He went into a random hut where an old man inside sat him down. Halfway through their meal, the old man asked him where he was from. “I’m from a Buddhist monastery hut called Tangqin, and I’m traveling to India. Whoops, I should not have told you,” said Xuanzang. With that, he dashed out of the door, mounted his horse, and galloped away at full speed. Just in case you are wondering, Emperor Li the First had banned travel to India, even for the purpose of retrieving the true legendary texts. So basically, the big secret had been revealed. Now he was pretty sure that the old man would report him to the emperor.

Tang Taizong’s Palace

“We have a visitor,” one of the men in the palace called out. At that moment, Emperor Li the First, also known as Li Shimin, was relaxing on the throne, munching on a crunchy lamb leg. “Let him in! let him in!” Shimin called. The visitor was the old man who Xuanzang had asked for food, and who was reporting Xuanzang to the emperor. The old man knelt on the carpet before the emperor and waited for permission to speak. “Speak, please,” said Li Shimin. The old man told him the news, “A madman is breaking your laws!” he described his appearance to Li Shimin. “Thank you,” said the emperor, “You may go now.”

After the old man had left, Li Shimin ordered some reinforcements for the soldiers guarding the border of India. Meanwhile, Xuanzang was crossing a grassy plain stretching for miles and miles.

So Xuanzang, set off at a gallop, leaping over thin streams and wading through refreshing rivers. This is what a thousand-mile-horse should do. The landscape gradually changed from grassy plains and bustling villages to baking deserts and windless valleys. The wind whipped at the rider’s faces, but they did not stop. Finally, they reached the border, where problems began. The border guards were very fierce and, recognizing Xuanzang, attacked. Xuanzang had no choice but to retreat, and think hard about his plan.

He finally settled on a good one and decided to give it a try. He leapt over the guards, forcing them to back away. Almost immediately after landing in the middle of the army, he leapt again and started zooming towards the legendary texts. He galloped towards a temple, snatched the texts when no one was looking, and galloped back to the boundaries. The guards have probably learnt their lesson by now, so it will probably be difficult for Xuanzang to get back.

The new plan was to go AROUND the guards and continue. Since this was a THOUSAND-MILE-HORSE, Xuanzang did it—no sweat. He then retraced his route to where he had started, and showed Emperor Li the First the true legendary text. Despite breaching the law, he was awarded twenty chests filled with gold to the brim.

Xuanzang was the richest and most unusual person in history. He lived in a beautiful mansion in the centre of the village, so he never missed a thing. He really had some catching up to do!

Please note that this story is 98% fictional—all fiction except for characters and the texts that Xuanzang wants to retrieve. Any event in this story that actually happened is completely coincidental. Please do not take this story seriously.

The Emperor's Silk Quest

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Li, Xiwen – 8

Once upon a time, there was a famous merchant named Chan. He was well known for his grand mission to the China Silk Road, where he searched for the world's best silk to make the finest clothes for the emperor. Merchant Chan was both a trader and a designer. He loved his work very much and was very loyal to Emperor Jade. He believed that designing clothes for the emperor was the greatest honor of his life. However, the journey to the China Silk Road was by far the hardest journey any designer had ever faced.

As soon as Emperor Jade gave the instructions, Merchant Chan prepared for the long journey. He set sail immediately using the best ship from the palace. The emperor allowed him to take six of the finest and bravest sailors. The ship was strong, and the sailors were skilled. On the first day, the journey went smoothly. The waves were calm, the sky was clear, and the wind gently pushed the ship forward. Merchant Chan felt peaceful and hopeful. That night, he went to sleep feeling confident about his mission, dreaming of the beautiful silk he would find.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, the ship hit a giant rock hidden beneath the water. A loud crash echoed across the sea. The ship began to break apart and slowly started to sink. Water rushed inside, and the sailors shouted in fear. Merchant Chan and his crew felt helpless and thought they would soon drown. Just when all hope seemed lost, they saw a small boat approaching them. The moonlight reflected on the waves, making the boat look magical as it came closer.

On the boat sat a beautiful young lady. She was none other than the daughter of Emperor Zheung. The princess was not only pretty but also kind and brave. Without fear, she guided her boat toward the sinking ship. She decided to help the merchant and his crew even though she did not know them. One by one, Merchant Chan and the six sailors climbed onto her boat. They were tired, wet, and shaken, but they were alive. The princess offered them food and blankets, and everyone felt a little better after the terrifying night.

The princess rowed them across the sea for three long days. Then, they reached a sunny and magical island. The moment they arrived, everyone was amazed. The water around the island had the rarest aqua color, sparkling under the sun. The woods were covered in shiny green moss, and the air felt fresh and clean. Birds sang happily, and the place looked peaceful and full of life. Merchant Chan had never seen anything so beautiful. Even the sailors stared in wonder at the colorful flowers and tall trees. The island smelled sweet, and the gentle wind made everyone feel calm. The princess and the crew soon agreed to work together on the mission. Deep inside the woods, they discovered a tall and glowing tree. This tree was very special. It produced the finest silk threads in the world. The silk shined brightly and felt softer than clouds. Everyone stared at it in wonder. Merchant Chan carefully pulled some silk threads, feeling how smooth and perfect they were. The princess warned him to be careful, but he was so excited that he could not stop.

Carefully, the crew and the princess began pulling the silk threads from the tree. At first, everything seemed fine. But after a while, the island began to change. The beautiful blue sea slowly turned moldy. The green grass became brown and dry. Leaves fell from the trees and turned to ash. The princess became frightened and begged them to stop. She told Merchant Chan that the tree was alive and needed to stay in the forest to keep the island beautiful. Merchant Chan hesitated, but his loyalty to Emperor Jade was stronger. The crew continued pulling every silk thread from the tree. They ignored the warning signs and focused only on completing their mission. When they were finished, they hurried back to their boat and sailed away from the island. The sailors felt guilty, but they tried to focus on the task at hand.

On the journey back, the princess argued with Merchant Chan. She told him that it was wrong to destroy nature just to please an emperor. Merchant Chan felt sad but said that he was only following orders and doing his duty. Their argument grew stronger, and their friendship ended. They parted ways with angry hearts. Merchant Chan looked back at the island sadly, wishing he could have done things differently but he was eager to show the emperor the silk.

The princess returned to her kingdom, while Merchant Chan sailed toward the Grand Palace of Emperor Jade. When he arrived, he went straight to the palace and presented the silk. Emperor Jade was amazed. He touched the fabric and smiled with joy. It was the finest silk he had ever seen. Merchant Chan explained where he found it, but he left out the part about the damage to the island. The emperor only saw the silk and praised him highly. During the grand inauguration, everyone praised the emperor's clothes. The design was admired by all the guests. Because of this success, Emperor Jade opened a new workshop for Merchant Chan. The merchant became famous and respected. He traveled to many places to find more silk and helped decorate the emperor's palace and workshop with great ideas. His work inspired many other designers and traders, and people admired his creativity.

Even though Merchant Chan was happy, he sometimes felt worried about the damage done to the jungle. He always pushed those thoughts away. The Emperor and Merchant Chan became close friends. Their families met often, and their children played together. They laughed, shared stories, and enjoyed the beautiful silk together. One day, terrible news arrived. Princess Zheung's daughter was preparing to attack Persia, the land of Emperor Jade. A great battle took place. In the end, Emperor Jade and Merchant Chan won. After the battle, peace returned, and the soldiers became friends. Merchant Chan learned that courage, loyalty, and friendship were just as important as silk and wealth.

Later in life, Merchant Chan married a kind and wealthy woman. Together, they opened a new clothing shop. Their shop became famous, and they helped many people. They shared their wealth and lived happily in a large castle with their children. Merchant Chan still traveled to find silk, but now he also taught others how to design and create beautiful clothes. He never forgot the lessons he learned from the magical island and the brave princess.

The Road No One Planned

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Liu, Clara – 10

No one woke up one day and decided to build the Silk Road. It all began with a mistake.

Dongdong was the ordinary son of a spice merchant, and he had been travelling with his dad to the neighboring towns and villages since he was born. By the age of nine, Dongdong knew everything there was to know about the spices and how to trade them. They would often go on journeys lasting days to months, but regardless of the unpredictable conditions on the road, they always made it back home. Until one day, when everything for Dongdong – and the whole world – changed.

One scorching hot day, Dongdong's dad told him to get ready for a trip from their hometown, Xian, to Hanzhong – a journey they had taken multiple times before. This time, however, Dad had surprised Dongdong: he said that his son was old enough for his own camel! Dongdong was elated – he had dreamt of it since he was able to dream! Dongdong, his father, and some other merchants packed their goods, collected enough water for the trip, and started moving, as slowly as always, towards the South–West.

For the first couple of days, nothing unexpected happened. Dongdong was excited to ride his own camel, whom he named Xiao Lu. Since the summer that year was extraordinarily hot, they stopped to rest during the daytime and continued to move through the night. On the third day of the journey, half a day before they were about to reach Hanzhong, they stopped to rest in the shade of a huge desert rock that provided some relief from the sun. Everyone but Dongdong was asleep, as he was supposed to be on the lookout. However, Dongdong was not paying attention to anything but Xiao Lu. He was trying to teach him tricks, which was not really necessary.

All of a sudden, the winds started to build up. The speed was increasing second by second, and anyone would have noticed it – but not Dongdong. In a couple of minutes, the winds were the force of a thousand camels! When he realized what was going on, it was too late to relocate. Dongdong woke everyone up, but they were already in the epicenter of the sandstorm. His Dad was about to shout, but his mouth filled with sand in the blink of an eye. All they could do was to huddle together and wait for this all to end.

After what felt like weeks of waiting, the sandstorm started to slow down. Dongdong's father and the other merchants stood up to assess the damage. Luckily, none of the camels nor the goods were damaged, and it was probably the only thing that saved Dongdong's life. Unfortunately, the compasses that were attached to the camels were all shattered. There was no way for them to tell the direction from now on!

Dongdong felt terrible. He knew that it was all his fault, and that he was lucky no one got hurt. He tried to save the situation. He quickly told everyone that he figured out the direction. Everyone knew that Dongdong had a great memory and that he was really good at navigating. They did not have another choice but to trust the boy.

And so, Dongdong led the way. Little did he know that they were actually going in the wrong direction: they were heading North–West, the area that no one ever travelled to before. At first, the merchants followed Dongdong confidently. However, after some exhausting days, when they started to run out of water, they began to question his abilities. Dongdong tried his best to conceal the fact that he didn't know where they were going, but he started to get really nervous. Where was he leading them?

They traveled for days, weeks, and months, but they never reached any human settlement. All that surrounded them was the desert with limitless sand, excruciating sun, and a tiring road ahead without any sign of life. Still, they kept going because stopping would mean inevitable death. Their minds were filled with one phrase only: keep going, and so they did.

After countless days, they noticed some people who looked like they had never seen before. They dressed differently, spoke in a language they did not understand, and had houses that looked strange. The merchants and Dongdong were as scared as they were exhausted, so they had to try and communicate with them, at least to get

some water. Surprisingly, people in the village were extremely generous and helped them out. They fed the camels and the merchants and provided them with a place to rest. Dongdong was very touched by their kindness and tried to explain, with signs and stick drawings on the sand, what had happened to them.

One of the kids from the village was a bit more curious than the others. Dongdong soon learned her name: Alma. She explained, with a lot of patience, that her parents are also merchants, and that they sell things that people eat and drink from – only Dongdong had never seen a cup he could see through before! He showed those things to his dad, who was equally amazed by the beauty of the Western glass. The parents decided to trade: fragrant pepper and clove for the delicate glass cups and bottles. Since no one in China had seen those, they knew they would be able to make a fortune.

The people also had compasses, and they were able to explain how to get back to their hometown. After some days of rest, Dongdong's group began their way back. They spent months and months heading to the East, but they were determined to reach that final point, as now they had a bigger goal: to tell everyone about the lands that lie on the other side of the world.

Eventually, Dongdong's name was forgotten, but his mistake became one of the most important discoveries of humankind.

The Case of the Missing Crystal: A Take of the Silkroad

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Low, Harrison – 8

Cypher was not an ordinary boy. At just ten years old, he had already solved mysteries that baffled grown-ups. He noticed things others missed, and his loyal dog, Rook, was always by his side, sniffing out clues and keeping him safe. Together, they made the perfect detective team.

One cold morning, the newspaper boy rushed down the street, waving a paper. “Big news!” he shouted.

The headline made Cypher’s stomach twist: “Silk Road Crystal Missing – City in Darkness.”

The Silk Road Crystal wasn’t just a jewel. It was the treasure that connected their city to the old Silk Road. It glowed with power and reminded everyone of the journeys when traders carried silk, spices, and inventions across deserts and mountains. Without it, the lights in the city flickered, and people grew afraid.

Cypher knew at once: this was his case.

The Museum Clue

The Silk Road Museum was the first place to search. Inside, maps showed caravans crossing deserts, ships sailing seas, and markets buzzing with traders. Cypher loved those maps. He would stand for ages imagining himself walking beside the travellers, hearing stories in many languages, and tasting foods from faraway lands.

But today the museum was silent. Guards stood nervously, whispering to each other.

“Did you see the thief?” Cypher asked.

“Yes!” they all shouted at once.

One said he saw the thief near the spice stall. Another swore he saw him by the silk rolls. A third whispered he had escaped through the coal burner room.

Cypher checked each place carefully. Nothing. No footprints, no broken glass, no clues at all.

“This is a trick,” he muttered. “Someone wants to confuse us.”

Rook sniffed the floor and barked. Beneath a display case was a scrap of parchment. On it was a drawing of a camel and a glowing crystal, pointing towards the old Silk Road gate.

The Caravan Trail

Cypher and Rook followed the trail out of the city. The desert stretched ahead, golden and endless. The footprints in the sand weren’t theirs, and they weren’t human. They were deep, like camel tracks.

“Follow the prints you didn’t make,” Cypher whispered, remembering the clue.

The sun blazed above them, and the wind whipped sand into their faces. Cypher pulled his scarf tighter, while Rook padded bravely beside him. The tracks led them to a ruined watchtower.

The Watchtower Fall

Cypher climbed the crumbling stairs to get a better view. But the floorboards gave way, and he tumbled straight through the roof of a small room below. He landed with a thump on a dusty bed.

An old lady appeared, her eyes sharp but kind. “You fell from the roof,” she said. “Lucky you didn’t break your bones.”

Cypher stood up, brushing off dust. “I’m looking for the Silk Road Crystal,” he explained.

The lady nodded. “I know of it. But the Silk Road was never just about treasures. It was about helping each other. Fix my roof, and I will give you the clue you need.”

So Cypher spent the evening repairing the broken beams. Rook carried nails and barked encouragement. When the roof was strong again, the lady smiled.

“Here is your riddle: The light you seek is hidden where journeys end.”

The Wolves

The next morning, Cypher and Rook followed the tracks further. At the valley entrance, a pack of wolves blocked the path. Their eyes glowed in the half-light, and their paws pressed into the sand.

Rook growled, but Cypher remembered stories of Silk Road travellers who faced dangers together. He threw a piece of dried meat from his bag. The wolves sniffed, then padded away, disappearing into the hills.

“Even wolves understand sharing,” Cypher whispered.

The Hidden Market

The tracks led them to a secret market. It was like stepping back in time. Stalls were filled with silk in every colour, spices that made the air tingle, lanterns that glowed like stars, and scrolls covered in strange writing. Traders spoke in many languages, their voices rising and falling like music.

Cypher felt as if he had stepped into the heart of the Silk Road itself.

At the centre stood a glowing chest. His heart thumped. But when he opened it, the crystal wasn’t inside. Instead, there was a note: “Home is where the light begins.”

Cypher frowned. Why would the thief leave such a clue?

The Thief’s Plan

As Cypher walked back towards the city, he thought hard. The thief hadn’t stolen the crystal to sell it. He had hidden it to test whether anyone could follow the clues. The Silk Road had always been about journeys, riddles, and sharing knowledge. The thief wanted to see if someone young and curious could solve the mystery.

The Tree House Secret

The tracks looped back to Cypher’s own street. He was tired, so he ate and fell asleep with Rook at his feet.

In the morning, a glow shimmered above his tree house. It wasn’t bright like a lamp. It was soft, like moonlight caught in a jar.

Cypher climbed up, but the glow hovered just out of reach. His ladder wasn’t high enough.

He stared at the beams and ropes. An idea clicked. He tied a pulley with a long rope and a hook, swung it towards the glow, and tugged. A panel slid open.

Inside lay the Silk Road Crystal, wrapped in cloth. Beside it was a note: “Power belongs where it is protected. If you can find it, you can guard it.”

Resolution

Cypher realised the thief hadn’t taken the crystal far. He had hidden it at the house of the boy detective who noticed everything. It was a test, just like the Silk Road had tested travellers long ago.

He carried the crystal back to the museum. Light spilled across the floor. The city hummed awake.

“How did you find it?” a guard asked.

“I followed the prints I didn’t make,” Cypher said. “And I remembered the Silk Road — how people found their way by sharing paths, clues, and ideas.”

That night, the city glowed steady and warm. Cypher sat in his tree house with Rook, looking at the stars. He thought about the Silk Road — old and new. It had carried silk, spices, and inventions, but also trust, friendship, and hope.

And now, in his own adventure, he had walked a new tale of the Silk Road.

—The End—

Cosmic Riddle of the Old Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Mok, Henny – 9

Lucy was very intelligent and friendly, though sometimes a shadow seemed to pass behind her eyes, a dark side she kept hidden. Her family was so destitute that her parents had no choice but to asked her to travel the Old Silk Road to find work. They spoke of traders, markets, and distant cities where a clever girl might earn a few coins. But they never knew about the real dangers waiting there. Dangers that did not come from bandits or deserts, but from the stars.

Lucy had once found a tattered book called *Dangers of the Old Silk Road* tucked away in the village library. The book told that singing sands that could swallow caravans, mirages that drove travellers mad. And most unbelievable of all, that evil aliens who lurked near the mountain passed. She was really scared when she heard where she was going. But her family was too hungry. There was no other choice. She had to go. She decided to bring the book along, just in case the stories were real.

As she walked on the dusty path under the hot sun, suddenly her way was blocked by the team of strange, glittering creatures. Their skin looked like molten bronze and they had three large dark eyes each. They were the evil aliens from the book! Lucy's heart beat so fast she could hear it in her ears. The book was right! It said aliens would ask for money. And sure enough, they did. The tallest alien floated forward, its voice buzzing like a trapped insect. "You can only pass if you give us one hundred billion dollars!"

Lucy could not believe it. Her book said they only asked for \$10! She was poor and only had a single crumpled ten-dollar bill in her pocket which all her family had managed to save. "I can't pay that," she said softly.

"Then you must answer three riddles," the aliens said together. Lucy agreed, trying to sound brave.

"First riddle," one alien hissed, leaning so close she could smell something like ozone and cold metal. "What word begins and ends with 'E' but only has one letter?"

"Envelope" Lucy said right away, remembering the riddle from a game she played with her little brother.

"Second riddle! What has many keys but cannot unlock a single door?"

Lucy thought of the old piano in her village hall, its yellow keys chipped and dusty. "A piano" Lucy answered, feeling a bit more confident.

"Third riddle." The aliens leaned closer now, forming a half-circle around her. The desert grew silent, as if holding its breath. "What has a heart that doesn't beat?"

This time, Lucy did not know. She mumbled "An...an..." but the answer would not come. The aliens laughed so loudly that the sand shook under their feet. Lucy felt her face turn red. She wanted to make them stop laughing.

But wait, a funny idea flashed in her mind. She remembered that there was one riddle aliens absolutely could not solve. She stood up straight and said, "if you are so smart, try my riddle! If you cannot solve it, you must let me go."

The aliens looked at each other and grinned. "Fine," they said.

"What has words but never speaks?" Lucy asked.

The aliens began whispering and arguing. They scratched their head and looked at the sky. None of them knew the answer was a book. Finally, they grumbled and moved aside. “Go on,” they said with a fake smile, their lips curved in a strange way.

Lucy walked past their shiny spaceship, feeling relieved. But she forgot one important thing. They were evil aliens, and evil aliens do not always keep their promises. As she passed by, she heard them snickering, but she did not know there was more trouble coming.

Just when Lucy thought she was safe, the sky suddenly turned dark purple. A huge, rumbling sound filled the air, and the biggest, most gigantic spaceship she had ever seen came down from the clouds! Lucy was shocked! This was not in her book! Lightning bolts shot from the sky, and she dodged every one she could see.

The giant spaceship did not just block the road. It started blasting smoke at her! But this was not ordinary smoke. Inside the smoke were tiny lightning bolts, zipping, and zapping. Lucy jumped and ducked, avoiding the smoky clouds, until the spaceship blasted one enormous cloud that was impossible to dodge. Everything went white and fuzzy.

When the smoke cleared, Lucy was gone.

The news spread everywhere. Her parents were so worried. The evil aliens laughed, knowing they had finally caught a bookworm. But somewhere in the stars, Lucy was already thinking of a plan. She always knew revenge would find her, or maybe she would find it first.

Did the aliens let her win the riddle game on purpose? Or was Lucy smarter than all the evil aliens in the universe? The Old Silk Road held its breath, its ancient sands remembering the girl who carried a book into the stars. The game was not over. It had only just begun.

Pyramids and Silk: The First Voyage West

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ng, Tsz Yui Marcus – 9

The sun blazed in the sky like a fiery demon, scorching the land with merciless heat. I felt as though I were trapped inside an oven, with sweat pouring down my face like a waterfall. The endless desert stretched for miles towards the horizon, shimmering like a brown sea that swallowed all paths.

I had already spent weeks trading in India when my Emperor summoned me for a greater mission: to journey westwards to Egypt and acquire precious stones in exchange for our finest silk. Silk was so rare and exquisite that this road itself became known as the Silk Road, a ribbon of connection between worlds.

The journey was exhausting yet enchanting. Each day began before sunrise when the desert was hushed, and the stars lingered like silver lanterns. Camels trudged steadily across the shifting sands. At night, we camped beneath a sky so vast it seemed endless, and the stars glittered like spilled jewels. I often lay awake, gazing upwards, wondering what marvels awaited us at the end of this road.

Egypt was a place of legends and mysteries. I had only heard of it through stories whispered by travellers and from scrolls in our imperial library. The “Gift of the Nile” fascinated me, with my heart beating with anticipation. I couldn’t help imagining temples that touched the sky, markets filled with treasures, and a river so vast it gave life to an entire civilisation.

A week later, we finally arrived. The pyramids rose before us and scattered across the desert like silent guardians. Their golden peaks caught the sunlight and glowed like flames frozen in stone. Though majestic, they were tombs for Kings and Queens of the past. I was transfixed by the Sphinx, crowned with a human head and a lion’s body. Its gaze seemed eternal, as though it had watched over the land since the dawn of time.

On the way to the Pharaoh’s Palace, we passed through markets bursting with life. Merchants shouted with stalls overflowed with fruits, urns, stones, metals, linen and even animals like gazelles. Men wore kilts or loincloths, while women glided in elegant gowns. The wealthy shimmered in pleated fabrics, jewellery and wigs. I searched for silk here but found none.

The Palace was a marvel. Walls and pillars glittered with embedded jewels, reflecting light like a thousand suns. Aromatic smells of roasted meats drifted from the kitchens, mingling with the music of harps and flutes. At the throne sat the Pharaoh, radiant in a golden headdress and cape. Servants fanned him with enormous leaves and offered tropical fruits.

I praised the magnificence of his Palace and presented our silk. His eyes gleamed as he touched the fabric and agreed straight away to trade with his precious stones and gold. He wished to surprise his Queen on her upcoming birthday with a gown so gorgeous it would make her shine like a goddess.

We spoke at length until hunger interrupted us. The Pharaoh welcomed us to a grand feast with cucumbers, fish, lamb, honey cakes and melons. The flavours danced across my tongue, unlike anything I had tasted before. That day ended with our exchange of silk for Egypt’s treasures, a moment that felt like history itself being written.

The next morning, we visited a towering temple dedicated to the gods. Statues of animals lined the halls — an eagle for Ra, the god of the Sun, and a jackal for Anubis, the god of death. As I approached the jackal, an eerie chill ran through me, as though death itself crept closer. Priests in white robes moved silently, carrying incense that filled the air with heavy fragrance. I realised how deeply the Egyptians believed in their gods, and how their lives were shaped by faith and ritual.

Later, we wandered the streets to glimpse daily life. Children laughed as they played, women carried baskets of bread, and men led donkeys laden with goods. The markets were simple with wooden poles and cloth roofs, unlike the sturdy stone shops of China. Yet there was a charm in their simplicity, a rhythm to the way people lived. Time slipped away, and the sun had set in a blaze of crimson. We returned to our lodgings, weary but content.

Days passed, and soon the Queen’s birthday arrived. We were invited as esteemed guests at her banquet. The feast was splendid, with tables piled high with roasted meats, fruits and pastries. Musicians played lively tunes, and dancers moved gracefully across the hall. Yet the true highlight was the unveiling of her silk dress.

When the Queen stepped forward, the hall fell silent. Her gown shimmered blue as the ocean, adorned with jewels that sparkled like stars. Its texture was softer than clouds, flowing like water with every movement. The Queen’s

joy lit up the hall, and her smile was brighter than the jewels she wore. The Pharaoh was delighted. Our silk had become a masterpiece, symbolizing friendship between two great civilisations.

The celebration lasted late into the night. Lanterns glowed, casting golden light across the palace walls. Nobles admired the Queen's gown and whispered in awe. In that moment, I realised the power of the Silk Road. It was not just a path for trade, but a bridge between worlds, carrying stories, cultures and dreams across deserts and seas.

From that day forward, trade between China and Egypt flourished. Caravans travelled more frequently, carrying silk, spices and treasures. The Silk Road became a lifeline of connection, weaving together distant lands. And I, the first person to walk this path to Egypt, carried home not only precious stones but also memories of a land filled with wonder.

As our convoy prepared to return, I looked once more at the pyramids, standing tall against the horizon. They seemed eternal, just like the Silk Road itself — a road that would continue to shape history for generations to come. My footsteps vanished into the sands, but the road I walked endures — an everlasting path of daring and discovery.

The Travels – A tale of Marco Polo

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Qi, Junwan Anne – 11

Captured – **Prologue**

Where the journey begins

My stomach churned at the stench of expired milk and rotten eggs. A sense of discomfort lingered, my appetite lost days ago on account of my traumatic capture. My mind winded back in time, visions of my capture replayed, fresh in my mind.

And now I'm stuck in this silly cell! A burden scorched in my mind: Why couldn't I have taken the alternate route?

I gazed left to right, inspecting my environment with a false sense of hope, hopes of escaping.

My cellmate spotted this.

"Well, your stomach isn't going to feed itself, and If I were you, I would rather not starve."

His deep, monotone voice sounded behind me, easily recognizable but new, the voice of my imprisoned cellmate, Rustichello Da Pisa. He was a well-known romance writer.

Startled, my eyes wandered, our stares intertwining. His eyes were a shade of brilliant, emerald green, yet were ringed with dark circles and wrinkles. His face etched was stories of their own, weathered with decades of experiences.

"I'm not hungry." I lied, mumbling, as I stroked my overgrown beard.

"Entertain yourself, at least. Why not tell a story of your own?"

I sighed, drenched in enervation. My calloused hand dragged against my porcelain face. However, as he was a writer, I also took this as an advantage; an opportunity to share my untold experiences and stories. As I began reciting, my captivated cell mate eagerly began writing.

The Million – Il Milione

One of history's most fascinating travelogues – written by Rustichello Da Pisa

I trekked amid a city, along with my uncle Maffeo, and father Niccolò, encircled by pleasant gardens and verdure greenery. Streets bustled with seas of humans, mostly merchants. Various goods were being transported, silk, gems, items that were valuable and scarce, originating from Asia to Europe. Nevertheless, they were fragile and exposed, a perfect situation for robbers and criminals. This city is called Tabriz, a significant trading hub located near the silk road, popular amongst traders, with a high, viable potential of business success. Markets sold articles of value, including pearls, spices, gold, silk, as well as other prized, exquisite treasures.

A palette of vibrant hues derived out of stalls, coated with ethnic patterns and textile fabrics stretched till the horizon, where the hovering fire orb leisurely descended from the blush of sunset, leaving darkness in its trail; night had fallen. With no light source as a guide, the streets were tenebrous, vacant almost. I sensed my father's tension, squeezing my

hand, a definition of: I'm worried, Marco. I glanced an ensuring gaze back, signalling: There is nothing to be afraid of.

The sole intention was to meet the Mongol ruler, Hulagu Khan, who was interested in business, as we were exotic foreigners. I was originally hesitant, unsure if the information was even true, due to the fact that it wasn't Hulagu Khan who suggested in going, rather a Mongol ambassador. This expedition would take years voyaging across, maybe even decades, to reach Kublai Khan's court. We still took the risk, despite voicing my worries to my father. The risk of wasting years of time, or death itself.

After countless days of traversing, our legs was in a devastating state grazed with cuts and bruises, dried blood smudged across our skin, and swollen. Every stride spiralled soreness throughout my body, protesting and unwilling to cooperate. Before I could complain however, Maffeo suggested in stopping, allowing relief to instantly flow. When we eventually settled; my mind wandered, as I pondered deeply.

Time flew by as fast as an arrow, the sun emerged from beneath the skyline, it was dawn.

Sunsets and Sunrise are similar although opposite, what makes them different, is that sunsets are an indication for the end of a day, where we reflect our actions in the past, Sunrises implies the start of a day, a new chapter, where we think of the future.

The future, I sighed. We have years of travelling ahead, a seemingly long journey. We still had struggles to face, and fears to overcome. The future still held moments, traumatizing or elating, that were yet to come. Yesterday will always be the past, today will always be the present and Tomorrow will always be the future. No matter what, every day, we will try our best, live our finest. Today might not be exceptional, but there is always tomorrow.

Deathbed – Epilogue *Where the journey ends*

A senior lay rasping on a stained bed, struggling for breath, on death's door. A priest sat next to him, unsympathetic, a frown creased across his forehead. He parted his lips to speak, tainted with mock and accusation, "Admit that your book has been exaggerated, your travels has not been luxurious. Your book is filled with pages of lies and untruthful tales."

The man shook his head, upset, exhaling a sigh that carries a cacophony of emotions, dull with guilt, guilt of carrying a never-told secret. He mouthed his final words, before his eyelids shuttered closed, until his body was unsettlingly motionless. His words would not be forgotten:

"I have not told the half of what I saw and did."

The Porcelain Shard

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Qi, Qijunxuan Emma – 11

The shadow of a creature flickered before me, face seamlessly smooth and body blinking in and out of vision. His strides were quick—paced, and I felt drawn to this hologram of a figure. Following his insubstantial footsteps, I didn't stop to question my sanity, struck by a sudden urgency that compelled me to follow.

I had been wandering the streets of Dunhuang, where stalls were illuminated by luminous signs in a variety of fluorescent colours. The night market was exhilarating, with the shroud of darkness cloaking the sky lifted by pearls of blazing light. The atmosphere held a freeing essence and a heavy anticipation that was almost tangible, the cloying flavour of fragrant fruits perfuming the air. Bunches of people clouded the chipped pavements, an obstacle that made it significantly more arduous to trail the wisp of pulsing silver ahead, as it was inconvenient that I could not walk through physical beings. As we finally left the veil of noise, the cacophony of voices fell into unsettling silence. We exited the town, and the desert lay in undulating dunes of gold dipped in shades of moonlight. A horse nickered ahead, mane cascading in lustrous, almost opalescent strands, its body holding an ethereal glimmer. With deliberate tenderness, the ghost, which was what I assumed to be a merchant loaded his supplies, tying them in neat knots onto the horse. He immediately started to resume his hastened pace, leading his horse by the saddle's reins. I tried my utmost to keep up, my breaths laborious. The night sky lay vast and endless, a pitch—black carpet woven with infinitesimally small flecks of stars. Each one seemed to hold a promise.

The two were now just faint silhouettes against the horizon, winking in and out of sight. Yet they were holding on to one tenuous string that held them in the fabric of existence. Sprinting to catch up, the merchant spared no attention to my struggles. A faint glow rimmed the outline of his body, giving him a halo of starlight. We trekked through the meandering terrain in shrouded silence, the dunes arching in glorious mounds, each tinted—silver grain visible. But the merchant was not aware of my presence, eyes clear yet unseeing. As if I was just viewing what had already been orchestrated, as if I were merely a spectator watching inevitable plans unfold. An echo of a memory, woven into the seams of the past, yet somehow also the present.

Eternity seemed to pass. At first, I did not see his footsteps waver, fading to silence. It almost felt surreal to see anything but mounds of glittering sand. But what stood before me took my breath away; an echo of a market was anchored inside a dip of yet another golden dune, translucent as if it was merely an illusion. The market gave the impression that its tether to reality was fleeting when it shouldn't even exist in the present. Within its insubstantial walls clamored hundreds of pearlescent figures, clad in cotton, leather and even silk, the rich fabric that everyone coveted. Their voices were indecipherable, fleeting whispers.

Gradually, the merchant's smooth façade cracked, impeccable rhythm erratic and eyes furtive. A lone merchant without a caravan was rare, a flaw to exploit. His horse, sensing the unease, looked ready to bolt. Nevertheless, the temptation of wealth was seductive, and after slight hesitation, the merchant took faltering steps towards the entrance, which held elaborate carvings displaying exquisite artistry and skill. As we walked through, ghoulish figures, ironically, turned to stare at the frail phantom instead of the one made of flesh. As far as they knew, I didn't exist. Most spared only brief seconds of attention, but some gazed with greed and intense curiosity, openly eyeing the horse and the load upon its back. Despite acting unaware, his frantic pace and weakened poise made it clear he was defenseless.

What happened next seemed to speed up time. A blur of silver tackled the merchant, besieging him along with some of his accomplices, who emerged from the shying crowds. The merchant's stallion thrashed as his reins were snared by foreign men, the merchant forced to his knees. He held the self—assured air of one who held authority. He strode up to the merchant's stallion, who's head lowered in defeat. As soon as they had unsealed the bundles hung on each side, envious whispers spread like wildfire, fear overridden with desire. With an uncharacteristic tenderness, the bandit displayed his crown with smug triumph. Despite my disgust, I could not stifle the gasp that merged with all of the other spectators in the crowd, as in his clutches was a porcelain teacup, whimsical patterns immaculately carved upon it. Even devoid of vibrant colors, I could admire the artistic beauty and effort stored within the fragile porcelain, the hours of sweat and tears fired with the clay and kaolin. This was not an ordinary find, as porcelain was too fragile and usually transported by sea. I marveled at how the ceramics haven't shattered into shards by now. The awe amplified tenfold as both packs revealed to hold porcelain art, the bandit gleeful with his excessively fortunate find. With his gloating over, the merchant was of no use anymore. We all knew that, but just as one of the robber's accomplices

moved to kill, the merchant suddenly turned his gaze straight at me, eyes an ashen gray. As a final act of defiance, he knocked himself into the bandit, and everyone watched with despair as the porcelain fell. Splintering into tiny shards, the scene seemed to untangle itself from its seams, everything evaporating into the air. I was stunned to see one porcelain shard had cut into my leg, proof it was real. I tenderly drew it out. I gazed on in wonder at one character branded into the porcelain. 赵, the name of the merchant I had followed all this while. The name signifying new beginnings, as the sun mounted a pink-streaked sky.

Serica and Bel Paese

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Shi, Zhi Yu Zoe – 10

The cover of the journal felt decrepit and leathery to the touch. As I flipped the pages, a thin cloud of dust burst from the seams of the ancient relic. Engraved on the cover were a distinct string of words “*Maiden Voyage to Italy*” My whole ancestry plied their trade on diplomatic relationships between China and Western countries. This journal belonged to the most successful trader in our family, who was the first person to travel on the Silk Road. This journal would further provide me insightful information about the Italians as I was tasked with welcoming them to China tomorrow. I cautiously turned to the first page and began reading.

“Lumbering through the bustling city, I observed the familiar sight as I knew that I would not be able to see it for another long and gruelling 18 months. I bid an emotional farewell to friends and family. My feelings were contradictory. On one hand, I felt the need to stay with them, but on the other, I was looking forward to an unprecedented adventure to explore new and uncharted territory. Heading towards the beginning of my journey, the forest seemed as packed together as a beehive, but despite that, I began to head inside, trailing behind me were my partners, Liang, and Zhu.

The primeval forest outside of Chang An provided me with the same comfort every time I stepped into it. It’s spring season, so the abundance of life was everywhere. It’s amazing how much attachment I feel towards it now. I guess I was feeling sentimental as this was a piece of landscape I would be missing for a long time. I had no idea what the land of the Italians looked like. However, I was assuming it’s drastically different from here, considering they are on the other side of the world. My two partners warned me about the precarious journey ahead and I had to be mentally prepared.”

I was totally captivated in reading that I almost missed my mother calling me to dinner. Reluctantly, I closed the journal and headed to the dining hall. Food was entering my mouth, but I was chewing on auto-pilot because my mind was preoccupied with what happened next in the journal. After what seemed like an eternity, dinner was finally over and I made a beeline back to my bedroom. I felt the intense need to continue reading.

“9 months have passed, it was an excruciating period filled with despondency and desolation. This could be due to the homesickness I felt, as well as the multiple raids from bandits and wild animals along the way. It was unfortunate that one of my partners fell victim to a Siberian tiger as we passed along the Russian borders. Nevertheless, we had to trudge on, as this was a mission given to us by the Emperor.

Grandiose is the only word I can use to describe the palace of Emperor Augustus. The walls of marble towered over me as I admired the intricate mosaics that adorned them. The Italian Emperor had welcomed us with open arms when we set foot into the city. He sent his most trustworthy generals to escort us back to the palace, and even prepared a scrumptious feast. Another interesting architectural design that intrigued me were the windows. They were made of glass but the most fascinating thing was that it was colourfully tinted and had artistic pictures drawn on them. It was a stark contrast to the windows that we used in China. Over dinner, we exchanged pleasantries and gifts with the Roman Royalty. From our side, we offered precious jade, fine silk and noodles which was one of the fine delicacies from my homeland. In return, they gave us a wide array of spices to experiment with. Time flew by and soon the moon emerged, bathing the city with its luminescent light. It was time for us to retreat back to our chambers to rest.

The following day, I was startled by the sound of cheering in the early morning. This continued for a prolonged period of time, until I couldn’t bear it any longer. I stepped into the hallway and immediately felt the gentle breeze caressing my hair. Soon, I was summoned to the presence of Emperor Augustus, who warmly invited me to join him in an invigorating event. What he led me to stunned me to my core.

Blood splattered everywhere and screams of agony and triumph emerged from the Colosseum. It was followed by deafening roars that rang in my ears interminably. Emperor Augustus stared on with disdain as if there wasn't enough bloodshed. I was flabbergasted that the place with such a grand design was used for something so barbaric. In the moment I was thankful I was born in China, not Italy.

The days turned into weeks and finally, the time to return home arrived."

To my astonishment, the journal ended here, with no further details. Out of curiosity, I asked my father what happened to this ancestor. Tragically, I was told that he met his untimely demise on the return trip.

The next day, I donned on the extravagant imperial armour, bestowed upon me by the Emperor. The Italian convoy entered the gates of Chang An in riveting clothes and headwear. They were chaperoned to the Royal Court of our Emperor – they started to show us the wonders they brought with them. One of the most curious items was something they called Pasta. Apparently, it was a modified dish that my ancestor introduced to them many years back. It was dried noodles served with a thick and red sauce that had pieces of meat in it. To most, that looked savoury but my mind was brought back to the journal entry about blood and pieces of human flesh being chopped off.

I was glad that our diplomatic relations with Italy was prospering but I guess not all of their culture abides to my liking.

Grapes and Silk

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Wang, Arrow – 10

Ahe ran his fingers over the plump purple grapes hanging from the vine, the sunlight dappling his face. He gazed westward, where the distant mountains faded into the horizon. His eyes were soft with longing—for a grassland full of wild, plump grapes, and for a girl with bright eyes who had once saved his life.

It all began in the spring of 138 BCE. Emperor Wu gave Zhang Qian, a Lang in the court, a mission: to explore the lands far west and trade with other people with silk. Ahe, a 12-year-old servant, was the youngest in the ten-man team. His responsibility was not only to take care of Zhang Qian, but also to guard a heavy bag filled with silk bolts.

For two long months, they trekked across endless deserts, seeing no one. Until one day, when they were dragging their weary bodies forward, Ahe spotted a flash of green. He rubbed his eyes hard—there, in the distance, was a grassland covered with wild grapevines, heavy with juicy purple and green fruit. “What’s that?!” he yelled, jumping up, his eyes lit up. The tired men rushed over, their mouths watering at the sight of the sweet, glistening fruit they’d never seen before.

This was the land of the Pu Tribe. Soon, a crowd of tribespeople closed in on the strangers from the Central Plains, their eyes wide with curiosity, and their lips moving in soft whispers. Suddenly, a man strode over, his chest puffing out like a peacock. He wore a turban decorated with golden threads, a thick sheepskin robe, and a curved knife at his waist—this was the tribal leader, Tengri.

“Who are you, and what brings you to our land?” he asked in a cold, hostile voice, his jaw tightening with suspicion, his eyebrows knitting into a big frown.

Zhang Qian bowed politely and told him about their mission of exploration and trade. He asked Ahe to pull out a bolt of sky-blue silk and unfolded it. The silk shimmered in the sun, smooth and light as a cloud. The tribespeople gasped, crowding around to touch it. “Back off, you useless brats!” Tengri shouted impatiently as he ran his hands over the silk, his eyes popping. “Is this woven from the wind? It’s so soft and shiny!” He smiled at Zhang Qian. “Stay with us for ten days. Rest and enjoy our grapes.” He announced, however, a faint flicker of evil flashed across his eyes before anyone noticed.

That night, the tribe held a feast. Ahe stood by the fire, seeing people dancing and celebrating. Suddenly, a girl ran over and took his hand. She was about twelve or thirteen, with braids tied with colourful ribbons, round cheeks, and big, bright eyes. “My name is Ali, would you like to dance with me?” The little girl asked, her voice as clear and bright as a tinkling bell. Ahe grinned and nodded.

Over the next days, Ahe and Ali became best friends. Ahe learnt that Ali was the only daughter of the tribe leader. They spent every free moment by a sunny spot under the biggest grapevine, where Ahe taught her to draw houses from the Central Plains with twigs on the ground, and Ali took him to pick the sweetest, tangiest wild grapes—the most delicious fruit Ahe had ever tasted.

It was the tenth night, the wind whipped through the grapevines, creaking and groaning like an old rocking chair. Ahe let out a small cough, freezing mid-movement when he spotted a shadow darting to the tent. “Ali!” Ahe couldn’t help but gasp, his eyebrows shooting up to his hairline. How could she be here so late? Beneath the cold silver moonlight, Ali’s face was pale with fear, her eyes glistening with tears. She pressed a woollen bag into his hands and ran away before he could speak.

Confused, Ahe opened the bag. Inside was a hide map marked with camel footprints and springs, a small packet of grape seeds, and a crumpled note. It read: Run! Now! My father is planning to kill you all to keep your silk.

Tears rolled down Ahe’s cheeks. He finally understood why the leader had been so kind. He wiped his eyes and ran to find Zhang Qian at once. Before leaving, he took out another silk scrap—sewn into his collar by his mother—and left it on the smooth stone where he and Ali used to sit to draw and eat grapes, with a note: May we meet again someday.

Under the silver moonlight, the group followed the map and slipped away quietly.

Years later, those grape seeds grew into lush vines in the Central Plains. As Ahe stood among the grapevines, the wind carried the sweet scent of the fruit. He looked west, and in his mind, he saw a girl with bright eyes, standing under the big grapevine on the grassland, waving goodbye.

The Pilgrim

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Wong, Kin Yee Ann – 10

In the sky of gentle blues, restless pilgrims of some place far moved along like subtle waves of an ocean far and wide. Up above in the valley side, the blues turned white, before the whites sipped toward the pinkish–orange hue of the evening sky. In the foreground, one pilgrim stood out. She was young and covered in a dark blue gown adorned with glitter, green and sharp. The girl's sleeves swung low toward the dusty ground upon which she sat down to rest for the night.

One morning, the wind picked up.

Her face, undistracted by the wind, beamed fondly as she raised her head up high. In the sky, toward which she leaped, she stretched her arms out and gave the ground a gentle kick. She would often wake up in a great deal of excitement, a sense of relief, and escape. She was, after all, undeterred to find her own way in the vast desert that she and her flock traversed.

Along the road, she could see various colours and sweet delights. There were Mongolian chives that grew in clumps with yellowish–brownish skin that she pecked from bush to bush. Her favourites, however, were the harmag berries, but when she leaned to twist a fruit off a branch, she found nothing but dead plant matter that detached and laid to rest on the ground.

The next morning, the frost bit her.

In the far distance she saw the skeletons of trees. Bare branches stood out before a splendid light blue sky. She took off and wondered whether she'd be able to get so far to spin around their maze of twigs. Then came the restless winds.

'Why won't you be a little calmer?' she spoke to the wind.

But the wind picked up and wrenched her body to the side. The gritty sand puffed into her eyes, which made her lose track in the quickening gust. Swooped aside, she fell off course, whilst the flock of pilgrims headed off into the sandy horizon. Sandstorms swirled in the distance. The young girl, unaccompanied by the richness and determination of her companions, began to make a search for her own way.

But it was no easy task.

She sat.

And waited around.

When the dark blue skies returned, she looked up. This time, when she saw the shimmering starlight of the stars, she did not just find a sense of direction. It was something different. Something amazing. The further she looked at the rhythmic, pulsating glows of the stars and the other celestial bodies, the more that her mind filled with amazement. She fantasized about leaving the world and flying to the moon and riding the beams of light that flied through the skies from out of space. She felt something strange in the retina of her eyes. It was not a tear. She felt that for the first time she had a sense of direction.

It was time for her to head west.

With darkness abound, she heard something that sounded like starlight followed by a hush and whisper that said, 'whenever you're feeling isolated and lonely, know that you've always got company, yourself.'

'Myself?' she replied into the dark.

'It is by no luck that you find yourself here,' the voice said before she interrupted, 'in a desert?'

'Look up, does this look like a desert to you? Since birth, you have spent your life flying from one place to another, seamlessly gliding with your flock, but you remained largely a stranger to yourself,' said the voice.

With that thought she subtly dimmed her eyes to the grey surroundings. The next morning, she woke up to the sound of the winter's march. The sky above broke down and colour disappeared, as thunder and wild winds moved in from somewhere in the distance. The soldiers of death encroached in from the east.

Death entered the land. It was propelled by a tall-bodied creature, as tall as the Altai and with a thousand throats that poured cold air into the steppe. A current of terror dominated the valley. The landscape, all barren and desolate, shook. The leaves of a dwarf elm that stood by the roadside turned black before they crumbled and fell to the parched, brown ground. Then as she looked down into the valley, she saw webs of ice that pierced through the dry skin of the land. In the blur of her escape, she saw vein-like icicles spread across the soil like an invasive force that froze anything in its way.

She fled through the valley. The skies became alive with fantastic thunderbolts that pierced through the boundary of sky and heaven. Like tentacles, the lightning jutted down from the sky and grabbed life as it passed through the valley.

Suddenly, a bolt crashed into her. She swirled down to the earth. After she fell to the barren ground, she lay on her back and felt a stir of dust beside her. With her face toward the sky, she saw the first stars shimmering in the sky.

In her sleep, she reminded herself of what her mother told her when she was young.

'Soon, it will be time for you to stretch your wings,' her mother said, 'the sky, the road, they're all yours.'

'Can I reach for the stars?' she remembered herself asking, to which her mother replied, 'Of course, without them you won't find your way.'

'To where?' she asked again.

'To the end of the road.'

'Which one?'

'The road we fly and the road of life. They're both here and now.'

'And when will I know I've reached the end of the road?'

'You'll know.'

'I'll be waiting for you when it's over.'

'When will it be over?'

When she woke up it was morning and all was silent and all was bright.

Satin's Silk Road

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yan, Jessica – 9

Long ago, in the ancient Tang dynasty, there was a young, hardworking Chinese woman no older than thirty. Her name was Satin, and she was a dedicated needleworker. Satin would carefully sketch out her designs on a planning notebook and would follow the details to cautiously weave her sketch out on silk, and then she would put them up for sale.

After working in China for years, Satin sought new customers to sell her products for profit. She decided to travel to the west. The night before departure, Satin prepared all the things she would need in her journey to the west. Food, water, clothes, a tent, and a veil hat...

After saying goodbye to her hometown, Satin was off to begin her adventure on a little donkey.

Satin rode for miles, from the impoverished villages to the the boundless sweep of prairie. She rode for uncountable miles before stopping before a turbulent river. The river was wide and fierce, and it seemed simply impossible to cross it. Just then, an old man approached her.

'Dear young woman, I have not eaten for days. Oh, would you be so kind to give me that loaf of bread please?'

'Of course. Of course!'

Satin picked a particularly large bread with ham and cheese inside and handed it gingerly to the old man. The old man knelt down politely. After the man walked away, Satin once again pinned to the thought of how to cross the river. Unexpectedly, a sparkling, wooden bridge magically appeared, leading Satin across the roaring river. The moon rose out from behind the horizontal line of the dark-blue ocean and glowed upon Satin's gazing eyes.

The next day, Satin continued her journey. Satin then stood in front of a snowy mountain, where snow whipped through her red, dry cheeks like bullets. Satin came to a halt. An old woman slowly walked towards her.

"Oh, dear! My hands are swollen, and my feet are frozen. If you would please, please give me your donkey for me to ride on?"

Satin paused and hesitated. The donkey. Surely, she cannot get another one, and she still had a vast expanse until she reaches the west. However, Satin always had kindness glimmering in her warm heart. Hastily and hesitantly, the words spluttered out of her mouth.

'O...Okay. Certainly!'

'Oh, oh dear, I don't know how to thank you!'

With Satin's generosity, the old woman slowly got onto the donkey. Now what? Satin thought as the old lady went out of sight. No donkeys. How was she going to get on? Suddenly, the snow and ice started to melt away. A tunnel appeared throughout the mountain to the very top. The glistening sun stopped hiding behind the dull, grey clouds. Instantly flooded with hope, Satin quickly jogged through the tunnel and made it to the very top.

After a brief rest, Satin continued her journey. She walked out of the mountains and into a dry desert. The scorching sun was high up in the sky and heat was practically shimmering in the air. The sand constantly blew across Satin's face like sharp blades. Satin trudged along the sinking sand. A boy and his mother reached Satin.

'Please ma'am, please. We do not have anywhere to live. If you would be so kind to hand us your tent, it would be a massive help.'

‘Em...okay...all right...sure thing.’

‘Thank you, oh thank you so much for your kindness. We will never forget you!’

When they had stumbled away, a miracle happened just in front of her very own eyes. A chain of cool, green oases appeared in the middle of the desert, navigating to the far end. At once, Satin’s spirits were up again. In the oasis, she found crystal-clear spring water and tall trees that grew apples and branches with luscious grapes. Satin plucked the apples and grapes and filled her bottles with plenty of water. After spending several nights in the oases, she successfully navigated out of the desert.

Satin walked and walked, and then she had just realised that she started to see more people and habitats. This was the west! Satin has entered a completely different world — the people were taller there, with blonde hair and crystal jade eyes. Satin checked in a one-person hotel room and unpacked her bags. The next day, she woke up early and started selling silk on the street! Her goods were so popular, and crowds were lining up to buy Satin’s colourful, elegant, and delicate silk. Satin made a fortune and returned to her home in ancient China.

Satin used her kindness and warm heart to make it to the west. Since then, people call this east-to-west route ‘The Silk Road.’

The Silk Road Treasure Kindness

Harrow International School Hong Kong, Yang, Mira – 9

A little girl named Manyi lived in the town of Harmony, which was tucked between green hills. She was brave and interested in the world around her. She loved stories, especially ones about the famous Silk Road, a trade route full of spices, silks, and exciting experiences. Manyi would sit by the fire every night and listen to her grandpa tell stories about travellers, lost treasures, and the magic of faraway places.

As the sun went down one night, Manyi's grandpa told her about a legendary wealth that was hidden along the Silk Road and was watched over by a strange creature called the Dragon of Fortune. The story went that only good people could find the prize and give the money to the town.

"That's it!" Manyi shouted, and her eyes sparkled with joy like stars. "I will find the treasure and make Harmony rich!"

Her grandfather gave her a knowing smile. "A good goal, my little girl. Remember, though, that you're not just looking for the prize. It's the trip and the people you meet along the way.

Manyi put together a small bag with rice cakes, her favourite water flask, and a hand-drawn map of the Silk Road that she had put together from stories her grandpa had told her. The next morning, she left for her trip with a wave to her family.

The air was sweet with the smell of flowers in bloom as she walked through the fields. Manyi thought of herself as a great explorer as she walked along the twisting road. After some time, She got to the edge of a very big forest. The trees stood tall and proud, and the leaves talked to each other in a secret language.

As she walked into the woods, the sunshine dancing through the trees made it feel wonderful. She heard a rustling sound all of a sudden. Manyi turned around quickly and saw a little girl peeking out from behind a tree. Her hair was wild and curly, and her bright blue eyes sparkled with fun.

"What are you?" Manyi was too interested to hold back and asked.

She smiled and said, "My name is Mei." "Like you, I like to go on adventures!" "Do you want to find treasure?"

Manyi happily agreed as she talked about her plan to find the Silk Road wealth.

"May I join you?" I love to climb trees and look for secret paths!" Mei jumped from foot to foot and said, "Yes."

Manyi agreed with a smile, and the two of them went deeper into the forest. They played games and climbed over downed trees and across boiling streams as they went. It got stronger between them, which made their trip even more special.

As they came out of the bush, they saw a huge desert with golden sands that sparkled in the sun. Manyi looked at her plan and remembered that the wealth was said to be in a cave past the dunes. She told Mei, who was now full of energy, "Let's keep going!"

They took a big breath and went into the cave. The walls were made of rocks that were wet and looked like lanterns because their lights flickered. They heard a low rumble deep inside. Was it the Dragon of Fortune?

Out of nowhere, a beautiful monster with scales that sparkled like gold and emeralds came into view. The dragon was very tall and had sharp, bright eyes.

"Who is brave enough to come into my cave?" The Dragon of Fortune growled, and its sound could be heard in the dark.

Manyi and Mei didn't give up. Manyi spoke in a calm voice, "We seek the treasure of the Silk Road, great dragon." "We want to give our village some of its wealth."

The dragon looked at them, but you couldn't read its face. It said, "Many come seeking wealth for themselves." "Show me that your hearts are good." Do a task, and I'll give you a prize.

"Just what kind of challenge?" Mei asked because she was interested.

It said, "Find the Heart of the Silk Road," and it pointed to the cave's deep. "It's a special stone that gives off a nice glow." Only people who really want to use the wealth for good can find it.

Manyi and Mei were determined, so they went deeper into the cave. They made their way through dark tunnels, avoiding rocks that were too slippery and winding trails. At last, in the middle of the cave, they found a glowing stone that was pulsing slowly like a heartbeat in a cave.

"This has to be it!" Manyi yelled as she picked up the Heart of the Silk Road. She held it in her hands and felt warm. It was a sign of hope and kindness.

They felt different as they made their way back to the dragon. They were stronger and had a sense of purpose. Manyi held out the Heart and said, "Great Dragon, we found it."

The dragon looked at the rock with big eyes. "You've shown what you're worth." Your hearts really are pure. Take the Silk Road's wealth and give it to your village to help them.

The cave opened with a wave of its hand, revealing gold, silks, and spices—enough to make their town happy and wealthy.

When Manyi and Mei thanked the dragon, they filled their bags with riches. They also took the Heart of the Silk Road with them as a lesson to always be kind and giving.

When they got back to Harmony, they were welcomed as heroes. The village did well because of the gifts Manyi and Mei brought back. They became known as the kids who followed their hearts and made their town rich.

Manyi thought about what her grandfather had said that night as they ate and drank under the stars: "It's the journey and the friends you make along the way."

At that moment, she realised that the real prize was the bond they had made and the love they had for their town.

Whispers of the Eternal Path

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chan, Isabel Keenlam – 10

Kamila galloped across the endless steppe. Her horse's hooves kicked up dust like whispers from the past. At eleven, she knew every fold of these hills better than the lines on her palm. Her family, Kazakh nomads, had roamed here for generations. They tended sheep, traded wool at distant markets, and shared tales of the old Silk Road under starlit skies. Her mother wove intricate carpets patterned with stories. Her father guided weary travellers. Life felt simple and eternal, until the new high-speed trains arrived.

The gleaming rail line cut through their grazing lands like a silver thread. It carried goods and people from Beijing to Europe once more, reviving the ancient path. Construction crews' unearthed stones etched with forgotten scripts. Kamila's family watched warily yet curiously.

One autumn evening, while herding sheep near an old ruined caravanserai, Kamila spotted a shimmer in the air. It looked like heat rising, but colder and more alive. She dismounted and approached. The air rippled, revealing a narrow, glowing gateway. Without thinking, she stepped through.

On the other side, the steppe looked the same yet transformed. Iridescent camels grazed beside winged horses. Among them moved extraordinary beings. A sinuous Chinese dragon with jade scales coiled around a pillar. A proud Greek griffin perched nearby. Persian simurghs with fiery feathers flew about, alongside Indian nagas and visitors from distant stars. Those tall, luminous figures had eyes that held galaxies.

They were trading on the Eternal Path, a timeless bridge that appeared along the old routes whenever true exchange occurred. Long ago, when the Silk Road flourished, this path had connected east and west. Merchants, scholars, and wanderers shared not just silk and spices, but languages, stories, songs, art, and ideas. Now, with the iron serpents roaring again, the Eternal Path stirred once more.

The dragon exhaled luminous threads that carried the essence of healing wisdom. The griffin offered vials of spiced wind granting visions of distant seas. The star-beings shared glowing orbs of knowledge from far realms.

Kamila froze. A small nine-tailed fox spirit noticed her first.

'Human child,' it said in a voice like wind through reeds. 'You have found the Eternal Path. Few do anymore.'

The dragon turned its ancient eyes toward her and tilted its massive head with a playful glint. 'The old road weakened when seas claimed the trade. The Path faded. But now the new trains awaken it. What brings a brave steppe girl stumbling in here?'

Kamila swallowed. 'I didn't mean to come. My family is outside. The trains bring strangers. They're changing everything.'

The griffin ruffled its wings. 'Change is the road's heartbeat. This path has always been the stage for connection. Long ago, we exchanged more than cloth and spice. We traded languages and cultures from east to west, even whispers from beyond the stars. We taught earth's people new words, new ways of seeing. But sometimes, exchanges get lost in translation.'

The dragon chuckled, a low rumble. "Especially with those tricky characters we shared! Look how they got mixed up '射' (meaning to shoot / shot an arrow) uses parts for 'body' and 'inch', but '矮' (meaning short in height) has an 'arrow' part on the left. Such an odd swap! When traders tried translating the sounds across languages, 'shot' sounded just like 'short'. One traveller even boasted proudly, 'I am very short!' when he wanted to say he could shoot farther than anyone. We still laugh about that silly swap!"

The star-beings shimmered with quiet laughter, and even the griffin cracked a smile. Kamila giggled despite herself. The dragon's teasing made the ancient being feel like a cheeky grandfather sharing old jokes.

But the dragon's tone grew serious. 'Greed nearly severed the Path once. Now a merchant from the new age seeks to exploit it. He wants to steal our shared wisdom for profit and bottle it as merchandise.'

Kamila thought of the workers, the rails, and the elders debating jobs versus tradition. 'I can help. My people know these lands. We can speak to them.'

The creatures nodded. The dragon said with a sly grin, 'Prove your heart belongs to the road, little one. Bring the greedy one here. Let him see what real connection looks like.'

Kamila returned, raced home, and watched. Soon she found him: a slick businessman in a suit. He arrived by helicopter, promising exclusive resorts and 'mystical' bottled air.

That night, she led him to the ruin. She pretended to show hidden artifacts. As he scoffed, she pulled him through the gateway.

He gasped. Beings loomed. He dropped his tablet.

'See,' Kamila said softly. 'This is what the Silk Road truly was, and is. Not just trade, but connection. Wisdom born from sharing across east and west, from places you know and beyond the stars. The road has always been the stage where people from different countries learn about each other. Old caravans or new trains, it threads the world together.'

The nine-tailed fox circled. 'Destroy the balance, and the Eternal Path closes. No more exchanges. No more wonder.'

Kamila added, 'Help protect it. Build the road to connect, not conquer. Let cultures, languages, and ideas flow freely again, like the old days but for our changing world.'

The businessman stared at the threads of wisdom, the visions, and the still-chuckling dragon. Fear turned to awe. He nodded slowly.

Outside, he cancelled the resorts. Instead, he proposed a cultural centre open to all. It would celebrate shared history, with programs for language learning and exchanges along the new routes.

The Eternal Path remained, quieter and guarded by trust.

Kamila returned to her family. The steppe winds carried faint echoes of dragon laughter and star songs. She knew the road had never died. It waited in hidden places, in stories, in hearts willing to listen.

And when the trains thundered past, she smiled. She knew the eternal path was threading the world together once more.

The Pie in the Sky

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chan, Ka Shun – 9

My name is Jiachun. I live in Nanxun, a quiet water town in Huzhou, where canals weave past houses with wide courtyards that rest beside the water. Everyone here earns their living from silk. Families raise silkworms and weave fabric. My father is a farmer with only a few chickens and a pony. My mother makes silk but sells it to merchants for a pittance. Our dinners are meagre. I often dream of eating great pots of rice, not just small bowls, to fill my empty stomach. My friends laugh and tell me it is nothing but a pie in the sky.

One day, my mother asked me to deliver some of her finest silk to a distant western village. ‘You and Esme will need to travel for months,’ she said, tying the bundle onto our pony’s neck. ‘Remember, don’t fall asleep. Esme will go berserk if no one is holding her reins!’

Days later, as we passed Xi’an, I grew weary. My eyelids drooped and finally closed. In my dream I tasted sweet cotton candy, but in reality the reins slipped from my hands. Esme’s eyes sparkled and she galloped at breakneck speed. Alarmed, I woke, stretching desperately to catch the reins, but the wild pony kept running. ‘Help!’ I cried, clutching her neck as the wind slapped my face and stole my words.

Hours passed before Esme slowed, exhausted. I peeled my hands from her neck and sighed with relief. Just then, I noticed someone behind a tree. He had olive skin, curly black hair, and warm brown eyes that gleamed when he smiled. Curious, I led Esme closer. His gaze fixed not on us, but on the silk. He pointed at it wildly, speaking in a strange language that sounded like a cow’s moo. I tried to hide my laughter, but my mouth betrayed me. He jabbed his finger at the silk again. At last I understood—he wanted it.

I scribbled 500 coins in the sand, expecting him to laugh or bargain. Instead, he nodded eagerly and pulled out a shining bar of gold. My jaw dropped. ‘Am I dreaming? Selling plain silk for gold?’ Awkwardly, I accepted the bar. That night, I could eat like a king.

As I prepared to leave, the man intercepted me, mooing again and pointing at Esme. She snorted impatiently. What else did he want? Suddenly I realised—he wished to follow us home. I nodded and gestured for him to climb on. Amazingly, Esme remembered the route. Months later, we reached Nanxun. I hugged her tightly, relieved. My parents, worried and worn, rushed to me. ‘We thought you had been eaten by beasts!’ they cried, angry yet overjoyed. ‘Look!’ I interrupted, showing them the gold. ‘We can finally enjoy fabulous meals every day!’ Their anger melted into tears of joy. I introduced the man, explaining he had paid for the silk. He stayed only briefly, leaving behind colourful carpets as a gift.

In time we learnt that our saviour was Aurelius, from the Roman Empire. Months later, he returned, carrying a heavy chest. When he opened it, golden light burst forth. ‘Gold!’ I screamed at the top of my lungs. My mother’s eyes widened, my father bounced like a kangaroo. Aurelius pointed insistently at the silk. ‘He wants more!’ I cried, thrusting fabric into his hands. ‘We must produce it quickly!’

I ran through the village, urging everyone to increase production with triple pay. Within a week, we had woven all the silk Aurelius desired. When I tried to bid farewell, he pulled me towards his carriage. I understood—he wanted me to follow him home. Without hesitation, I leapt aboard.

Months later, we arrived at a magnificent palace with fortress walls towering into the sky. Inside, we entered a grand hall where a man wore a crown glittering with jewels. I realised he was the king. Nervous, I knelt, trembling as though the earth itself shook. To my surprise, the king laughed kindly and lifted me to my feet. He led me into another chamber.

There, a gigantic table stretched before me, laden with food more colourful than I had ever imagined: a whole roasted pig glazed with golden honey, sausages fragrant with smoky spices, platters of bright fruits. My eyes gleamed.

I stuffed food into my mouth, feeling as though I were flying. At last, I was eating the 'pie' I had dreamed of for years, watching the Silk Road I had begun unfold before me.

The Emperor's Mistaken Treasure

Heep Yunn Primary School, Chang, Hoi Ching Candace – 9

'What a day!' the Uzbek merchants sighed, as they settled their camels outside the caravanserais. While the guard was away, they laid down on mats and snored like pigs...

Later, they heard somebody shouting Tongyu loudly and excitedly, 'Here are the stolen goods and the thieves! Don't waste time, let's bring all of them to Emperor Wu!' The voice caught the merchants off guard, waking them from their slumber. However, the strangers' words were Greek to them. They did not know what was happening...until they were hauled up, tossed onto a cart, and tied. The bravest and strongest merchant tried to free everyone, but the strangers pointed at him with knives. Then, they forced some bitter potion down the other merchants' throats, and for the merchant that tried to free everyone, they hit and punched him until he fell unconscious. When they woke up, they found themselves in front of the Chinese emperor in an enormous and magnificent palace in China. The strangers were having a conversation with the emperor, but, surprisingly, the merchants could now understand every word. They were all on pins and needles while listening to the conversation. 'China is truly the best country in the world! Now, go throw the thieves in a jail cell, lock the door, then throw the key in the ocean! Great work, my soldiers!' boomed the emperor. Actually, the merchants were not thieves, but they were too scared to protest. A soldier with a terrifying look, voice snarled, 'You stole the emperor's wealth. Your journey to the court will be short but unpleasant.'

First, they passed a wall displaying the emperor's resplendent old robes. As the merchants gazed in awe... 'Don't you dare lay a finger on that, you foul wretch!' Snarled a soldier to a merchant who wanted to touch the clothes. In his hand, there was a big spear! All the merchants were terrified.

Later, they passed by a large vault. The curious merchants were looking at the vault door curiously. This time, the Chinese soldiers did not threaten them with weapons. Instead, the soldiers boasted, 'See this? This is the money the emperor gave us. The emperor gave us so much money so we have to use a very big vault to put in them in! We need nearly two thousand vaults to hold it all!'

The merchants and soldiers finally arrived at the jail cell. It was just a small, dark room with no windows. There were just five chairs, a table and two small beds in the corner of the room, made of wood. Also, a lot of strangers sat in a corner. 'Good night,' the soldiers sneered, marching out and locking the door.

Hesitantly, the merchants approached the other prisoners. All the other prisoners had a great, big, welcoming smile on their faces. One of them said, 'Hi! We are all from different countries, and have different backgrounds. I am Dabir, from India. These are my fellow merchants.' Everyone introduced themselves, then Dabir continued, 'We all got captured by Emperor Wu. Did you come here because you were framed by him? I guess you 'stole' his money. And, there is a tale you should know.'

Long ago, China was the greatest and kindest country in the world. The kindest too! The Chinese had hearts of gold. They always offered a helping hand to the people in need. However, the people started refusing the help since a person accidentally killed someone important while trying to help. One day, everyone decided to take revenge on China. Then, Emperor Wu became the emperor. It was like he had a layer of power surrounding him, so the leaders of the revenge got cold feet! But it was too late! He captured the leaders of the revenge, then threw them into jail. Now, he is throwing innocent people in jail, all accused of the same crime.

'Did I just hear somebody saying something about the emperor?' A soldier peered into the cell, then stepped inside. He tripped on a stone, and his spear clattered across the floor to Dabir's feet. He picked up the spear and passed it to a muscular man, who broke it in half! The soldier scrambled out in panic, accidentally leaving the key in the lock. Dabir opened the door with it, then everyone escaped.

Everybody ran out of the castle, but Dabir and the merchants stayed to talk with Emperor Wu. They had a long conversation about what happened and how the emperor was wrong. They understood each other's feelings, and

soon they became friends. Emperor Wu gave the valuable goods they stole from the merchants back. Then, somebody else ran to them, out of breath, said excitedly, 'Your Majesty, I found the lost money behind the secret door in the new vault—number two thousand and twenty-six!' An awkward silence fell.

Dabir and the merchants stepped out of the castle gates. They carried more than their returned goods—they carried the seeds of dialogue. Together, they chose to travel to Europe, seeking to learn about more cultures. Their trek was filled with animated conversation, recounting tales of India, Uzbekistan, and a changed China. They were no longer mere merchants, but unwitting ambassadors, ready to weave their stories into the wider world.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Heep Yunn Primary School, Yuen, Wai Kiu – 11

The sun hung low over the streets of Chang'an, casting shadows that shifted with the movement of people. Merchants traded not just textiles and spices, but also stories and ideas. In the heart of ancient China, a man named Li Yan dreamed of adventure beyond his father's silk shop. It was a lively time when the Silk Road served as more than just a trade route.

Li Yan was drawn to tales of the west. He had heard about the incredible items people traded and the friendships formed along the way. The thought of meeting people who had never seen silk before excited him. Inspired by stories of travellers, Li Yan decided to embark on his adventure. He packed his belongings and prepared his heart for the journey.

One night, Li Yan visited Wu, an old wise man who had faced many dangers on the western trails. Wu had travelled far and wide, and his face reflected years of experience.

'The journey has many challenges, but the rewards are great. You will see cities sparkle in the sun, taste fruits you've never known and meet people who think differently.'

With determination and excitement, Li Yan set off, joined by friends who shared his dreams. Together, they loaded their camels with silks, spices and paper, each item a potential link to new worlds. Weeks flew by as they travelled through hot deserts and snowy mountains. This journey changed how they viewed life and brought them closer as they discovered more about the world and themselves.

In a valley, they stumbled upon a town filled with celebration. The air smelled of freshly baked bread and herbs. The townspeople welcomed them, eager to share their stories, traditions and plenty of food. Here, they quickly recognised the importance of sharing meals, which made it easier to connect. They traded silk for local pottery, spices and unique treasures. Li Yan learned that trade was not just about buying and selling; it was about building friendships and understanding cultures.

As they continued westward, the friends faced challenges. Bandits lay in wait, storms tested their strength, and rough terrains pushed their limits. Yet with each hardship, they found strength in their friendship. They grew as lifelong friends, bonded in their quest for something greater than themselves. Each night, they gathered around the campfire to share stories of their dreams. These made them feel like a family.

With the changing seasons came a deeper appreciation for the cultures they encountered. They admired Persian carpets, enjoyed Central Asian fruits, and learned about Hellenistic influences. They returned home with stories that forever shaped their identities. Li Yan's father could hardly believe the tales of adventure and friendship his son brought back.

Fast forward a thousand years, and the Silk Road was revived with the 'Belt and Road Initiative'. In today's fast-paced world, technology has made travel easier than ever, but the need for connection remains strong. This renewal offers great opportunities but also faces new challenges, just like before. Countries can now communicate in ways Li Yan could not have imagined.

By 2026, we find ourselves ready to write a new chapter in our story. Nations that were once distant can now connect through the Internet. Social media allows people to share their lives worldwide. The globe feels smaller, yet the richness of diverse cultures remains a treasure waiting to be explored.

At a global conference in Chang'an, leaders from many countries gather to discuss the future of this renewed Silk Road. The air buzzes with excitement and hope. Zara, a passionate entrepreneur from Kenya, steps onto the stage. 'The new Silk Road should not just focus on trade; it must support sustainable development,' she says. 'Let's not just exchange goods, but also address issues like climate change and social justice. Together, we can make a difference.'

In the audience, Amir, a tech expert from Iran, nods enthusiastically. 'Imagine the possibilities if we use technology to create green solutions that could help all nations! This teamwork could change how we view progress, just as the original Silk Road did long ago. Together, we can create a world where everyone benefits.'

As ideas circulate in the room, a consensus emerges: this new Silk Road is not just about trade; it involves shared hopes, cultural exchanges and collaboration. During breaks, participants from different backgrounds mingle, sharing laughter and food, just as Li Yan had done many centuries ago. Global partnerships could spark groundbreaking innovations in Science, bringing people together. The spirit of collaboration resembles Li Yan's adventure—people from different backgrounds coming together to share stories, dreams and hopes, turning ideas into reality.

However, while discussing big plans, they also recognise the challenges ahead. Fragile relationships between countries, ongoing inequalities and the urgent need for climate action must be priorities for all nations. This renewed journey cannot repeat the mistakes of the past; it must focus on fairness, sustainability, and mutual respect.

Zara adds, 'The past offers us lessons, and we must learn. We are not just living in history; we are creating our own. Let's make sure it includes everyone from the world.'

As the conference concludes, the leaders step into Chang'an, filled with hope and energy. They feel a bond that echoes the spirit of adventure carried by Li Yan and his friends. They understand that the Silk Road was not just about trading goods; it was about human connection and understanding.

From Chang'an to the vast world beyond, the journey continues. By learning from the past and creating new paths, the Silk Road remains a timeless symbol of our shared experience—a story as rich as the silk it carried and as vast as the possibilities we can explore together.

Through this journey, we are reminded that trade is not just about exchanging goods. It's about the stories we tell, the cultures we share and the legacies we build together. Together, we can work toward a brighter future.

The Faded Legend of Zhang Qian

HKUGA Primary School, Chan, Yuen Kwan Lewis – 11

For generations, the story of Zhang Qian has been passed down, yet much of it has faded into time. This legend did not begin with pride or glory, but in a small, serene village. The sun lingered warmly, as dust motes danced in its rays, and life seemed perfect. The villagers enjoyed their routines, but Zhang Qian longed for adventure. The unknown tempted him like hunger, though he remained trapped in his quiet life, dreaming of distant lands and daring journeys.

One night, as he lay awake, the stars seemed to form a radiant figure. With vast cerulean wings and luminous eyes, it spoke, “The desert to the west hides a secret. Only the chosen one can go. Follow the King of the desert.”

It handed him a compass engraved with a strange creature—lion’s head, dragon’s wings, eagle claws, and horse’s body. Zhang Qian fainted. When he woke, the compass was clenched in his fist. His odyssey had begun.

At midnight, Zhang Qian packed supplies and followed the compass. He entered a cave that felt like a portal. Darkness surrounded him, while water dripped from unseen walls, and his footsteps echoed. When he emerged, the scorching desert stretched endlessly. For three days he walked, but his food ran out. His lips cracked, his legs trembled, and he thought he would perish. Just as he was about to collapse, a group of camels appeared. To his astonishment, they spoke.

“It’s been ages since humans came here,” one said.

“He must be the prophecy,” another replied.

Zhang Qian fainted again. When he woke in a hay house, the camels gave him stew. He asked about the prophecy. Orion explained, “Long ago, this land was a forest. We were stallions, not camels. But the Demon of the Desert destroyed it. Only the chosen one can save us, with the help of the Old King of the forest.”

The compass, they said, bore the King’s emblem. Together, they set off to find him.

After days of travel, they reached a camp of crimson tents. Centaurs and unicorns guarded it, their weapons gleaming in the sun. Orion shouted, “We are the prophecy!” The Old King appeared, majestic like the creature on the compass. He looked at Zhang Qian with skepticism.

“So this weak human is the chosen one?” he asked.

A centaur replied, “Destiny has chosen him. We cannot deny it.”

The King sighed. “The war between desert and forest will come soon. We must prepare. Human, follow me.”

Inside a giant tent, Zhang Qian saw weapons of every kind—swords, bows, spears, daggers. The King told him to choose wisely. Zhang Qian picked a fiery sword and a shield of dragon scales. The King was surprised. “Strong enough for the shield, worthy of the blade. Perhaps you are not so fragile.”

Suddenly, a terrible sound shook the camp. The King’s face turned pale. “The demon has come. He wants to kill you before the prophecy comes true.”

Outside, a storm of sand rose. From it came the Demon of the Desert—pitch black, with glowing red eyes, silver claws, and a colossal tail. Behind him slithered fire-breathing snakes, their hisses sizzling like firewood. The ground shook with each step, and the air burned with their fiery breath.

The King and his army charged. Unicorns lowered their horns and fought the snakes, centaurs shot arrows, but many fell. Zhang Qian ran forward with his sword and shield. The Demon pinned the King down and grabbed Zhang Qian by the throat. His face turned red, his breath nearly gone. Just as he was about to faint, Orion and Solara rammed the Demon, knocking him back. The King attacked again, but the Demon hurled him aside like a rag doll.

The Demon laughed. “Foolish! A mortal cannot defeat me. I will be King of the desert!”

Zhang Qian raised his sword, which glowed gold and burned with fire. “No, Demon. You are nothing but a grain of sand!” he shouted. The Demon charged, claws flashing, but Zhang Qian’s shield blocked every strike. Sparks flew as claw met scale. With a mighty thrust, Zhang Qian stabbed the Demon. The sizzling sound echoed across the desert. Defeated, the Demon limped away into darkness, his army of snakes scattering into the dunes.

As the Demon vanished, the desert began to change. Sand melted into grass. Rivers flowed, flowers bloomed, and magical creatures returned. Phoenixes and dragons soared in the sky, their wings painting colors across the horizon. Unicorns drank from the rivers, their reflections shimmering. The air filled with birdsong and the roar of beasts, life returning to the land.

Orion and Solara transformed back into stallions, their humps gone, and bodies strong and proud. Their fur gleamed white as marble, their eyes shone with freedom. “Yes! Finally!” they cried, stamping their hooves in triumph. Zhang Qian watched in awe, realizing how much the desert had suffered and how much hope had been restored. He felt pride, but also humility, knowing destiny had chosen him not for strength alone, but for courage to act when others could not.

Then, roots rose from the ground, twisting into a spiral portal. The Old King appeared once more, his wings unfurled. He bowed to Zhang Qian. “Thank you. You have saved our world. I now grant you the Portal of the West.”

Zhang Qian stepped through the portal. Behind him, the land sang with life. Ahead lay new horizons. He thought of his village, of the people who had never left its borders, and of the countless journeys waiting beyond. From then on, he began his travels to the West, opening paths for trade and adventure. This was the beginning of the Silk Road, and the legend of Zhang Qian lived on, whispered by forests, deserts, and rivers alike.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

*Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School, Chen,
Pok Yuen Matthew – 12*

“Cheers!” said Liu Bei, drinking beverages. He is the Emperor of Shu Kingdom. His Conspiracy Zhuge Liang said, “We’ve been attacking ChengDu for a month. But now, we’ve taken ChengDu as our capital! Let’s celebrate!”

But as the military team of Shu Kingdom was about to enter ChengDu, they were lost at a fork in the road.

Liu Bei and his two little brothers, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, with his beloved hero, Zhao Yun, were four people who wanted to stop Cao Cao, the traitor.

Cao Cao said to his army, “We need to ATTACK LIU BEI with our FULL POWER! To stop him from getting our land! UNDERSTAND?” But a person in the army said, “Emperor, we could attack Liu Bei by this plan. First, we need to surrender to Liu Bei...” Cao Cao questioned, “If we surrender, how could we win? Soldiers, bring him out of the palace and kill him!”

When Zhuge Liang heard that, he told the army, “We could get ChengDu easily by general Zhao Yun and general Guan Yu because Cao Cao is not very united.” But Liu Bei said, “No, no, no. Cao Cao’s army is very strong.” After an hour, Cao Cao and his general Zhang He came to a resting place. Zhao Yun came out and killed Cao Cao and Zhang He in less than half an hour.

“Cheers!” said Liu Bei, celebrating with the army. Zhuge Liang said, “We’ve been attacking ChengDu for a month. But now, we’ve taken ChengDu as our capital! Let’s celebrate!” But when the Army was about to get into ChengDu, they were lost.

“Neeeeeews! News! Emperor! The road ahead is sand!” said a soldier. When Liu Bei heard this, he was shocked. The team didn’t recognise that they had already walked past ChengDu. The team walked for so long. When they finally saw a city, it was a much different city than in Shu Kingdom.

When Liu Bei asked the question in Chinese, the people there didn’t seem like they knew what he was saying. Zhuge Liang told Liu Bei that they might have been out of China already.

After Zhuge Liang had learned languages there, people from China would use this road to carry goods to sell, so it was named the Silk Road. But Zhuge Liang went even deeper to the west.

The Thousand-Year Time-Travelling Silk Heroes

*Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School,
Ma, Man Hei Hollis – 10*

In a hidden laboratory beneath the Hong Kong Ancient Antiques Museum, a mysterious time traveler named Professor Wen was conducting an experiment. Suddenly, alarms blared. His eyes widened in horror as he read the data: “The Silk Road network established by Zhang Qian has been disrupted. An imperial ally has betrayed the Han Dynasty. History is in danger!”

With urgency, he typed furiously on a glowing keyboard, his fingers dancing like a swan across the keys. A swirling portal opened which led to the past, shimmering with golden threads. Without hesitation, he stepped through and vanished along with the mythical portal.

Meanwhile, in modern-day Hong Kong, a curious student named Liana discovered an ancient scroll hidden in the museum’s archives. It chronicled Zhang Qian’s perilous journey westward, his diplomatic mission to forge alliances, and the birth of the Silk Road—a lifeline of trade, culture, and peace stretching from Chang’an to the Roman Empire.

As Liana traced the inked routes on the parchment, a strange black smoke rose from the scroll’s quill. An ominous voice echoed: “The emperor and Zhang Qian will fall. And the Golden Silk shall be mine. China will kneel.”

Startled, Liana tried to alert her teacher, but a dark force overwhelmed her. Then she lost consciousness.

She awoke in a dense forest, disoriented and alone. Distant cries pierced the air. Following a trail of crimson stains, she reached a cliff where a man was being attacked by imperial guards. Grabbing a bamboo stick from the ground, she charged forward.

“Stop! If you want to harm him, you’ll have to face me first!” she shouted.

The guards laughed—until Liana, trained in karate, launched into a flurry of strikes. One by one, the guards fell, some tumbling over the cliff’s edge. The man she saved stirred and looked up.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m Liana, from the Hong Kong Ancient Antiques Museum.”

He smiled. “I’m Professor Wen. Someone seeks the Golden Silk—an artifact that symbolizes the unity of the Silk Road. If it falls into the wrong hands, China’s past and future will collapse.”

Liana nodded. “Then we must stop them.”

Their journey took them across the ancient Silk Road. In Chang’an, they uncovered a coded message hidden in a jade pendant once worn by Zhang Qian. In Dunhuang, they deciphered murals in the Mogao Caves that pointed to a secret chamber in Samarkand. Along the way, they encountered merchants trading silk, spices, and scrolls, and scholars exchanging ideas in a dozen languages. The Silk Road was alive with the heartbeat of civilizations.

In Samarkand, they met a Persian astronomer who revealed that the Golden Silk was not merely a treasure—it was a sacred thread woven with the essence of peace, knowledge, and cultural exchange. “It binds East and West,” he said. “To sever it is to plunge the world into chaos.”

Following a trail of black and red smoke, Liana and the professor arrived at a looming fortress near the Taklamakan Desert. Inside, they climbed a spiraling tower, where a blood-smeared door awaited. The professor handed Liana a reinforced bamboo stick.

They burst into the chamber. A cloaked figure turned, holding a shimmering golden thread.

“Reveal yourself!” the professor demanded.

The figure laughed and removed his hood. Liana gasped. “You?!”

It was her best friend from school, Kai. “I’ve always envied your brilliance,” he sneered. “Now, I’ll reshape history and rule the East and West.”

A fierce battle erupted. The professor and Liana fought valiantly, but Kai wielded the Golden Silk like a weapon, its threads slicing through the air. Just as all seemed lost, Liana remembered the martial forms she had studied — movements inspired by ancient warrior monks who once guarded the Silk Road. With a final strike, she disarmed Kai, sending him crashing to the ground.

“You’ll never win,” he hissed as he vanished into the shadows.

Liana rushed to free the imprisoned Emperor Wu of Han and Zhang Qian, both bound in golden chains.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. “The Golden Silk… it’s torn. Is it too late?”

The emperor smiled gently. “Do not despair. That was but a decoy. The true Golden Silk lies here.”

He opened a sky-blue pouch embroidered with dragons and phoenixes. From within, golden threads shimmered and danced like sunlight on water.

“This silk,” he said, “was woven by artisans from Chang’an, dyed with indigo from India, and blessed by monks from Dunhuang. It is the soul of our shared journey.”

After heartfelt farewells, Liana and the professor returned to the present. Back in the lab, the professor resumed his experiment.

“Oh, I never asked—what’s your name?” he said.

“Liana,” she replied with a smile. “But I think I’ve earned the title of Silk Hero.”

She stepped through the portal, returning home. As the lab quieted, a gold piece of silk drifted to the floor, glowing softly.

The Silk Road had been saved—for now.

A Tale Of Exchange And Dreams

*Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School,
Mok, Hing Yu – 12*

Camel bells rang beyond Xi’an’s gates, mixing with voices Chen could not understand. Chen tightened his grip on his leather sack and stepped onto the road.

Chen, a 20-year-old peasant Chinese civilian from Xi’an in 720 AD, grew up hearing Silk Road stories and dreamed of opening a shop selling Western and Eastern goods. He had calloused, tanned hands, and carried a giant leather sack of silk, porcelain, and medicinal rhubarb — the most valuable Chinese items in the West — entrusted to him by local merchants. He listened to foreigners’ conversations in the markets, his heart aching to understand more.

He left his hometown, observing diverse humans — Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians — all preparing for the journey. Merchants checked goods, camel herders watered camels, and farewells were exchanged between loved

ones. His inquisitive eyes darted around, heart racing, eager for the wonders beyond. He then hurried along the trail of merchants disappearing into the horizon.

The curious and enthusiastic Chen followed the hunched merchants along the winding path. Camels trudged steadily under heavy loads, while merchants spoke in different languages that blended into a constant murmur. As Chen walked among them, he thought about the dangers and sacrifices ahead. His heart raced with both excitement and fear, wondering whether he would survive to tell the tale. “This doesn’t fit my dream, and there seem to be so many dangers, so will I even make it? Is it worth it?” After a moment, deep in thought, Chen decided that it was.

The Taklamakan Desert — a vast, shifting sea of golden sands in the Tarim Basin, where few returned from — stretched endlessly, its swirling sands and howling winds coating everything in dust. It smiled at Chen with a malicious grin, as if it had already prepared endless challenges.

Through sleepless nights, the traders walked stealthily with the help of guides from one oasis to the next. Chen moved carefully, feeling his bag pressing against his chest. Without a horse or camel, each step, aching dully, sent shocks through his muscles. As he adjusted the rough fabric of the satchel, a harsh rasp echoed in his ears. He looked over the silent landscape and saw a merchant collapsed, gasping for water with dry, chapped lips. Chen frowned as his legs buckled and gave way, and he dropped his sack to the ground.

The drained Chen glared with disdain at the sack that dragged him down. “You threaten my dreams and life. You’re not the perpetually treasured possession I thought you were,” Chen grumbled. With shaking hands, he stood and buried one large pile of rhubarb in the sand. He watched as the grains of sand fell back into place, as if nothing had been there. It struck him how merciless the world could be, swallowing up what men thought was priceless and returning everything to its original state as if nothing had happened. He did not look back. He stifled a snuffle, his lips quivering.

After months of hardship, he finally escaped what felt like a waking nightmare, walking along the shimmering edge of the Tarim Basin toward an imposing, snow-capped barrier gleaming in the distance.

The freezing Pamir Mountains sneered at Chen and blanketed their peaks behind clouds, obscuring Chen’s destination. His fingers numbed, and his lips turned blue. Each breath rose into the air, white as steam, only it didn’t provide any warmth. “So, this is how fog is made,” he thought. In a small village, he traded fragile, heavy porcelain jars for warm clothing. A Buddhist family invited him inside and pressed warm bowls of noodles into his frozen hands. He then descended the treacherous slope toward his goal, teeth chattering but spirit unwavering.

Chen spotted delicate flakes of pure-white snow drifting from the sky and knew his journey might take longer than he had expected. He stayed in a town to spend the winter with the other resting traders.

After long, grueling months, Chen had formed strong bonds with some of the merchants. When rumours of bandits arrived, Chen’s friends suggested that their armed guards protect him and his belongings. Feeling safe, Chen gained the confidence to face the tough road.

One night, as the pearly moon hung in the sky, Chen heard faint footsteps and saw masked figures approach his caravan like silent foxes. He warned the guards, sweating as he wiped his forehead. It didn’t take long before yells cut through the air as the sound of clanging metal rang out between the guards and the bandits. Pounding footsteps surrounded the caravan, only to be deflected by the guards and their shields.

Chen scrambled frantically as one of the bandits began climbing the caravan’s sides. Just as Chen found what he wanted, the bandit poked his head up, and Chen knocked him down with the porcelain jar he was holding. After a tense stand-off, the bandits retreated into the desert, leaving a dark streak across the sands.

Beyond the perilous routes, Chen entered a new world, where he discovered things he never knew existed. “This adventure has been quite the rollercoaster,” Chen thought, as he traded materials for textiles, ores, and Ferghana horses. In India, he sat beneath a Buddha while a monk traced stories in the dust, reminiscent of Greek statues. He met an Islamic inventor demonstrating improved papermaking and the compass, and heard John of Damascus’s lecture in Syria, blending Greek philosophy with Christian theology.

After years on the road, Chen sat joyously in his humble shop on Xi’an’s bustling streets. His eyes traced every wooden corner of the new stall, and his fingers touched glazed pottery, ornamental glassware, and abstract art.

Chen placed a small jar of cinnamon beside the textiles. He breathed in the crisp, fresh air. For a moment, he thought of the rhubarb buried beneath the desert sand, still drying. The journey had cost him something, but given him more. He arranged the foreign goods beside his old jars of tea as the street outside began to stir.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Kau Yan School, Lee, Yiu Chun – 11

The gloomy figure raised his hands, his pale fingers streaming through the cold air of the night. Jasmine recoiled as smoke billowed from the figure, who was a bloodthirsty mage. Tension was in the air, I felt weight on my shoulders, but I tried to protect her, but it was too late.

I am Lucas, a member of the Chinese Silk Road project, a network of ancient trade routes. A new co-worker has just joined our team, and as an experienced employee, my boss tasked me with training her. She's really nice, and I might have a thing for her. Although some strangers bully me for being too "traditional", working in different Chinese factories, I love my job and it has become a part of me. Business has been booming recently, and corrupt workers have slowly emerged from the shadows, snatching money from unsuspecting victims... I can only trust Jasmine.

On the other side, a mage known as Death, was smirking at the sight of so many stains on the face of the earth. His motive was to rid the world of peasants and filth. His ideal life was to eliminate any scum in the air that disturbed his well-being. And unfortunately, Lucas and Jasmine were some of them. A corrupt worker arose from the darkness, he was the Silk King. He promises the mage tons of riches and power if he gets rid of Lucas, the "goody two-shoes" in his eyes, always scrutinizing his money-making schemes and rubbing up to the boss. He believes the only person standing in his path is Lucas. "I want him dead and terminate anyone who stands in your path." As Death grinned and bared his sharp teeth riddled with poison and hatred, he summoned a squad of born killers, a pack of rabid hyenas, each with different strengths but without the ability to work together.

I just returned from work, my head filled with sweat. Jasmine was welcoming me with a warm smile. "Oh yeah, you're here to discuss work matters with me?" "Well, yeah... I need more training from you, as I feel like an outsider in our workspaces." I gave her a kind smile, "Actually, I want to tell you something. I've had a thing for you since you started working..." I could tell Jasmine was flustered, as her cheeks were flushing like a tomato. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean.." "Can you excuse me for a second?" she hurried out of the room.

Death was lurking in the shadows, smiling deviously at the sight of his target in emotional distress. He wanted to study his target's habits and lifestyle before scheming his evil onslaught. As he disappeared into the night atmosphere, drifting through the clouds like a bat, Jasmine was surging into the forest, unable to think. "What just happened?" She pondered to herself. "What is there to be confused about?" She furrowed her eyebrows, contemplating what her next move might be. She just walked home, not knowing the deadly events that would unfold later.

A day later, it was my birthday. My co-workers thought it would be funny to hand me boxes full of silk, as usual, they were always mocking me. I didn't hate the gifts though, because this would be a funny memory of my job when I grow up, so I spent my afternoon putting together a sculpture made of silk. I smiled at the finished product, as my doorbell rang and I went to respond to it.

It was Jasmine, holding a bouquet, smiling warmly at my presence. She tousled her hair and whispered, "I wanted to make up for my sudden disappearance yesterday, these flowers are for you! I...might also have a thing for you, I guess.." I took the flowers, fully knowing what to do next. I glanced into her beautiful brown eyes, held her hands tightly, and pressed my lips against hers. She had the same idea, as she playfully nibbled my lips. "Not bad for a first kiss, huh?" I laughed.

A few days later, Jasmine, my girlfriend, was lying next to me cleaning our flowerpots. I suddenly had an ominous feeling, as the air became thick. Jasmine, with her chest pounding, went out to investigate the sudden shenanigans. I

followed behind, catching a glimpse of Death outside the window. My eyes widened as I grabbed my shotgun and tossed Jasmine a knife. As we stepped out into the night feeling more exposed than ever, a pack of aggressive hyenas stampeded towards our direction. Reacting quickly, I shot one with my firearm. It recoiled but had a terrifying aura surrounding it, and fire emerged from the ground. An invisible mage appeared right in front of my eyes, pointing his bony finger at Jasmine and I. "You two should be honored to get killed by me. I will destroy the Silk project and anyone who stands in my way. You will die, but who is there to care?" Another hyena rushed towards Jasmine, eyes full of fury. She stabbed it and it dropped dead. "Sacrifice one, and I shall let the other one go." Death said. Jasmine looked at me with sadness in her eyes. "I'll go." I said to Death.

I grabbed Jasmine's knife without Death knowing and walked up to him. As he raised his fingers to my neck and the hyenas focused on Jasmine, I whipped my knife against his face, and blood streamed down his cheek. "YOU DAMNED BEAST!" He roared as the hyenas pounced. They weren't able to work together, and Jasmine and I took care of them easily. Death grabbed his staff, and poison potions rained from the sky. I opened fire and the bullets pierced all the potions before they took their effect. Lastly, I shot Death. He yelled in agony, whispered in pure anger before he snapped his fingers and disappeared, "The Silk King will be meeting you soon. Be prepared for the downfall of the Silk Road project."

The Artifacts

Korean International School, Choi, Levin – 10

I am an 18-year-old boy named Felix, living in Changan, China. I have blue eyes, a short nose, and golden hair, and I think I am quite charming. My parents are half-American and half-Chinese. My best friend is Alex, who is also half-American, and he has brown eyes, unlike me. Alex and I have known each other because we both help the people trading on a route called the Silk Road. We assist in bringing silk, spices, tea, jade, medicine, and precious metals. Today is a big day—it is the day that China starts trading with India and other countries.

After the trading day is over, we are ordered to organize the artifacts and relics we received from the trading. We take one look at the cargo and are immediately shocked by the sheer number of different weapons, decorations, and much more. "Ugh. This is going to take forever!" I complain. "Why couldn't they choose someone else?" Alex shrugs. "I don't know, but we need to start. If we don't, it's going to take us more than just a day," Alex says. "Fine!" I shout. As we open the crates, I feel an unnerving sensation. The objects start to shake.

"W—what's happening?" I ask. The artifacts begin to lift into the air, outlined in gold. Then, one by one, the relics come to life. The sounds send shivers down my spine: the roar of a golden dragon, the shaking of a pearl necklace, the drumming of a tribal statue. "Oh no!" Alex exclaims. Then he pulls me to run. I take off with Alex, and the artifacts, hot on our heels. Suddenly, I hear a shooting sound, and before I know it, I am paralyzed by a poisonous dart shot into my leg. Alex turns around to try to help, but it's too late; the relics have surrounded us. Alex is about to give up, but I say, "No. We're not going down without a fight." "Sure," Alex replies. I pick up a spear that has fallen, and Alex grabs a bow and arrow.

We charge into battle, my spear clashing against gold, jade, and pearls. I duck just in time as a samurai suit swings at me. Luckily, I'm saved by one of Alex's arrows. I see a tribal warrior, not attacking me but speaking in some kind of ancient language. He holds a book filled with hieroglyphs and runes. I don't understand what he's saying, but I think he wants me to read it, yet I don't know how. "I can't read this!" I say to the warrior. He blows some kind of blue dust into my eyes; it stings a bit, but suddenly, I can read the words! The warrior urges me to read the book, so I do. As I speak the words, the artifact fighting Alex crumbles to the floor, a ghostly apparition escaping it.

Other artifacts do the same, filling the air with supernatural entities. The tribal warrior bows and then crumbles. A sudden wave of information floods into me. The ghosts had been possessing the artifacts, but why? A ghost flies down to me and whispers in my ear, "Thanks for setting us free." Then I realize — these are the spirits of people who were wronged in their homeland! They must have become so agitated that they didn't even know they were possessing objects! With that, they evaporate into thin air. "Phew," Alex says. His words make me laugh, and soon, he laughs too. "Our parents must be worried. Let's go back home," I say. "And not talk about this?" he asks. "Of course!" I reply, and we head back to our respective homes.

China's New Silk Road

Korean International School, Chow, Chelsea Ho Nam – 10

'Yes!' exclaimed Anyeongzhao. After years of experimenting he finally invented a material for clothing that is smooth and non-itchy. He thought about how much money and fame he would get for his invention, then he started to daydream. 'Money.... fame!' he mumbled several times. His younger brother, Anyeoungbao, saw him sitting there. 'I think he might be having a sugar-crash!' thought Anyeoungbao. So he then got a bucket of ice water from the fridge and poured it over his brother. 'That should wake him up.' 'What is that?' 'Anyeoungbao Shanhei, what did you do!' His brother howled with laughter as he walked back up to his room. Anyeongzhao was furious. He took a towel from the toilet and wiped himself dry. 'Much better!' he said as he folded his red towel neatly and placed it on the footstool next to him. 'Now, what to name it? I know silk!' he thought. His Mum trots along. 'Whatcha doing?' she questioned. 'I did it!' said Anyeongzhao, excitedly. 'I did it!' mimicked Anyeoungbao, sarcastically. 'Young man get to your room right this instant!' 'You are grounded for a month!' shrieked Mum. Anyeoungbao groaned several times before stomping up the stairs to his bedroom. 'So what you up to?' asked Mum, hoping Anyeoungbao would stay in his bedroom and not come down screaming and kicking. That's exactly what happened last time Anyeoungbao was grounded. Mum shuddered at the thought. 'So as I was trying to say, before I was so rudely interrupted,' he glared at his brother's bedroom. 'I finally invented a non-itch material for clothing!' said Anyeongzhao. 'That's great!' 'But what are you going to name it?' asked Mum 'I'll name my new invention, drumroll please!' Mum did a polite drumroll. 'Silk!' 'That's a good name!' said Mum. She kissed Anyeongzhao and said 'Bye Zhao Zhao, I have to head to work now!' Zhao Zhao was Anyeongzhao's nickname. Anyeongzhao started to think about how to sell his invention. He decided to get interviewed with two companies that can help his invention be a worldwide success. The next day, he went out with his backpack containing his invention. The first one was named Worldwide Inventors and the second one was named Global Inventions. A few days later, the results for the interviews came in the mail. 'I'll get it!' screamed Anyeongzhao. He took all the letters from the mailbox and put them on the sofa. He scrambled up all the letters to find two with his name on them, one of them has a stamp that says Worldwide Inventors and the second one has a stamp that says Global Inventions. He sat down and opened the first letter. Worldwide Inventors didn't accept him. Anyeongzhao ripped the letter into pieces. He crossed his fingers and hoped that his next letter would accept him. Though he found it tricky to open the letter, he still managed to open the letter without uncrossing his fingers. It read Dear Anyeongzhao Shanhei, Thank you for applying for a spot in our company and Congratulations! You successfully took a spot in our company Global Inventions. Your timetable to go to work is every Wednesday and Friday. Congratulations again and we hope you join our company. Sincerely, Liuxinpian, Trainer of Global Inventions. 'Yessssss!' whispered Anyeongzhao, fist-pumping the air. The next day was Wednesday, Anyeongzhao's very first workday. He had to wake up very early in the morning to have his breakfast and get to work on time. Unfortunately though, that was the time where he was most clumsy. He nearly used his comb to brush his teeth but luckily got stopped in time by his Mum. After having breakfast, Anyeongzhao was accompanied by his Mum to the train station, on the train and to the building to go to his very first workday. After thirty minutes on the train, Anyeongzhao and his Mum walked to the building with a huge sign on it saying Global Inventions in bright purple. They were outside the building. 'That must be it.' said Anyeongzhao, hoping his Mum could hear him over the loud traffic. 'Have a good day!' exclaimed Mum. Anyeongzhao walked slowly inside the building. He met a guard who showed him to his meeting room. The guard opened the door. 'Hey Marguet,' shrieked the guard. 'Here's one of your team-members.' 'Ah, good!' said Marguet. 'Now we can start our meeting!' 'Sit down in the empty seat next to me please Anyeongzhao.' she hand-gestured him to come sit down. He sat down. 'So I looked at your inventions' she explained 'But I saw that two people have the same invention but with different names.' 'Can Anyeongzhao and Cheungshuyon please go up to the front.' Anyeongzhao sidled forward along with Cheungshuyon. 'So we can't have two people in our team with the same inventions, so you guys are going to take turns saying the materials you put into silk or silky.' declared Marguet. She pointed to Anyeongzhao while saying the word silk and Cheungshuyon while saying the word silky. 'You first Anyeongzhao.' 'Flour.' said Anyeongzhao confidently. On Friday Cheungshuyon finally gave up. 'Yessssssssss!' shouted Anyeongzhao. 'Alright, next meeting we can finally discuss more important matters.' croaked Marguet.

Cheungshuyon had to leave the company. Next week they discussed which invention they would make worldwide, by a whopping twelve votes silk won the game. Silk was a total success in China but that's not what this company is for, it's to help inventions go worldwide. They decided, to make silk go worldwide, they would trek westwards. They thought they could find some new customers. They trekked for more than three months but it was more than worth it. They successfully sold silk to new customers but also made a trading road with west and east exchanging food, clothes, jewelry and many more. That's how Anyeoungzhao's invention made the legendary silk road.

Lizzy and the Silk Road

Korean International School, Kohli, Mehr – 9

Lizzy Lam, a curious 10-year-old girl from Beijing, loved listening to stories of big, brave travellers who carried silk, spices, and secrets. One evening, while exploring her grandmother's attic, she stumbled upon a beautiful vase. "I wonder what's inside the vase!" she exclaimed. Lizzy put her hand inside gently and pulled out a piece of smooth and shiny red silk. "Wow! I wonder where this came from" she asked herself. At the corner of the fabric, there were gold letters embroidered "Follow the road, and you will find the world. Her heart stopped and without hesitation, she decided to get there and bring her friend Maizy Wong to the journey. Afterall, this has always been her dream.

The next morning, Lizzy set out with her best friend, Maizy Wong. Together they walked across golden sands and caravans of camels. "I can't believe you decided to embark on this arduous journey after reading what is written on the silk." Maizy lamented to Lizzy. "Maizy, I'm your best friend. You should be happy for me." Lizzy replied as her eyes were filled with kindness. "I know, but it has always been my dream to come on the silk road and get the opportunity to see the magical bridge of happiness and the beautiful history of China and to learn different languages from various merchants. Just then they bumped into a bridge that had a sign saying, "Bridge of kindness, spread your kindness everywhere." Lizzy stepped carefully on the bridge, however, when Maizy tried to get on the bridge, she immediately got pushed off. She kept trying and trying but the bridge kept pushing her away. "Ugh! Why wouldn't this dumb bridge let me climb on it! UGH!" Maizy struggled angrily as Lizzy kept on going further. The bridge only permitted kind and genuine people to use it. Maizy waived bye to Lizzy promising to become a better human being.

Along the way, Lizzy saw numerous merchants from different countries and religions. Lizzy would often greet them in multiple languages. "Namaste! Ni Hao! Olha! Bonjour! Annyeonghaseyo! Konnichiwa!" After hours of walking, greeting, and bowing (to show respect), Lizzy finally reached Rome. "I can't believe that I'm in Rome! exclaimed Lizzy. Since I spent all day and night trying to get to Rome, I think that I should at least stay here for a couple of weeks."

When people discovered that Lizzy had come all the way from Beijing, they decided to treat her by making a highly decorated tent in the heart of the city for her to live in. In less than a week, everyone in Rome got to know about Lizzy and her long journey from China to Italy. The people had never met someone so young coming from such a far distance. They loved the piece of red silk that she brought and offered her gold coins. Soon, the silk became famous all over Rome and even the royal family invited Lizzy to the palace as a mark of respect. A month went by, and Lizzy got tired of all this fame and was eager to go home to be with her family. She wondered how they were doing without her and was excited to share her experience in Rome.

In the middle of the night when most were asleep, Lizzy sneaked out of Rome and was finally alone in the peace and quiet of the silk road. After that enriching journey, there was a lot to digest about her experience as she quietly walked. As she was going further away, she started observed every part of the road very carefully immersing herself in every way as she knows she may not have this chance again. In every corner, there were big caravans, tents, and camels. There were dancers doing summersaults, merchants selling food, and mothers playing with their children. The scene was mesmerizing and buzzing with excitement. All of this filled her heart inspiring her to compose a poem about the silk road:

As long and tiring the journey had been

Everything was more chaotic than it may seem

The true magic of the road was not the gold

It was the courage of being brave and bold

The connections between people are stronger than they look

This beautiful story of the silk road shall be written in a book!

Crimson Silk

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Cheng, Ceron – 11

VENICE, SPRING 1453

In the humid and salt-scented air of Venice, 1453, Ibrahim al-Tabriz stood by the Grand Canal on the Rialto bridge. A breezy gust of wind brushed against his arms that were resting on the railing of the bridge. The wind provided no comfort against the overwhelming chatter of merchants haggling for better prices. He watched the sleek ships cut through the lagoon water to unload their goods from the East. A sailor in a white woolen shirt boasted loudly of better sea routes that didn't have the danger of bandits and could hold more goods, solidifying his hypothesis – the Silk Road was fading, and this journey may be his last. He was an Arabic merchant, who was old enough to know that the years behind him outnumbered those ahead — if any lay ahead at all.

He walked down the bridge, searching for his crewmates – A Chinese scribe clutching rolled-up paintings; Indian jewelers fleeing from war; Arab astronomers carrying star charts forbidden in Europe... They went to the merchant galleys waiting for them, where he loaded his camels heavy with Venetian glass beads, Murano mirrors and more. After that, they started sailing. They crossed the Adriatic, landing in Constantinople, then the Black sea. They carefully maneuvered past storms, past pirates and islands, till they finally arrived at Tana.

TANA – TARTAR

After weeks of living a barren life of creaking decks and stale bread, they finally arrived at the Tana port. When the gates creaked open, something was off. Very off. The Tartar markets were supposed to be a sprawling bazaar that thrummed with life. Instead, half of the stalls were empty. Spices rotted below the open sun. Some of his crew found rats running around abandoned boxes, while some found empty houses. Ibrahim aimlessly walked around the market. Suddenly, he came across a rug covering a large object. With morbid curiosity, he lifted one corner. An empty eye looked back at him. Flinching back, he whipped the whole rug off the ground. The corpse's neck was covered in buboes, and blood oozed out of his half-open mouth. After asking the merchants, they waved it off, "Tis sickness from the East. Very common." Disturbed, Ibrahim bought his camels and headed off.

The caravan left Tana with the line of camels following behind. Tatar guides led them northeast along the Don River, then east toward the Volga – a muddy road worn by centuries of wear. All they could see was a rolling steppe dotted with white tents. At night, they camped around small fires providing little warmth. The air smelled of sweat and the rot of distant marshes. Ibrahim listened to the camel bells and felt, for the first time in weeks, a small sense of safety. But on the ninth night, one of the young camel handlers woke up coughing blood onto the grass. By morning his armpits swelled into black buboes. The Tatars backed away, touching their *Muskas* and whispering "*A'udhu billah*" – I seek refuge in Allah – with horrified expressions. Ibrahim hesitantly ordered the body to be burned. As they went on past the deserted city of Sarai, the caravan's laughter faded. The vast sky no longer seemed free – it was foreboding.

CASPIAN STEPPES

The caravan turned south-east into the steppe edging the Caspian Sea. The days blurred together – the searing heat, the smell of death and rot. Sometimes, they came across caravanserais (roadside inns), which offered brief shelter, but most were empty, their wells filled with brackish water and doors with red crosses. In one inn, three men woke up with a severe headache and vomited all over the floor. By dawn, two had died with blackened armpits while the other stabbed himself "to stop the pain". The team were shell-shocked with panic. The Italian eyed retreat, the Arab astronomer cursed the stars, the scribe saw ghosts at night. Only Ibrahim's beckoning and the promise of gold had kept them going. When the palaces of Samarkand rose on the horizon, half of the caravan was left. The once-thriving markets had no chatter nor laughter. Ibrahim traded his Venetian mirrors for silk while wondering how many more deaths lay ahead. After their business, their caravan left.

The caravan climbed into the snowy Pamirs where air was scarce. At night, they sat around in a group, unable to sleep due to the bone-chilling temperature. Most of the group had already perished. The remaining few dragged on with gaunt faces and hollow eyes. More and more corpses lay behind them. Fevered men babbled of seeing the dead beckoning them to succumb to death. Then, they ran into the Taklamakan fringe – endless dunes that spread past the horizon with sand scraping their lungs and eyes. Oases revealed poisoned wells and abandoned caravanserais crawling

with rats. The last Indian scraped the sand with his fingers, screaming until he coughed up blood. By the time Kashgar could be seen, only a handful remained. In the city, Ilbrahim traded the last spices and beads for more silk and dried fruit. After resting in the city, they finally headed out for the final push – the Gansu Corridor.

The survivors entered the Gansu Corridor under a cold autumn wind. The path narrowed to a dusty road with towering mountains on the south and the barren Gobi desert on the north. Fortified watchtowers of stone and dirt rose along the route and the Jiayuguan Pass loomed ahead. Beyond it lay Dunhuang's Mogao Caves, their sandstone interiors filled with Buddha statues staring blindly from the shadows. The plague had taken its toll. Those left were merely hollow shells, trudging with numb limbs toward the horizon. After what seemed to be years, the walls of Xi'an appeared on the horizon. The journey had come to an end. Ilbrahim traded his silk and rested in inns.

He rolled open a piece of silk. Blood of a dead merchant stained the cloth, reminding him of the cost of his journey.

The Song in the Thread

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Hui, Tsz Kiu – 9

In her grandmother's dusty attic, Mei opened a wooden chest that sighed with age. Inside, a half-finished tapestry glimmered. It showed a golden dragon and a silver phoenix flying over deserts and mountains. As Mei traced the woven road, a single, shimmering thread came loose. It hummed in her palm, warm and alive.

Suddenly, the air swirled. The attic walls dissolved into endless sand dunes under a blazing sun. Mei stood on the ancient Silk Road, the magical thread tugging her toward the horizon like a gentle friend.

The thread led her to a cave where a small, sand-colored dragon fretted over faded scrolls. "I'm Long," he said, his voice like rustling parchment. "I chart the stars and the sands, but The Forgetfulness steals my ink." Beside him perched a young phoenix, Fen, whose feathers were the grey of an unbroken dawn. "My colors need stories to shine," she whispered, "but stories vanish here."

Mei understood. Their quest was for lost treasures of sound. Her glowing thread would guide them.

First, in the ghostly ruins of a caravanseraï, the wind carried a faint ting. Mei dug and uncovered a tiny bronze camel bell. She shook it softly, and a clear, brave echo sprang forth, pushing back the creeping, silent fog of Forgetfulness.

Next, at a lonely oasis where a single palm tree stood, Fen sang a note of hope. From the leaves drifted a soft, forgotten melody, sweet and old. As it wrapped around Fen, her tail feathers shimmered with hints of rose and gold.

Finally, high in the wind-whispered Pamir Mountains, Long breathed a warm sigh onto an ancient stone hearth. From the stone rose the sound of shared laughter, crackling and warm like a welcoming fire. Long's scales gleamed like polished stone in moonlight.

Then The Forgetfulness attacked, a thick, grey wall that swallowed color and sound. Despair almost won—until Mei had an idea. "We must weave!" she cried.

She held her thread aloft. Fen offered a brilliant feather. Long breathed a stream of stardust. Together, they didn't fight. They wove. Mei wove the brave echo, the sweet melody, and the warm laughter into the very air, creating a radiant bridge of light and memory.

The fog shattered into a million glistening pieces. Above them, the completed tapestry blazed across the sky—the glorious dragon and radiant phoenix now soaring over a road alive with music and connection.

Mei blinked. She was back in the attic, the finished tapestry resting softly in her arms. Her grandmother stood in the doorway, her eyes holding a familiar sparkle. "So, my child," she said, her smile deep and knowing, "you have learned the road's true song."

Mei hugged the tapestry. She now knew the Silk Road's greatest treasure was not silk or spice, but the shared echo of a bell, the melody of a song, and the laughter of friends—a golden thread of understanding, waiting for the next heart to weave it on.

The Silk Road

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Lee, Lok Yin – 9

The Silk Road was a very old network of routes that connected many countries and regions. It linked Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The Silk Road was important because people and goods could travel from one place to another. It was not just one road. It was a big network of many roads. Some parts were on land, and some parts were on the sea. This made it easier for transport to move around.

People used the Silk Road a long time ago. They traveled to buy and sell things. The travellers carried goods on camels, horses, and other animals. These animals helped carry heavy things over long distances. The journey along the Silk Road was not easy. It was very long and sometimes very hard. Travellers had to travel through deserts, mountains, and so on. Sometimes, the weather was very hot or very cold. There were also thieves who tried to steal from the travellers. Because of these dangers, the journey took a very long time— sometimes many months or even years.

Even though it was hard, the Silk Road was very important. It helped people share things they made, like silk from China, spices from India, and gold from Africa. People also shared ideas, culture, and religion. For example, Buddhism spread from India to many other places along the Silk Road. Artists, scientists, and scholars also exchanged their knowledge. The Silk Road was like a big bridge that connected different parts of the world.

Along the route, there are markets. Travellers stopped there to rest, buy food, and trade their goods. These places became busy towns with many people from different countries. People learned new things from each other, like new foods, clothes, and stories. The Silk Road helped different countries become friends and work together.

Traveling on the Silk Road was a big adventure. Travellers needed to be brave and patient. They had to prepare food and supplies for the long trip. Sometimes, they faced dangers like sandstorms, cold nights, or wild animals. But they kept going because they wanted to sell their goods and learn new things. The journey was very hard, but the things they brought back made life better for many people.

Today, people remember the Silk Road because it helped the world become more connected. It showed that trading and sharing can bring people closer. Even now, countries try to work together through trade routes that are inspired by the Silk Road. These new routes help countries share goods and ideas faster and easier.

In conclusion, the Silk Road was a very important network of routes long ago. It connected many countries and helped people exchange goods and ideas. Traveling on the Silk Road was a long and difficult journey, but it helped make the world a better place. The Silk Road teaches us that working and sharing with others can bring many good things. It was a special road that changed history and helped the world become more connected.

Echoes Across the Forgotten Road

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Mak, Pak Ho – 11

The Silk Road was dying. In 1453, the Mings in the East and Byzantium in the West, two of the most important places facilitating the trade between the Silk Road— were weakening. Pirates ruled the seas, and merchants now favoured sea over land.

Yet Tian, a Chinese merchant with silver in his beard and calluses on his soul, refused to let it end in silence.

Long, long ago, there was a legend of a bell that could stir memories, heal people, and stop wars.

Tian held it in his hands, wrapping silk over the relic. His master looked at him with proud eyes, “Fulfil its mission, only then, might we have hope for reviving the Silk Road, Chang’ an awaits.” As a final gift from the West to East, the bell meant the world to Tian, and it implied that he was taking his final journey.

But Tian wasn’t going to do it alone, he had a team of the most bizarrely assorted people from all around the world. Vladimir, a mapmaker from Kazakhstan; Mustafa, a trader of spices from Uzbekistan; And Giulia, bringing festive music from Italy. The band of misfits were backing down from no challenge.

“One final journey,” he whispered, letting out a breath of uncertainty. “One last song for the road.”

Tian led the group of underdogs through deserts that whispered forgotten names, mountains filled with stars that twinkled like ancient eyes, forests filled with mythical and unknown creatures, until they ran into their first problem...

As the team was crossing the Taklamakan desert, the endless grains of sand trembled and shuddered in silence. The setting sun cast long, jagged shadows along the dunes, but one moved against the light — too large, too wrong. The Manticore showed its twisted human-like visage. Its lion body rippling with muscle, wings unfurling like torn banners, scorpion tail twitching with venomous promise, eyes warped with hunger.

Mustafa reacted quickly, immediately taking out his oil lamp, and lit the sand in front of them with fire. The licking inferno lashed out at the beast, when the team ran for their lives. As the Manticore gave chase, Mustafa looked at his frantic teammates, “Don’t wait for me!” He yelled, spurring his camel forward, shouting and waving a torch. Tears of heartbreak and confusion rolled down Tian’s face, until it was too late.

The beast’s gaze locked onto the flame, its hunger drawn away from the team. As it gave chase to Mustafa, who taunted and mocked the beast. Through the dunes the team fled, hearts pounding, as they finally sat down in exhaust, “No, Mustafa...” cried Giulia, the team looked astray, until their torchbearer hero reappeared hours later, grinning beneath the desert dust. He had led the monster astray — not lost, but triumphant.

The team travelled for forty days and forty nights, until one day...

“The bell is cracking,” whispered Giulia. “Time is running short; we have before the full moon to escort it to Chang’ an.” “Impossible! It would take us ten days by foot, but in five days?” cried Mustafa.

“It isn’t if we don’t at least try.” Argued Vladimir. “Tian Ping town is near the Bosphorus Strait. A “bridge” for the East and West to connect. If we reach it, hope remains.” Everyone grew silent, the town separated Constantinople and Türkiye, and the hatred boiled between the two countries were as deep as the roots of a thousand-year-old tree.

Unfortunately, a war was unfolding before Tian’s very eyes...

Tian’s team travelled across Asia and Europe, finally arriving in Anatolia, where they heard the news: Constantinople was under siege. The Turkish were invading.

Vladimir paled, “If the city falls, the road ends.”

Tian replied firmly, “Then we go as far as we can, as fast as we can,”

The travellers reached Tian Ping city just as the cannons roared. Smoke curled into the sky. The army were at the gates, the city was burning.

Tian stood on a hill, the bell in his hands. “We have no chance of reaching Chang’ an. We failed.”

“Then... What if delivery wasn’t the bell’s purpose, but something else?” questioned Giulia.

“Attack—” In the heat of the battle, a swift tune emerged, Giulia played her flute as loud as she could; Mustafa offered food; Vladimir yelled for peace. But it was no use, the city was crumbling into ash. “Gong...” everyone paused, weapons inches away from delivering the final blow. “Gong...” The Turkish general surveyed in horror at what *he* had done, what anger had done from impulsiveness. “Gong...” He dropped his weapon limply, understanding how foolish they were, how a small misunderstanding caused a city, a country to be destroyed.

“This was never about delivery,” Tian said. “It was about remembrance.”

He struck the bell. Not once, not twice, but three times.

Its chime rose above the fire, above the screams, above the end of an empire.

Days later, they buried the remains of the bell beneath an olive tree, where it was never found for centuries to come.

One day, a young descendant of the famous musician Giulia was exploring in Tian Ping, as he carefully dug up a relic under an olive tree that resembled a bell. Sweat beaming under the hot sun, he read the side of it, which remarked: “*The Silk Road ends only when we forget it.*” Curious, he rang the bell gently, as a breeze stirred in the air. Suddenly feeling memories from far-away places, he gasped as a whisper crossed the continents, sharing the long-lost spices from the West, silk fabrics from the East, and story of travellers that stopped a war, of travellers that inspired not war, but wonder. The boy got up on his feet, as his story sparked billions in the world to resume trading, deepening the connection of friendship between East and West. The Silk Road had never truly died. It had simply been waiting to be remembered, and the world remembered to listen.

The Story of Yan's China Silk Road Journey

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Tam, Cheuk Kiu – 12

In old China, it was an extremely poor place. A man who was determined to make China become rich and stronger was called Yan. Therefore, he thought for ages about how to make China become rich and strong. One day, he saw an old man selling silk. At first, Yan did not care about the silks, but he suddenly thought of using silk to earn money to make China rich, so he bought a lot of silk and also tried to make some in his home. He wanted to accomplish a great career, so he started to sell silk in his country.

However, it wasn't smooth at first. As there were no people who were rich enough to buy silk, Yan couldn't earn money. He was tearing his hair out. After thinking for a long time, Yan opted to continue his career in places in other countries. So, Yan became a businessman who had the determination of selling silk. First, he started his journey in Luoyang.

However, as that time did not have airplanes, Yan needed to use his horse to get to Central Asia. After an eighty-day ride, Yan finally arrived in Central Asia. He went to Afghanistan. But another problem happened. When Yan first arrived there, people did not want to buy the silk. Then, Yan tried to use silk to make clothes for people to wear. When he finished, he gave some people a try of it. When they wore it, they thought it was so breathable and comfortable. So they immediately bought some silk back home to make clothes.

Then, Yan rode his horse for two to three weeks to West Asia. Later, he went to Iraq. He was already sweating profusely. When he arrived there, no one nearby wanted to buy silk because it was expensive. Therefore, Yan made some towels for people to try. They also thought it was comfortable, so they bought a lot of silk for their parents. After that, Yan had to continue on his journey. Yan needed to ride on the boat to the last stop—Europe, Italy, Milan.

After twenty days, he finally arrived in Italy. When Yan found a place to sit down, he started to make clothes and towels with silk. When he finished making over a hundred clothes and towels, a member of the royal family called Harry was walking back to the castle and walked past Yan. However, Yan did not know he was a member of the royal family, so he told Harry to try the clothes. When he tried it on, the texture was soft and breathable. Harry said, "Now the musical lacks clothes, so we can ask the man to make more clothes for the musical." When Harry went back there, he asked Yan to make different kinds of clothes made with silk for the musical, so Yan got a lot of money. At last, the musical went very well and people agreed that silk was very useful and comfortable. After that day, Harry decided to let Yan become the fashion designer to make clothes for all the members of the royal family. After they got their new clothes, they wore them and travelled around the world to tell people about silk.

A few years later, when many countries in East Asia, West Asia and Europe knew about silk, they started to trade them with China. As many countries need silks, many factories started to open in China for making clothes and other products. Because of silk, China got a lot of money and became rich. The people in China are not poor anymore. At last, Yan became a successful businessman and earned a lot of money. Yan was in seventh heaven when he knew that he had achieved his wish. In this story, I hope the readers learn that they should not give up easily when we face problems.

The Journey to China's Silk Road

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Yung, Ching Kan – 10

One day, two people thought: “What if we could effortlessly transport and trade silk and other to other places?” They both thought it was a promising idea, so they started their journey. Little did they know, they were going to make a historical path that would help millions.

On the first day, they started walking determined to make a goal. When they were walking, they had one clear goal in mind: To make a path to trade silk with others. As they walked, they saw lots of things nearby that could help them massively on their journey, such as a sword, a horse to ride, and the motivation to succeed.

Later, while they were deep in the woods riding a horse, they saw a glowing light in front of them. They watched in shock like it was a miracle. Moments later, they were near the shiny glowing creature, and they stopped there to look closer. Not only did they realise how valuable it was, but it was also a once in a lifetime chance to help them to succeed in their goals. As they stood there in shock, the creature came to life. It was a dragon! It said: “What can I help you with?” with a deep, strong voice. The two men pleaded: “I want to make a path that can help millions to trade silk!” Hearing this, the dragon whispered: “Sure, I can help you with that.” As they followed the dragon through the frightening and interesting trail, they saw some weird creatures along the way. A snake, a cobra, and more frightening things.

A few days later, the trail was almost done. The two people knew this and were even more determined to finish their goal. They only had to go through one cave, but little did they know, it was going to be one of the most memorable things of their life. As they were going through the cave, they heard some talking. They leapt off their horses and checked what was going on. As soon as they saw them, their jaw dropped. They were trolls! The trolls also saw them too. “Who are those people? I’m skeptical that they overheard what we said. We must attack them!” The two people knew this and then ran back to the dragon and begged: “Could you please help us? There is a troll in front of us, and we want to kill it!” The dragon didn’t say a word, but it went to where the trolls were. The trolls screamed, but it was too late. The dragon’s fiery breath had “killed” the trolls. However, the trolls actually had magic in the tips of the fingers and had blocked the breath. Nevertheless, the two people grabbed their sword and tried to stab the trolls in the chest. Still undefeated, they knocked one of the men unconscious by giving him a furious kick to the face. While the other person was trying to save the unconscious person, the dragon cast a spell on them. A bright ray of light shined across the whole cave, and in one blink, the trolls had disappeared.

In the end, they successfully made what was known as China Silk Road, and it did help millions to trade silk and other things like spices. It even was one of the most famous things in the world at that time.

At last, in the 15th century, it collapsed, but it will still be remembered forever.

The Silk "Migration" Road

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Zhang, Tianluo – 11

The Silk Road— A supposed trade route connecting Eastern and Western culture. At least that was what I've been told. Growing up, I heard the same thing, "Twenty-two centuries ago, some Chinese merchants spent months trekking westwards to see if they could sell silk to new customers." And as a child, I used to wholeheartedly believe this tale of the once legendary trade route, slowly fade through time, until the day I collaborated with my friend Jack to write a book uncovering conspiracy theories surrounding this exact route.

One typical Monday morning, I woke up to a notification—Email to be exact, pop up on my cracked phone screen. It was 5 in the morning, and I expected it to be some sort of advertisement, so I ignored it and started my day. On the bus to school, I clicked on it out of pure curiosity, because who in the right mind would send Emails in the morning?

An unanswerable question was raised, in which remained unanswered for the rest of my life because of this Email.

It was an Email sent to me by Jack, a guy from our who just transferred here last week. He sent me an invite to write a book with him, called "Mysteries of the world". At first, I thought it was a dumb prank, because I have zero literacy experience and the book title sounded like a toddler's picture book, so I reluctantly texted him back asking if he was serious, and why the title was so childish, then I went to class and forgot about this whole thing.

On my way to lunch, Jack spotted me and ran towards me and asked if I'm in. He was willing to pay me a thousand dollars cash if I participated, so I agreed within a heartbeat.

Later that afternoon, Jack pulled me aside and explained our only mission in writing the book.

"Listen Ben, because school's ending next week and we have a 2-month long holiday, I need you to come with me and go to the Silk Road, because that's one of the main points in our book, alright? My parents will buy us the tools and plane tickets; I'll text you the specific information later." Dumbfounded, I went, despite not believing him at all.

Later, my mum told me that Jack's parents have called her explaining the situation and said that I could go with them. Though my mum was still a little worried, she still let me go. One thing to mention is that Jack's parents are weirdly supportive of this entire event, god knows why.

They paid my parents too.

Time flies and soon arrived the day of departure. It took us 9 hours to fly to Xinjiang, the nearest place with an airport to Gobi Desert, where we were supposed archaeologically excavate in. When we finally arrived at our hotel, I immediately fell asleep.

While I was still deeply asleep, Jack somehow woke up and violently shook my bed, in desperate attempt to wake me up, resulting only in him falling over and me starting the day with a bad temper. After we got up, Jack gave me my first order: Research pictures of Egyptian artifacts at the site and send them to him. Despite the weird request, I still followed it, believing that Jack probably knows what he was doing as he has an excavating license, though he is still a supposed minor.

We arrived at the heavily guarded site in a Rolls Royce, which made me even more skeptical about this whole thing.

While researching in a temporary building near the site, I heard several gasps in surprise and shock around the excavating perimeter, with a few exclamations from Jack, and occasionally some “Oh my god” s and “Holy cow is that legit?” s from the rest of the team.

That evening, Jack shared the excavation results with me. Turns out, his archaeologist friend identified pieces of discovered objects as shattered pieces of several artifacts such as pottery, all matching identically to the pictures I sent him. This furthermore proved that his earlier—developed theory of the Silk Road existing 5000 years ago as a route for Egyptian citizens to immigrate towards Eastern land, and so the Eastern (Asian) civilization was spread via the now well-known trading route, the Silk Road. And now, he has proof.

This is a crazy assumption, but it also makes a lot of sense.

I spent the rest of the night wondering a few questions about Jack. How did he, at the age of 16 (Though he seems older), have access to an archaeological excavating site? Why did he invite me specifically? How did he have an archaeologist friend? What was up with the Rolls Royce?

Jack never answered me directly and so remains my skepticism about him.

The next day, we told one of the archaeologists at the site return the discovered artifacts to the Chinese government anonymously. At home, we decided to submit our discoveries to a reliable news company anonymously but got brutally rejected because “The evidence couldn’t be proved taken in the trail of the Silk Road” and “The analysis contradicts traditional theory”.

After another month of writing the actual book, we finished it and sent it to a publisher but was rejected again because “The analysis was explained poorly and could not give a clear definition, meanwhile contradicting traditional theories”. Jack then explained to me that most scientists and archaeologists neglectfully deny these new theories because they’ll shape the entirety of the Eastern civilization’s current mindset, breaking their whole society mentally, so no theory like ours were ever accepted, to prevent global catastrophe.

I guess I just wasted a day of my life in the Gobi Desert and a month writing a book that will never be published. I had problems accepting this fact.

Just as I was about to delete all my research, a question struck my head.

Who even is Jack?

He already left.

Way Back Home

Kowloon Tong School (Primary Section), Zhou, Si Yuan – 10

The Silk Road was not just a route for silk and treasures but also was a ribbon of dreams that connected nations, cultures, and hearts across deserts and mountains. During the Tang Dynasty, when caravans stretched endlessly across the horizon and Chang 'an shone as the most magnificent city on earth, one young boy's unexpected journey would weave a new tale into this timeless passage of history.

It was a sunlit morning in Chang 'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty. The streets were bustling with merchants speaking in many languages, Persian, Arabic and Chinese, etc. Li Fei, a twelve-year-old orphan, wandered in the lively streets, still remembering an adventure that had changed his life forever, just six months before.

Li Fei's life had not always been so peaceful. After losing his parents in an unfortunate accident, Li Fei did not have any money to go to school and struggled to survive, often hungry and alone. One day, desperate for work, he joined a merchant caravan bound for the western lands. Yet he was lazy and quick to complain, even secretly sneaking food whenever no one was watching.

One night on the journey, as the caravan rested near the borders of the desert close to Byzantium, Li Fei was hungry again and crept toward the storage tent to steal some dried dates. This was a bad idea, but it saved thousands of lives. Of course, Li Fei did not know this at that time.

But before he could grab anything, he overheard voices whispering nearby. "How much for this map of the Tang Empire's military storehouses?" said one person in a foreign accent. Li Fei froze, and a shiver ran down his spine. "That map is very important! If this map reaches another kingdom," he thought, "our soldiers will be in danger. Even though sometimes I am very lazy, I am still a member of the Tang Dynasty! I must save it and bring it back home, no matter what."

He hid behind a cart as a group of tall, armored men stepped out of the tent. Their helmets glittered under the moonlight. "The Persian army!" Li Fei realized, and his heart was pounding. Li Fei was petrified and did not even dare to breathe or move a muscle. It felt like hours for Li Fei, but it was probably only ten seconds before the Persian soldiers finally went away.

He waited until the camp grew silent again. Then, he sneaked into the tent, took the stolen map, and vanished into the night, quiet like a shadow.

From then on, Li Fei's journey back to Chang 'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty, was long and perilous. He followed the Silk Road eastward through burning deserts and icy mountain passes. He knew many difficulties and dangers would be attended upon his journey back to home.

One day, when Li Fei was walking in the desert, something terrible happened. He was trying to cross an enormous sand dune when suddenly it started to get very windy. Then, it got even worse. The wind blew away Li Fei's bag containing the map and his food! Li Fei immediately tried to catch his bag but failed. He realized he had no choice but to leave the sand dune to avoid it collapsing. "It must be a sandstorm," Li Fei thought. After a while, the sandstorm finally stopped. After this, Li Fei started to try to find his bag. Thankfully, he found the map buried under some sand after a few hours.

A few months later, Li Fei finally crossed the desert safely. After that, he went into Persia. As he walked in the street, he suddenly heard the thunder of hooves. He looked around and saw the Persian soldiers! "There he is!" One soldier shouted. Li Fei was terrified. "The caravan I have joined before must have guessed that I have stolen the map. Then they must have told the Persian army this!" He thought. Li Fei was terrified and ran with all his might. But of course, he could not possibly run faster than the well-trained horses the Persian soldiers were riding. The soldiers were meters away from Li Fei when the Persian soldier leading the army suddenly tripped

over a big rock on the street. The other Persian soldiers crumpled over him one by one. This gave Li Fei precious time to run away from the soldiers. Without looking back, Li Fei fled as fast as his legs could carry him until he had left Persia.

After six months of travelling, Li Fei was exhausted. He did not know that he was already very close to Chang 'an.

One misty dawn, Li Fei saw familiar walls rising in the distance. "Am I dreaming or is that the city wall of Chang 'an?" Li Fei pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming. "I am home now!" he cried once he realized it's true, tears welling in his eyes. He ran toward the great gate, clutching the map to his chest. When the officials heard his story, they were astonished and deeply moved. "You have saved countless lives," one said. "Your courage will be remembered." Li Fei smiled and said, "This is what every resident of the Tang Dynasty will do and should do!"

Years later, Li Fei became a merchant himself, traveling the Silk Road once more, not to steal or survive, but to share stories, protect peace, and connect distant lands. And wherever his caravan went, people would gather to hear the tale of the boy who once crossed deserts and dangers to bring hope home.

A Dream of the Silk Road

Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section), Pan, Hoi – 9

Slowly, I opened my eyes. I can't believe what I saw!

It was early morning. The deepening sky was just beginning to fill with sunshine. I was a young camel standing in the middle of a desert! There were a group of camels waking up beside me. An old camel talked to me about our journey.

"Hey, don't just stand there. Come and help me with the packs!"

"Where are we? What's in those packs?"

"We are on the way to the Europe. Inside those packs are goods like silk and china. It is a very long and dangerous road young fellow. I hope you can make it till the end."

I gasped, "So this is the Silk Road?!"

After a while, we started today's journey . We walked on the yellow sand. The sand was dry and hot.

Suddenly, I heard a sharp voice "Ouch! Move your foot pad. Silly!"

I quickly lifted my foot pad, but I saw nothing. As I looked closer, a yellow snake was half-buried in my footprint.

"I'm sorry. This is the first I'm being a camel. I barely know how to walk in the desert yet."

"Okay. I forgive you," The snake hissed. "You are on a very important mission."

"What mission?" I was confused.

"Cultural exchange! I was hoping my ancestors' legend will upgrade my image."

"Oh, I know, you are talking about Nuwa, the mother goddess who creates people and patches the sky. That's why Chinese people admire her."

"Yes, deliver the tale to the western people, please. It's much better than the tale about a cunning snake tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit."

I grinned and nodded. Oh, there will be much more than the snake tales. We exchange all kinds of cultural, technologies and knowledge. It is very glamorous and thought-provoking. Now I feel proud of myself.

The journey seemed to last forever...

At last , dusk came, and the sky turned orange and purple. The people began to pitch tents. As I was looking for a place to rest, a tiny voice above started singing. I looked up and saw a fierce-looking bird singing on a rock.

"Hi, your singing is very different from the birds in Hong Kong. What are you singing about?"

“The song? I made it myself. I like to sing it after a good meal. I sing about sesames, grapes and dates. I bet on your way back to China, you will bring these foods from the western and the Middle East with you.”

“And they will be a big part of the great Chinese cuisines.”

Although the bird seemed to want to tell me more, I was too tired to keep myself awake. Slowly, I dozed off.

When I woke up, I found myself back in my bed. The alarm clock was about to ring and the early sun was peeping through my window. Thank goodness I was just dreaming!

What an amazing adventure! I'm sure there are lots of untold stories relating to the great Silk Road, one of humanity's greatest accomplishments. Maybe a young camel is playing a crucial part in it, too!

A Hollow Victory

Marymount Primary School, Chan, Chloe Caroline – 9

A dense curtain of ginger, peppercorn, cassia, and salts covered the docks, blanketing the town of Panyu as the Xīnglóng Hào set sail. On board, Wu Zi Chun, a boy of only 13, saluted goodbye to the specks of bodies below, as the ship's anchor was plucked away. Groaning, the ship started towards Hormuz.

Yells of merchants polluted the air, as the boy brought a box of silk to Room 6. Gently, Wu placed the box on the wet, splintered panels, but as his eyes lifted, a shadow descended. A tall figure in a bold, black suit blocked the few strands of sunlight permeating the boat's cabin. The man's piercing eyes darted around, before he quietly inhaled, and picked up the box. Wu provided a polite, nervous nod.

Wu turned away. A heavy hand clamped over his mouth.

The news was a fever. A boy missing. Precious silk stolen. It reached Wang Kit Chen, a local detective defined by his peculiar pet: Beaky, a hawk. In that box lay a slip of fabric, on which was written the intricate process of silk production, a treasure trove many had tried, but failed, to unseal before. Wang's life largely consisted of slow, bureaucratic drips, but now, a potential national catastrophe was at hand.

In a nearby pine forest, a hunter's lodge rotted quietly. Inside its cellar, Wu was hauled onto the soiled floor, as the man threw words like darts at him, which Wu couldn't understand. Removing his black hood, the man revealed hair of wispy chestnut, defined by curls that mirrored the waves Wu sailed on each day. Beneath the man's largest curl were deep, brown eyes that occasionally glowed green, like sea glass. Wu was slipped a few soybeans. A lock clicked.

Wang and Beaky accessed the interior of the ship, inspecting the rust that carefully bordered each and every hinge. Sweeping his hand down the wall, Wang yelped in pain. He stared, not at the blood slowly spurting from the incision, but at the wood splinter itself, which was coated in black material. He wrapped his finger with a thin scrap of similar beige cloth he had found nearby (a porter's rag, perhaps) and scurried outside.

"Hey! YOU!" Wang yelled onto the docks. "Black wool. The night of the theft. Anyone?"

The dockworker shook, his body a typhoon, his hands clasped tightly together in a triangular shape. He was trying to imitate swimming. So far, Wang's investigation had been a tapestry of misdirection. A mute cleaner, his prime suspect, only wore linens. He was embarrassed. He was frustrated. The aquatic theatrics of the dockworker had left a stone in Wang's throat; perhaps this was the first real lead.

Wang started on his way home, taking the long, contemplative route, through the pine forest. He landed, facing a single abandoned house. Through the grimy window, a thin, black wisp paced around. As he looked down to check on his finger, Wang spotted another piece of cloth on the path below. Wang's eyebrows grew angular. The colour and material matched his finger bandage.

His memory flared like a fire drenched in oxygen. The boy. The boy, who had waved at him as he strolled past the docks just days before, was wearing a humble beige tunic. The picture was vivid in his mind, as if drawn by a realist. Upon lifting the rag, a thread was exposed, a thread that gleamed spectacularly in the moonlight of dusk.

Silk thread.

Before Wang could move, Beaky dipped, flew, and unpicked the latch of the cottage's lock with silent precision. As the door pelted open, Wang whipped his head sharply to the right, to see a figure, dipped in black cloth. Wang leaped at him, like a tiger, positioning himself inches from his face before whispering "I know you stole that silk."

The man in the suit spat, "Nobody would believe you."

Wang was already reaching towards the cellar door, guided by the faint, rhythmic scraping of Wu's nails on the inside handle. It opened. Wu's eyes met Wang's. "Hurry up, boy!" Wang bellowed, while scouring the walls behind Wu's head. Spotted: a warped wooden plank, bent, darker than the rest. He jumped towards it, yanking at it with all his strength, revealing the carton of silk behind.

Surprisingly, the man in black had remained obediently upstairs. He sat. Still.

"Your name. Now!" Wang demanded.

The man in the suit wheezed, "Rostam." Wang's eyes thundered. Wang knew that name. It lurked in old intelligence files and newspaper articles, a remnant of the time where the Persian 'Gatherers of Treasure' were most active.

Wang questioned, "So, you swam on to the ship, attacked this boy, lurked in the shadows, holding him captive, and then escaped with both him and the silk onto the shore? All before being noticed? All before the ship had even set sail? For a box you couldn't have known contained the instruction fabric?"

Rostam scoffed, "I can't swim."

The dockworker must have been paid to paint a phantom. Regardless, how did any of this make sense? Wang gripped the thief's narrow wrists, snapping them behind his back. Police would be there soon. The victory felt hollow as Wang escorted Wu home to his mother's straw hut. The boy whispered, only once, as he entered through his own door, saying: "The silk, it dances when you spin it, and he wouldn't have understood the motions anyway. It couldn't have been replicated."

In Wang's living room, the clock ticked obnoxiously, in tandem with the dripping tap. He sat, still, on his peeling leather sofa, staring aimlessly at the wall. Rostam couldn't swim. The Xīnglóng Hào had departed at night, under watch. Only those who had packed the box for Room 6 would have known the instruction fabric was inside. He swam back to shore, holding Wu? He escaped the docks, wet, holding a man, and yet unseen?

It was impossible. Who, staffing the docks, was betraying China?

Marco Polo and The Silk Road

Marymount Primary School, Chan, Sze Wing Hailey – 9

Born into a wealthy family of merchants in Venice in 1254, Marco Polo had experienced a life of comfort and stability up till the age of fifteen. However, he had a heart that longed for expedition, exploration and the unknown. In 1271, fifteen-year-old Marco Polo was fresh-eyed and bursting with excitement, as his uncle Matteo and his father, Nicolo had finally decided to invite him on one of their adventurous expeditions. They would soon head East and experience the Silk Road together.

The first part of their journey led them through Tabriz, after which they travelled south to Hormuz, a port on the Persian Gulf. Observing the poor state of the ships barely sewn together with twine, the Polos decided to travel via land towards Badakhshan. Unfortunately, Marco gradually fell ill with malaria during this part of the journey, experiencing chills and a high fever.

Upon the Polos' arrival in Badakhshan, they were greeted by the towering Pamir Mountains rising above them, along with a bustling market filled with masses of people. Despite Marco Polo's weakened state, he felt compelled to explore. The moment he stepped outside, a wave of vibrant scents enveloped him. Fresh fruits, aromatic herbs, and rich, earthy spices filled the air, blending together like a magical potion. The market was alive with sound – merchants shouted their prices, clients bargained passionately, and children laughed as they played among the stalls. Vendors proudly displayed vibrant fabrics and shining trinkets, each eager to sell their treasures.

As Marco approached a stall overflowing with rolls of shimmering silk, he saw a tall, jovial man with a thick beard and a friendly smile. "Welcome! Are you here for Chinese silk? It is the finest silk in the world!" the merchant exclaimed, gesturing towards the countless rolls of glimmering fabric.

"Indeed," Marco nodded. "However, are there any more valuable goods in Badakhshan?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course!" replied the merchant. "Balas rubies are very precious. They are found in only one special mountain called Syghinan, but they are extremely difficult to mine – it is hard, dangerous work, and you require the permission of the King."

Curious, and longing to find out more, Marco asked, "Why, only with the King's permission?"

"The King's permission is required for miners to mine and dig, because if anyone were allowed to mine the rubies, then the Balas rubies would lose their value" The merchant retorted.

Marco was in awe and exclaimed, "Wow – Balas rubies are a treasure unique to Badakhshan. I can only hope to see one in my time on this Earth!"

The merchant chuckled and added, "The King usually collects the Balas rubies that have been mined and delivers them to the Kings of other lands."

The merchant placed an emerald in Marco's palm "Here – I may not have Balas rubies on sale but please have this as a mark of our friendship, so that you may remember Badakhshan on the rest of your travels."

Marco was touched by the gesture and held the emerald close to his chest.

Learning more and more about Badakhshan, Marco decided to follow a narrow path to the next stall. He saw another merchant selling shining Persian silverware, crafted with extraordinary detail, each piece reflecting the wealth and artistry of the Silk Road.

"Welcome to our land, is there anything you wish to purchase?", the merchant asked in a sing-song tone.

“Not at the moment, but I wish to learn more of your land and your belief,” Marco answered in an earnest voice, stopping to breathe at times, due to his ill health.

Noticing Marco’s pale face and heavy breathing, the merchant decided to share his knowledge of the Badakhshan mountains. “Brother, you are as pale as a ghost in the dead of night, and your breathing is uneven. Go forth into the Badakhshan mountains. There, you will find lush green trees and grass, overflowing springs of pure water rushing through rocks and lakes, and air so fresh that it will clear your lungs.”

Marco nodded his head in agreement with what was advised and smiled weakly in thanks.

“Brother, you speak also of belief – we who inhabit the Badakhshan land, worship Mahommet. May Mahommet bring you peace in your time of suffering,” The merchant stated calmly.

“In my land, we believe in a Catholic God. May you be blessed by our God as well. Brother – be well.” Marco bowed his head lightly in prayer, feeling joyous in his heart for being met with such kindness in a foreign land.

After wandering through the market of Badakhshan, Marco finally felt the weight of exhaustion settling upon him. He turned back, holding the emerald tightly in his palm, a tangible reminder of the kindness he had encountered.

Eventually, he reached where his family had settled for a few nights. There, amidst hearty laughter, he found his father, Nicolo, and his uncle, Matteo. They were recounting tales of their own encounters, their faces animated with joy.

“Where were you?” Nicolo asked, his eyes filled with curiosity.

Marco took a deep breath, then began to share his experiences, “The Silk Road is not merely about the exchange of goods,” Marco reflected, his voice growing resolute, “It’s about the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. Each encounter opens a new window to understanding and friendship. It has taught me the value of keeping an open mind and an open heart.”

Nicolo nodded thoughtfully, impressed by his son’s insights. Matteo chimed in, “Indeed, Marco. The true riches of our journey lie not just in the treasures we seek, but in the relationships we build along the way.”

Outside, the stars twinkled like jewels above, a reminder of the endless possibilities that lay beyond the horizon.

With renewed vigour, Marco felt ready to embrace the challenges of the journey ahead, knowing that true exploration was about the connections made and the shared humanity that transcended borders. Marco felt ready to head away from Badakhshan, carrying a message of significance in his heart.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Marymount Primary School, Yu, Sze Ching Isabella – 11

Through decades of diligence and perseverance, my tremendous effort to sell silk and introduce it to different parts of the world has finally been paid off. I am now known as “The Father of the Silk Road” – a household name that every family in the city of Chang’an has heard of, let me share with you the story of my life.

A few years ago, I was just an ordinary merchant selling silk, working endlessly to make ends meet. Although my life was not easy, I was able to support my family until a rival company stole all of my customers and crushed my business. I was devastated and hopeless. One weekend, I wandered into the wild to clear my mind up and get some inspirations. As I was trekking along the trail, I decided to go into the desert to find new customers. My friend told me that there were rumors of a faraway town that was completely different from Chang’an. I decided to give it a try. Even though my fellow workers mocked me endlessly, it only hardened my resolve.

That weekend, I ventured into the desert alone on a camel, carrying an armful of silk, looking everywhere for the mysterious city. I walked for a whole day but there was still not a person in sight. Defeated, I turned around to leave when I saw a shadow approaching in the distance. My heart racing, I walked towards the stranger. But when I saw who it was, I was terrified out of my wits. I back away slowly.

Standing in front of me was an ogre. A huge, intimidating ogre, about the size of an elephant, with rough, greenish skin. Its clothes were tattered and hanging on by a thread. He asked me a bunch of questions and I was too scared to defy him so I told him my story without stopping. After listening to my story attentively, the ogre took out a piece of fabric, asking me if I had anything similar for him to mend his clothes. Thinking of the business I had originally wanted to do, I instantly rummaged through my goods and gave him a tael of the most beautiful silk I had with me. The ogre was impressed with the quality of my silk and he gave me a big toothless grin after receiving it.

Suddenly, a brilliant idea came into my mind. I asked, “Mr. Ogre, if you like my silk, why don’t you show it to all your friends? I can swing by every day and give you more samples so you will be the most handsome ogre in town!” The ogre nodded and I was exhilarated as I knew this would be the turning point of my business.

The next day when I returned to the place where the ogre and I had agreed to meet, I saw that the ogre had brought many of his friends along with him. And he was dressed in the silk I had given him the day before! When they saw me and my additional samples, they were elated. They expressed their interest in making themselves regular customers and they wanted to buy such a tremendous amount of silk from me that my jaw dropped. Apparently, all of their friends wanted my silk!

Days passed, and with the help of the magical creatures, my business continued to bloom and flourish. Who knew that the silly man who wanted to go into the desert to sell silk could actually succeed? After that, my ambition grew and I was ready to bring my business to the world. My relationship with the ogre was so close now that when I told him that I would like to go through the desert and sell silk to whoever came across, he agreed to accompany me on my journey.

Therefore, we set off with tons of supplies and walked through the scorching hot desert. Although we had met some other creatures and some small towns along the way, the desert was big. We walked for what seemed like an eternity but there were still no new people. We were exhausted and feeling defeated, just as we were about to turn back and go home, we saw some colourful lights and buildings up ahead. We quickly ran and neared a small town, and I was completely dumbstruck by the sight in front of my eyes.

It was a city for sure, yet so different from Chang'an. It was crowded with people who had different shades of hair and skin. They wore clothes that were made with heavy wool and linen, making them look bulky and heavy weighted. I wondered if the city was the one that my friend had told me about.

Some of them noticed us coming out of the desert and started a conversation with us. They told us we were in a place called Europe. The ogre and I wandered through the market and saw many merchants selling their goods. Although communicating with these foreign strangers was extremely difficult, I managed to sell all of my colourful and lightweight silk using different ways.

From that day onwards, I continued to visit the country and brought lots of different kinds of silk with me. They were a big hit and I soon found myself at the hands of countless orders. Ever since that day, my company had also become viral. I used some of the money I had earned to build a road that connected China to Europe, so that people from both sides could trade with one another. My astonishing contribution had made my name world-renowned and, over time, the path had become to be known as the Silk Road and that was how the mystical journey of "The Father of the Silk Road" had begun.

The Adventure of Four Cats: The First Cats to Trek The Silk Road

Sacred Heart Canossian School, Chan, Oi Yan – 11

Once upon a time in ancient China, there lived a group of four cats. They were close with the emperor, Lihua, and helped him complete various tasks. One day, the leader of the group, a gray tabby named Yuzu was called to the emperor's throne. Upon arriving, he was handed a cart of valuable, pure silk. "Bring this cart of silk to the nearby emperor Limao for gold," explained Lihua. Yuzu nodded, took the cart of silk and went home. Back home, he told everyone about the mission, and the whole group agreed to join. However, they were left without a map, which means they'd have to figure out the route.

The next day, before dawn, the group set off with solely their bamboo bags and the cart of silk, ready to start their adventure. Yuzu raised up a small stick, signaling for the others to follow her. As they treaded along the stone path, things seemed to be going smoothly, but they were soon to be faced with their first challenge. As they continued walking, they approached a split end. One end led to an endless, deep forest, one led to a snowy mountain, one led to a deep, dark forest. "Those mountains look like they lead to somewhere, let's go that way!" Lulu exclaimed. However, Tangyuan being the impulsive one yelled, "No way! How does that look like it will lead to anywhere?" Not soon after, a heated argument exploded between the two, and they ultimately decided to take the snowy path thanks to Tangyuan's impulsiveness. That night, they managed to find an old, abandoned hut around the foot of the mountains and stayed there for the night.

The next day, golden light shone on top of them. They felt energized as Ama, the calico she cat had made an energy boosting dish the night before. With hearts full of determination, they set off into the snow. Throughout the day, the group treaded through the snow and overcame challenges. By dusk, strong winds blew, and they had no food or water left. They collapsed in a pile in the snow, losing hope. "I think we went the wrong way, but there is no going back," Ama exclaimed grimly. "Don't lose hope, Ama. No matter what, we're in this together," Yuzu reassured. He put a paw on Ama and comforted her.

Scarlet light streaked the sky, it was dawn yet again. Everyone was exhausted, and nobody had the energy to get on their paws on an empty stomach. Still, they decided to push through. They trudged through the rest of the mountains, only to be welcomed with an endless desert. They knelt on the ground in frustration, almost passing out. Out of the blue, an ear-splitting yowl echoed in the distance. Just as Yuzu turned around to look, a big, fierce sabertooth cat leaped for the group. It dug its claws into them, making them unconscious.

"Yuzu! Yuzu!" a voice echoed in the darkness. A faint light sparkled around Yuzu. Placing his paws step by step, he realized a colorful light was surrounding him. Finally, a cat goddess with long, soft, white fur approached him. She put one paw on Yuzu's head, and all his discomfort vanished almost immediately. "Yuzu my dear, you've put in so much effort. You've grown," the goddess said softly. As she spoke, clouds surrounded Yuzu, and the ring of light around him glowed brighter. "Thus I will not bring you to your designated location, but I will give you a second chance to thrive, to live," the goddess said. Suddenly, the goddess vanished, and so did the once heavenly area.

When Yuzu awoke, he and his teammates were on a big, gentle dragon. The aquamarine-scaled dragon glided smoothly in the air, passing deserts, grasslands, lakes. It began descending and landed in an area near a town. The group got off and suddenly realized that this was nowhere near their home. They walked closer to the town. It was a western market, full of glee and energy. Still, despite being scared and confused, they pulled the cart of silk over and decided to trade with the locals. Upon seeing the silk, the locals grew confused but reluctantly handed them some foreign objects. Yuzu was about to turn back and leave, but seeing their dirty, ripped clothes, the locals gave them a carriage to ride home.

By the time they reached home, everyone applauded and cheered, but stared at the cart full of weird objects in confusion. After explaining the situation to the emperor, the emperor decided that the route they took

should be used as a trading route and named it “The Silk Road “. From then on, the road went on to be used by many other nations, and the sabertooth cat that once attacked them was never to be seen again.

The Silk Road's Friendship

Sacred Heart Canossian School, Yip, Ka Ying – 11

Imagine a road full of adventures waiting for you, at the start of the magical road, there were vibrant color silk, all kinds of flavorful spices and fresh tea leaves and touching stories. Now I'm going to tell you the story of Tisha and Ada who met each other on the Silk Road and became loyal friends.

On a summer day as extraordinary as any other, sweat dripped on Ada's back as she was listening to her sister telling her the tales of the Silk Road as the sound of silk spinning filled Ada's ears. Surely, the Silk Road started from China where Ada lived, and she gazed upon everybody when they come and go. Ada didn't know anything about the 'Other Side' of the Silk Road, she had heard the rumors about mythical creatures but didn't believe any. She did find herself daydreaming about it though, she hoped if one day she could really go there. Ada was listening to her sister speaking, when a girl at her age stepped onto this brand new place, hoping for a better future. Both of them didn't know that one day, they would bond a strong friendship that will last forever.

Tisha was exhausted as she felt like her eyes were about to drop. The Silk Road seemed endless and Tisha's energy has been drained. She was from a Noble family all the way from Asia, looking forward to a fresh start. Tisha was sound asleep when her father woke her up in a starter. Whispering softly, "We're here." Half awake, Tisha quickly patted her face to be sure she wasn't dreaming. As she covered her mouth with her hands, her eyes widen and couldn't believe what her father was saying.

As Tisha looked out of the carriage window and saw it looked like thousands of people were waving to her, yelling in some sort of foreign language. Suddenly, the carriage, broke! Tisha turned snow white, as her heart raced at a tremendous speed. She exclaimed, what we can do to her father as he scratched his head, puzzled.

At this moment, Ada ran up to her and told Tisha that her father was good at repairing. Even though they spoke different languages, but Ada drew some realistic pictures that were easy to understand. Tisha's happiness was written all over her face and was over the moon. Grateful for what Ada done as happy tears rolled down .

Ada's mother also invited Tisha and her father to stay until Ada's father fixed the carriage. Ada's father offered mirrors and clean rooms for them too. Ada's jaw dropped, and went to thank her parents." Maybe one day, we can be friends." Ada quietly hoped that night.

Soon after Tisha settled in the guest room, it was time for supper and Ada was cooking local spices while Tisha was looking at Ada's hand-made cook book. Tisha thought it was easy but she was badly mistaken. The strong spices made Tisha sneeze and nonstop cough. Tisha was pouring boiling oil when she accidentally burned her arm. Tisha screamed in pain and Ada quickly came to her and treated her arm with traditional Chinese medicine. Tisha was amazed and wanted to learn from Ada. However, something was bothering Ada and she was depressed because her brother who went to the war of the horses was badly injured. Ada's eyes were red and dull as tears rolled down like a river, sopping on the pages of her brother's letter that was covered with tears and blood, because of how dangerous and fierce the war was.

Tisha was awoken by sobbing sounds in the middle of the night, she tipped toed and followed the sound to Ada's bedroom. Tisha couldn't understand what was happening but didn't ask. She knew Ada was sad and she didn't need to tell her everything. Ada was thankful for a friend who truly knew her. Their friendship grew and it will be each others' strongest wall forever.

As Tisha had also experienced war and knew how it felt to lose a loved one. She quickly comforted Ada and patted her back and told her jokes and how much pressure she had to bear. And how she longed to be normal. The two girls chatted and laughed as if they forgot all of their problems and danced in the moonlight.

Over the weeks, Ada and Tisha's friendship strengthened and became friends for life. It doesn't matter what language you speak, how you look like or where you from or even what religion you believe in. You can still become friends like Ada and Tisha and have peace and happy life.

Silk's Journey

Singapore International School, Ah-Weng, Emmanuelle Vetuz – 11

He gazed at the blue flowers, dragons and geometric patterns on my white body.

"That is a beautiful piece of silk you have there, Lee! It should be worth lots of money!" I overheard a strange looking man say.

"It took me long enough to persuade the weaver to sell this to me, Xi! It's a big piece so it should be worth more than the usual," the man called Lee said with a grin.

"When are you planning to leave town?" Xi asked.

"Tomorrow, but there's only a small caravan, not many people are going. Do you want to come along?"

"Sounds good! I have a vase to sell. Where to?"

"Kashgar," Lee replied, already packing for the journey.

"Count me in!" Xi said, before leaving the workshop.

I woke up the next day to the sensation of being folded, then rolled and gently put into what looked like a small trunk. When Lee arrived at the caravan, Xi and five other men were already there. Everyone had a camel each which carried goods and supplies. A man with a moustache took out a map.

"Everyone's here, let's go!" He said.

"Yes, Wang!" Everyone replied. The first step of the journey had begun – onward to the Wei River Valley.

The journey took a day. When we arrived, Xi came over, opened Lee's small trunk and inspected me lying comfortably inside.

"Hey Lee," he said, "That silk is going to be worth a few silver pieces!"

"That is a beautiful piece," Lee replied with a smile, "I would not expect anything less!" We passed through the Wei River Valley and continued into the Liupanshan mountain range.

We travelled for 3 days and finally arrived in Lanzhou. In Lanzhou, Lee and his companions stocked up on supplies, bought more weapons and let the camels take a break. The next day, we moved onwards to the Hexi Corridor.

One of Lee's travelling companions named Lin started feeling unwell. He complained that his muscles were aching. Wang forced him to push through, saying he might just be cold. However, a week after we left Lanzhou, Lin started to grow a dark-coloured bubble on his neck. Lee and his friends finally noticed something was wrong.

"Oh no, Lin, this might be the bubonic plague!" One of Lee's companions called Ray saw the dark bubble. "My dad passed away nine months ago due to this! I know what I'm saying, trust me". "Ray..." All the

colour drained from Lin's face as everyone was at a loss for words. Then he sombrely said "I saw quite a few rodents back in Lanzhou. I will stay behind and get this checked – we cannot risk any one of you catching this too. You must go on without me."

During the rest of the journey through the Hexi Corridor, the remaining traders all looked miserable and were quiet. No one brought Lin up. A month later, we exited the Hexi Corridor and arrived in Dunhuang. Then it took around twelve days to travel through Dunhuang to our final step of the journey — the Taklamakan Desert.

The desert was blazing hot in the day and freezing at night, the difference was extreme. Wang led us around the northern rim of the desert, and we walked for five days before finally arriving at the first oasis city — Hami. We stayed at a local inn, and the locals advised us to shut our windows before we sleep in case of a sandstorm. The next day, a sandstorm indeed hit the city.

"Oh no! Our trip is going to be delayed by the sandstorm!" Ray exclaimed.

"Don't worry, it will only last for a few hours" Wang said calmly, but it lasted the whole day, and the traders had no choice but to stay in the inn. After the storm passed, we left Hami for the next oasis city — Turpan.

Four days into the journey to Turpan, Lee and his travelling party encountered bandits. There was a shower of knives on the caravan and out of nowhere, bandits came and surrounded them. "Give me your valuables and we will let you go," the head bandit said menacingly. "Never!" Lee and his companions bravely fought off the bandits and suddenly there was a scream of pain.

"No! Xi!" Xi had gotten stabbed in the leg and there was blood spurting everywhere. "I'm fine," Xi said, forcing a smile.

"You are not fine, you must bind up your wound," Ray said, running over with a bandage, quickly wrapping up the wound and securing it tightly. Lee helped Xi onto his camel, and the traders hurriedly went on their way.

We arrived at Turpan the next day and the traders took Xi to get checked up and properly taken care of, remaining in Turpan for about a week.

We journeyed through the last few oasis cities — Karasahr, Kucha, Aksu — and finally we arrived at Kashgar. All this time, I was kept safe in Lee's small trunk.

At Kashgar, Lee met many traders who were interested in looking at me. However, there was no one who could match the price that Lee wanted, until Lee met an Indian trader called Singh. Singh was looking for a beautiful piece of silk for his wife to make a special dress. That night, Lee took me out from his trunk. I could feel the gentle breeze blowing and my whole body moving with it, no longer folded and trapped. I felt a sense of freedom as I was unfurled and seen by admiring eyes. It had been a long journey to finally get to Kashgar.

The next day, Lee said his last goodbye and sold me to Singh for many pieces of silver. Now my journey from Xi'an to Kashgar was truly complete. From the weaver's workshop to Lee's trunk, to the beautiful streams, trees and mountains, even though the bandit attacks, there was nothing more memorable than this journey with Lee and his companions.

One Dragon, one Phoenix, one Silk Road

Singapore International School, Ang, Zi En Isabelle – 10

“Eureka!” I exclaimed in joy! I had finally invented the time travel machine that I had poured years of effort into making. Eager, enthusiastic and excited, I could not contain my excitement any longer, and jumped inside...where would my time machine bring me to?

I stepped out. The majestic and imposing Weiyang Palace greeted me. There were tall crimson-coloured walls, massive doors, and golden statues. Intrigued and curious, I stepped inside. I had been to the Weiyang Palace in my time, but the designs on the walls were never as intricate as right now, and the dull colours of the walls that I had seen in my time were replaced by the bold hues of vermilion and gold adorning the walls.

I ambled leisurely around the palace grounds before setting off on a trek westward. Soon, I found myself completely lost in the wilderness of the desert.

Suddenly, a dark shadowy figure loomed over me! Startled, I recalled tales of the Xiongnu (the nomadic tribe that was locked in a mortal battle with the Han Dynasty) from the history books and I recoiled in fear of meeting someone from this fearsome tribe of the ancient past. But I soon realized that this man had features of a Han Chinese and looked exactly like the statue of Zhang Qian that I had seen in a museum! I could not believe my luck! Right before my eyes was the man described in history books as the father of the Silk Road!

“Who are you? Where do you come from?” Zhang Qian asked, curiously scrutinizing my appearance.

With my mind racing, I recalled Zhang Qian had a loyal aide on his first trip to the Western Regions and I decided to create this persona for myself, “I... I am Gansabelle. I... am a scholar from the household of... Gan Fu! My master, Gan Fu, your loyal assistant in your first trip to the Western Regions, has sent me here to help you!”

To my relief, Zhang Qian’s suspicions melted into delight. He excitedly revealed all his plans for his trip. He was going to find a key hidden in the desert that could unlock a treasure chest full of silk and ceramics!

While we travelled in search of the key, I was racking my brains, trying to recall the place where the key was buried (books in my time had revealed where the key was hidden). Suddenly, a flash of inspiration struck me. Wasn’t the key hidden at the start of the Gob Lake Valley, next to the giant Red Goyo plant?

“Master...I think I know...The key is located in the Gob Lake Valley, next to a giant Red Goyo, which is only a few meters away from here!”

After a few minutes, we arrived at our destination. Zhang Qian pulled out his shovel and started digging. Soon, he found the key!

He gasped in awe, and said in disbelief, “Gansabelle, you are extremely intelligent. Please continue to guide me in this journey.”

Day after day, we trudged under the scorching hot sun, saving every single drop of water that we had and taking care of the horses. Exhausted, I asked Zhang Qian, “When will we reach our destination? I am tired.”

“I understand that you are feeling tired. However, we must persevere.”

We continued to trudge across the desert.

Suddenly, we heard thudding footsteps and the thunderous clattering of hooves. Terrified, I scrunched up into a ball, cowering in fear...

“Ha! Hans! The homeless, helpless Hans! What are you planning here, trying to invade us?! Welcome into our prison! You will surely have lots of fun!” A Xiong Nu soldier spoke up.

Then, the Xiongnu marched us into prison.

Every day in prison seemed an eternity. The oppressive weather seemed to sap and crush my spirits. However, Zhang Qian remained optimistic. After a thoughtful deliberation, he decided to persuade the Xiongnu to release us in exchange for trade between the two empires.

After Zhang Qian and I obtained approval to visit the Chanyu (the ruler of the Xiongnu empire) we walked into the Chanyu’s palace. The Chanyu sat in a stately manner, glancing at us suspiciously.

Bowing deeply, Zhang Qian said, “Honorable Chanyu, we can form greater understanding between our two empires by economic exchange. We will offer silk and ceramics in exchange for your horses and fur.”

“Why do we need to trade? We have all that we need.” Chanyu replied curtly.

“Economic interactions make both sides stronger.” I added. “We are a dragon and you a phoenix, we are each already strong. But together, we are stronger.”

Moments of silence and tension passed by. The Chanyu finally spoke up.

“Your wisdom is enlightening. I had never thought of the possibility of co-existing with Hans! Your idea of exchanging goods is intriguing and worthy of further consideration. I will release you, but you must promise me to work towards trade exchange.”

“Deal!” Zhang Qian agreed, bowed, and left with me.

I asked Zhang Qian if he genuinely believed that there could be peace with the Xiongnu through trade as the history books recorded that the Hans ultimately defeated the Xiongnu. He gave me a cryptic smile and said, “Establishing mutual understanding and peace through trade is possible.”

We scrambled onto our horses and continued our search for the treasure chest which our key could unlock. Eventually, we found the treasures, hidden underneath the Red Goyo. There were bountiful silk and ceramics!

News of this discovery spread rapidly across the Western Regions. As we travelled back towards Chang’an, a Roman trader rode up, “Hey, give me this bale of silk in exchange for these grape seeds.” I passed over a bale of silk, taking the seeds.

Suddenly, I felt the world fading... “Isabelle! Dinner time!” I heard my mum shouting. I looked around fervently for Zhang Qian, but realized I was back in my room. In my hands were glistening grape seeds...

Hidden In The Silk's Silence

Singapore International School, Av, Li Yang Liam – 11

Then came the summer morning that changed everything.

It was eight o'clock in the morning, one particular day during my summer break. A blaze of vibrant light shimmered on the liquid gold pond, reflecting a delightful day ahead, offering many opportunities to have fun and learn. I pranced out of bed to the washroom to wash up, changed into formal clothes and prepared myself for the day.

I had so many options.

Stay in the house to relax? Too boring.

Going out to the beach? I'd rather stay in the house.

Then something struck me. Since it's summer, why don't I visit the antique shop near my house for the summer sale! Grabbing my allowance and stuffing it into my pocket, I darted out of the house.

There was a big antique shop that was popular whenever a sale was on. The store was run by an old man. He was in a displeasing old shirt and worn-out shoes, who pointed to the new item in the store.

"Here, little child, this rattle is traded along the Silk Road."

I looked at it and hesitated.

"It is one of the most famous toys," he said.

I stared at the label, which said the toy was a Siberian bear rattle. I handed over the money and placed the item in my bag.

I found the toy unexpectedly fun. I played with it every day and presented this object to my classmates and friends. They liked it too.

That toy turned into a question.

"What if I traded across countries and found a new object like this?" I began to have an interest in the Silk Road.

Years passed, and I glanced at the rattle that was on my bed. I made a decision to travel the Silk Road. I reassured my parents that I would visit them once in a while. Saying my farewells to my family and friends, I packed my sack and headed off on a camel. The journey took a long time; I climbed treacherous mountains and slippery hills. With a curious and excited mind, I stepped foot into another country, Pakistan. The streets were crowded and narrow, and the buildings were mostly made of fire-baked bricks. The scaffolding covered the original colours of the building, the cloth covered the stalls that were closed, and the metal roller shutters were ancient. I was a newcomer to the city of Peshawar, Pakistan. I heard it had a large variety of goods made in Pakistan. From stall to stall, I lost count of the number of trades I made!

It was getting late. There was a stall, hidden in the shadows of the building, resting at the corner of the street. My stomach began to grumble from the smell of it. The fragrant aroma whooshed past my nose, making me hungry suddenly. That stall served beef pulao, Pakistan's local delicacy. The food arrived after a while, and I gobbled up the stack of juicy beef. After satisfying my hunger, I checked into a hotel nearby. In the room, there was a wooden desk with several visible splinters, a small cane chair, and a wooden bed covered with a thick piece of cloth. With that, I drifted off to bed with my mind full of memories of the day.

As I prepared to leave Pakistan, a peculiar cave caught my eye. It was far deep inside the forest, camouflaged by the lush greenery. The cave had an uneven silhouette I couldn't describe. I approached the cave. My heart pounded against my chest, echoing in my ears as I took shallow, deep breaths. Every creak of my footstep sent a shiver down my spine. My footsteps were gradually uncontrollable. My curiosity devoured me. It was like the time when I was small and wanted to see what was in the sea.

I took a step. Then another.

WHOOSH!

A large pile of soil fell deep into the cave. It carried me with it; I was paralysed in horror. The pile of soil soon landed on a floor deep in the ground. At least the soil gave some cushioning for the impact. I stood up, taking a glance at my surroundings. A jagged cluster of shimmering, translucent stones lit up the place with vivid colours. The stones had razor-sharp edges. I collected some of them, thinking that these were items that had not been discovered. Maybe I could trade them for many precious goods! The diamonds lit up one by one in an orderly manner, creating a well-lit pathway to an unknown area. That place looked forbidden and terrifying. I turned back hastily, and all I could see was a black wall.

I've got no other choice.

A swooshing sound came in my ear. I could tell that something was not far away. I followed the sound. The air started to ripple like someone tearing a hole in a piece of fabric. It turned into a whirlpool of blue-like liquid. It felt like I had to walk into it to escape. Stepping into the blue-like substance, a reel of blurred images flashed across my eyes. One moment, the world was still, followed by a white, glaring light and a moment of extreme silence. Within a split second, the light turned into a new world of mystery.

Was this the end of me?

I managed to open my eyes. It was an endless dark room filled with automatic pens writing on blank pieces of paper. The papers had the names of different traders. I walked around and realised that the pens were recording down each trader's journey. At the very far back of the room, I noticed entrances to many other countries. The countries were labelled on top of the doors.

I had begun to understand.

It was my turn to start my own story.

This was not the end.

This was just the beginning of my new chapter of adventures.

The End

The Child of the Silk Road

Singapore International School, Chan, Tsz Hei – 10

“Okay. Listen up, class!” Ms. Green shouted to get our attention. “We are going to have a big project coming up, and it’s to research your family.”

What did I know about my family? Almost nothing! And to make things worse, not only was it graded, the project also had to be submitted for an interschool competition. Whoever wins this thing gets free ice cream and bragging rights, which is a pretty big in our school. I had to write an essay to submit in a month.

Ever since my parents got divorced a year ago, my family has been growing very distant. All I knew was that my mother was a lawyer from Malaysia and my father was a sailor from Guangzhou, China. After the divorce, my father barely returned to Melaka City anymore. He undertook long trips across the ocean, often lasting for extended periods. Nowadays, Mom works part-time and takes care of me at home. So, as you can guess, I wasn’t feeling very sunny.

“Mom!” I greeted my mom as I walked into the house. “Can you help me with the new assignment for school? I’m kinda stuck, so I would appreciate some help!” I said as I tried my best to sound happy, to get my mom to help.

“Of course, Sabrina, I’m always happy to help!” replied Mom cheerfully.

She set up her computer in front of her and motioned for me to sit beside her before grabbing some paper and pencils and getting us some snacks.

“So, Mom, I’m working on a project about my family, and I was hoping you could tell me more about my relatives on your side?” I asked, munching on the sandwich Mom had prepared for me.

Grandma and Grandpa had died a while ago, but they were still a touchy subject for Mom, and I was always careful about mentioning them while she was around.

To my surprise, Mom smiled wistfully. “I knew I wasn’t going to avoid this conversation. Sabrina, your Grandma and Grandpa were wonderful people. Your ancestors were too. Follow me, please,” said my mom as she stood up and went to her room.

I couldn’t think of anything to do except to follow her. When we arrived, she pushed open the door and pulled on the handle of the drawer in the bedside table. Inside was an old, leather-bound journal.

“Here, Sabrina. This will help you a lot. It’s your great-grandmother’s journal,” Mom said as she caressed the book with her fingers.

After that, I put the journal on the dinner table and started to read. Mom watched me the whole time. As it turns out, my great-grandmother was a historian who specialized in the ancient Silk Road—the maritime Silk Road. She listed some of the important marks and findings she had found, and I became fascinated with the Silk Road. So, I decided to bring the journal to school tomorrow.

Ms. Green is going to be so happy to see this, I thought, feeling good about myself. This is going well!

The next day, as I walked past the gates of my school, my classmate Ruby, a bully and an arrogant American, saw the journal I was holding and immediately took the chance to mock me. Ugh. I hate that girl!

“Hey! Is that a journal the Chinese Malaysian is holding? Seriously? It looks ancient! Are you a grandma or something? Old-school Sabrina is in the house! I guess I should show some respect to the ‘elderly,’ but come on—what fun is that? I’m definitely not old, unlike you!” mocked Ruby as she sneered at my scared face.

The ancient journal will get me more grades than your entire Snapchat account, Ruby, I thought furiously as I tried to keep my cool outside while fuming inside. You just wait and see, Ruby.

After a whole day of lessons, the last period came. It was English, and we worked on our project.

“Sabrina, progress check!” Ms. Green called out to me. “Have you found anything so far?”

“Yes, Ms. Green,” I replied, feeling self-satisfied, as many people had yet to get any findings. “I found a journal that belonged to my great-grandmother. It reveals that she was a historian and an archaeologist who specialized in the ancient maritime Silk Road.”

Later, as I headed back to my seat, Ruby tripped me and spilled water all over the journal. “You are not going to win the competition. I am,” she snarled as I tried to wipe the journal with my sleeve, tears in my eyes.

I just couldn’t bear it anymore, so I burst into a rage, “Well, I actually bothered to do some work, unlike someone in this room who didn’t even bother to get any findings!”

When I got home, I called my dad for information on the other side of my family.

“Dad, it’s so good to see you!” I smiled as the call went through. “Can you tell me about my ancestors? It’s for school.”

“Wow! You are lucky you got me on break time! I’m sailing across the Indian Ocean! Just like your ancestors. One of your ancestors was a sailor on the Silk Road. Her name was Sabrina, and we named you after her. Yes, she was a girl, and yes, she had an English name, which made her stand out to us,” Dad explained to me.

A girl. A sailor. My namesake. This was so cool! I suddenly felt very inspired. I knew exactly what I was going to write. The essay was easy now. I was going to make Great-grandmother, Mom, Dad, and Sabrina proud.

A month later, I sat in the front row of the auditorium as one of the nominated few for the competition. Ruby was also nominated, and we glared sparks at each other.

“And the winner is,” the announcer said, “Sabrina Liu, the child of the ancient Silk Road!”

I have never felt so proud before.

A Morning Market Adventure

Singapore International School, Chen, Wanqing Chloe – 11

“Dong...” There goes the temple’s bell.

“What? It’s morning already?” I fling open my eyes. A single beam of sunlight travels through my window, leaving a spot of warmth at the foot of my bed.

I sit up in bed, half-awake, rubbing my eyes. My name is Wenzhi, and I’m twelve years old. My father is a fabric merchant. I’m going to the market to help my father today, and I do so often.

“Ready for some brainwork? We don’t want to be fried alive by the desert air, remember!” Father says.

After a quick breakfast of Hu Bing [1] and camel milk cheese, Father and I set off toward the market.

The streets of Dunhuang bustle with people, as usual. The sound of camels’ bells rings through the busy streets. As Father sets up his stand at its usual spot, I watch all types of people pass by. People wearing Hanfu like Father and I (Han people like us); people with delicately curled beards (Father once told me they were Sogdian merchants); people with dark, curly hair (these people are Persians); people wearing long robes with short knives at their belts (Tibetans were not to be messed with). [2]

What’s so interesting about these people is that everyone carries some type of merchandise: Rolled-up carpets, boxes of dried tea leaves, smooth rolls of silk, carts full of fabrics, bright copper mirrors, barrels of wine, camels and horses, china bowls and plates, spices and herbs...

The sound of Father hawking pulls me back into reality. He does the smiling, talking, bargaining, and hawking while I do the counting and calculating, which is great. I’m really good at math. Father is, too, but he lets me do the important work. He says it teaches me responsibility and will make me a more practical salesperson when I grow up.

Suddenly, I spot something – someone – out of the corner of my eye. A person wearing a kasaya – a monk. He’s a tall monk, with a tired yet friendly expression, leading a sturdy but old horse. Then I notice something else. A group of people who looked like thieves were following him sneakily, doing hand gestures at each other, and eyeing his pack carefully. That’s when I tug at Father’s sleeve gingerly.

“Father, please! Look over here!” I jerk my head in the direction of the monk and the thieves.

“Wenzhi, I’m packaging up fabric, and I don’t have time,” Father says, tying up the wrapping around some fabric and handing it to his customer.

My mind races. I can’t keep on calling Father. It would be too late when I finally get him to turn around. One of the thieves is already reaching out toward the monk’s pack.

So I do what my instinct tells me to do. I run through the crowd of people and straight toward the bandits, smashing headfirst into the one in the front.

“Owww! That hurt!” I yell, toppling over deliberately. Then many things happen at once: The monk turns in astonishment at all the commotion behind him. The first thief snatches his hand back and stares daggers at

me, his face red with anger. All the other bandits glare at me and mutter things under their breath. Father stares at me in horror and yells for me to come back. People turn, stare, point, whisper.

“You! Watch where you’re heading! You are not going to challenge me in any way!” the first bandit waves his fist at me.

“I’m s—sorry, sir, I was just g—going to the other side t—to see what they have...” I stuttered.

The thief stomps his brown, sandy boot. “Gang! Let’s go!” He commands.

The thief pulls down the brim of his hat angrily. He leads his gang through the market and into the distance, glowering and stomping all the way.

For one second, the silence is deafening. Troubled whispers and nervous glances. Finally, after the awkward pause in time, everyone resumes their activities.

The monk helps me up. “Are you all right, child?” he asks gently.

“Thanks, I’m fine.” Then I lean closer, my head bowed. My voice trembles a little. “I believe you should watch your pack more carefully. That suspicious group of people just now looked like thieves. Their leader was even trying to steal your pack!”

“Oh!” The monk gasps, then looks at me with an expression that seems to combine surprise, gratitude, and pleasure. “Thank you so much, child, for saving my pack. Even though the thieves would be upset with its contents if they managed to steal it,” he adds with a chuckle.

“Why?”

“I do not have much money, child, but there are some very important tongguanwendies[3] that I cannot lose,” the monk answers.

I cock my head a little. “Tongguanwendies? Are you going somewhere far away?”

“My name is Xuanzang [4], and I am heading toward Tianzhu [5]. When I come back, child, I shall bring Buddhist scriptures with me, letting the power of Buddhism be known far and wide to spread our powerful beliefs to the most remote corners of China.” Xuanzang smiles at me and mounts his horse.

“Good luck on your journey to Tianzhu, and I hope that you will return with the scriptures safely!” I look up at him and smile.

“Thank you and farewell, child, I will!”

I watch Xuanzang and his horse trot through the crowds and disappear in the sea of people.

At night, I lay in bed, thinking about the tough journeys and adventures Xuanzang has before him. I visualize him carrying rolls of sacred texts, trotting his way back through the crowded market on his old horse.

[1] Hu Bing: A delicious sesame—topped flatbread that the Tang people ate

[2] This is the year 627 CE, the first year of Zhenguan

[3] Tongguanwendie: Ancient passports; documents needed to pass borders in the past

[4] Xuanzang: A Famous monk who brought back religious scriptures from Tianzhu (See 5)

[5] Tianzhu: The ancient name for India

The Peril of the Precious Pouch

Singapore International School, Chen, Wun Yi Amber – 10

The air in Suzhou smelt like mulberries and secrets. At fourteen years old, Li's life was woven into her village's special silk trade, a trade guarded more fiercely than even a dragon's hoard. She was a weaver with dye – stained hands, and a protector of her village's silk secret that nobody else knew.

Her brother, Jia, was the opposite of silk: coarse, loud, and about as subtle as a gong in a library. He was supposed to be mastering trade skills, but he mostly just bragged about their "special process" to anyone who'd listen – a habit that drove their father mad.

Today, Jia was boasting to a stranger.

Li knelt outside the workshop, picking up stray mulberry leaves. The stranger was tall and thin, draped in expensive foreign wool, taking notice of nothing but a handful of silkworms and dye samples.

"Oh, yes, we have a great variety of the very best White Mulberry bushes here. Their leaves are what make our silkworms and dye mixture so fabulous. The secret is the quality of the materials used, Kleptes." Jia said.

Li's basket hit the ground with a loud thud. She didn't just feel anger; she felt a sharp prickle of fear. The secret hadn't been shared; it had been surrendered.

"Ah, Li," the stranger said, turning. "My true identity will remain concealed, yet you may address me as Kleptes, a monk from the Eastern Roman Empire. Emperor Justinian finds your village's exceptional work quite... interesting. Your brother's been very informative."

"That's nothing," Li said hurriedly, her voice sounding high even to herself. "It's just gossip. Jia, Mother wants you to help with the loom. Go!"

As Jia shuffled away, Kleptes smiled. "Such generous people. I've become fond of your 'tiny weavers.' It would be a tragedy if this secret remained in a single village. Tell your father to watch out; Roman silk may soon rival your own." He patted the hollow bamboo staff he carried, a sly move that suggested a hidden compartment.

He pressed a coin into Li's palm, his eyes gleaming, then turned away and vanished between the bustling huts. The coin felt like a hot ember in her hand. Li knew the bamboo staff was no longer empty.

Without waiting for permission, Li leapt onto her chestnut mare Xia, and urged her after Kleptes, who'd leapt onto a horse and was cantering off. She paused for one last look at her village, where her parents and brother worked on a loom, chatting happily, unaware of the catastrophe. The peaceful scene steeled a resolve in her heart: she must restore the secret for her village. Kleptes was heading east and if he reached his emperor, the secret of their unique, shimmering silks – the special silkworms and dye – would be lost forever to the world beyond the Great Wall.

"Kleptes, she thought as Xia galloped along a bridge. *"Doesn't that mean 'thief' in Greek? He wasn't scared to be obvious; he knew we'd never overpower him."*

Li caught sight of Kleptes near the Great Canal. He was talking with a merchant, holding up a small object. A cocoon. Li's stomach flipped. A confrontation was impossible – he was armed and backed by the mighty Roman Empire. She needed to win without him realizing a fight had happened.

Li watched as Kleptes put the cocoons back and guided his horse east. Directing Xia through a marshy shortcut just off the main road, Li reached a night market a few moments after Kleptes. While Kleptes wandered about the stalls, Li dismounted quietly and slipped over to his horse, where he'd left the cane. Her heart was beating furiously as she pulled out a bag of wild cocoons she'd scavenged – lumpy things that produced silk like

straw, and a jar of paint used for fixing stains. To untrained Roman eyes, they looked exquisite. To a true weaver, they were trash.

Li's hands shook as she swapped everything. Just as she finished and turned to leave, she bumped into Kleptes, who was entering the stables.

"Looking for your brother?" Kleptes asked mockingly.

"No," Li said. "I've come to tell you that our secret isn't a gift. It's a curse for anyone who dares to steal it."

Kleptes laughed. "Well, I believe in gold and the power of my empire, not myths told by a peasant girl.

Get out of my way."

Li mounted Xia. As she rode off, she glanced back. She almost felt sorry for Kleptes. When that hollow cane reached the Emperor Justinian, the threads would be brittle, the colors would be dull and boring, and Kleptes would have to explain his failure to a furious emperor not known for his mercy.

The village was quiet when Li reached home at dawn. A crowd had gathered outside the Cocoonery, observing the splintered remains of the boxes containing jars of dye and silkworm cocoons Kleptes had smashed. Her father was at the front, watching Jia pick through the wreck.

Jia swallowed. "Father, our stocks are gone...the ones we needed for the next cycle of this rare breed. The jars of dye are all smashed. Nothing is left...we're finished." Her father remained silent.

"Father? I...got these," Li said, passing the cocoons and dye to her father.

For a moment, her father stayed still, staring at them. Then a look of disbelief broke across his face. "How?" he asked, cradling the pouch in his arms like they were made of crystal. "We thought we were doomed."

"The secret isn't the quality of the materials, Father," Li said, glancing at Jia. "It's about knowing how to protect it. Threads can be taken, but the history of our silk is woven too tightly for a thief to unpick." Then she walked into the peaceful workshop. She'd finally gotten what she wanted — the secret was safe in the crates, the future was secure in the village, and the loom was waiting for her touch.

Desert of Death

Singapore International School, Dong, Hanru – 11

The burning heat fried Jacques's back. All he had left was the bag of china he was sent to trade, a small skin rucksack of water, a useless map, an old compass, and a few pieces of beef jerky. He regretted ignoring his father's warning about the Taklamakan Desert.

Oh, he *knew* that the Silk Road forked around it, but he wanted to arrive in Kashgar earlier, so he planned to walk through the desert instead of around it. Jacques *did* consider hiring a camel, but the guides had all refused to take him across. Now he understood why this place was called the "Desert of Death". All the locals had said to him, "You can go in, but you will never come out." Even Jacques's father called it "The Place of No Return".

Jacques struggled up a sand dune and saw the light of a small oasis village and sighed with relief and exhaustion.

Almost...there...I'll make it...get water...food...directions...trade...for Father...not fail...but go tomorrow...sleep first...

Jacques climbed with the last of his energy up behind the largest rock he could see and curled up in the shade. He had no idea what was coming for him, in this horrible place with death lingering in the air.

The next morning, Jacques woke up with a lot more energy than he had expected. He thought he could only muster enough for him to drag himself through the gates of the village, then he would collapse on the sand. Instead, he could now jump around a few times and jog on the spot for a minute.

"Jacques, I told you not to go through the Taklamakan Desert! Don't you ever listen? Why didn't you go on the main path? It is very easy to follow!" Father's deep, booming voice echoed inside the poor boy's head.

"Father?" Jacques reached for Father's arm, but his hand groped on thin air.

Mirage, he realized glumly. He sighed and rubbed his temple.

Jacques turned in the direction of the oasis village...or where he thought the oasis village was. It was gone!

Jacques racked his poor, rusty brain. He remembered clearly that the village was behind the boulder he was sleeping under. So why had it disappeared?

Jacques's mind paced around and around in circles. He became frustrated with himself.

Why didn't I use my compass to check which direction the village was in? Then I could follow it to the village. Now I have to find it. I should do a radius sweep of around 100 meters, but I'm not sure if I can do it. I feel like sleeping again, and my legs are feeling wobbly.

Suddenly, the wind growled and hissed, almost blowing Jacques away. He could just see the raging monster in the distance, speeding in his direction. *Sandstorm*, he thought, his heart weighed down by a mountain of rocks.

Jacques's eyes widened with fear as the first army of sand came flying.

Run! he screamed in his head, *run!*

But his legs were paralyzed, frozen to the ground.

He couldn't move.

He couldn't see.

He couldn't shout for help.

Before he blacked out and fell, Jacques thought, *I am going to die.*

— — — — —

Everything was blurry. There was something moving, a dark shadow against the white background.

Where am I?

Jacques pinched himself, then regretted it as he recoiled in pain.

I'm alive, then. How did I survive the sandstorm?

He paused, straining his ears for any sound, any voices.

WHERE AM I?

Then somebody spoke. It was a small, high female voice, but the sound made Jacques feel uneasy. There was something behind that dependent voice. Jacques felt sure about that.

“One of the watchers thought they saw him on a boulder two days ago. But they weren't sure if it *was* a person. There are many critters in the desert, after all. He could have seen our village, but he didn't come to us, so I assume the shifting dunes are up to their mischief again.”

“Yeah, luckily we sent out search teams after that sandstorm. Fortunately, this storm didn't last for a long time.” This was a man, with a low, gruff voice.

Who were they? And what did they want with Jacques? He didn't know. The room gave him an eerie, out-of-place feeling.

“Uh—oh, he's waking up,” the girl said, “you better knock him out again, so he wouldn't hear our plans.”

That's not necessa— Jacques thought, before he felt a heavy blow, and everything faded to black.

A Portal To The Past

Singapore International School, Fung, Yoke Wai, Zoe – 10

“Hey Patrick! Are you looking forward to history class? We have a substitute teacher “Mrs Hui”. She sounds strict!” said Ethan, my best friend.

“I really hate history class! The boredom is unbearable!” I sighed.

“We'd better get to class before we get detention again! Ms Doll must be tired of seeing us at detention class all the time!” said Ethan nervously.

When Ethan and I arrived, Mrs Hui was already in the classroom.

“Hello class!” said Mrs Hui with a British accent. “I will be your substitute teacher for history today. I hope we get along and have fun learning about the Silk Road!”

“Is it just me or is Mrs Hui really excited to teach this topic?” I asked Ethan rhetorically.

“The Silk Road from China was an ancient network of trade routes...”

As Mrs. Hui continued, I daydreamed about Ethan and I going to the Silk Road and having an adventure of a lifetime.

“RIIINGGGG!”

“Finally! Dismissal time!” I let out a sigh of relief.

“Let's walk home together,” Ethan said.

On our way home, we came across a creepy dark alleyway. However, there was also an unexplainable draw.

As we edged closer to the end of the alleyway, I felt an overwhelming sense of fear. Just then Ethan saw a rock and kicked it towards the end of the alleyway but it didn't bounce back. Instead, we heard a “ding”. At the end of the alleyway, there was a giant rectangular door frame with an ancient sign.

“Dear Future People,” Ethan read aloud, “You have found a portal to the past. Instructions for using this portal: firstly, enter the year you want to travel to, then select the destination you want to visit, and lastly press “GO”. Safe travels!”

“Yeah right,” I said sarcastically, “there is no way this hunk of junk works.”

“Hey, how about going to the Silk Road? Mrs. Hui made it sound fun!” Ethan suggested.

We looked at each other, jumped into the time machine and entered 114 BCE, the Silk Road and pressed “GO”.

Suddenly, we saw a blizzard of ones and zeros appear. Blue and purple lights flashed like the galaxy before it cleared up and shrank into a small ball. Ethan picked it up and put it into his pocket.

“Whoa! Look at all the pyramids here! There are so many that it is impossible to count!” Ethan said sarcastically.

We looked around and saw camels trotting slowly, carrying strangely-dressed people. They were dressed in robes, with long hair in braids, even the men! “Who braids their hair and how often do they wash it?” I wondered to myself.

As we walked around the streets, we could smell the scent of cinnamon from Sri Lanka, cassia from China, cloves, nutmeg, and pepper. As we walked along the road, we saw shops selling Chinese silk, which are so soft they feel like the skin on a baby’s face.

“Whoa!” Ethan exclaimed as he continued touching the silk, “There is no way you can buy this in the present world for this price!”

As Ethan and I continued to roam the streets, we heard many different languages being spoken, but it made a lot of sense since the Chinese Silk Road was a trade route across many countries, and people came from all over the world to trade their goods. The Silk Road was a vast network of ancient trade routes linking East Asia with the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, covering both land and sea routes. We learned that Marco Polo used the Silk Road to travel from Italy to China.

As we ventured further inland, we came across a place called the White Horse Temple. It was profoundly majestic and we thought perhaps this was where the emperor lived! As there were no guards, we ventured in further. We saw towering statues of Buddhas which felt intimidating.

We saw a large cave with a huge statue of Buddha. Right at that moment, it struck us that we didn’t have a place to stay for the night.

“This is perfect! This is where we shall sleep tonight!” I exclaimed.

“Good, as I’m getting really tired. Goodnight!” Ethan yawned.

That night, we both slept soundly after our long, adventurous day.

The next morning, we woke up to guards yelling, “You are under arrest for trespassing!”

We were immediately thrown into jail and we later found out that trespassing was a crime punishable by death.

“Oh no! What are we going to do?” Ethan wailed in despair.

Ethan’s petrified voice rang through my mind. “Do you still have the portal ball with you?” I asked Ethan urgently.

Ethan took the ball out from his pocket and threw it onto the ground, but it just made a “clank” sound.

“Huh?” I said, “what just happened?”

“Now we are going to be stuck here forever and die! I am too young to die!” Ethan screamed.

I bent down to pick up the ball, my phone slipping out of my pocket without me noticing. I threw the ball on the ground again with all my strength.

“Voosh,” the portal rumbled.

“Hey, this portal works!” I said with tears of joy.

We hastily entered 2026, Oak Street and stepped into the portal. The world around us started spinning and everything turned dark. We fell onto our knees, and when we looked up, we were in front of a shop selling electronics. We saw a gadget that looks like a phone but is much more complex which we have never seen before. We looked around and noticed that there were flying cars zooming past us and everybody was bald and wearing goggles.

We approached the shop owner and asked, “Excuse me, what year are we in?” Ethan inquired.

“It is 2056. Why do you ask?” the person answered.

“No reason,” Ethan whispered.

We realised that we had mistakenly entered the wrong year and ended up in the future instead.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

A Perilous Journey

Singapore International School, He, Baichen, Darren – 11

“Come on Han. We’re falling behind.”

I nodded at my friend, Liang. The silk threads on my shoulder felt like a thousand needles jabbing straight into my skin.

I jogged for a bit under the intense glares of the sun, my skin had turned bright purple, after the continuous bake of the great giant ball of red hovering above our heads.

After our camels were stolen by a bunch of robbers back in Aksu, a village in Persia. Our silk road journey had become what Liang called, the devils path. Half our team gone just like that—fifty men, dead or just disappeared.

“Almost there.” Shouted our leader Kan.

Kan was still frustrated of the conflict with Liang a few days ago, merely about a cup of water, since it was scarce out here.

The walls of Kashgar towered over us, almost masking the attacks of the great sun.

“We’re like nothing, compared to this monstrosity. Nothing really can harm it right?” I muttered under my breath. This was a great chance of trading the silk I had heaved on my back for over 1 year. —and maybe, just maybe, prove I wasn’t the coward everyone thought I was.

“Try your spices! Handmade ceramics! Beautiful Textiles!”

We eyed the bazaar, Kashgar was also extremely well known for its notorious robbers.

“Come Liang, this trader has some good spices, and only for one thread of silk” I shouted to my friend who was sniffing at a batch of cinnamons.

“Thanks.”

We traded for the spices and I threw the silk threads back onto my back.

“Han! Liang!” Kan rushed hurriedly towards us, his face was etched with a mixture confusion and anger. “Lee’s missing, we can’t find him anywhere.”

“Probably ran off to trade his stuff” Liang shrugged.

“He had the priceless nephrite jades in his bag. It’s the most valuable thing in our team.” Liang whispered, the emperor is going to kill us!

I said in a quivering voice “The emperor’s deadline is three days. If we don’t find those jades by sundown on the third, our wives, our children—they’ll die.”

“We have to find him!” Kan announced to our team.

I shrunk back—did we really have to find him? My heart pounded against my chest, my stomach churned in dread. What if I was captured too? I instinctively started to bite my nails. My friends always called me cowardly and shy, after the embarrassing incident at school; that was why I volunteered to travel on the silk road. To prove to my friends that I was also very brave. But now Lee was missing, possibly captured by the local robbers who were infamous for their brutality. My real nature was starting to unfold bit by bit.

“Han, we have to find Lee. He might be in danger!” Liang said.

I nodded shakily, this was my big moment. I would not be the cowardly person who I was before.

We searched all over the bazaar, until we reached a gloomy alleyway. A few brave traders from our team started to tip toe slowly into the eerie cobblestone path. I mustered up my courage and followed them. We took the few weapons we had.

The rest of our team, including Liang—to my disappointment—had stayed at the front of our alleyway. Guarding it so nobody would try to go in.

We crept closer and closer to the end of the alleyway which to us, did not exist.

And there it was, the gleaming nephrite jade. Sitting peacefully on a cobblestone stand. There were no traps, no sudden death, no obstacle at all. It was all too perfect, a little too perfect.

We all stood frozen on the path, terrified something would go wrong if we moved even an inch. I knew that we were thinking of the same sentence. Who would go and pick up the jade stone.

I bravely walked forward, all my friends stared at me with awe. I felt like a superhero who had just saved the world. I reached down, feeling the cool smooth surface of the jade slide perfectly into my palm.

I quickly backtracked my steps, and shouted to retreat. We sprinted down the hall in perfect unison.

“Liang, we found a piece of nephrite jade! The robbers must be near here.”

No answer. All 20 people guarding the alleyway had disappeared without a trace. I looked around, it was already night time. The street stalls were closed and the bazaar once packed with people was now only occupied by 30 confused men, standing in front of an alleyway.

“Get on your knees!” A familiar voice shouted behind a street stall.

Then, in an instance, a number of men leaped out of the nearby stalls, waving daggers and swords. Pointing them straight at Kan.

The person leading the robbers was my dearest friend, Liang.

“Well, well.” Liang strode forward towards me. “Look at you, scrambling for a piece of jade. But forgetting that you left 30 defenseless men standing out in the night. While holding immense loads of valuables.

My face twisted with anger, I could speak no more. My eyes turned bloodshot and was full of unstoppable rage. My dearest friend, best companion for over one year had teamed up with the robbers.

“Fight! Fight! Beat up the traitor!” Furious voices sped past me, echoing around the whole bazaar.

Our miniature team had turned into a swarm of fury empowered men, they sprinted forward, waving their weapons. Determined to give the traitor a lesson.

A streak of terror rippled across Liang’s face, but still he was unfazed. With a tiny flick of his hand, his men also started barreling towards us.

I slowly started inching away from the battle, however, something in my heart seemed to rise up in anger. It was courage, I too, joined the brawl.

It was a short battle, the robbers were only experienced thief’s, while we were toughened by the hardship’s during the silk road. Soon, our victory started to show in our numbers.

“You lost, Liang. Your forces are gone; you have no more weapons. Hand over the jades.” Kan ordered.

Liang took out the jades.

A few days later, all was settled. Liang had been sentenced to court and banished from our team, while most of the robbers including their leader had run away. All of our lost men, including Lee had been found and returned to our team. Liang had succumbed to greed of stealing the jades so he teamed up with the robbers and planned to kidnap Fan.

At last, with a few successful trades. We started to embark, once again, on the perilous journey. We all knew, the journey ahead was not going to be easy.

For the first time in my life, I was ready.

The Journey Through Time

Singapore International School, Hsieh, Rachel Elizabeth – 10

“Found you!” Elliana exclaimed, her voice ringing with excitement. It was a rainy Saturday morning, and the two girls, Elliana and Hazel, were lost in a game of hide-and-seek in the dim, dusty attic. Elliana, the twelve-year-old, had blonde, wavy hair and emerald green eyes. Her long, slim limbs made her very fast and sneaky. Ten-year-old Hazel, on the other hand, had straight brown hair with matching eyes. She often crossed her arms and frowned when things didn’t go her way. Once she set her mind on something, you could never change her mind.

“It’s your turn to hide!” cried Hazel. “One, two, three...” Elliana squealed and ran off. When she stopped, she found herself next to a small, half-covered door that she had never seen.

“Wait! Hazel! Come here!” Elliana called. “There’s a secret door here! It can lead us to a secret room!” Hazel gasped in wonder as she saw the door.

“Let’s open it,” she breathed, and counted down. When she opened it, a strange blue light appeared. Hazel yelped, her heart beating as fast as a cheetah. Suddenly, she felt herself being drawn in by the light, wrapping around her like a cold blanket. Her sweaty palms quickly grabbed Elliana. Then the light surged, pulling at them both. Oh no, thought Elliana frantically, what’s happening?

A few seconds passed in eerie silence as the two girls swept through some kind of void, colors blurring around them. All of a sudden, they tumbled out of the void and landed roughly on a cool, uneven surface.

“Ow!” they cried, their butts sore. Elliana looked around and realized that they weren’t at home anymore. Sand dunes were everywhere, and houses as small as ants were in the distance. She saw other travelers wearing weird clothes, riding in carriages, and carrying large products. A strange thought flashed into her mind. Something looked familiar.

“Where are we?” Hazel said, her throat raspy. She looked around. “Elliana, I want to go home,” she sobbed. “Now we’re lost!”

“It’s okay, Hazel, we will find a way back home,” soothed Elliana, patting Hazel’s head gently. Then, something caught Hazel’s eye.

“Look! A piece of silk clothing!” Hazel stopped crying. I’m keeping it, she decided. As she bent down to reach it, two burly young men ran into Hazel and snatched the silk clothing from her. “No! It’s mine!” Hazel yelled aggressively, turning into her stubborn self. Elliana, with her long limbs, sneakily snatched away the silk clothing from the burly young men.

“Oh, not so fast, young lady!” bellowed one of the men, and both of them ran after her. Elliana tripped.

“No!” screamed Hazel. Elliana desperately kicked at the men.

She threw the silk clothing at Hazel. “Catch!” As the men scrambled after the clothing, Elliana ran to Hazel. “Quickly, wear the clothes so it’s harder for the men to get you!” she said. As Hazel wore the clothing, the same strange light appeared.

Hazel yelped in surprise and quickly grabbed Elliana's hand. The same sensation swept through the girls, and they had never been so glad to have a portal to go home. The portal closed just as the men lunged to grab Elliana's leg. Phew, thought Elliana, wiping her sweaty hands.

Bump! They landed on the attic's dusty floor. "Well, that was quite the adventure," said Hazel. "By the way, thanks for getting into all that trouble to get the silk clothing for me." She chuckled. Elliana didn't reply. Everything had clicked in her head.

"Elliana?" Hazel looked around. Elliana had a weird look on her face.

That's why the travelers were wearing weird clothes, she thought. That's why they were carrying big products, she thought. That's why the men wanted to snatch the silk clothing from us, she thought.

"What?" Hazel asked, worried.

"Hazel," Elliana murmured.

"What?" Hazel repeated, impatient.

"We went through time and landed on China's Silk Road," she replied.

Where Silk Meets Sand

Singapore International School, Huang, Zinuo, Nathaniel – 10

JOSEPH

December 21, 2024

We'd just arrived in Xi'an after moving. I was walking up the stairs to the attic and stumbled over a box. After turning on the light, I looked at what had spilled on the floor: A pile of old books.

HUANG YI

September 30, 1351

War is breaking out. It's called the Red Turban Rebellion. Worst of all, my father is sick, and I must visit him in Chang'an. On the way, I will trade for provisions. I decided to go through the Silk Road to reach Chang'an.

JOSEPH

DECEMBER 21, 2024

Most of the diary entries were like this, short paragraphs about someone named Huang Yi and their sick father. The writer also shared a last name with me, "Huang", but it was probably a coincidence. These letters were intriguing, and mysterious. I continued reading.

JOSEPH

DECEMBER 22, 2024

When I woke up, I ran to the attic. The box belonged to my grandparents, and I figured that they must have left it here when they moved.

HUANG YI

OCTOBER 7, 1351

This was around a 40-day journey, and it wouldn't be easy. My father and I would finally see each other after years. After hours of riding my horse, Jade, we rested. I figured it was around 2 weeks until we could reach the Silk Road: Multiple interconnected routes that led to different trading stops, and the fastest way for me to get to Chang'an. I jumped off Jade and we took a break. I drank some water and continued my journey. From then on, all I did until I got to the Silk Road was travel and take occasional breaks.

JOSEPH

DECEMBER 22, 2024

After finishing some of the diaries, I researched the "Red Turban Rebellion". Soon, I had an idea of what it was. During the Yuan Dynasty, the government was divided in two. One group preferred a Mongol and Inner Asian style, but others wanted a Han-based style of governing. This division led to a movement opposing Mongol rule.

HUANG YI

OCTOBER 27, 1351

I've finally reached the Silk Road, after what seems like eternity of travel. Unfortunately, I'm still a long way from my father. The trading stops I pass through aren't as crowded as before, mostly because of the Black Death. There are a few traders, and I trade with them for provisions.

HUANG YI
NOVEMBER 5, 1351

It was a hot afternoon, sand blew against my face, I was in the Gobi Desert. This was one of the most vast and large deserts in all of China, and very easy to get lost in. I walked around for hours, venturing through the sand and rocks. I went for a rest. I looked at the map; every single dune looked the same to me. Though it was hot, I still felt chills down my spine. I was never going to see my father ever again.

JOSEPH
DECEMBER 23, 2024

It was nearly Christmas in Xi'an. After helping my mom with decorations, I researched deserts and sandstorms. The Gobi Desert was large and dangerous. According to the internet, traders would go around the borders of the desert to avoid traveling through it. But Huang Yi was braver than most, taking the most direct path to her father.

HUANG YI
NOVEMBER 6, 1351

The next day, I continued finding my location, I kept telling myself that there still was hope even though I was on the brink of accepting my fate. Suddenly, there was a humongous sandstorm in the distance, swallowing up everything in its path. I immediately covered my face with cloth. Sand was everywhere, I couldn't see anything. I was in the belly of the beast. It looked like a wall of sand separating me from my father. I couldn't let that stop me. I pushed as hard as I could, and using all my strength, I escaped from the path of the sandstorm. As my vision cleared, I saw a river flowing. There it was, the key to finding where I was.

JOSEPH
DECEMBER 24, 2024

Today was Christmas Eve. We would be inviting family members and friends over for dinner tomorrow, so I helped my mom buy some groceries in preparation. I decided that since grandma would be coming, I would ask her about the diaries. After going to the supermarket, I read a few more diary entries.

HUANG YI
DECEMBER 10, 1351

It was the "Ongi River", close Chang'an. I was so excited to see the river, I went there as fast as I could. When we arrived in Luo' yang, I raced all the way to the border where Chang'an was. It was nighttime. I thought to myself: What if I was too late? What if he was already dead? I ignored those thoughts and opened the door to his house.

JOSEPH
DECEMBER 25, 2024

It was Christmas. After finishing the diary, I was relieved that Huang Yi had made it. When grandma arrived, I rushed downstairs to give her the box of diaries. As I picked it up, there was a piece of paper inside that I must have overlooked, titled "Family Tree" in Chinese. Near the top of the family tree, it said "Huang Yi", near the bottom of the tree, there was "Huang Zhao Jian", who was my great grandpa! I ran up the stairs to ask grandma.

Upon seeing the box with the diaries and the paper, my grandma exclaimed, "I must have forgotten to take that with me when I moved out!"

“Grandma, why does the family tree have great grandpa on it?” I asked, “And is Huang Yi my ancestor?”

“Yes, those diaries were written by Huang Yi, your ancestor”, grandma said, “She was able to save her father with medicine she bought on her way to Chang ‘an.”

I grinned, glad that Huang Yi’s story had a happy ending. I learned a lot about the Silk Road through their journey.

Walls of My Name

Singapore International School, Huong, Hiu Yan Joanna – 10

I have always been good at noticing things. Like when I was eight, my father brought me to the trading port in Luoyang near our house. It was bustling, full of sounds. Vibrant colors from the women's Hanfu danced before my eyes. The sound of people shouting and haggling wrapped around me like a blanket. The mouth-watering scent of grilled lamb mingling with the tingling scent of spices drifted in the air like feathers in the wind. Suddenly, a man with olive-colored skin wearing a loose shirt and a funny-looking cap walked out of his stall and stumbled into my father. The air tensed around us. The man turned around, eyes wide, held up his hands in apology, and walked away. My father liked to pretend that everything was alright. But I noticed the stares that man got and how other Chinese people "accidentally" bumped into that man without being apologetic. The next day, when I came back, the man's stall was in ruins.

I have always been treated like an outcast. Everyone was scared of me. I had no friends. Why? Because of my father. I didn't choose to be the only child of Luoyang's biggest general. Nor did I choose to be named Zhao Zhigang, which means Strong, Powerful Ambition, and not live up to even my name.

Incidents like what happened in Luoyang kept happening. Tensions were running high. During my lonely afternoons, I asked myself: Why are people who are not Chinese treated differently? They didn't choose their skin color; they didn't choose where they came from. They don't deserve the glares, the pushes, the hate. We are all human, no matter where we come from. Where we come from shouldn't determine whether or not we should be treated like one.

I am sixteen now, and my hatred towards my name has grown stronger. Now, everyone knows who I am: the failure of my father. The boy who will never follow his father's footsteps. Lately, my father has been getting letters from An Lushan, threatening him to pay him money to fund his army that kills hundreds of foreigners each day. I have decided that today, I will take a walk outside our courtyard. I want to see what Luoyang looks like now. I cannot keep going on like a tiger trapped in a cage, like the ones in the circus I saw before. I am restless in our house, dying to view new scenery. I don't care if the streets are dangerous or the fact that someone might capture me to blackmail my father. It's not like he would even care!

And... the first step out of the high walls of our mansion, and I am shocked. The streets were ringing with the sound of fear and hunger. The vibrant colors were gone, replaced by the gray colors of a soldier's uniform. I felt anger bubbling in my stomach. What had happened? The soldiers stared at me, but they didn't capture me. I am too useless for even them.

I turned into an alleyway, a shortcut to the trading port. Suddenly, something rustled. I took a step forward. Curiosity engulfed me. Who is it? I walked forward and pushed back a pile of rubbish. A family of three and a woman looked up at me. They looked thin and hungry. The woman's eyes rounded, glowing with fear. She put her hands together, eyes darting everywhere.

"Please don't harm me! You took my husband... Please, I will give you money!"

"Relax, I am not a soldier."

The woman calmed down, and I started to really pay attention to her. She had tangled hair and bloodshot eyes. And... she wasn't Chinese.

“How do you know how to speak Chinese?”

“My family came from Iraq and lived in Luoyang for years, so I picked up Chinese along the way,” she spoke in heavily accented Chinese.

My heart shattered for her. Even if I only just met her, I felt like that was the most I have ever connected with somebody in my life. We both knew how it felt to be treated differently because of things we can't control. I looked around the woman's living space. It was dirty and smelly, a contrast to my room. I curled my hands into fists. How can An Lushan be so merciless, so cruel, so cold? Doesn't he understand these people? Why does he hate them so much? Suddenly, footsteps sounded. Soldiers.

I pushed the woman and her children deeper into the alleyway. They sobbed quietly, knowing they were to die. But I won't let that happen. All the unfairness, the disappointing looks, the sighs, the shaking of heads rushed into my mind like a river. I have tried to store my anger every time my father complained about me, ignored me, and treated me like trash. But I am sick and tired of this world! It is time to stand up for what is right, even if nobody does. It is time to be Strong, Powerful, and Ambitious.

Anger poured out of me as the first soldier charged at me. Red spots danced at the rim of my vision. I roared. I am no longer the cowardly boy everyone sees; I am Zhao Zhigang, and I will prove it. My foot met the chest of the soldier with a satisfying THWACK! The soldier stumbled backward. More soldiers were realizing what was happening and were running toward me. But that didn't stop me. I fought with my anger. Until what seemed like hours, or minutes, the red spots cleared, and soldiers lay at my feet, unconscious. I brushed dust off my clothes. I am not a coward like my father. I am Zhao Zhigang, with a Strong, Powerful Ambition. And I will live up to my name for the innocent.

The Journey Back in Time

Singapore International School, Kwong, Hiu Ting Leia – 11

“One strawberry for Zelda, one vanilla for Eleanor, one blueberry for Freya, two chocolates for me and Agnes, and one more strawberry for Scarlett.” I read out.

Maya

I wonder what the others are doing. Are they at home?

A tap on the shoulder snaps me out of my daze. “Um... Excuse me, your order is ready.” My cheeks flush from embarrassment as I walk to the counter with my head down. I collect the cupcakes, and in my haste to leave, I almost bump into an old lady in front of me.

“Sorry,” I mutter under my breath. Suddenly, a scrawny hand encloses around my wrist. I try to jerk away, but the grip tightens. I look over my shoulder to see the same old lady that I almost bumped into.

She pulls me into the storage room and locks the door behind her. I slowly back away from her as she starts walking towards me. My hands hit the wall. I'm cornered.

“Now, dear... don’t run away!” She rips off her mask and reveals her true self.

“Meth...Methusela?” I whisper, my voice trembling.

She grabs and pulls me while clicking a device and somehow, we arrive in a desert! How the hell did we end up here? Where am I? She throws me into a cage with all the animals, and I scream in fear. There are lions and hyenas! In a panic, I press my alarm.

Agnes

“MAYA ACTIVATED HER ALARM!!!” I shout as soon as I get the notification. I take out my phone and check her location.

“OH MY GOD! SHE’S TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME to the year 108 BCE! In some place called the Silk Road!!!” Scarlett shouts.

“What the hell is the Silk Road?” Eleanor asks.

“We’ll see when we get there!” Scarlett says.

“GET THE TIME MACHINE AND LET’S GO!” Freya exclaims.

Eleanor grabs the time machine, and we all hold hands. “To the China Silk Road — year 108 BC” we say.

We arrive at the entrance of the Silk Road, and the place is humongous!

It’s bustling with people, and they all speak different languages. They seem to be negotiating with one another, trading anything from Chinese silk, spices and wine, to horses, lions, and PEOPLE? They trade slaves.

Suddenly, an old man approaches us.

“ello? Where you guys go?” he asks. He sounds like he’s from somewhere in Europe. His face has scars on it, his hands are bandaged, and I can see a sword handle sticking out of his waistband. Is he... a warrior?

“Oh... uh... we have to go here.” I show him the map, and his eyes darken.

“That is... Methusela’s tent! It dangerous, don’t go!” he warns us, shaking his head frantically.

“But our friend is trapped there!” I reply.

The man takes a deep breath, and sighs.

“Methusela is not the dangerous one, but Meths are. Meths surrounding your friend’s cage. But they have button on their back that make them follow her. If you press, they will join your team because they want revenge against Methusela.”

We thank the old man and run off to save Maya.

Maya

I rattle the cage bars. Luckily, the animals haven’t eaten me yet. I fed them the cupcakes I got. THANK GOD! But it’s only a matter of time before they get hungry again...

Agnes

My throat feels like sandpaper, and the sand beneath us is rough and coarse. We must have walked past a hundred cages before finally finding one that is heavily guarded. It must be Maya!

We see a bundle of animals surrounding a cage. They must be the Meths! They look like monkeys, but have normal limbs, and their ears are pointy and gigantic.

Suddenly, a voice calls out. "YAY! YOU CAME TO SAVE ME!"

We all facepalm in synchronization. Maya ... you just gave us away! The Meths instantly stare at us menacingly, letting out a grunt and preparing for battle.

I glance at the camel trader beside me and signal for him to run. The silk trader is already packing his bundles of silk.

The Meths charge. But we are too strong for them.

One of the Meths knocks a candle into a barrel of gunpowder, and it explodes instantly! Flames are burning everywhere. Checking to see that my friends are unscathed, we continue the deadly battle. We sneak alongside the Meths' backs, pressing their buttons to get them on our team.

"Ooohh... look who's here..."

A shrill voice appears behind us. I turn to see the ruthless, vile creature who took Maya, and with one look at that smug face, I lose it. That despicable villain had the audacity to come for Maya! Oh boy, she is so cooked.

"Methsssss, ATTACK!" she shouts. No response. Her face turns a sheet of white as she realises there is no one to protect her.

"They are on our side. You constantly hide behind the Meths to protect you, but now, you're on your own. Give me the key." I warn, gripping my sword tight.

She, defeated, reluctantly hands me the key.

"Zelda and Freya, stay here and make sure she doesn't run." I say, glaring at Methusela.

Maya

I see my friends approaching cautiously. They unlock the door.

I throw my arms around her neck in relief. "Agnes!"

"Now let's get out! " she says happily. "One more thing — let's lock her away."

All six of us grab Methusela by the shoulders, and throw her into the cage she trapped me in.

"Wait! Her teleporting device!" Eleanor cries.

"Already got it. Took it out of her coat when we were dragging her in." Scarlett replies.

We all sigh in relief.

“LET. ME. OUT! You will pay for this!” she shouts angrily.

“No chance!” I respond, smirking.

Agnes

As we walk back out onto the Silk Road, and the business people hesitantly return to their stalls. We thrust our swords into our waistbands and return home with victory in our grasp.

The Silk Road Journey

Singapore International School, Lee, Alyssa – 11

The Note

Winter heavily cloaked the city, smothering the streets in an eerie silence of falling snow. Through a dimly glowing window of a hut, a young girl's fingers were nimbly dancing up and down a weaving loom, threading silk and churning out ribbons.

It was the weaver, Lili. She was startled by a silhouette moving past the window. The girl rubbed her eyes and tapped her head as she could not make out what it was, but a chill travelled through her spine. "Don't be silly. Who would come out in the freezing night?"

Suddenly, a sharp scratch scraped across the wooden door frame. Lili gasped and knocked her stool to the floor. Her heart thumped hard like it was about to burst from her ribs. She looked at the candle clock, its shadow stretching long, indicating it was midnight.

Lili stayed in the furthest corner of the hut away from the unseen threat. When the cockerel crowed at break of the first daylight, she opened her door slowly, inspecting. There, pinned on the door was a note with the words looking like they were written by someone in a hurry:

Visit HuangFang Silk Shop at noon tomorrow.

Underneath was a strange drawing—a circle with jagged lines, like an exploding sun. Lili's hands shook as she quickly tucked the note away.

The Gathering

The next morning, she ran to the silk shop. The eighteen strangers were waiting, their faces pale like ghosts themselves. One teenager about her age whispered, "Did you hear the scratching too?" Lili nodded, her heart racing.

The group found the shop vacant with a riddle on the counter.

*With a map of twenty, two are ghosts,
On the mountain they haunt the lost.
In the desert, they hide from sight,
At sea, they guide by ghostly light.
Tell me truly, if you are wise—
Will the Middle Kingdom fall or rise?*

The strangers put their notes on the counter and realised it was a map of roads twisted like snakes pointed towards Alexandria. Some said it was merely a trap, others said it was a mission. Lili stared at the paper and suddenly she saw it! Two empty spaces, like missing pieces. The ghosts.

"We have to find what is in these two empty spaces," she said, surprising even herself. Her voice was hoarse, but everyone heard her. "If we don't, China might be in trouble. The riddle says so."

The group of girls packed their bundles for the quest; clothes folded neatly beside bread and water. They bowed to their families in tearful farewells. The Emperor's eunuch awaited them at Changan city gate. His smiles were calm yet his eyes unreadable. Lili had a feeling that the one on the throne seemed to know more about this quest.

The Tianshan Trial

By the nightfall of the first moonless night, the girls reached Tianshan. Legends told of two beasts guarding the Silk Road, each mightier and invincible.

The first trial was triggered without any sign. A monstrous flaming bird burst from the trees. Its eyes were glowing yellow, wings swooping up grit and leaves. The girls dove under giant tree roots. They shivered as they noticed how the bird's claws were sharp enough to slice through tree bark like paper.

It attacked endlessly, screams echoed and blood splattered. Lili stifled her cries, remembering a trick taught by her Grandfather. She took out her catapult and aimed it at the bird's eye. The rock flew and hit its target but Lili collapsed when the bird's wing swept her off the ground.

When she woke beneath the stars, her friends were tending her wounds. The bird was gone, but its cry still haunted the forest. An older girl held up a note with the jagged sun symbol.

The Desert Mirage

The girls left the mountain shaken. The bird's cry was still ringing in their ears as they pressed on. Each step was heavy with dread. By the time a full moon hung in the starless night sky, the girls found themselves at the edge of Taklamakan desert, known as the Sea of Death.

Without warning, the sands of Taklamakan shifted and swallowed them whole. They were lost. They had no more water supply and their throats scraped like sandpaper. Only their spirits kept them moving.

As they were about to give up, a shimmering pool appeared. Was it a mirage or salvation? The girls rushed toward it, collapsing at its edge, scooping water into their mouths greedily. Relief washed over them until the water surface rippled. A massive hippopotamus rose from the pool, its dark beaded eyes gleaming as it charged.

The girls scattered, water splashing everywhere. Lili steadied her catapult and fired. The beast recoiled, sinking back into the pool. Bubbles rose, and a scroll floated to the surface.

"Look, Lili. There is a scroll floating where the beast escaped.

Lili hooked it with a stick. The scroll bore the same symbol again. Her face was grim. One final test awaited.

The Red Sea Opening

Then it dawned on Lili, the first riddle held the truth and the answer. The two empty spaces on the map were not roads but hidden passages. One pointed back to the mountains. The other stretched beyond the desert, leading to the sea.

At Lop Nur's shore, Lili explained what she had discovered. The notes were guides, the ghosts were clues. Their role was to clear the obstacles and follow the hidden current.

The girls got into a boat and manoeuvred toward the current marked by the symbols. The sea itself seemed to part, carrying them forward. The answer was clear. The Silk Road was no longer bound to land. It flowed across the waters, through the Red Sea, toward distant lands.

Lili whispered to her companions, tears shining in her eyes.

“The Middle Kingdom will rise.”

Her companions nodded. They were no longer just weavers. They were guardians of a new road, one carved by courage.

Traitors, Treasure and Trust

Singapore International School, Liew, Si En, Adele – 10

Wyatt glanced at Sven's sleeping form. The old man lay silently, one arm draped over the Great Spellbook. Wyatt waited, heart hammering, then carefully slid it free.

Sven stirred, muttering. Wyatt seized his chance and slipped out into the cold desert air.

A shout followed him. "Hey! Traitor!"

Wyatt leapt into the truck. "Sorry!" he called, locking the doors. "But I don't share—especially with old men!"

The engine roared to life. A bullet whistled past and scraped the side mirror. But Wyatt didn't worry—Sven's aim was terrible. Wyatt sped into the dawn, dust trailing behind him like smoke.

At last, the Spellbook was his. Months of backbreaking work had paid off. Once he reached Dunhuang, he'd sell it to the highest bidder. He'd be rich, famous—a legend. *I'm only valuable if I'm rich.* The words that Wyatt's father had once said to him echoed in his head.

But ten miles out, the truck coughed and rolled to a stop. Wyatt jumped out. A small hole pierced the fuel tank; gasoline pooled beneath it. Sven's bullet had found its mark after all.

He clutched the Spellbook tightly. The desert yawned around him—golden, endless. He could turn back, but pride kept him moving forward. The desert heat bore down on him mercilessly as Wyatt heard the winds whispering in his ears.

Hours later, his legs aching, he spotted a shadow rising in the distance. The closer he got, the clearer it became—caves carved into cliffs, adorned with faded carvings. *The Mogao Caves.* He'd heard tales of treasures hidden there centuries ago.

Wyatt ducked into one of the caverns, a wave of spiritual atmosphere surging over him. His flashlight swept across painted walls showing daily Silk Road life—and then he stopped.

Three ghostly figures hovered before him, faces pale as moonlight.

"Greetings, traveler," said the leader, smiling.

Wyatt steadied his voice. "I'm Wyatt, and I'm looking for treasure—possibly hidden in this very cave. Will you help me find it?"

The ghosts smirked. "We want half."

Wyatt nodded sharply. "Deal."

They floated into the passageways, their whispers echoing. But when they returned, the leader's face darkened. "The treasure is not here. And now, you must help us."

Wyatt snorted. "Help you? No thanks. I'm leaving."

"You cannot," the ghost said. "This cave is cursed. Those who enter remain trapped until they bring peace to the souls within."

Wyatt scoffed. "Liar." He grabbed the door handle and pulled. It didn't budge. "Open!" he shouted. Nothing happened. He stepped back, breathing hard.

“Fine,” he muttered. “Then begin—and keep it short.”

The first ghost drifted closer. “I was James, a porcelain trader. I stole gold, thinking it would make me happy. I died with regret.”

Wyatt hesitated. His own betrayal flashed through his mind—Sven’s bewildered face, the shot fired in anger. Shame prickled his chest. “Then make it right,” he said quietly. “Even in death, you can still ask forgiveness.”

“Oh! What’s that?” James glanced at the Spellbook with interest.

“It’s nothing. Just a book I like to bring around,” Wyatt fibbed.

James smiled. “Oh. Anyway, thank you.” His shimmering form dissolved into the air.

A little girl appeared next. “I’m Cora. I ran away from my parents while they were exchanging stories with the shopkeeper in Dunhuang. I died in a sandstorm and I hurt their feelings badly.”

Wyatt’s throat tightened. He thought of his parents—how he’d stormed out years ago, chasing fortunes and leaving them behind. “If your parents could see you now,” he said softly. “Would they want you to rest?” *What a monster I’ve become because of the treasure*, Wyatt thought.

Cora looked up at him. “You’re right. They would. Are you lost too?”

He faltered, looking away. “No. I came here for treasure.”

“Then I hope you find it,” she whispered, fading into the shadows.

Only one ghost remained—an old man. “I’m Oliver,” he said. “I helped steal the Great Spellbook of Dunhuang. But betrayal destroyed us all. Only that same book can free me.”

Wyatt froze, gripping the Spellbook tightly. *Betrayal destroyed us all. I betrayed Sven*. Thoughts echoed in his head. He glanced down at the Spellbook in his arms.

Oliver studied him. “Do you know, Wyatt? The real treasure isn’t gold or magic. It’s here.” He pressed a hand to his heart. “Friendship, kindness, forgiveness—that’s what we lose first and seek last.”

Friendship... The word echoed through Wyatt’s mind. He thought of the people he’d pushed away, the trust he’d broken, the joy he’d long forgotten. Maybe this was what all his journeys were truly about. He met the old man’s eyes and saw an echo of himself—lonely, driven by greed, and hollow inside.

Treasure or friendship. Money or forgiveness. Thoughts rang in his head. *Selfishness or kindness*.

He stepped forward. “Take it.”

Oliver’s eyes widened. “Thank you,” he whispered. “There’s a supply cache nearby, left by travelers long ago. Use it.”

As his hand closed over the book, his ghostly form turned to light. The walls trembled, dust falling. A deep rumble echoed, and the stone door creaked open.

Wyatt shielded his eyes from the burst of sunlight. He stepped outside, breathing in the dry air. The desert stretched before him, golden under the sun. Near the cave’s entrance, half-buried in sand, lay an old chest. Inside were tools, dried rations—and an emergency fuel tank. He grabbed it and shoved it in the truck.

As he stepped into the truck, he looked down at his empty hands and felt something strange—peace. For the first time, his heart didn’t ache for treasure or fame. He had found something far greater.

“I’m coming back, Sven,” Wyatt murmured. “We’ve got things to fix.”

As he headed towards the horizon, the wind carried a whisper behind him—a voice as soft as the desert air. “*Friendship is the greatest treasure of all.*”

Wyatt beamed, eyes shining. For the first time, he believed it.

A Silk Heist

Singapore International School, Lin, Alicia – 11

My whole body jolted as I stepped out of the wagon. After many tiring hours sitting on the wagon, I was finally here in China, more specifically, Chang'an! I drew a sharp breath as I surveyed my surroundings. Courtyards stood shoulder to shoulder, while three three-story buildings rose above them, claiming the sky. The road was bustling with people, and horse-drawn chariots roamed along the streets.

"Remember what we're here for," my cousin Alexandra murmured. We need to make Rome proud, our people proud. "Come on, we've got work to do." She darted toward the trading centre, and I followed close behind.

"A diamond from Rome, 20 carats," Alexandra said, holding out a large gem in her palm, presenting it to the Chinese merchant. He picked up the gem under the sun to examine it, and he grunted in approval.

"What do you want?" the merchant grunted.

Alexandra smirked, "I want to know how silk is made." Colour drained from the merchant's face.

"I'm afraid I can't disclose that information." He looked away, placing the diamond back in Alexandra's hand. I pursed my lips. Alexandra dug out another diamond from the pouch along with a bar of gold. The merchant shook his head, "I suggest you leave, young lady." Alexandra kept going, another gem, another bar of gold.

"This," I pointed towards the gems and gold, "can feed your family for more than a year," I said. The merchant inhaled deeply, and his brows furrowed.

"Silkworms." He blurted, voice barely audible. Then immediately clasped his hands on his mouth and shook his head. He gestured for us to leave, shooing us away.

We searched every public market until the streets began to blur together. Exhausted, we headed back to our wagon. We were only a few steps away when I suddenly heard locals passing by mention silkworms. My ears perked up. Silkworms? What about silkworms? I came to an abrupt halt and veered the other way. Silkworm eggs... found in mulberry trees!

I hurried back to Alexandra, who was leaning against the wagon, her foot tapping impatiently against the ground. "Where did you go?" She demanded.

"I overheard something. Silkworms are found in mulberry trees!"

Her eyes lit up. "Didn't we pass some at the city gates?"

"Yes... But they're guarded."

"Then we have to be quick."

The wagon came to a stop as we reached the gate of Chang'an. We parked the wagon by the side of the road. Alexandra pointed at a tree, the leaves just tall enough for me to reach, tucked away in a shadow, "That's a mulberry tree," She urged, "now!" I hopped off the wagon. I looked towards the guards, who were examining another merchant. I bolted towards the tree. Bent down. Rumbled through the leaves. There! There lay multiple small white dots. My gut told me it was a silkworm egg, and I trusted my gut. I quickly scooped up the white dots and sprinted back to the wagon.

"Alright, alright." I slipped the sticky, hard shell into the small golden pouch. The handwoven dragons on the pouch glistened under the sun. I just have to go beyond Chang'an, past the Great Wall of China, and then to Khotan. If I can make it, then I can finally reveal the secret behind the making of silk!

"You there! Halt in the name of the Emperor!" The command sliced through the air. A guard, armoured in lamellar, advanced toward us. One of his hands was gripped on the hilt of his dao, the other was pointed directly at me. Sunlight glared off the metal, and each step echoed with a threatening clash.

"Good sir, is there a problem?" Alexandra cut in, her tone forcibly calm. The guard's attention flickered to her, and I quickly slipped the pouch back into my robes.

"Both of you," the guard said, his voice low. "Out of the wagon. Now."

My whole body felt numb as I stepped out. My breathing rapidly increased, and thoughts were racing through my mind. Was this the end of my journey already? I felt a shiver of coldness run up my spine.

"We're going to have to check your wagon, ma'am, to make sure no *illegal items* are being smuggled out."

"Arms up," another guard instructed. Alexandra obediently raised her arms. I hesitated, but Alexandra shot me a look, and I reluctantly raised my arms. The female guard patted us down. I was sweating bullets. The guard reached into my pocket. I closed my eyes, accepting my fate.

"I'm going to have to take whatever's in your pocket." The guard said to me, I pulled out the pouch slowly, my hand gripping tightly onto it. The guard snatched the pouch out of my hands forcefully. She opened the pouch, narrowing her eyes, and peered into the pouch. She gasped loudly. She gestured for one of the guards to come over and showed him what was inside.

"What is the meaning of this?" The guard asked, holding the pouch like evidence left at a crime scene. "Speak!" He boomed, the words felt like daggers on my skin. "Do you know what's inside?"

I stuttered, "N-no."

"Salus, don't lie to the guard," Alexandra suddenly hissed to me, keeping her voice low but loud enough for the guard to hear. I turned to her, stunned. "I clearly saw you put some white-looking pills into that pouch!" My mouth dropped open. Was I hearing this correctly? Was my own blood-related cousin snitching on me? I stared at her, eyes wide, searching for some trace of the person I thought I knew.

"What are you talking about?" I asked, confused, what was happening right now?

"You're gonna have to come with me." The guard ordered, and the metal shackles felt cold around my skin.

"Goodbye, Salus." Alexandra's voice softened, almost tender, and that was what hurt the most.

"Traitor!" I yelled, trashing, resisting as the guard dragged me away.

Alexandra smirked and waved to me. "Traitor!"

Little Fox and the Foxhead Nephrite

Singapore International School, Liu, Yanxi – 10

"Everyone, be quiet!" As the children came into the enormous Jade Hall, Mr. Hoppy yelled, "Hands to yourselves and no running." The glossy marble floor was covered in green patterns as sunlight streamed through the towering windows. As the students gathered around the primary display, the class fell silent. A massive sculpture of a fox's head made of deep black-and-green jade stood there in gentle lighting, larger than any of them. Some ancient, knowing secret seemed to glow in its velvety eyes.

"Today," Mr. Hoppy said softly, "we're talking about one of the rarest treasures on earth: Foxhead Nephrite. This is the biggest piece ever found. But its story starts over a thousand years ago, along the ancient Silk Road..."

Outside Samarkand, with its blue-tiled domes and noisy markets, a boy named Arslan lived with his dad in a simple mud-brick house on a windy hill. Every afternoon, Arslan hunted along the river for pretty stones to sell. One day, he picked up something amazing: a fist-sized chunk of dark green jade shot through with black veins. When he held it up to the light, it almost seemed to sparkle inside.

He raced home, clutching the stone in one hand and munching a sticky honey cupcake with the other. His father, Siam—a kind-eyed merchant—met him at the door. "Any treasures today, Little Fox?" he teased, using Arslan's nickname for his quick mind and faster feet. Arslan squeezed the jade tighter. "Just rocks," he mumbled, looking away. Siam just smiled. "Keep your secrets, son. Dinner's almost ready."

That night, Arslan hid the jade under his pillow in his little bedroom nook, cozy with old rugs on the walls. He didn't sleep well. The next morning was a nightmare. His dad lay on his mat, shaking, looking suddenly ancient—hair snow-white, skin papery, like he'd aged a hundred years overnight. "Father!" Arslan yelled. Siam's weak eyes found him, his lips moving in a faint whisper Arslan couldn't hear. Then he was gone. By evening, Arslan was alone.

The house felt empty and cold without Siam's stories and laughter. Neighbors buried him under a young apricot tree on the hill, said a few kind words, and left the boy to himself. That first lonely night, moonlight slipped through the window. Curled up crying, Arslan reached under his pillow for the jade—his one comfort. It wasn't there.

He tore the place apart—bedding, floor, every corner. Nothing. The beautiful stone had vanished. Grief mixed with guilt. Had he dreamed it? Had his dad found it in the night? Or had the weird jade somehow stolen his father's life and disappeared? With no answers and nowhere to stay, Arslan joined the next caravan heading east, working as a scout and helping serve drinks.

The Silk Road stretched on—dusty, dangerous, endless. They passed through Bukhara's bright domes and the tight Iron Gate pass. One morning, scouting ahead, Arslan found a dead Chinese envoy in fancy yellow silk, eyes burned out, a jade tablet with a dragon seal around his neck. That night, the caravan master showed the real cargo: wrapped in black silk was a carved fox head, the exact size and colors as Arslan's lost stone, with the same inner glow.

Firelight flickered over it. Arslan's breath caught—it was his jade, now shaped into this sly fox face, strange symbols carved around the base that hurt to look at. "It's older than empires," the master whispered. "The Foxhead Nephrite. Look too long into its eyes, and you might see through time. The emperor wants it badly." Arslan said nothing, too shocked. His treasure was back—maybe through his dad's secret trades, or just fate.

Two days later, raiders hit. Thirty horsemen in wolf masks charged in, led by the fierce, scarred Daughter of the Wind. She wanted the jade. When they refused, fires started and arrows flew. In the mess, the dying master shoved the wrapped fox head into Arslan's arms. "Run, Little Fox," he gasped. "You're smart enough to escape anything. Take it east—it picked you."

Arslan bolted on a limping camel into the Registan desert, the one that swallowed whole armies. The raiders chased for days. Seven scorching days and icy nights across the dunes. When water ran out, he drank camel blood to survive. On the fourth night, half-dead, the jade seemed to whisper in a rough, grinding voice: "Carry me east, little thief, or I'll open my eyes and eat time itself."

Ninety more grueling days east—past the Jade Gate, through the Hexi Corridor, lonely watchtowers—until he reached the misty walls of Chang'an. Using the dead envoy's seal, guards took him to the grand Daming Palace. The young emperor sat quietly among his court. Arslan laid the jade at his feet.

The emperor came down, examined it, then looked straight at Arslan. "You gazed into it." "Yes, Majesty. In the desert, when I was dying, I looked deep." "What did you see?" "Everything," Arslan said. "Cities rising and crumbling. The Daughter of the Wind growing old peacefully. Myself, ancient under that apricot tree, telling this tale to kids who don't believe it. But none of it matters—the road goes on forever."

The emperor set the jade down carefully. "You're free. Ask for any reward." Arslan wanted only a camel, water, and to leave by the western gate at dawn. Free, but tied forever to the endless Silk Road.

Back in the Jade Hall, the kids stared wide-eyed at the huge fox head. One girl raised her hand. "Mr. Hoppy... was it real?" He smiled, glancing at the shining jade. "Who knows? Every legend has a bit of truth—and one clever little fox who learned that some treasures pick their own keepers... and always find their way home."

The Princess Who Wove the Road

Singapore International School, Lye, Yutong – 11

The wedding procession was grand: fifty horse carriages and two hundred soldiers. But the journey was long and grueling: one year from the Tang capital of Chang'an, through the wind-scoured Hexi Corridor, past the oasis of Dunhuang, to the far west of the Silk Road.

"Do the mountains ever end, Captain Yang?" Princess Nanping asked the stern-faced soldier riding alongside her window.

He glanced at her, surprised that she had spoken. "They end, Princess. We will reach Dunhuang soon, then comes the desert, then..." he paused for a moment, "then Khotan." He did not want to remind Nanping of the name of her future kingdom.

She nodded as her fingers moved to the elaborate headdress weighing her hair down. Hidden within, were the forbidden treasures: silkworm eggs and mulberry seeds—her secret to bring freedom to Khotan. But she knew her father would never let her do this, for it could endanger Tang's monopoly on silk.

Her father. The Emperor.

She looked out the window and sighed, as her mind slowly drifted elsewhere...

"I know you feel trapped, going from one cage to another," her mother's calm voice echoed through her mind, "But, Ping, you can break free, just like silkworms do."

Glistening tears trickled down her cheeks, but she wiped them off, determined to walk her own path.

Weeks became months and the greens disappeared into vast, empty deserts. One night, camped in the darkness and silence, Captain Yang approached her by the fire. "You have been quiet, Princess. Most in your position would cry."

Nanping poked the fire with a stick, sending sparks spiraling like escaping stars into the dark night sky. "Does the road cry, Captain, because it leaves the mountain behind? Or does it rejoice to meet the desert?"

The captain was not used to such questions, "A road does not feel."

"Maybe not, but those who travel the road must," she looked at him earnestly. "Tell me about the Khotan people, what do they hope for?"

He replied, "Water, because their river fails and their crops wither. They hope our alliance brings food. They hope for rain."

"I can't give them rain," Nanping paused, then beamed. "But look, silk, isn't this the colour of water?" She pointed to the deep blue silk of her sleeve.

The captain was confused, "Silk is luxury. It won't feed its people."

"Not yet," she smiled knowingly. "But it all starts with a single thread, a single seed."

After an exhausting five months, the procession passed the Jade Gate, the last Chinese outpost before reaching Taklamakan, which meant "the desert of no return."

Facing a severe storm, the carriage shook and sand seeped in. Princess Nanping jolted, and her headdress fell to her legs. Her heart raced as she quickly scanned her surroundings to make sure no one saw what was hidden. Just

before she was about to put it back on, she noticed a small scroll tucked inside. With trembling hands, she unrolled it carefully as it read, “Break the cocoon to become silk”, signed off with the Emperor’s seal.

Nanping’s breath caught. The Emperor knew. His message wasn’t an accusation, it was a blessing for her to share the secret of silk with her future kingdom. A slight smile appeared on her face, relieved and touched by her father’s hopes for her.

One scorching midday, the princess’s carriage suddenly stopped. A wheel had broken. Everyone panicked, except Nanping who remained calm. As men laboured under the sun, a Khotanese boy ran to the carriage curiously.

The princess bent down from the window and handed a piece of rice cake to the boy, beautifully wrapped in silk. He finished the cake quickly. As the silk wrap touched his cheeks, it felt smooth and made him chuckle.

“What is it?” the boy asked.

“It is a promise,” Nanping said softly. “Tell your people the princess brings not just herself, but a future that can be woven.”

Khotan was a kingdom of dust, sun-baked clay walls and half-full rivers. Its subjects lined the streets, welcoming Nanping, now their Queen.

The welcoming feast was meagre by Tang standards. Nanping’s new husband, King Vijaya, cleared his throat, “We warmly welcome Queen Nanping from the mighty Tang, a new beginning for Khotan.”

Nanping rose and the entire court immediately fell silent. “Your Highness, and People of Khotan, I have travelled the Silk Road not just as a bride, but as a bearer of gifts.”

“But my most precious gift is not gold or jewels.” She reached up calmly and removed her heavy headdress, amidst the gasps and muttering. From its hidden compartment, she took out a tiny pouch.

“This,” she said, holding the tiny, pearl-like eggs, and shaking a few dark seeds onto her palm, “is the secret of silk.”

The king was bewildered, “Silk? We need grains, not finery.”

“You need a root that does not fear dry soil,” Nanping’s voice strengthened. “The mulberry tree is hardy. Its leaves feed the silkworm. The worm in turn spins a cocoon—a cage that it makes so it can transform. From the cocoon, we draw strong threads more beautiful than jewels. And silk trades for grains, all that we need.”

“I was given away in a cage,” she continued aloud. “But I shall bring you freedom.” Her words were powerful and strong, like the tall, steady mountains in Tang.

Months passed after the seeds were planted. The first mulberry grove took root near the canals. Under Nanping’s guidance, Khotanese women learned to tend the delicate silkworms. The day the first thread was reeled, a crowd gathered. Nanping demonstrated how it was done, her fingers manoeuvred through the warm water, finding the thread’s end.

Queen Nanping had travelled the Silk Road, but her journey did not just end, for the Silk Road carried more than just goods—it carried ideas, courage, and the quiet power of a princess who understood that real freedom is not given but woven.

The Silk Road

Singapore International School, Oon, Yu Mo Emma – 11

Remember, Tao, there is always a dark side to the moon, as there is to a person. Don't try to reason with soldiers. Tao took that advice to heart, but even then, he still relied on his father to find hiding places and keep them out of sight of soldiers. Tao knew he had to learn, sooner or later, but he wanted to keep his weak hold on the elusive sense of safety. And life was peaceful for a while, but naturally, fate decided to turn Tao's life upside down.

"Well, well, well, look what we found here, a pair of *silk smugglers*. And we all know the punishment for smuggling silk, right, Fong?" Tao leaped back, but the other soldier, Fong, grabbed him by the collar of his tunic. The first soldier had already bound his father's wrists.

"Open the basket! See if they are silk smugglers like I thought they would be!" The first soldier snapped. Fong grabbed the basket and upturned it, spilling out all the silk inside. Tao's heart dropped to the bottom of his stomach. Things were not looking good for him.

"Take them both back to the Imperial Palace for their execution, Fong! I will check for more smuggler scum who may be hiding nearby!" The soldier was practically spitting in excitement. Yet, to Tao's disbelief, Fong *dropped* him and grabbed his father instead!

"What are you doing, Fong? Take him!" The soldier snarled, teeth bared, spit flying out from his mouth.

"The boy is too young. Take the adult. He will die out there alone anyways. Now you. Run." Fong grunted, aiming the last sentence at Tao. He tossed him backwards. Tao scrambled to his feet, meeting his father's eyes. His father gave an almost imperceptible shake of his head, and he knew that there was no hope left for him. The look in his eyes was clear. *Go. Run.* Tao didn't need to be told twice. He ran. He ran and ran and ran until his legs wouldn't function anymore. He collapsed and crawled under a dense bush, falling into a deep slumber filled with blood, soldiers wielding swords slick with blood, and, worst of all, his father, dying in about a hundred different ways.

When Tao woke up, he ignored the pangs of hunger wracking his body. *I don't deserve to live.* Tao thought of his father, who was dead by now, and how he had run away like a coward instead of staying to fight. He should have disobeyed his father's orders. True, that was disrespectful, but at least there was a chance his father would still be alive. Tao crawled deeper into the bush and lay there for days, wasting away. Even when he barely had enough energy left to sit up, he still did not move. *I'm going to die soon. Then I will see Father in Heaven.* This thought comforted him, and Tao drifted off to sleep, dreaming of the moment father and son could reunite again.

"Hey, wake up." Somebody shook Tao, and he jolted upright. *Soldiers!* But then his eyes cleared, and instead of a soldier, a boy close to his age stood over him, next to a man whose sack was stuffed with an assortment of colourful silk. *Silk smugglers. I can trust them.* So, Tao grasped the boy's hand and stood shakily, pausing only to look at the bush. It had sheltered him during his delirious grief. Now that he was leaving, Tao wondered what other things he had taken for granted before.

Even though the boy who rescued him, Ping, and his father gave him a far better life than Tao's father could ever have given him, he could never be truly happy with them. He tried to forget, tried to forgive, and to live his life in the present and stop remembering the one thing that pained him the most. And he almost succeeded, feeling a sense of security, he hadn't felt since his early childhood. But it seemed as if his past had a way of catching up with him.

"Silk smugglers? When was the last time we found a batch, two years ago?" A voice straight out of Tao's nightmares barked. He jumped up, clenching his fists to restrain the beast tearing through his body, threatening to break loose and unleash havoc at the slightest trigger. Tao's body shook, the edges of his vision darkening, and he reined back the creature that was thrashing, struggling, and burning in his gut. He clenched his fists tighter and gritted his teeth, ignoring a voice whispering in his head, *you can take them. There are three of you and two of them.* Tao shook his head. The odds were far worse than the propaganda the voice was feeding him. The soldiers were older than him and Ping, with more combat experience. So, he could only stand there as Ping yelped and scrambled to his feet, trembling nonstop. Then the soldier, Fong, who had Ping's father in a vice-like grip, said the same thing that he did ages ago,

"The kids are too young. Take the father." Fong nodded towards Tao and Ping, and Tao swore he saw recognition flare in Fong's eyes. Then it was gone, and Tao grabbed Ping's wrist despite his screams of protest, forcing him to flee with him.

"What do we do now?" Ping whispered once they were far away, his eyes wide, hands clammy, face whiter than snow. Even before Ping asked, Tao knew the answer. It was the only way for them to survive.

"We head to the beginning of the Silk Road, where the soldiers have no authority." *And...maybe we could make a new life there.*

The New Tales of the Silk Road

Singapore International School, Qiu, Lezhao, Peter – 10

“Newest horse gear, now 50 percent off!” A man advertised as a teenager passed by. It was a Sunday morning in Jesiva, the most popular street in Rome, Italy.

The teenager looked very noble, a dark purple toga and golden jewellery made him stand out from the crowd. Two fierce-looking guards followed him and the crowd bowed as he passed by. This teenager’s name was Alexander, the youngest son of King George. King George had 6 sons, he believed the older the son is, the more reliable he is. Alexander doesn’t really get any attention from his father, so all he does every day is horse riding and watching colosseums.

As he walked towards the stable, a man caught his attention. The man wore cloth made out of bright red silk. A lot of people surrounded him, looking curiously inside his carriage.

Alexander walked towards the man, “Are you from China?”

“I am a trader from Dun Huang, China. Would you like to have a look at these goods from China?” The man replied.

A special scent Alexander had never smelled before surrounded him like a huge wave. It made him calm and peaceful. The smell came from a bunch of “green-colored leaves”.

The trader told Alexander he was called Zhang, the great leaves were called tea, which you can put in water and drink. Other goods also caught his eyes. There was red silk, porcelain and spices. Alexander was amazed by these goods; the curiosity in his body made him want to know more about this mysterious country, China.

“You seem very interested in my country, do you want to come with me? I will be going back to China soon.” Zhang pointed out.

Alexander immediately agreed. He went back to his house and got ready, and was very excited. The next day, Alexander and Zhang met outside the city. Alexander had a cart full of food and supplies, carried by horses.

“Oh no no no, we will be using camels, they are more helpful in the desert,” Zhang explained.

The two travelers embarked on their journey. They crossed deserts, climbed mountains, and drove boats. After 3 months of long trek, they finally reached their destination, the city of Dun Huang.

As he entered the city, the vibrant colours and lively atmosphere astonished him. From Chinese people wearing silk dresses all the way to Arabs wearing keffiyehs on their heads, so many people were present in this fabulous city. The streets were full of people peddling their goods, grapes, wine, horses, everything Alexander could imagine.

Zhang brought him to the city’s most famous attraction. It was a cliff in the middle of the desert, lots of caves were dug into the cliff. Inside each cave, stood beautiful paintings and huge statues of Budas . They talked

about the tales of Sukyamuni Buddha, how a deer became immortal, or 3 rabbits sharing 3 ears..... Alexander learnt about Buddhism, he thought it was very astonishing and spent half a day viewing the caves.

Then, they went to the stalls. Alexander saw a weird-looking item, it looked like a stand with two spoons on it. Zhang told him it was called a balance, you put two items on it and it will lean towards the heavier object. Another thing that made him curious was a stall with a man pouring powders into a cup. He learnt that it was a formula passed down through generations, it was a medicine that can cure people with flu. Alexander learnt so much in the city of Dun Huang, he understood that he was a frog at the bottom of the well. He decided to bring the goods back to Rome, so that he could make the people's lives easier.

After the fun trip in Dun Huang, Alexander knew it was time to go back to Italy. He said goodbye to Zhang and left with new goods and new technology.

After a long three-month journey home, Alexander finally returned to Rome with his luggage full of treasures. His trip to Dun Huang was an unforgettable experience. He decided to send caravans frequently between Italy and China, not only to trade goods but also to exchange different religions and cultures. The unique porcelain, tea, and technology brought from China greatly improved the living standards of the Romans, and Alexander's abilities were fully recognised by the king. Years later, Alexander became the new king, and more importantly, he led his people to greater wealth and civilisation.

The Journey in Ladakh Silk Route

Singapore International School, Rabiller, Charlotte – 11

I trudged along the rocky path of the Ladakh Silk Route, hoping that I would soon reach the town of Leh, which had all the best attractions, palaces, temples, famous buildings... I had left university in Texas just one day ago to come on this trip, excited to take a break from my tedious studies.

The route looked endless and vast, like it was waiting for me to step into the unknown. The expansive, charcoal-heavy cloud surged forward like a rising tide ruthlessly swallowing the last remnants of the afternoon sun. Where moments before the landscape had been washed in a warm glow, a sudden, suffocating gloom now descended. The sky transitioned from a vibrant blue to a bruised, oppressive slate, as the thick clouds strangled the light until the sun was reduced to nothing but a pale, smudge behind a veil of mist. The wind blew in my face, my long hair flying everywhere. The breezy wind felt refreshing against my skin.

Three kilometers away from Leh town, my feet started begging me to stop. Every step of this long route was agonising for my feet. I was not enjoying this, but I knew that in the end, when I reached Leh, it would definitely be worth it. Halfway through, As the heavy weight of clouds finally fractured, a single, piercing lance of gold tore through the gloomy clouds, signaling the sun's return. I could also hear the town. The streets were clogged with conversation, making the walk from the bakery to the fountain a series of friendly interruptions. The town was in sight now, I saw the mosques, shops, little houses. Everything looked so lively, and people were bustling around, making the atmosphere very inviting.

I picked up my pace and walked into the town, my eyes darting around, looking in awe at everything and everyone. The town was alluring and steeped in culture, I wanted to go everywhere! As I was walking through the town centre, I saw little kids running around, people carrying food, fresh clothes, coming out from the stores. I started by going to the open-air markets to get some fresh fruit for my journey to the mountain. After that, I went to the local bakery to get an egg and tomato sandwich, which I was craving for. The flavors danced on my tongue as I ate. I went to the Leh Main Bazaar, also known as the Tibetan Market. They sold pashmina scarves, handicrafts, trekking gear, dried fruit, and local food like butter tea and momos. I walked past the shops, admiring all their clothing and little trinkets, most of them imported from other countries by using the famous Silk Road for easy transport. I looked down at my own clothes. The tattered clothes hung in stiff strips from a frame that was too large for them, a tapestry of jagged rips and unraveling seams encrusted with layers of dried dirt and unknown stains that gave off a repulsive scent. I patted my pockets, rummaging through them, searching for coins. My face instantly dropped when there wasn't any money on me. The shopkeeper seemed to notice and got a fresh pair of clothes for me, and pushed them into my hands, gesturing for me to take it. "Free." He said, with a warm smile on his face.

I nodded gratefully, with a big grin on my face and got changed. My next location: Shanti Stupa. I took a ten-minute cab drive to it and when I finally arrived. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. It was a white-domed Buddhist stupa on a hilltop. It looked majestic. The Shanti Stupa dome rises from the jagged ridge like a colossal, polished pearl set against the Himalayan sky. Its immense white hemisphere, pristine and blindingly bright under the mountain sun, serves as a silent sanctuary of symmetry and grace. Up close, the marble surface feels cool and eternal, a stark, tranquil contrast to the wind-swept wilderness that stretches out in every direction. After the temple, there was still one last location in my itinerary: Leh Palace.

But out of the corner of my eye, I saw something beige, and big. A camel. Free rental camels. I speed walked to the camels and climbed onto the step stool and sat myself down in the seat. I felt so tall, towering over everyone else walking past. I stroked its neck, its hair feeling like silk on my fingers. I could feel my heart pumping with excitement. I was riding a camel, and I was headed to one of the most popular and iconic places in Leh town. This palace was well known for its grandeur and mystic beauty. When the palace came into sight, I stopped the

camel and jumped off, patted the camel one last time and set off for my adventure in the Leh Palace. In every step I took, my excitement was growing larger and larger. I came to a halt and my jaw dropped open in astonishment. Leh Palace. This? This was unreal. Even in its ruined state, the structure possesses a haunting, vertical majesty, nine stories of sun-baked walls and hollowed-out window frames. As I navigate the dim, cavernous corridors that smell of cold dust. The windy terrace offers a dizzying, breathtaking view of the valley below, a sight that should only be reserved for royalty. This makes it impossible to believe how life was back in the older days. The cold, thin walls are hiding secrets. Secrets that show how people lived before. The people that once slept, ate and worked in this terrifyingly beautiful grandeur.

The Silk Road consists of many different paths, one of them is the Ladakh Silk route, which can lead to other interesting locations, and provide you with some of the most exciting experiences ever.

Abdullah's Journey

Singapore International School, Rattanauryot, William – 10

"Guy said that we're lost," Omar translated with his usual emotionless voice.

Did the Sultan really have to send some nitwit who couldn't even read a compass and was only here because he committed a crime? As good a translator Omar was, his Mandarin was barely comparable to his Hindi, let alone his Arabic, so sending Chinese people was not ideal.

FIVE DAYS EARLIER...

"It is settled, then," Sultan Ahmad bellowed. Even a man of his tiny stature could frighten Omar and I, who were each several parmak (a unit used during this time, roughly 3cm each) taller than the Sultan. "Since we are short-staffed, you two will set off with Wang from Sichuan Province to deliver this crate of silk to Antonio from Venice, who will meet you at the gates of the city. You have five lunar months to deliver, and I expect to hear from you after Ramadan." And so, it was settled. After Wang arrived at the great Ottoman Empire, we would promptly set off at sunset.

BACK TO THE PRESENT...

Would we get to Venice on time? Not with Wang navigating the "waters", anyway. I huffed and snatched the compass and the map.

"Oh Allah, why are we heading towards Egypt?" I reprimanded Wang, steering our saddled mounts to the direction of Italy.

Day broke as we set up camp in the sweltering heat. We set up a tent with our materials from the caravan. While we were working to build a shelter for our horses and us before dawn, Wang was poking a stick at a SCORPION.

I resisted the urge to yell at him again and instead went inside my tent. Sometimes, you can't fix stupid.

Suddenly, I heard a loud yell in Mandarin along with my name in it. "Wang almost got stung by a scorpion" Omar said without trying to help at all. I guess I was the only competent one on the expedition.

The next day, we got up before the sun rose to begin riding away. Omar suddenly pondered in the middle of our ride, "I feel as if we have forgotten something." Suddenly, I realized the horse behind mine was unmounted. "CURSES!" I yelled at the sky. Hopefully the people from my mosque didn't see that.

We found Wang inside his tent, sleeping with a bunch of scorpions resting on his back. "Oh great, what do we do now?" the normally stoic Omar angrily exclaimed. "Sultan's gonna murder us if these bugs kill him!" He drank from the waterskin.

"AH!" Omar screamed like a child after a dark, soggy creature leapt out of the waterskin. I recoiled and saw the creature. A mouse! The scorpions pounced and grabbed the mouse, while Wang woke up. We could go now!

I prodded Wang with a stick, waking him up. After he squealed something in Mandarin, Omar translated, "What are you doing to me? Go away!" I tugged him onto the horse and began riding in the distance.

Days upon weeks passed as we finally reached Constantinople. "He said: 'Okay, now we need to reach Venice. I think it's one month away.'" Oh great. One month. That was exactly the time we had left, and any unexpected problems we WOULD run into were not accounted for.

“Hey!” another trader greeted. He held a crate of silver ingots, and a name tag on his breast pocket read “Matteo”.

“What’s your business here?” I asked. Although it seemed quite blunt, it was the only way to make conversation between traders.

“Oh, just coming to trade for spices for Venice,” Matteo explained. “You?”

“We have business involving Venice as well, to trade silk in particular,” Omar answered as he took the compass and map and began riding towards Italy.

We rode off into the distance, as days became weeks. After around three to four weeks, we reached Italy.

“So, this is it?” Omar translated seconds after Wang said something. “It looks very different compared to the splendid, magnificent and stunning place I imagined.”

For once, Wang was right. As a trader, I had never seen a place in Italy looking like this before.

“Hey, what part of Italy is this place?” I asked a nearby red-headed man with curly hair and a tall stance. Never did we expect the answer he gave us.

“Uhm...sir...you’re in Croatia.”

OH SHOOT!

We set off for Venice at dawn. After reaching Italy, Wang began looking around like a child in a toy store. I snapped my fingers. “STAY FOCUSED!” I yelled at Wang. “We need to ask for directions to Venice!”

Omar began asking nearby passersby to take us to Venice. “Hey! Do you know how to get to Venice?” he asked a nearby trader. “That way,” he hastily pointed towards the direction of a cathedral.

We walked past the cathedral and began to make our way to Venice.

Day, night, week and fortnight didn’t pass, didn’t fly, more like a caravan screeching down a hill after the horses broke free of the ropes. Despite being in a fairly rich city, we were pickpocketed, mugged, and almost beaten up once. After reaching Venice, a man named Antonio reached out and shook hands.

“I see you’ve delivered the goods?” Antonio muttered with a smile that didn’t even reach his vocal cords, let alone his eyes. He picked up the crate of velvety string. “This will do nicely for my new cotte (tunic).” He then began twirling the silk threads in his fingers, gazing at them.

Omar quickly coughed. “Sir, we’d like the money you’ve promised us.”

“Of course!” Antonio handed us a pouch of money.

We set off on horseback. “Hey, Omar! Why are you still carrying the empty crate on your horse?”

Omar suddenly pulled out a pouch of silkworm eggs from the crate. “Who says only the Chinese can farm silk?”

A grin crept across my face. “Omar, you villain! We’ll be rich!”

That was the day Omar Silk & Co. was started.

Retracing the Silk Road

Singapore International School, Seet, Seng Hong, Hillary – 11

Timmy woke up with a start. His friend, Jayden, was nowhere to be seen. With a yawn, he pushed his way out of the tent. Jayden was sitting on a flat rock outside, staring into space. Not that there was much to stare at, anyway. The arid landscape stretched out ahead, bronze sand blown into dunes, punctuated by the occasional cluster of rocks, dead bush, or empty streambed.

For days, they had gotten seemingly nowhere in this giant sandbox, climbing dunes, only to see another one ahead, trekking for hours under the blazing sun, and shivering in the subzero temperatures at night. For what? Just to follow an old, outdated path across China's Gobi Desert called the Silk Road, he thought bitterly.

They packed the tent and were yet again ready to head northwest through Xinjiang across the barren wasteland, as they had been doing for the past few days, starting from Xi'an to Dunhuang. But today was different. There was a billowing tawny cloud on the horizon, Timmy noticed, but quickly dismissed the thought.

As they trekked, the sky grew noticeably darker, and the temperature dropped so it was not sweltering yet cold enough to send a shiver down Timmy's spine. Something was definitely wrong. Thunder rumbled.

Wait, thunder? "Jayden! Something's wrong here!" Timmy told him.

"You think I never knew?" Jayden asked, not looking back. The brown cloud was gaining on them fast.

"Well, you were walking straight ahead like it was a perfectly normal day," Timmy tried to reason with him.

"Whatever! Now we have to find shelter! But whatever happens, I'll meet you at Dunhuang!" Jayden shouted. The clouds were bearing down on them.

There was a small outcrop with its back to the approaching cloud just a few hundred metres away. Timmy dashed for cover, Jayden hot on his heels.

150 metres. The clouds weren't far behind. 100 metres. The clouds were closing in. That was when Timmy realised that they weren't clouds, but a massive wall of sand and dust. Headed straight at them. 50 metres. Almost there. The wall of sand loomed over them, colossal and ominous. They weren't going to make it.

Timmy squeezed his eyes shut and took a deep breath. Then he felt the wall upon him, tiny grains of sand relentlessly battering him, invisible tormentors taking a bite of him, then vanishing. He opened his eyes to a world tinted red, eerily mesmerising yet terrifying. Pulling his shirt over his nose and breathing normally, he realised with a cold shiver that he had lost sight of Jayden. Jayden, who knew the way. Jayden, who had been carrying the tent. Jayden, who had all the knowledge. Without him, Timmy was almost as good as dead.

Tearing his mind from his thoughts, Timmy focused on the present. Around him, the storm raged, minuscule particles stinging every bit of exposed skin. Timmy flung himself to the ground, turning away from the direction the storm was coming from and hoping the storm would end soon.

After what seemed like hours, the roar of the wind subsided, and Timmy picked himself up and looked around. The same bleak landscape stretched ahead, but coated with a fresh layer of sand. Jayden was gone. Opening his

pack, Timmy counted his supplies. A compass. Three large bottles of water. A length of rope. A box of matches. A sleeping bag and basic food.

With only that, he wouldn't be able to live long. "I'll meet you at Dunhuang!" Jayden's parting words rang in his head. He had to find the way to Dunhuang. Then it clicked. The compass! Dunhuang was northwest! All he had to do was go northwest! Timmy carefully aligned the compass and set off in the northwest direction. Easy enough, he thought, but little did he know that things were about to get tough.

For the next few days, of which he had lost count, Timmy would plunk down his sleeping bag in a sheltered area and sleep. Then in the morning, he would align the compass and set off, eating and drinking as little as possible. Things got worse slowly. First, his supply of matches started dwindling. Next was his food and water. The sun was setting, and he stopped by a prickly pear plant.

That night, his food and water ran out entirely. Desperate for food, he plucked a fruit from the prickly pear plant and demolished it. It was delicious: mildly sweet and juicy. After one or two more, he remembered that moderation was the key, and he lay down to rest.

Timmy woke to bright sunshine. Sand all around. He was on top of a dune, the landscape stretching out around him. Then the thirst hit him like a brick to the face. After wolfing down another two fruits, he scanned the desert for water.

Miraculously, there was an oasis! A crescent-shaped lake! And were those... buildings? Timmy rushed towards them, momentarily forgetting the thirst, half-sliding, slithering down the dune, to the water, to the oasis and desert city.

He ran headlong into the oasis, gulping down water. Only was his thirst quenched, then it dawned on him. Slowly but surely. A city? In the middle of a desert? Could it be Dunhuang? He waded out of the water, rushing towards the buildings.

Jayden had taught him if a city was Dunhuang. By the crescent-shaped lake? Right! From the crescent-shaped lake! This was Dunhuang! Now all he had to do was find Jayden. Easy.

Walking around the city, he spotted a familiar face. Jayden! He had kept his promise! "Jayden! I lost sight of you in the sandstorm," Timmy apologised. "But I didn't forget what you'd said," he added proudly.

"No problem," Jayden replied happily, grinning from ear to ear. "I think we arrived early so that we can relax here before our flight," he finished.

After a few days of entertainment, they got on their designated plane and flew home with a story to tell.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Singapore International School, Sun, Chuqing, Naya – 11

It was a sunny morning, and John woke up to the sound of chirping birds. He looked around the small inn and thought, another beautiful day! I wonder who I will meet, and what wonderful items I will get to see today!

John was a merchant, a merchant who traded soft silk, beautiful glassware, and many other valuable goods along the marvellous Silk Road to other countries.

The Silk Road wasn't exactly a single road. It was a vast network of roads that connected the East and the West. An explorer named Zhang Qian created it when he was sent on a mission to find allies. Instead of finding allies, he ended up opening a series of trade routes which ended up being known as the Silk Road, since Chinese silk was some of the most common items traded.

John traveled in a small group he had met at an inn at Dunhuang. Their group was led by a tall, burly man called Eric. Eric was responsible for their safety, serving as the security person. Mark was the organization person, he kept things running smoothly, ensuring that nothing went wrong. Justin was in charge of translating, he made sure that everyone could understand what other people were saying. John was the route planner; he determined the direction of travel, ensuring that nobody got lost. John's small group traded just as efficiently as any other trade groups because they all stuck to their roles. This was because when Justin insisted on doing John's role as he thought it was very easy, he got them lost. John then had to quickly find the correct path to the closest inn to make sure they wouldn't miss the inn's closing time.

'John, it's time to go!' Eric yelled from downstairs. John bounded down the stairs and dropped his payment for the one-night stay at the inn on the counter. Then, he sprinted across the room to meet up with his group. 'We are in Kashgar right now, and we have two choices: Balkh and Kokand. Where should we go next?' Eric asked, looking at the others.

'We should go to Balkh!' Mark yelled, excited.

'No, we should head to Kokand!' Justin roared.

'We should ask John, because he usually does this job,' Eric interjected sternly, raising his hand to stop Mark's annoyed protests and Justin's sulky whining. He then looked at John. 'What do you think, John?' John said thoughtfully, 'Well, I would suggest Kokand, since it is closer. We would be able to reach there quicker.'

And so, John and his groupmates were off to Kokand.

The gravel crunched under John's foot, and the sun beat down on his neck until it stuck to his skin. John looked down at his compass, which he recently traded at with a Chinese merchant in Aksu. Finally, it was time to rest for a bit. John had just sat down when a dark mass suddenly came 'flying' from above. Bandits were attacking them! John quickly leapt to his feet and drew his blade. He hurried over to Justin, who was struggling as he was dealing with three bandits.. A bandit saw him coming over and struck him with his knife. He tried dodging, but it was too late. He got stabbed at the side of his waist! John gasped, staring at the blood blooming across his waist. Noticing that the edges of his vision were becoming fuzzy, John flung it to Justin, who caught it and punched a bandit. So, he thought, this is definitely the end. Farewell, my groupmates. Farewell, dear Silk Road. Thank you for letting me travel this far and see so many interesting things. Then, everything went dark.

What was that? John blinked. He was sure he saw something. Was that light? He reached out, but found that he couldn't move. He was probably just imagining things. There it was again, another flash of light. John desperately tried to sit up, but it was useless. He felt searing pain at the side of his waist. John moaned and shut his eyes. This was torture! Then, he heard his name, over and over again. Was that real then? John slowly opened his eyes, and the first thing he saw was Mark. Mark's face was pale, and he was gripping John's arm tightly. The second he saw that John was awake, he yelled to Eric and Justin.

'Guys, John is awake!' Mark yelled. In an instant, Eric and Justin were both next to him. Their faces lit up when they saw that John was alright. Then, John asked, 'What happened?' Eric, Justin, and Mark exchanged nervous glances and told him what had happened. Apparently, after John had fallen unconscious, Eric, Mark, and Justin got rid of all the bandits and carried him to the closest inn they could find. Then, they found a doctor, who treated John. Even so, John might not be able to trade ever again as his injury might cause some serious infections. If his wound doesn't get infected, then he should be fine. John's face fell. His groupmates also told him that the doctor had said that the chances were not high that he would recover. After telling him that, his groupmates left his bedside to get some food, leaving John to wonder what would happen to him.

All the doctors in the inn had given up hope, but John wasn't ready to give up. Within days, his deep wound had closed into a jagged red scar. A week after that, he made a full recovery. The doctors checked John over again. He was fine, except that he would have a limp. His friends insisted that he should rest for a few more days when John suggested leaving immediately. As he fed the four new horses: Comet, Spirit, Wind, and Quest, he thought, I can't wait to go back on the Silk Road, and this time, whatever life holds for me, I will be ready for it.

Threads That Connect Us

Singapore International School, Tan, Sean – 10

“Xiaolian! Xiaolian!”

In a small mud-brick house nestled on the dusty eastern stretch of the ancient Silk Road, twelve-year-old Xiaolian spent her days at the old wooden loom that had belonged to her ancestors. The loom stood in the corner of a single room, its frame scarred by

generations of hands. Sunlight slipped through the narrow window, illuminating the tiny room.

Xiaolian’s grandmother rolled her wheelchair through the narrow hallway. Grandmother Li’s wrinkles never seemed to fade. Instead of her usual wrinkled face, her eyes sparkled with energy today. Xiaolian glanced up from her weaving, movement stalling in her hands.

“Yes, Nainai?” Xiaolian asked as she stopped weaving. Grandmother Li reached between her shawl and drew out a small, dark wooden box. The lid was carved with faded flowers, almost erased by time. She set the box on a table and took a seat next to her. “I have something special for you.”

Grandmother Li opened the box. Folded inside lay a silk scarf, its borders stitched with tiny symbols—circles enclosing crosses. Resting upon the scarf was a small rusty steel cross, its edges worn smooth from centuries of touch. Grandmother Li lifted the cross and placed it in Xiaolian’s palm. “Now, I must tell you a story.”

A story?

Xiaolian’s heart beat faster. She loved her grandmother’s intriguing stories. They were like threads connecting her to the past.

“This cross belonged to a brave traveller from long ago. It reminds us of him. Now, listen carefully.”

Rabban Bar Sauma was born in Khanbaliq to Nestorian Christian parents who had prayed for many years for a child. He grew into a gentle monk. At the age of 55, a restless longing pulled him westward. With his young disciple Markos, he set out on a pilgrimage toward Jerusalem.

They travelled the Silk Road for years. They walked across burning deserts where sand sang at night and through cities filled with unfamiliar people. At last, they reached Kashgar, a great oasis where every road seemed to come together.

“Now, your ancestor, Li Wei, was a street merchant who had migrated to Kashgar. He had set up a tiny stall in Kashgar, aiming to help Silk Road travellers.” Li Wei was a kind and honest person. He sold warm flatbread, offering travellers a relief from hunger.

On a sunny afternoon, as he fed crumbs to a stray goat that often visited his stall, he spotted two weary pilgrims among the crowds. Their robes were bleached by the sun, their sandals broken. Li Wei saw the exhaustion in their eyes and called them to his shade. “Travellers,” he said, “you look like you have come a long distance. My stall is small, but please, rest here in the shade.”

Without saying much more, he offered them dry bread and water. Rabban Bar Sauma and Markos tried to decline, but Li Wei just smiled and said, “I don’t need anything in return.”

Moved beyond words, Rabban drew from his pouch the little rusty steel cross that had travelled with him. He pressed it into Li Wei's hand. "May this remind us of each other," he said. Li Wei accepted it with a bow. Strengthened, the pilgrims continued west.

War later closed the road to Jerusalem, yet new paths opened: Markos rose to become Patriarch of the Eastern Church, and Rabban was chosen as an envoy to the courts of Europe. He stood before emperors in Constantinople, popes in Rome, kings in Paris and London, carrying messages of peace across a divided world. He died in Baghdad in 1294, but the light of his journey endured.

"Back in Kashgar, Li Wei kept the cross safe. His wife later embroidered the symbols onto an old silk scarf. The scarf and cross passed quietly through the family, until they reached this small house on the edge of an old road." Grandmother Li finished the story.

Xiaolian, traumatised by the story, traced the worn edges with her thumb. She could feel the weight of deserts and mountains. She could sense strangers who would become connected by one shared meal.

Years passed. Xiaolian grew into a skilled weaver whose scarves travelled far beyond the village. She never sold the original scarf or the cross. They stayed with her at all times.

One spring evening, long after Grandmother Li had passed, an elderly foreign visitor arrived at Xiaolian's door. He was dressed in simple clothes, and spoke Chinese with a strange accent. In his hand, he carried a small wooden box.

He introduced himself as Father Elias, a scholar tracing the footsteps of Rabban Bar Sauma. Word of Xiaolian's scarves bearing symbols no Chinese artisan should have known had reached him over continents.

He opened the box slowly and revealed a small rusty steel cross, identical in every detail to the one Xiaolian had.

"This," he said, "was found among Rabban Bar Sauma's few possessions in Baghdad. It was believed to have a companion piece, one that he gave away during his journey"

He had come, he explained, to see if the lost twin still existed.

Xiaolian's heart skipped a beat. The memories of Grandmother Li, her Nainai, came flashing back. Xiaolian drew her cross from its hiding place. The two pieces lay side by side on the table, gleaming softly.

Father Elias's eyes filled with tears. "The circle," he whispered, "is complete."

Xiaolian understood then that the threads had never been about one act of kindness in a dusty market. They were about two strangers who could meet again and recognise each other across time.

"Take it home," she said, "the road is long, and kindness is lighter to carry when shared."

That night, under the same stars that once guided Rabban westward, Xiaolian sat at her loom once more. The shuttle began its quiet song, weaving new patterns into the endless threads of connection.

The Chinese Silk Road

Singapore International School, Wang, Chenchen, Kristina – 11

“Don’t... worry,” the white-haired General Heng had wheezed while his son, who had never lifted a sword in his life, stood smiling in ceremonial armour behind the throne of the Emperor. “The Xiongnu are... cowards. Kill a few of... them and they will run.”

Zhang Qian galloped through the Hexi Corridor with a hundred men. The trade route to the West stretched through a narrow mountain pass beyond which lay Xiongnu lands, where they bred horses and warriors. To reach the Yuezhi people to form alliances, they had to trespass through the Xiongnu territory.

Zhang pulled on the reins of his horse, and it trotted to a stop. It was unusually quiet, and no Xiongnu were in sight. He dismounted and looked around suspiciously, but still, he didn’t see anything.

“Where are they?” one of his men asked.

“I don’t know—they might be hiding, ready to ambush us!” another muttered, scanning the grey crags.

“I will lead the scouts,” Zhang ordered. “Everyone else, stay here.”

Soon, they arrived at a clearing with long grass surrounding them. The grass rustled.

His horse suddenly stood on its hind legs and neighed worriedly, throwing Zhang to the ground. Then, it galloped away in fear.

Warriors wearing furs charged out of the grass, wielding heavy spears, yelling, “TRESPASSERS! We caught them!” Rough hands grabbed Zhang and dragged him away from the clearing. He looked with his fists clenched as his gaze followed one of his young guards retreating along with many others.

“How dare you trespass in OUR territory? People from the Han?” one of them snorted in disgust. “We’re taking you to see our leader, Chief Kaymluk! Let’s see what he will do to you!”

The warriors forced Zhang to his knees in the Chief’s tent. Kaymluk stared at him. Then a smile spread over his face. “One of the fat Emperor’s diplomats? An excellent hostage! Give him a wife and a tent. Altan! I have a man for you.”

Zhang looked at his wife in dismay. “So, you are to be my Xiongnu wife.” He said unhappily.

Altan looked at him darkly. “That word is your word. “Fierce slave”. We are not slaves! We are Huns, the Free People! Yet your Emperor insists we bow to him. That is why we must ride to war!”

Ten years later, Zhang was given more freedom, and Altan gifted him a son whom he truly loved. But on his boy's first birthday, Kaymluk reminded him that should he attempt to escape, his son would be burned alive. "I'm sure you'll never betray us!" the chief laughed.

Still, Zhang never forgot about what Emperor Wu had told him to do, and he had to get back to Chang'An. However, he loved his family and didn't want his son to be burned to death.

He recalled the Xiongnu's plan to crush Han forces using heavy boulders.

These thoughts whirled around in his head, and he couldn't decide. Emperor Wu really needed him to go back, but Zhang did not want his family to be hurt.

One day, a Han merchant caravan came through the Xiongnu territory. Zhang waved for it to stop. A guard ran out and said, "Zhang Qian! Emperor Wu has declared to exterminate them once and for all. He will be sending the largest army ever to attack."

"Wait, hang on—"

Just at this moment, Chief Kaymluk walked out of the tent. "Why is there a Han caravan in our territory?" He clapped his hands as two warriors marched out, brandishing spears and ropes.

They were going to get killed.

Thinking of a quick solution, Zhang said, "Chief, I stopped them to remind them not to trespass. I think we should let them pay some tax and live. They will learn their lesson."

Chief Kaymluk looked at him as if thinking whether to trust him. "Well," he said, "I believe we do need that tax money to buy the resources we need." He looked at the merchant.

"Do you have gold trinkets?"

Even though Kaymluk used all of the trinkets, the food was still not enough. Looking at his expression, Zhang was reminded of the endless rice fields of his home country where they sometimes had more than enough. He had an idea.

"Chief," Zhang said, "there are many rice fields in Chang'An, and we have more than we need. If you need more food to feed your people, I can share some with you—only if I can go back there."

Soon, Zhang had boarded the caravan racing towards Chang'An.

Once he arrived in the palace, he saw a few generals talking to Emperor Wu, one of which looked familiar.

Zhang had to hold back a gasp as he recognised him—the son of whom had sent him on a suicide mission fifteen years before.

“My father had told me to defeat them. They are real cowards! Once they see our power, they will never dare attack us. They humiliated him and they are going to pay!”

“I know that you are angry at the Xiongnu because they showed rudeness to your father,” Zhang began, “but the point is, they only raid because they need resources. We all don’t want war.”

The general turned. His eyes glittered angrily—then they softened. “You don’t know what they did to my father.”

“What they did was unacceptable, but they just need some resources! Why can’t we share when that is a better option than war? I was at their leader’s side, and he told me about not having enough.”

“Zhang Qian,” Emperor Wu said, “I believe that is a good idea. What should we do to help them?”

“We can share some of our rice with them and maybe we can send an official to live with them, and advise them in ways that can benefit the Han Empire?”

Emperor Wu smiled. “For that idea, I know just the person...” He winked at Zhang. Zhang smiled happily. He had made an effort for peace.

The Silk Road

Singapore International School, Wang, Jia Yi – 11

Joe stepped out of his old house, seeking a break from his loneliness and silence, accompanied by the fresh smell of the roses. His gaze drifted to the west like it usually did, where the sun was setting. Then he saw it. On the front door, there was a thick, majestic parchment envelope sealed with a blot of wax. A dragon curled around the seal, as if protecting the envelope. His full name, "JOSEPH", stood proudly on the envelope in big golden letters that glittered in the sun. "No way," Joe whispered, his eyes wide and His jaw went slack, his own fingers cold against his lips.

It was from the Imperial Household.

He held it with his trembling hands and retreated into the house.

His house was a house made for a scholar: made out of timber, floor swept cleanly so not even a speck of dust could be seen, and scrolls neatly on the tables, and a single window facing the west. He sat on the chair, took a deep breath, and opened the letter.

"Dear Joseph," he muttered under his breath, "We are happy for your volunteer to go to the west. Arrive at the palace before noon tomorrow. You shall go on the horse—chariot outside." Joe gasped. No way he was going to the palace. No way. He read the short letter over and over again until it was carved in his mind. This was all because of one day.

Joe was on his daily routine to the market to buy food when he saw a poster and a crowd of people gathered around it, speaking over each other's voices. A few horses stood nearby, looking curiously at the chaotic babble of voices while being restrained by a rope tied tightly around a pole. Joe went closer and saw a poster recruiting brave citizens for a mission to the west to ask if the tribes there would want to ally against the XLong Nu. Joe thought that he could do it, but a lot of people were going to try, so he might not make it.

Joe shook his head and returned to his dark room. "I guess I've got to go. Tomorrow at Noon, not a lot of time." Joe murmured to himself, taking the letter with him. Joe stepped back outside, away from that familiar loneliness and silence for what might be the last time in his life. A horse stood on the side of the road, accompanied by a scarlet chariot with a person on it behind the horse. He hesitated, looked back at the house, and took heavy steps toward the chariot. "I guess this is one last step of Joe the scholar," Joe thought as he stepped up into the chariot, "and the first step of... whatever the emperor wants me to be."

"Show me the letter," a grim voice said, breaking Joe from his thoughts.

Joe took the letter from one of his many pockets, which carried various items, each for a special use, and gave it to the chariot driver.

"Very well," said the driver, and hit the horse on the butt, and the chariot began moving.

The chariot began bouncing up and down like a cork on a stormy sea as they slowly gained speed. Joe wanted to sleep, but his head would always jump up and down whenever his head touched the floor of the chariot. The ride just went like that, bumpy and uncomfortable. By the time the first light seeped through the clouds, Joe's muscles were aching. Suddenly, they stopped. The driver said that they were there. Joe got off and found out that four people were already here. This was no palace; it was just a house about 300m from the palace. One of them asked if it was Joe, and he said yes. Then, he began briefing about the mission. They were each given a horse and a lot of food and water. After that, they introduced themselves. Joe learned that their captain was called Jack, and the other one was Ethan.

After that, they went on different chariots pulled by their horses and different drivers. The trip was still bumpy. After the torture of the ride, Joe was getting dizzy, so he got off. They were in what we now call the Hexi corridor. It was a land of green, but with mountains on one side and desert on the other. It was the only way to get from the Han Empire to the unknown world. There were many rivers, so Joe thought survival would be easy. He took out his notebook and began writing with a brush the diameter of the corridor and the geography, the conditions and directions.

“Let’s go!” Joe told Jack, waving at him, not nauseous anymore.

Jack humphed and followed.

Joe sat on the chariot again, watching the last of his home disappear. He somehow slept on the ride and woke up to find that they were in a vast desert.

Their supplies ran out fast. After a week or so in the vast desert with sand dunes everywhere, it became a nightmare, especially for Joe. They only had food left for a few days, and Jack was saying relentlessly that Joe was useless. Ethan was on Joe’s side, of course. He was also a scribe. Joe heard that and decided to prove himself useful once and for all. But right now, they have more important matters.

A sandstorm was on its way.

Joe’s teammates didn’t need help with noticing that, but it was also night. Either they sleep, or they continue. Jack decided to rest behind a sand dune. They had to follow him, because he was the leader. When Jack and Ethan slept, Joe was awake, searching in his brain for facts about sandstorms. Suddenly, he remembered. Sandstorms move sand dunes. He tried to open the tent, but it was half-submerged in sand. He pushed hard, and it finally opened. The sandstorm stopped, and he remembered Jack and Ethan. He pulled them out and woke them.

“I’m sorry,” Jack said, bowing.

“It’s fine,” Joe replied.

They got on their horses and went west at full speed, forming a dust trail. Finally, they saw it. A city. They screamed in excitement. When they asked the tribe leader about the alliance, he said that they were peaceful enough and did not want war. Then, when he saw Joe’s smooth silk handkerchief, he asked if he could trade some seeds for it. That was the beginning of the silk road.

Falling Into The City

Singapore International School, Wang, Yiwen Eva – 10

“Do you think she’s alive?” All I could hear was a man’s voice.

“She’s breathing; she’ll live,” said another voice.

“Where am I?” I asked, apparently having no idea how I ended up in a sunny desert when I was in a middle-school dormitory a second ago.

The burly men ignored my question, eyeing me suspiciously. “You’re not a scout from the Xiongnu, are ya? Our town’s got enough to deal with now. Don’t need another attack coming. And we don’t have silk.”

I had that cat meme face again, whatever it’s called. “Why would I ever want silk? And what’s a Xiongnu?”

Now it was their turn to be confused. “You don’t know what the Xiongnu are? It’s the most feared group in all of the Silk Road!”

Oh. So I’m in China. Is this a dream? To my dismay, a voice in my head said, “This is all too real to be a dream.” Now all I can do is avoid making these guys mad. If they get angry at me, it’ll be a hundred times worse than getting scolded by Mom.

“Okay, kid, meet the City of Dunhuang.” The city had stone walls and soldiers that only appear in TV shows. Stalls everywhere had cotton and decorations; one had horses. “I don’t think anyone can get past these.” But I was wrong. A small voice in my head warned, “The city is in danger.”

My heart started pounding. What kind of people are the Xiongnu, anyway? Are they normal people? But why would these people be so scared of them? They must be a scary group to make a whole city traumatized...

“They’re coming! Hide!” a voice yelled, starting the chaos. Within a few minutes, the place was empty except for wooden stalls and leaves. Both men beside me looked petrified. “We’d better hide, kid. Those people are no gentle lads.”

“What people are they?” They seemed to get used to me not knowing a thing about this place. “They’re said to eat flesh and drink blood. Now come on; nobody wants that flesh to be theirs.”

The next thing I knew, my feet were leading me into a house. “What do they even want? Why are they attacking us?” The man sighed. “Silk. The rarest thing here.” I just ran, wondering why these people wanted silk so much. Silk is like gold in the Silk Road times...

“Now, hand over the stuff!” Even the burly men looked anxious.

“They’re not nice.”

“The opposite of nice, kid. And don’t talk so loud; you’ll become their toothpicks.”

I just watched as they picked all the money and silk off the stalls, while a few more people around me whimpered. Probably the owners.

“What now?” one of them said, eyeing what seemed to be their leader.

He laughed. “Now we choose our dinner.”

My heart skipped a beat. With my luck, it’s going to be me. And this seems too real to be a dream. What if I actually teleported to Dunhuang and got roasted worse than my teacher does? I’d rather face an angry teacher than a group of savages. And while I thought helplessly, the trapdoor slammed open. “Who’s the unlucky guy?”

People screamed. But the Xiongnu just enjoyed the fear. “Don’t try to fight; you’ve got no chance. We can choose more than one person, you know.” They roamed around the room, eyeing everyone hungrily, as if we were roasted chicken instead of humans. “Our boss is in a good mood today, so we’ll choose someone small. All the adults step to the side and leave the children.” Soon, everyone left, leaving me and a few other children in the middle of the room. It felt like being a survivor in Squid Game, but just the complete opposite. While I wore the look that I had no idea what I was doing here, the other children were pretty much vibrating like a guitar string. “Which one of you little lambs isn’t going to survive tonight?” Strangely, I felt like this sentence was directed at me. Not me, not me, I’m too slim, and I’m only 13, I prayed in my head.

“How about... you!” He pointed at me, still having that grin on his face. My heart seemed to stop. “Don’t move, kiddo. We can fight,” one of them said as they moved towards me, raising his spear. “Come now. Don’t mess with a group of armed men.” That’s when I snapped. “No.” All the people looked at me with the “cat meme” face from YouTube. But the Xiongnu? Not for long. He thrust their spear forward—a second too slow. I arced to the right, giving him a kick in return. “Get her!” That kick wasn’t enough to leave an adult unconscious, but it did give him a second of shock. I struck him again and again, dodging left and right, avoiding the spears. He was like, “Hey, no fair! Why are you targeting me?” And when I finally knocked him unconscious (receiving another round of looks), I ran out the door. One tried to block me, but a second too late—people were already charging, copying my techniques, and piling on top of the Xiongnu. “Go, kid, run!” Everyone was fighting just for me to escape. I ran like my life depended on it to the gate, afraid that one of the Xiongnu would break free from the fight and charge at me like a bull. But as I ran past the city walls and into the desert sand, I felt myself falling and losing consciousness...

“Riley!” I rubbed my eyes. I was in my bed, three people staring at me like I turned into a banana overnight. “You okay? You were sleepwalking!” “What time is it?” “3 AM. And I noticed your story isn’t finished yet. Can you finish it in five hours?” I thought about the “dream.” Or not. Everything was real. “Yeah. I know exactly what to write about.”

The Symphony of Silk and Stone

Singapore International School, Wong, Wing Yuet, Bianca – 11

The hardest part about travelling across two worlds was not the physical toll; it was the way the colours here made my eyes hurt. Back home, we only had shades of grey. Here, everything screamed in a million different hues. Here, the shadows do not follow, they lead. The neon signs were not just lights, they were a veil of crushed diamonds that seemed to make the air sparkle. Everything was too much for me, for a young girl whose heart was pounding inside a jar sealed tightly in her backpack. Xi’an, was what they called this place, but in my heart, it was a surreal dream bleeding into reality.

Standing atop of the viewing platforms of one of Xi'an's most dreamlike landmarks, the Emperor Qin Shi Huang's Mausoleum Site Museum, I looked down at the forest of clay. Rows upon rows of clay held thousands of life-sized statues, each of their faces etched with a unique, haunting life. They were all statues, motionless and calm, yet somehow, I heard a lively heartbeat in every grain of terracotta. Somehow, I heard the grind of stone against stone. Every time I blinked, their clay lungs seemed to draw a breath. They were the roots of Xi'an's history, and a stability that allowed the Silk Road to flourish, helping it reach across Asia to the West. Each was hundreds of years, thousands of skilled craftsmen, and decades of determination carefully shaped into a beautiful, eternal piece of artwork. Was this a museum, or a cathedral of exhaled secrets?

Another corner of Xi'an I have seen is a silent sculpture that has never moved an inch, lost in eternal meditation. Of course, it is the breathtaking Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, built specifically to preserve the cultural and religious treasures brought to China via the ancient trade network, the Silk Road. It stands like a lonely lighthouse, guiding the monks back home. It is a figure so dense and heavy, and has made me realise, it was the dream of a monk who crossed deserts and islands to seek the truth. Its sandy colour blended perfectly with the sky coloured with precise strokes of watercolour, holding the skyline in the palm of its hand. It remains the heart of Xi'an, speaking through an ancient, silent language.

The last realm I have explored is the heartbeat of the Silk Road, the Bell Tower. A haunting shadow led my way to an alleyway that guided me to the entrance of the tower, each step feeling heavier than the last. I took one last glance at my porcelain compass before venturing inside. However, the compass seemed dead; it trembled in my hand, vibrating a frantic warning. The needle did not just spin, it fixed its gaze on a door that had emerged from the alleyway. The once radiant street behind me had turned into fragile pieces of cobblestone that could collapse beneath the weight of this tower. I reached out and laid my fingers on the cold, polished wood of the door before venturing into the glowing passageway. A sweet aroma of heavy, ancient cinnamon and silk fluttered across my face. It was another world, trapped within the tower's stone walls. The compass thrummed across my arms and over my chest, creating its own racing pulse, making my ribs seem to rattle. The air began to grow thick. I closed my eyes and felt a deep, powerful thud coming from the tower's foundation. It was not my heartbeat at all; it was the mechanical rhythm of the Silk Road's core, pulsing in sync with the porcelain in my hands. The shadows led me to a staircase that wound upward toward the throat of the tower. Slowly, I climbed up the stairs, and the truth lay right beneath my feet. The shadows were not trying to threaten me, they were escorting me, guiding me toward the light. The "heartbeat" I heard was not a warning; it was an invitation—an invitation to the edge of a new, radiant world.

The entire expanse of the Silk Road laid beneath my feet. The porcelain compass in my hand, once racing with panic and fear, was replaced by steadiness, as if it was welcoming me to this new world. My heart no longer belonged in the darkness of a bag; it belonged here, at the throat of the world, where the light could finally turn my grey memories into a million different vivid colours. Xi'an, a kaleidoscope of motion, crafted by a thousand years of commerce and spirit. Xi'an, where the markets sparkled; sacks of spices arranged in palettes of earthy blues and saffron yellows. Xi'an, an anchor of the Silk Road, preventing its history from drifting away. Just as the internet connects us today, the Silk Road was a network where an imagination sparked from a Chinese village could spread all the way across a Roman marketplace. The Silk Road was more than a trade route for spices and jewels, it was more than just a path on a map; it was a bridge for souls like mine, leading us to a new, ethereal, dreamlike reality.

Silk Friendship

Singapore International School, Wijanto, Emma – 11

Yong Xin rode her camel along the bustling path, looking for opportunities to trade along the Silk Road. She shielded her eyes as the sun reflected off the turquoise oasis of Dunhuang, when a familiar voice called out.

“Spices! Spices from Persia!” a young girl shouted, sitting atop a wooden cart of cinnamon, turmeric, cumin and other spices. Yong Xin had seen her a few times before. Though she longed to approach her, Yong Xin’s father did not trust people from other countries. She could only cast the Persian girl kind looks and hope that she would understand how Yong Xin wished to be friends.

At night, Yong Xin and her father slept at a small yurt down the road. It was made of large wooden poles anchored firmly into the warm golden sand, with sheep’s wool felt draped over it. The Persian girl slept at the yurt only a few metres away, with a silk floss tree between them. They would walk back together, but never spoke a word.

One day, the warm glow of the morning sun woke Yong Xin up. She looked out the window and noticed the Indian girl sitting under the pink silk floss tree. Her back rested against the trunk of the tree and her legs were folded in front of her. The girl’s long black hair was braided beautifully, and a golden hairclip glistened next to her milky brown face.

Yong Xin crept out of the shelter, careful not to wake her father from his slumber.

“Hello. My name is Yong Xin,” she said shyly, then realised that the girl didn’t understand Chinese. However, the girl smiled gently and gestured for Yong Xin to sit down next to her.

In the silence, they could hear the wind whistling in the distance, birds chirping and leaves rustling. Some traders were already out and about, preparing their carts for the day.

A pink flower landed on the girl’s head. She giggled, and Yong Xin smiled. Then the girl took it and placed it on Yong Xin’s hair, like a flowery hair clip. Yong Xin was touched and tried to communicate with her again. “Yong Xin,” she said slowly.

“Yong Xin,” the Persian girl repeated carefully. It sounded funny, but Yong Xin knew she understood. “Esha,” whispered the girl, with a little tilt of her head. The atmosphere was quiet, but also enjoyable, until Yong Xin’s father appeared outside the yurt.

“Yong Xin! Come here now!” he barked, fuming. Yong Xin hurried inside. Esha was a little confused, but sensed she wasn’t supposed to be there, so she left to prepare for the day.

Yong Xin’s father paced anxiously, the veins on his temples pulsating. He mumbled, “Don’t talk to anyone who isn’t Chinese. We trade with them, but we don’t make friends.”

Hearing that made Yong Xin restless. “Why can’t we be friends?” she protested.

The question hung in the air and was not answered.

The girls didn’t communicate after that incident. Yong Xin avoided Esha’s confused gaze. Yong Xin wanted to be friends, but was embarrassed and didn’t dare to creep out to that Silk Floss tree again.

The seasons turned, and Yong Xin's father was stricken with an endless fever. His body trembled helplessly, and when Yong Xin touched his forehead, it felt like he was on fire. Their travel was delayed. Nights were spent kneeling by his bed, a futile cycle of pressing wet cloths against her father's forehead that so quickly became hot.

Other traders continued west into the vast Tarim Basin, and Esha's family was soon to set off. Though Esha never spoke to Yong Xin, the girls remained closely aware of each other's movements.

When the day came for Esha to move on, she gave Yong Xin a bottle of brown grainy spices and gestured that it was for Yong Xin's father. Yong Xin hesitated but accepted the bottle gratefully.

She dashed home, thrusting the bottle in her father's hands. When he questioned the bottle's origin, Yong Xin's heart jumped into her throat. "It's... er... from the girl next door. But papa, please, just drink it," she begged.

Her father's face went pale, and he put the bottle down harshly.

Yong Xin struggled to stay calm. "Papa... you might die!" she paused to regain control. "Just take it..." she sobbed.

"No!" he roared. Suddenly, he clasped his chest with quivering hands. He started panting, eyes squeezed shut in pain. He took a shaky breath, grabbed the bottle and swallowed its contents in one gulp.

What happened next felt as if it was in slow motion. Yong Xin's father winced from the strong taste of the mixture. His whole body, once tense, began to relax and his breathing steadied. His eyelids drooped and he fell sound asleep.

What was happening?

Was Esha really trustworthy?

Was the mixture actually poison?

Yong Xin started to worry. She had thought the mixture would cure him... but maybe she was mistaken.

Maybe all had gone wrong.

Yong Xin waited. She waited and waited and waited, kneeling by her father as he slept and slept and slept. Yong Xin looked up at the evening sunset, a blast of red and yellow, consuming the endless, open sky. For what seemed like eternity they stayed like that, until, hours later, her father's eyes jerked open. "Where am I?" Yong Xin's father croaked, confused. He was quickly overcome with relief. The heat and pain had finally subsided.

He sat propped up against the wall, in deep thought. "I was wrong, please thank that girl for me," he said gruffly.

Yong Xin joyfully ran outside to find Esha. But then her face dropped when she saw the empty space on the other side of the silk floss tree. She turned towards her father and whispered, "She's gone. "

When Esha gave Yong Xin the bottle, it was the last time they met. Afterwards, they lived very different lives but kept the same thing close to their hearts: kindness.

The Journal West

Singapore International School, Xi, Lixin – 10

“Stop the execution!”

A loud shout, followed by powerful hoofbeats, broke the silence in front of the Meridian Gate of Chang'an. On the execution ground, the executioner had already raised his blade. Before the crowd could react, an imperial guard jumped off his horse.

“By order of the Emperor,” he announced, “the criminal Ranran is to enter the palace at once.”

The blade froze in mid-air. Sunlight flashed on the cold steel as Ranran was led down from the platform and taken to the royal palace.

“Yes, Ranran, I will forgive you for disobeying my order,” boomed the Emperor's voice. “But you are to travel to the western lands and beyond. Bring me back maps of the barbarian kingdoms and their horses.”

Ranran was silent. Few people ever returned alive from the unexplored west.

Suddenly, an image crossed his mind. On his father's deathbed, the greatest general the Empire had ever known whispered, “Promise me, Ranran, you will serve the Empire with your last blood and conquer the barbarians with no mercy.”

“Yes, I will, Your Majesty,” Ranran said.

Two days later, Ranran stood before his men.

“My blood brothers, we will march to the western lands in honour of our Empire!” he said firmly.

From the capital, the men marched west for many days and nights. The moon guided them at night, and the sun burned during the day. The desert was dry and harsh, and rain rarely fell.

One day, a group of people appeared in the distance. They were tall and strong, wearing small caps shaped like tiny yurts. Ranran became alert and signalled his soldiers to stay ready.

“آيا ابريشم داريد?” An old man with a white beard stepped forward.

Ranran turned to his deputy, Wanu, whom he had captured years ago in a battle with an invading Persian army.

“They want to trade for our silk,” Wanu said.

“Search them,” Ranran ordered.

The Persian group was surprisingly cooperative. No hidden weapons were found.

Their leader held up five fingers and spoke softly.

“They want five bolts of silk for one horse,” Wanu explained.

“I want that horse,” Ranran said, pointing to a brown horse with white stripes, a rare breed.

The Persian hesitated, then nodded. “The horse is yours.”

The two groups waved goodbye and continued on their journeys.

Months later, Ranran and his men reached the heart of the desert. Everything was sand, and an uneasy silence filled the air.

Suddenly, galloping hooves shattered the quiet. A large group of Huns appeared, shouting fiercely as they charged toward them. Ranran’s heart burned—it was they who had caused the wounds that led to his father’s death.

“Revenge!” Ranran shouted.

The battle was short and brutal. Outnumbered and unprepared for desert fighting, Ranran’s men were defeated. Only a few survived, knocked unconscious.

“Uhhh... where am I?” Ranran groaned when he woke up. “Where is my sword?”

“Sword? You will be executed soon,” said a low voice behind him. It was a Hun guard.

A cold shiver of anger, shame, and guilt ran down Ranran’s spine.

“Ranran, we will escape alive,” whispered a familiar voice. It was Wanu. Ranran met his eyes. They said nothing, but both nodded firmly.

The prison was heavily guarded, and the prisoners were treated cruelly, strengthening their determination to escape.

One night, Ranran heard Hun children crying for food.

For the first time, he felt confused. If the Huns invaded his Empire for grain, why did their children still starve? For all the battles he and his father had fought, what were they really fighting for?

Days passed as Ranran and Wanu studied the guards’ routines and memorised the path to the stable.

On a windy night, the Huns gathered to pray for food. The guards were distracted. Ranran and Wanu knew it was their chance.

Ranran took a hairpin from his hair and carefully twisted it into the lock.

Click.

A guard shouted, “Who’s there?”

Wanu pretended to snore loudly. After a pause, the guard walked away.

They tiptoed toward the stable. As they neared it, Ranran glanced at the praying Huns and froze. Hun children lay on the open ground, skin stretched over bone, staring hopelessly at the empty sky while adults bowed to the fire, praying for food.

Tears filled Ranran's eyes.

At that moment, a Hun spotted them. They jumped onto a horse but were quickly surrounded and thrown back into prison.

That night, Ranran lay awake, unsure if courage alone would save them.

The next morning, Ranran was brought before the Hun leader, Hon.

"You dared to flee," Hon said coldly.

"Please listen," Ranran said. "Robbing travellers will never give your people enough food or clothes. There is another way."

Hon leaned forward.

"My Empire feeds millions," Ranran continued. "I can teach your people how to grow crops in the oasis. In return, you must free my soldiers."

Hon looked at his crying children and thought for a long time.

"Fine," he said at last. "Set them free."

Over the next years, Ranran lived among the Huns, teaching them how to farm. They failed many times, but slowly they learned. Wanu taught them how to make silk into simple, strong clothes. He married a Hun woman, and they had a son together.

Two years later, the promise was kept. Ranran and his men were freed and given the finest horses.

As they rode west again, Ranran knew the journey was no longer only about conquest or gold...

He tightened his grip on the reins.

With one horse beneath him and Wanu at his side, Ranran rode west—toward a new quest.

Stolen

Singapore International School, Xu, Jiayue – 10

Every country and city that the Silk Road passes through knows the legend of the “Moghodas of Persia.” The Moghodas was a legendary spice, and the legend went that it could make the worst food taste like the best and the best even better. Everyone in all the countries, all the cities longed to try it, but the Persians were defiant, they would keep the Moghodas for themselves. That did not keep the other countries from trying though. Every time a group of merchants went over to Persia to trade items, they pleaded and pleaded with the people there, but no matter what, they all got the same answer.

“No. Please leave now.”

Every merchant left with disappointment etched on their face, and this just went on and on.

Persia kept this up, until one day, a party of Persian soldiers ran into the Chinese Great Hall of the People, screaming at the top of their lungs: “You stole the Moghodas! You stole the Moghodas! You stole them and you know it! Your traders came to Persia just yesterday! Anyone of them could have stolen it!”

The Chinese governors were in the middle of a meeting, and they stared at the Persian soldiers, looking affronted.

“Get out! We did not steal your *Moghodas* and you are *wrong* to accuse us of doing so,” replied one of the Governors, red faced with rage.

The Persians knew that they couldn’t do anything without proof, so they walked out all angry and rude.

There was a Chinese villager outside the Great Hall of the People, who unintentionally heard the entire conversation. Unfortunately, that villager was a gossip, he heard, and he ran all the way to the village to spread this news, and hoped they could have a taste of the wonderful spice from whoever stole it.

This news travelled all the way to a merchant named Chang. He coincidentally had gone to Persia recently for a trade. He also longed to try the legendary spice. He was also the one, the only one, who had ever successfully stolen the mythical, legendary, Moghodas spice.

Chang lived alone, as his mother had died years ago, and he never met father. He was the owner of a small restaurant, and it was struggling, and Chang thought, if he stole the Moghodas, maybe his shop would become popular! Chang was never the type to steal, but he was desperate for money, needy, maybe even a bit greedy. Chang spent his time at home brainstorming ideas, or recasting for the trip by reading a book. He was quiet though, kept to himself, which made him seem so innocent, and no one would ever suspect that he was the one who stole the great Moghodas spice.

He could remember it clearly, he had snuck into the village behind the port, and sniffed for any trace of delicious smell. That’s when it hit him. The scent of his favourite noodles that his mom used to make, mixed with freshly baked egg tarts from the local bakery. He followed the aroma, and it led him to a hidden shed behind rows of houses. He knew it was the place where tons of Moghodas were hidden. His heart beat in anticipation. He opened the door. Inside, were bags and bags of salt like substances, and Chang had never, ever smelled anything as good as this tiny store room. He stole a bag, and ran. He had made it just in time for the ship, and he slipped back with the other merchants, and no one suspected a thing.

After stealing the Moghodas, he felt a bit guilty, but after reminding himself of the money he was making for the restaurant, he forgot about it. His simple ramen became so delicious that it tastes like it came from a five star restaurant. Plain rice became so fresh and so good that it felt like he could have it for every meal for the rest of his life. Customers lined up for ages just for his food, and the money he was making would make a businessman amazed.

This was until one day, the Chinese government decided, to prove to the Persians that they did not steal the Moghodas, they organised a search, where Persian soldiers could search every Chinese home, and look for any trace of the Moghodas. Sure enough, a few days later, two Persian soldiers came to Chang's small house and banged on the door, shouting, "Open up! Authorised search for stolen Moghodas!"

Chang froze in his armchair, hand halfway finished flipping the page in his book. Oh no, he thought. He eyed the bag of half finished Moghodas on the table. He shoved it in the bottom drawer of his closet, then opened the door. He put on a welcoming smile, and said, "Come in."

The soldiers were very thorough. They looked under every chair, every table looking for any trace of powders on the floor. Then, they came to his closet. He opened the drawers one by one, until he came to the bottom one. Chang's heart thumped hard, and then they found it. Under one of his shirts lay the bag, clearly labelled, "Moghodas". The soldiers held it up like evidence at a crime scene. They looked up at Chang with rage. "It was you! It was you, you ——"

Chang heard nothing else. He had bolted, bolted out the door, running as fast as he could, heart beating fast. He could hear the footsteps of the soldier close behind. He was nearly out of breath, and he knew he couldn't run much further. Then, he hit a dead end. He heard the soldiers advancing on him, and his breathing became faster and faster.

"You have nowhere to run."

The Mysterious Ride

Singapore International School, Yu, Cheuk Chi, Gina – 10

“Bob, what is your plan in the summer? Interested to go to Italy?” I raised out in the WhatsApp group.

“That’s such a great idea, Andrea! Should we bring Hassan and Jing along with us too?” Bob replied excitedly.

“I want to come to you place and have parma ham and formaggio!” Hassan replied. “Then I’ll bring some British teas and biscuits!” Bob added in.

“I can’t wait!” texted Jing.

The foursome – Bob, Andrea, Jing, Hassan – had became good friends since we met in summer camps for over 10 years. Although we live in different countries, our bond is tied up every moment, and we planned ahead of time to meet once we are free. That was the typical night we spent chatting.

Before I knew it, I was taking the train to pick them up. The weather today was not only disturbingly foggy, there was also thunder. It was night time and there were fewer people. I went into a deep, long tunnel. Why am I still in the tunnel? It’s been over twenty minutes! I thought suspiciously. The tunnel lights were flickering and suddenly, everything went dark. I couldn’t see anything. When the train finally arrived to the airport station, I rushed out to find my friends. But they were no where to be seen. All that was around me was a lonely station with no one in sight. I looked at my cell phone and there was no signal. I was terrified I almost lost all hope, just as Bob appeared behind me.

“Andrea! I’m here!” Bob screamed out loud.

“Have you seen Jing and Hassan?” I asked

“No.” Bob replied.

We were in the middle of nowhere!

I finally located a person in the station and asked “Excuse me, do you know the way to airport and is there any Wifi here? I cannot connect to anything”.

The man said, “What is a “Wifi” and “airport”? I don’t get what you mean.” he was puzzled by my words. “It’s fine, thank you.”

Both me and Bob left and found ourselves helpless and kept walking. Finally, we stopped in front of a notice board. The papers on the board looks weird.

“Look Andrea. Can you see it? It said it’s the year 1500s right now!!!” Bob felt astonished.

When Bob and Andrea become more helpless and anxious, they heard something was approaching them. “Stomp. Stomp. Stomp”. A group of eight beige-coloured creatures marching towards them.

“Hello Andrea and Bob, so great to see you all again!” Jing greeted them.

“We are old friends but why is your clothes so old-fashioned and dirty?” I questioned.

“You have been late and we are keep searching for you for long time.” I added.

“Sorry my friends. We took more than six months to carry all my stuff with the camels through the Silk Road and crossed miles with endurance to get here” Jing apologised.

When Jing and Hassan were greeting Andrea, Bob sneaked towards the bags on the camels to look for presents for him. Jing was from China, and her bag was filled with many luxurious and colourful silk clothes and two set of compasses. Hassan had tons of spices, which smell and taste very special. Unfortunately, none of these were Bob's favourite.

"Why did you bring all these things I don't like? Bob complained.

"I brought spices from the middle east, my home country, and Jing brought silk products from China for your country, because all these items are very rare and valuable your country! We bring similarly every time!" Hassan explained.

"Compass is an imperative tool to guide us for directions when we were riding from the east region to here. It is an important scientific invention and I hear that your country needs it." Jing cried out.

The camel is also very important. It can go months without drinking water, and is used for long distance traveling. Without the camel, we could not come here.

"You are acting weird. Anyway, you must be exhausted after spending such long time and effort into coming here, lets go eat and play."

The foursome rode on the camels to a nearby restaurant and settled in. I ordered cheese platter, parma ham, pizza and lasagna and Bob took out his British biscuits and teas to share too.

"These are the best foods I have ever tasted in my entire life! I could never try these foods when I am in China. If I could bring it back to my country, it must be a popular dish!

Me and Bob did not care that we were in the year 1500s, because all we wanted to do was to reunite with our best friends.

Time flies, without knowing it, three days had already passed. Jing and Hassan had to leave. Before leaving, I asked "Just now, I saw a few white horses. Do you want to trade anything for them?"

"YES, I have never seen a white horse before please give it to me."

After trading their items, they bid farewell to each other. Jing and Hassan rode the white horses and took some jewels with some grapes and potatoes. Lastly, I gave my cell phone to Jing and Hassan, and reminded them to call me back when they arrive home, if the cell phone work.

After a long period of time, the lights turned back on. A blinding scene of light filled my eyes, and I was out of the tunnel. It was just a dream after all. My cell phone rang. Jing was on the other side of the call, and they said that they had already arrived. I realised that even in the modern world or the ancient world, people from different countries can still be friends.

The Glass Phoenix of Hope

Singapore International School, Zhang, Chuning – 11

“Please! I need it to save my sister!”

Fei, a Chinese girl disguised as a boy, knelt on the cold stone tiles of a Roman street. The senior glassmaker, Tiberius, closed the door on her without hesitation.

Fei’s mind was racing. What can I possibly offer to convince him?

“I’ll give all my money and spices to you!” she shouted desperately. Tiberius ignored her.

“I’m from China, I’ve travelled through the Silk Routes. I have stories!” Fei called with a hint of hope. Would he even be interested?

Tiberius’ eyes lit up. “Introduce yourself,” He welcomed her into a cozy room, heat radiating from the furnace.

“I’m Fei from Chang’an, the eastern starting point of the Silk Routes. I need a glass bird for my ill sister. A fortune teller said the only cure is a shimmering bird. I heard the best glass is made here in Rome.” she said urgently.

“Glass birds are expensive, but I specialize in them. I will trade one in exchange for some good tales and chores.” Tiberius proposed.

“Absolutely!” Fei beamed.

The next morning, while sketching a design, Tiberius asked Fei,

“What’s the most beautiful sight you’ve seen?”

“Daxia landforms. They have rainbow stripes spreading across dramatic red cliffs, like a painter spilling colours across the soil,” Fei shared, her eyes shining.

“I wish my works could be that spectacular,” he smiled.

The following day, while Tiberius was painting one of his pieces, Fei was reminded of Dunhuang:

“Dunhuang, a place rich in intricate murals,” Fei started, “inspired me to contribute. I once offered red beads from my bracelet to a painter, who was thrilled as they were exactly the shade he needed. I watched him apply the vibrant pigment to the fiery wings of a phoenix. Stepping back, I realized this was the final touch, completing the immortal bird. We exchanged a glance, and knew in the moment that it would last generations.”

“Brilliant!” Tiberius’ eyes widened with admiration

On one occasion, when Tiberius was buying clothes, Fei quietly whispered the legend of silk:

Leizu was having hot tea when a silkworm cocoon fell into her cup. The heat softened the cocoon, and she was amazed to see a shimmering silk filament unravel,

“Intrigued, she gathered more and wove them into silk,” Fei finished.

“The touch of silk is even smoother than the glass I make!” remarked Tiberius.

Another day, as Fei and Tiberius were fixing the furnace, the incredible heat had reminded her of the phoenix, “They are Chinese mythological creatures, ethereal, symbolising hope and revival,” she said, captivating Tiberius.

During a dark, stormy night, Fei recounted her encounter with bandits.

“My caravan was trading treasures when bandits attacked, brandishing blades and arrows. An explosive arrow detonated nearby, but I survived due to distance. Realizing they targeted the rich first, I kicked my horse into a gallop, pursued by one thief. I drew my bow and shot, striking him down. Behind me, the traders faced massacre.”

“A vicious sight,” Fei concluded.

“I’m glad you survived!” exclaimed Tiberius. Only if he knew how many friends and companions I couldn’t save, she thought, aching.

After hours of working on minuscule pieces, Tiberius often had sore eyes. Fei gently applied Chinese acupuncture, easing his discomfort.

Weeks passed. Tiberius summoned Fei. He unveiled an intricate glass phoenix. Its fiery wings spread wide, feathers in shades of red, its long tail shimmering under the sun.

“Wow! I’ve never seen anything like this!” Fei exclaimed.

“Thanks to you, I’ve created many unique pieces,” he smiled warmly. “Here’s the glass phoenix and some Roman medicine for your sister. I wish you all the best!”

“I am out of words to fully express my gratitude!” Fei dropped to a bow.

The next day, Fei mounted her horse, waving Tiberius goodbye.

Weeks later, sitting by the fireplace with her new friend Lei, Fei sighed, “I miss my sister” Lei nodded, feeling her pain. He had his own struggles. His father was a trader who lost everything, forcing Lei to fend for himself. However, their friendship blossomed as they watched each other’s backs.

One chilly day, as Fei’s caravan passed through a narrow Himalayan valley,

“There’s about a month’s journey to Chang’an,” their tour guide explained.

I’ll finally be home! Fei thought excitedly.

Suddenly, a low rumble echoed ominously above. An avalanche was approaching!

“Run!” Fei shouted, as towering walls of snow above began to shift. Heart racing, she scanned the mountainside desperately. She spotted a jagged opening in the rocky wall,—a narrow crevice offering salvation. As she started trudging forward, she spotted Lei, petrified. Without hesitation, she grabbed his hand firmly, snapping him out of his trance.

“We’ll die!” Lei cried.

“Come on! Don’t let fear take over. We have to try!” Fei shouted. They dodged falling snow and debris, the screams of companions muffled by the thunderous roar.

Determination surged, adrenaline pumping.

“Here!” she cried, yanking Lei towards the crevice, as a wave of snow rushed past them. They climbed the mountainside, huffing and puffing. Finally, they reached it, squeezing inside.

Inside, they huddled close, breathless and shaken.

“Are you okay?” Fei asked, heart pounding.

“I’m fine. You saved my life!” Lei marvelled.

Feeling proud, Fei grinned. I finally saved someone, she thought.

As the chaos faded, they emerged from the crevice and rushed to the nearest caravanserai, where warmth and light welcomed them.

Two fortnights later, Fei returned home, embracing her sister. "I brought a glass phoenix and western medicine for you. You'll get well!" Fei exclaimed, tears of joy rolling down their faces.

Her sister gasped at the magnificent creation. The phoenix radiated sunlight. A bright beam shone into her eyes, igniting a flame of determination and hope, as she gently placed her hand on the cool surface, her face brightening.

Soon, laughter filled their home; and hope returned. Together, they would face the future with love and an unwavering spirit.

The Journey

Singapore International School, Zhang, Rena Luoxi – 11

Mei shivered, with nothing but the comfort of her silks and the ragged blanket warming her. Her fingers danced deftly over the loom, creating breathtaking patterns that shimmered like starlight. Yet, none bought her tapestries. Wherever she went, whispers and murmurs followed.

“The witch! She’s here!”

“Poor girl, she carries the weight of death.”

“She is a curse, the devil brought her here!”

Born on April fourth, the fourth day of the fourth month. The number four in Chinese sounded like “death.” To the villagers, she was not another person, but a witch and bad luck.

Her best friend, Lu, sat across from her in her decrepit old shack that served as her house.

“Mei, how can we get so few customers when we have such beautiful silks to sell? When will they realise you aren’t a bad omen?” Lu asked, rubbing his forehead.

“They will never realise it, Lu,” she said, her voice low and steady, “Because they do not want to. It is easier to blame a girl born on a day they fear than to face the ordinary misfortunes of life. My silks could depict the very path to heaven, and they would only see a cursed road.”

“They will realise... One day.” Lu said, eyes filled with desperate hope.

“Excuse me, is anyone here?” An unfamiliar voice rang out, “I would like to buy the silk on display here.” Gasping in shock, Mei and Lu rushed to attend to the customer.

“This work,” the customer said, awed. “The tension, the pattern... it is like catching moonlight in a net.” Hope flared in Mei’s heart. But then, the merchant’s companion, a local guide, leaned in and muttered something. His words were low, but Mei caught the familiar, venomous syllables: “*Sì... sì qí...*” Four... death omen.

His expression did not change, but his hand quickly withdrew from the silk. “A beautiful piece,” he said, his tone now distant. “But I do not need it.” He moved on, never even bothering to look behind.

“It is not fair! How can they be like this!” Lu cried.

“Because I am ‘cursed’,” Mei said flatly

“But... but what if you weren’t?” Lu asked, eyes wide, “I’ve heard legends, stories about the Silk Road, the culture is different there! You could finally be free of this life! You could live a life like a normal person!”

Though she had heard many stories about the hard travels, the rumoured nine thousand kilometres of the Silk Road, the temptation was too strong. Within a week, she had packed everything she had into a few burlap sacks and used some of her precious savings to rent a camel. She watched Lu’s parents say their goodbyes, tears streaming down their faces, and a feeling of emptiness filled her heart. If only her parents could still be alive, if only they could be here to say goodbye to her. But alas, there was no use hoping for the impossible, for at dawn, Lu and Mei would set off for the Silk Road.

Journeying there was miserable. In the desert, it would be kilometres before they found an oasis, often hallucinating about pools of water, but somehow made it through. But one day, the unthinkable happened. Lu had fallen sick. In the midst of walking, he would suddenly crumple, clutching his throat. Horrible raspy coughs

would tear out from his throat, racking his body. Fortunately, they stumbled across a small village in the desert. Exhausted, they stumbled into the village, dizzy from dehydration.

“Plea...please. Please help us...” Mei pleaded, Lu, limp in her arms.

“Please... he needs help,” Mei said, before crumpling to the floor in exhaustion. After waking up, she had immediately asked one of the healers about his condition but could not get near him due to the flurry of nurses rushing around to tend to him.

“What’s going on?” Mei asked, panic shooting up her veins, “Is he going to be ok?”

A hand clasped her shoulder from behind. She turned to see a nurse standing there,

“His leg. He has a wound there, it’s infected.” She said, her face grim, “We don’t think he will make it.”

No.

No!

This can’t be happening!

Lu!

Mei shoved past the nurses, cold horror seeping through her body, before she came to a stop at Lu’s bed. She had known for a while that he had been getting paler and paler every day, seemingly weaker, but she had assumed it had been due to the harsh conditions of the desert. But now the nurse said it, he did seem ill, incredibly ill. His cheeks were sunken, his arms and legs limp, and his normally bright eyes seemed dulled. He lay on the makeshift bed, slouching against the pillows.

Days later, Lu had died. It happened in the night, the same nurse woke her, and said grimly, “He’s dead.” The words were a knife twisting her heart. She then left that day, carrying Lu’s belongings and heading off to the Silk Road. “*It was what Lu would have wanted me to do.*” She said to herself, desperately trying to comfort herself. But every day she woke, expecting to find Lu, but all she found was sand, dirt or rocks.

After many months, Mei finally reached the end of the Silk Road. She had arrived in a state of relief, relief for finally getting there, before collapsing onto the floor. Upon arriving, she had been treated with respect, respect for her talent with weaving, and for managing to make it to the Silk Road. Her life afterwards had been successful, but she was never satisfied. No matter how much money she earned, how many friends she made, there was always a big, gaping hole in her heart, because no matter how hard she tried, Lu was never coming back, but the least she could do for him was live a good life, a better life. A life that Lu would have wanted her to have.

A New Journey to the West

Singapore International School, Zhang, Ruixi – 11

I stood in awe, staring at the magnificent sculptures. The camel I journeyed with seemed to be smiling. Did my “friend” really just say one last goodbye? It had been so sudden, then the news in the car took me back to the present—back home.

“An ancient tomb was discovered at a construction site. Surprisingly, one of the murals consists of Xuanzang and a group of people dancing together, surrounding a little girl holding a small gadget.”

“It seems like a phone, doesn’t it?” my dad joked. I smiled.

It was a hot summer day in Xi’an, yet my father insisted on paying a visit to the Sculptures of the Silk Road, which symbolised its starting point for almost 40 years.

“It is made of locally produced granite, and has a shocking length of 55.9 meters,” my dad rambled on. “Can you see the three Tang people, the three Persians and 14 camels? That is one of the three dogs accompanying the merchants! And if you look in that direction,” he pointed to the right, “you might be able to see the two horses that complete the sculpture if you stand on tiptoes!” He continued to describe how the Tang people worked and lived harmoniously with the Persians, and how they helped each other on their journeys.

I turned back to look at the facial expression of the Tang people. Not sure if it was the heat and history that were making me drowsy, or the light playing a trick on me, but that wink from the statue just seemed so real! Then he even opened his mouth and started talking to me.

“We will soon embark on the journey along the Silk Road. Would you like to join us?”

I froze. Did I hear a statue talking? I slapped my face hard and realized this was not a dream! The ancient trader was actually inviting me to go along with him! I held his outstretched hand and shut my eyes, breathing deeply and bracing myself for the miracle to happen.

“Watch it!” A rough voice jerked me out of my trance. I blinked open my eyes and glanced around, dazed and confused. *Where am I? Why am I wearing this low-chest silk dress? Where are the cars and roads?* Then I remembered. This was the Tang Dynasty! The man who took me here was taking the same parade on that sculpture. There was another man there, also in the parade, who was not carved in the sculpture. His bright red master’s robe was eye-catching, I reflected. Then it hit me. This group of people was about to go on a quest along the legendary Silk Road! And where I was standing right now was the start of this historical path that led to places faraway.

The group warmly welcomed me as the journey started. Although the first few days were exhausting, I quickly adapted to daily routines. My companions were kind, offering me water when I was thirsty and ensuring I stayed warm with clothing and food. “The desert nights can be quite frigid,” Xuanzang kept reminding me.

One day, the parade marched into a busy exotic town. The other members of our group took the silk and tea and started trading with the local merchants for spices and wine, while Xuanzang and I explored the market.

“Top quality spices!”

“The finest wine in the world...”

I heard Xuanzang having some pleasant talks with these wonderful people about how different our lives were before we met the rest of the group at sunset. They were carrying large packages of various goods, while Xuanzang and I prepared the horses and camels for the remaining journey.

Treading the narrow, winding mountain path soon tired me out the next day. The distance between the rest of the group and me was increasing; only Xuanzang waited for me at the next rocky pile. Swoosh. A dark shadow emerged from the shelter of the trees. “Here comes the king; prepare to feel the sting...,” the man sang. His companions fanned out in a ragged circle around us as he chanted. Sensing my tension, Xuanzang moved closer, hoping to comfort me. Our group’s warm welcome and generosity had likely dulled my defenses, I mused. After all, this section of the Silk Road was known for its deceptive sense of security!

Xuanzang stepped forward. “Good afternoon, I am Xuanzang from Chang’an.”

The brigand suppressed a rusty laugh. “Oh, so you are *the* famous monk! Well then, you know a lot, don’t you? I heard that there is a very beautiful melody that is played by the Tang people. If you help me hear it now, you shall pass safely and never be bothered by us again.”

Xuanzang immediately leaned over to me. “Any ideas? Even a monk like me cannot just summon music,” he whispered. I quickly dumped my backpack on the floor and started rummaging through the zips. Ah hah! Luckily, I had placed my beloved little device inside! I opened Apple Music and searched for the most loved song in the capital of Tang—“Rainbow Skirt and Feather Garment Song”, which was created by the Emperor himself. Also, it was only played when there were very important foreign guests visiting Chang’an.

As the lovely tune flowed out of my phone, everyone was rapt in this wonderful melody. I breathed deeply, closed my eyes, and started spinning on tiptoes. I felt a gentle breeze on my face and opened my eyes again. “I’m fading!” I whispered. Xuanzang also seemed to notice and smiled.

“Time for you to go home now, goodbye, my friend. Safe journey.”

“... surrounding a small, modern-looking girl holding up a little black device,” the news continued.

“The device does seem like an iPhone,” my dad muttered to himself, half-confused, half-amused.

I smiled. His half-hearted joke met the truth, but I decided not to tell him about my little adventure on the Silk Road.

Bridge of The Silk Road

Singapore International School, Zhang, Shunning – 11

“Ring!” It was English class again, and as always, it was pair work. Today, we were going to do a project on the Belt and Road Initiative and the Silk Road. As always, I was paired with my table partner, Tom. I wanted to do BRI, but Tom wanted to do the Silk Road. I asked him if he wanted to do it by himself, so we could both do what we wanted. He agreed grudgingly, talking about teamwork. I quickly finished my BRI report and handed it in to Mr Sam. To my surprise, Mr Sam was reading a book and didn't even glance at me.

I peeked at his book.

‘The leader sensed something was wrong. “The bridge isn’t supposed to be so loose,” he shouted to his team. “We must fix it at once!”...’

Suddenly, Mr Sam looked up and said, “I see you have handed in your work. Let me check it.” I felt like a thief caught red-handed – Mr Sam caught me reading his book. “Ah, Jack! You have done your work by yourself, haven’t you?”

“Yes, Mr Sam,” I stammered.

Mr Sam said unhappily, “This is not the first time you’ve done this! You failed again. Don’t you understand that you must work together to create work of the best quality!”

“But... But... Tom is so lazy! It’s so much faster if I do it myself!” I countered.

“He still got better marks for teamwork!” Mr Sam answered.

Mr Sam was definitely angry with me.

To my surprise, he sighed and said, “Jack, read this book, and you might know the importance of teamwork.” And he tossed me his book about the Silk Road. I started to read, but it was so boring that I fell asleep.

All around me were the howls of the wind. In the dream, I was on the back of a camel, and all around me were merchants with goods to trade. The sight before me was the most magnificent sight I’ve ever seen, hundreds of brown camels with colourful saddles travelling across sand that looked golden under the red-and-yellow sunset.

As we moved on, all the camels stopped, and I saw a river with a bridge on top of it. The leader shouted to everyone, “The bridge is loose. Bridge rebuilding group, assemble!” I didn’t see how it would break anytime soon, so I walked over the bridge. “Crack.” The bridge split in half, and my camel bolted away.

The leader gave me an exasperated look and yelled, “Building team! Do your thing!”

I decided I must rebuild the bridge myself, since I broke it. I confidently told the leader I could build it myself. The leader looked very suspicious but agreed. I picked up a few planks from the riverbank and tied them together with ropes. Then I tied the ropes to the bank. “Ta da!” I shouted happily. “I’ve finished my bridge!”

“Glug.” All my planks suddenly sank into the water. I sighed. Can’t I get anything right?

Even the river was laughing at me. The gurgling of the water seemed to shout, “Ha! Even I can destroy your bridge.”

What was I even thinking about? Why did I even bother to try? I definitely couldn’t build a LEGO bridge properly. How could I build a real bridge? I was so foolish.

We split up into groups to rebuild the bridge. Everyone was busy gathering wood, finding ropes or building the bridge. People shouted words of encouragement in languages I didn’t understand. Traders from different places called out, “Thanks!” or “Xie Xie!” or “Aligado!” in languages I didn’t understand. People around me helped out and took the time to do small things like passing a piece of wood or helping tie a tight knot. We finished the bridge that day during sunset. The bridge looked fabulous in the golden sunset. The teamwork here was something I thought unimportant, and my cheeks flushed with embarrassment when I thought of my choice that teamwork wasn’t important.

The next morning, I went out for a stroll and met the leader. The leader ushered me into an empty temple. “I know where you come from since you’re not from my camel team. I appreciate your visit, and you will go soon as your mission is done. I hope you can remember us with this.” He gave me a jade camel that glinted in the sunrise.

“This is just beautiful!” I sighed. I knew jade was a sign of gratitude.

The sun was almost up now, and I started to wake up. In the distance, I heard the leader say, “It’s time to go.” But it was not for the camels to wake up and start walking, but for me to go back to the real world. I found myself lying with my head on the book. I thought everything I experienced was a dream, but the solid jade camel in my pocket told me otherwise.

Suddenly, Mr Sam appeared and asked me if I had a new idea for pair work.

I thought back to all the people whom I worked with, then it hit me: the Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative might not be that different. Even if transportation has become more modern, the goal is the same. It brings people together to create trust, friendship and bonds with other people. People from different places come together to trade on these paths. If anyone needs help, we always help them. We also overcame problems together. We developed close bonds while building the bridges. After all, we are stronger together and trust always brings out the best of us.

When I told Mr Sam all of this and how, next time, if we have to do BRI and the Silk Road again, I can work with my partner and talk about both. After I said it, Mr Sam beamed at me and said I was the best student he ever had.

Time Travel

Singapore International School, Zheng, Anyi – 10

The irritating ringing filled Jake's ears as he slammed his fist into the alarm clock, knocking it off his bedside table. He groaned when he remembered it was Monday and staggered out of bed. "I hate school," he muttered groggily as he stumbled down the stairs. "Mom, I don't want to go!" Jake whined as he packed his school bag. "You have to. Hurry up or you'll miss the bus," his mom said firmly. He glared at her furiously before resuming packing.

The clouds were gloomy and gray, blocking out sunshine as Jake rode the school bus. It was dingy, with bubble gum and snack wrappers stuck between the seats. Scraps of paper were everywhere, and a disgusting stench of rotten food blasted into his face. A wave of sleepiness washed over him as he sat down in his assigned seat, next to a P1 who was always screaming. His eyelids drooped, and despite the loud noise, he fell asleep.

He awoke with a start in a dark hallway. "Where am I?" he murmured to himself, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. In the dim light, he could make out boxes and different kinds of toys and pottery. Bright sunlight hit his eyes, blinding him for a moment as he stepped out of the dark hallway.

Jake's jaw dropped in shock. It was a bustling street, bigger and wider than he could see. A vast ocean of people chatted and laughed. He saw someone twice his size with dark curly hair and brown eyes joking with two others. "Where is this place?" Jake asked him. He tried to sound firm, but his voice turned shaky. "Sorry?" the man replied, confused. Jake's face turned red, and he repeated his question, louder this time. The man stared, then burst into laughter. "You don't know where you are? This is the Silk Road!" Jake's heart skipped a beat. He had learned about the Silk Road at school—how did he end up here?

Jake found a shop and went in, trying to figure out how to get back when he heard a voice behind him. "Hey! What do you think you're doing?" He turned and accidentally knocked a vase off the table. He reached out to catch it. Too late. BANG! He flinched as the vase shattered. The man's expression turned from dismay to rage. "You broke my most prized possession!" He lunged at Jake as he burst through the door.

His body felt numb, and adrenaline pumped as he raced into the woods. The man was closing the gap. Jake's heart thumped loudly. He skidded to a halt as a few rocks crumbled beneath him. A cliff loomed ahead, and his blood turned to ice. "Got you!" He turned to face the man. Jake wanted to scream, to run, but he was glued to the ground. Cold waves crashed overhead, blocking all hope and drowning him in dread.

Suddenly, bushes rustled, and Jake gasped as a wolf leaped out. It growled, baring its teeth. Its muscles rippled under its thick gray pelt as it pounced, its amber eyes glinting. Jake shut his eyes, waiting for the wolf to attack. But instead, he heard a yowl and forced himself to open his eyes. The wolf was attacking the man. He shrieked and kicked at the wolf as it pinned him down, but he was no match for the gray mass that snapped its teeth. The man ran back down the path, breathless and wounded. The wolf glanced at Jake before racing back into the woods.

Jake followed it. What else could he do? The wolf ran easily through the forest while Jake scrambled after it, struggling to navigate through the thick canopy. The wolf halted suddenly, and Jake nearly crashed into it. A single shining point appeared in front of him, slowly expanding into a mass of stars, like a galaxy. Jake stared in awe at the swirling mass of purple. He forced himself to tear his eyes away as soft fur brushed against him. But when he looked back, the wolf was gone. Had it led him here? Jake reached an arm through the portal and let himself get sucked through.

Jake stumbled out into his bedroom and saw that everything was normal: birds chirping, leaves dancing, and the wind whispering. When he looked back, the unknown shape was gone. He was back at the boring place. He felt relieved but also disappointed—he wanted to do more on the Silk Road. He checked the time; it was seven-fifteen. When he left for the bus, it was seven o'clock. How was it possible that it had only been fifteen minutes? He had been at the Silk Road for hours. He thought it was a dream, but then he found a tuft of gray fur on his jacket where the wolf had brushed against him. It looked exactly like the wolf's pelt.

The Great Journey

Singapore International School, Zhou, Lexi – 10

September 663, Constantinople

Wang Ze, Aylin, and Midnight were zigzagging through the crowd at the Grand Bazaar in Constantinople, trying not to get hit by any stray elbows or knees, their sacks flung over their shoulders. The busy crowd was mainly made up of merchants who shouted to trade their products, while others hurried down the road to carry on with their journey. But for the three of them, they still had a bit of stuff to trade before moving on. Midnight prodded Aylin and cocked her head to the left.

“Fur!” Aylin exclaimed, patting Midnight on the head with a “Thanks, Midnight!” and hurried off with Wang Ze to trade some fur. A few minutes later, they came back, each carrying half a sack of fur and both with bright smiles grinning from ear to ear. The fur would come in useful later on their journey.

“Now we are ready for the East!” Aylin gushed as they returned to their caravan and embarked on their journey.

May 664, Merv Oasis

Their camels trekked among seemingly endless dunes of glistening sand. All of a sudden, there emerged a vibrant oasis city, with lush gardens, bustling but not too busy streets, grand mosques, libraries, and palaces.

“WOW!” Wang Ze gasped.

“Oh! I think we’ve arrived at Merv!”

When they got closer, all of them stared at it in amazement... a complete miracle. A wonderful patch of green appeared out of mountains of sand, containing joy and happiness. Laughter and chitchat floated in the air, and as it reached their ears, becoming a mesmerising song. Suddenly, a deep but gentle voice jolted them out of their ‘dream’.

“We get that reaction a lot with newcomers. Look at the merchants in the caravan behind you,” said a strongly built guard with a friendly smile. And true enough, when they looked back, the merchants in the caravan were staring at the Oasis with the same astonished looks.

It was obvious that the Merv Oasis was a warm and welcoming city, and the right place to stop. As they walked around, they overheard people saying that the cotton in Merv was of a superior quality and their melons were spectacular.

“Hey, should we try a melon? They do look very sweet,” Wang Ze asked when they passed a stall selling melons.

“Yeah,” said Aylin, while Midnight gazed at the other two with her round, shiny, and pleading eyes.

Aylin traded some amber and fur for some melons and cotton. When they had their first bite into the melon, they knew that they had made no mistake because the melon was absolutely scrumptious. The sweet juice and crispy but soft flesh sang in their mouths as they savoured the melon at the speed of turtle walking. When they finished, they licked the juice from their fingers, not wanting to waste a single drop of it. No wonder no merchants would leave Merv before getting at least half a sack of melons, and no less.

A few days went by, and much too soon, it was time for them to move on. As they trotted away on their camels and caravan, they looked back at Merv with a longing expression. They didn’t want to leave. They still

remembered how amazed they were when they first came into Merv, but now that they recalled it, the memory came fresh and sharp, and it felt like yesterday. They continued their journey eastward, and everyone seemed to be lost in their own thoughts.

February 665, Chang'an

"Ah, we've arrived in Chang'an!" Wang Ze exclaimed. It felt so good to be back in his homeland. He breathed in the chilly air and wrapped his cloak around himself more tightly. Aylin put a blanket over Midnight, then buttoned up her thick winter jacket.

Just as they were about to start trading, Aylin realised that one of the sacks containing the goods from Constantinople was missing. "Wang Ze! Our sack from Constantinople is missing! Where is that sack?" Wang Ze and Aylin looked at each other with troubled expressions and started urgently searching the way they had come from.

Midnight had her suspicions. She sat high on a wall, sweeping the whole market with her eyes in the colour of a dark alleyway at night. Suddenly, her eyes narrowed and focused on a pile of sacks in the corner that seemed oddly out of place. She walked over, careful not to be seen, and almost immediately noticed their sack. She ran over to Wang Ze, who was mumbling to himself, sounding like a deflated balloon. "Oh, no, what if we can't find that sack? We won't be able to..." He broke off when he saw the are-you-done-talking-yet gaze from Midnight. She cocked her head to the right, indicating that he followed her. When they stopped at that pile of sacks, Wang Ze's expression turned from puzzlement to astonishment as soon as he spotted their sack, and his mouth formed a giant O.

"Aylin! Look! Our sack! I'll go..." Before Wang Ze could finish his sentence, Aylin had already zoomed off to get their sack back, at the speed of a lightning bolt.

The next few days went past in a blur as they were busy trading. After they could finally take a break, Aylin made a mattress with cotton and silk they got from trading, for all of them to lie down on it, and it was so comfortable that they felt like floating in the sky, among fluffy clouds. Cuddling together, Aylin asked Wang Ze, "What do you think of staying in Chang'an? I mean, I kinda like it here. And I think Midnight does, too." They looked at Midnight, right now playing around the corner, meowing happily while trying to 'tackle' another cat.

"Yeah, I think we should," Wang Ze replied. So, just like that, they settled down in Chang'an. Midnight found a partner, Silas, and together, they became the ancestors of the home cats in China.

The Journey on the Silk Road

Singapore International School, Wong, Annabel – 11

The rhythmic *clink clink* of camel bells and the braying of donkeys carrying loads for their owners was the soundtrack of Nina's childhood. One day, the sun was high over the bustling markets of Chang'an. Nina stood mesmerised before a stall that said, "Heavenly silk". Her fingers hovered inches above the layers and layers of silk that shimmered like moonlight on a moving river. The silk was dyed indigo, woven with silver threads that formed the shapes of soaring cranes. Nina had wavy brown hair, blue eyes, and a sharp nose, dotted with freckles. She may seem innocent and polite, but there is a brave side of her that shows when she really wants to achieve something.

Sometimes when she was spending her time in the markets, she would look out of the walls of the city and imagine the great desert, the Gobi Desert, sitting majestically, *waiting* for her. The golden horizon she had only ever seen in ink paintings before stretched across the lands. The skies painted with fiery orange and bruised purple, she imagined the wind whistling through the dunes, hundreds of camels trekking West, their long shadows like giant fingers on the sand. Echoes of coyote howls, a distant caw of a hawk. Her, riding a camel, a trekker travelling on the legendary Silk Road.

Nina always wanted to travel on the Silk Road and meet people from all over the world, but she was never allowed outside the city. Her father, a merchant, took her aside one afternoon. "Listen, Nina. You are old and mature enough to join our caravan now. We leave tomorrow morning. Pack your things." He turned to leave. Nina couldn't hide her excitement. A huge grin spread across her face. "Yes, father, thank you, father!" She bowed. Nina's father stopped in the doorway and said, "The Silk Road is not a path, Nina. It is a conversation between worlds. And tomorrow you join that talk."

The journey began. Nina rode her very first camel, whom she named Dusty. "This is it!" Nina said, her heart whooping with joy. "I'm finally travelling on the road I was always meant to be!" She felt the wind whistling in her ear, a melody she longed to hear. Several merchants joined their trading caravans, and his dad, Master Lin, was the leader of the group.

The caravan travelled west. Nina watched as the lush rolling hills of Central China slowly began to thin out into the dry rocks of the Loess Plateau. As the sun dipped below the rugged hills, the caravan circled the camels to create a windbreak from the cooling air. This was Nina's first campfire with the "Veterans of the Sands" ---men and women whose faces were etched with the years of travelling. As the brushwood fire crackled, sending sparks flying towards the sky, the men told stories, legends they heard during their travels across the world.

Then, after months of trekking through the treacherous mountains and scorching deserts, Nina finally saw it: a shimmering spark of turquoise that seemed to hold a piece of the sky captive on the earth. It was Bukhara, the "Jewel of the East", and the heart of their long journey.

"Look closely, Nina." Her father said, wearing a proud smile. "This is where the world meets to exchange its secrets."

As Nina and the merchants walked through the city, they were fascinated by the facades, shimmering with glazed tile mosaics, some even with detailed brick patterns. Even more, Nina was overwhelmed by the caravans of hundreds of camels and horses, all laden with goods from India and China, flowing in like waves, bringing treasure to a distant island. The strong smells of spices wafted into Nina's nose. Markets displayed woven carpets, wool, gold embroideries, and much more. As merchants traded in caravanserais, sharing meals, exchanging news, languages and culture, music filled the air as local Bukharans performed, some playing foreign music, or dancing, all celebrating their special day, Silk and Spices Day. The constant flow of people from Persia,

India and China brought diverse traditions to Bukhara, making this city a carpet woven with Buddhism, Islam, Muslim, and Judaism. Nina was fascinated by the difference between Bukhara and China. Unlike the rigid, grid-like streets and sweeping wooden eaves of Chang'an, Bukhara was a swirling mystery of narrow alleys and trading domes called *taqs* that hummed with a thousand languages. The local people are blowing foreign flutes, so *different* from China. Every corner revealed new wonders, from a deep, cool pool, a *hauz*, to merchants selling "glass", a material as clear as mountain water.

On their final night in the West, the merchants held a last campfire to celebrate their successful trades and the forged bonds on this journey. Under the canopy of stars, the air was thick with a sweet floral scent of perfume. Around the fire, the distinctions of nationalities faded; the Chinese silk merchants, Persian jewellers, Sogdian guides laughed together, their voices a symphony of different tongues united by the shared language of the Silk Road.

Nina realised the Silk Road wasn't just a route that allowed people to trade with one another, but it acted like a road to a feast of bonds with people of different countries and cultures. On her way back to Chang'an, Nina thought about when she met a Persian trader, how she taught him how to weave silk, something that was passed from one generation to another in Nina's family. "And see, that's how you make these luxurious fabrics." Nina had said, finishing her weaving, producing a crimson red fabric that stunned the fascinated merchant. And in exchange, the merchant taught Nina how to identify pure silver coins.

The Silk Road hadn't just brought them to Bukhara but had woven their lives into the grand tapestry of the world, and the Silk Road will continue to flourish for years to come. As for Nina, it was just the beginning of a whole new journey on the legendary road of the West.

The Hidden Hand Behind the Journey

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Chung Yam – 11

With beads of sweat on his forehead, Xuanzang pondered if the sandstorm nightmare would ever end.

In the 7th century CE, Buddhist scriptures were widely circulated, but their content was often inconsistent. Some were mixed with ideas from Chinese traditions, while others may miss essential texts that changed the overall context.

Therefore, as a devout Buddhist monk, Xuanzang felt obliged to study the original scriptures and introduce authentic Buddhist statues to his country. He was so determined that he sneaked out of the country without permission, as foreign travel was forbidden. He was keen to look for the original scrolls and translate them into Chinese so that his country could read them.

That was where he was for the moment—a sandy desert with no water source or even a place to take a rest. He hadn't had a sip of water since the sun rose, and his lips were cracked with thirst. He noticed something in the distance, and his eyes widened in shock. *A sandstorm*, he thought. First, the desert winds began to howl. Then, the fierce winds lunged at him as fast as lightning. He barely had time to think before the wind blinded his eyes. Immediately, his knees buckled and he collapsed lifelessly.

When he regained consciousness, he thought he was in the afterlife. The sandstorm had swallowed him whole; he could neither breathe nor see. How could he still be alive? He turned his head. A man in strange attire was sitting beside him. *How strange*, he thought. *He wore pants—with holes? Why was he wearing transparent round pieces on his eyes? Most importantly, what was he doing here?* His mind was brimming with questions that were waiting to be answered.

When the man noticed that he was awake, he quickly scrambled to his feet. He knelt and said, "What an honor to meet you, sir! What an honor!" Xuanzang asked, "Did you save me from the sandstorm?" "Of course," he replied, "We can't afford losing a legendary figure this quickly!" He chuckled at his own joke.

"What do you mean? I demand an explanation!" the monk asked sharply. The man averted his gaze and tried to change the topic. "Anyway, I'm Morgan, nice to meet you!"

"Hnm, I have to continue my journey now." Xuanzang gazed at the desert horizon. "Ah, I am lost! How am I supposed to find my way to Tianzhu?" "What? You don't have...", Realization dawned upon the man's face. "Oh, you don't have it yet, you can take mine for now. I have a spare GPS on me." The monk looked at it curiously. "Not only can you locate where you are, but you can also find a way out when you get lost."

"Let me show you something else as cool as this," the man said, pulling a small metal aircraft from his backpack. "This is a drone; you can navigate it with this controller." He tossed him a black device with a joystick. "You can use this to control the drone to scout ahead. I know there are a lot of bandits around. If you see any bandits, quickly scout a safer path to bypass them."

"Last but not least, I bought some heat packs and cool clothing for you. The temperature of the desert's day and night is like fire and ice—burning hot in the day but freezing at night. In the daytime, wear something light. These clothes are also light-colored. Unlike dark clothes, these ones reflect sunlight instead of absorbing heat. They can make you cooler than a normal monk's robes. When it is nighttime, you can use these heat packs to fight off the freezing winds that sweep across the dunes. I believe that these gadgets will help you on your way. Good luck and Godspeed."

They say, “Seeing is believing.” However, Xuanzang couldn’t believe what he had just witnessed. All these gadgets—heat packs? Drones? GPS? Xuanzang had never heard of them before. He was overwhelmed by curiosity and could not stop studying these tools.

“Thank you, Morgan. These tools will certainly speed my way to collect the scriptures from Tianzhu. It was nice meeting y—” He trailed off. Morgan was nowhere to be seen. All that remained was the imprint in the sand where he sat. Xuanzang rose, clutching the tools tighter, and stepped toward the horizon. His journey to Tianzhu had only just begun.

In the modern day, everyone knows about Xuanzang travelling to Tianzhu, or India as we refer to nowadays. He successfully obtained the Buddhist scriptures and translated them to Chinese. His odyssey even inspired Wu Cheng’en to write a story that everyone has read in childhood, *Journey to the West*. Children marveled at how Xuanzang faced this challenge alone. Yet, perhaps there was more to the story. Did anyone wonder how he accomplished these impossible feats all by himself? Will history researchers find out what Morgan’s identity really was? Why did he help Xuanzang on his travels?

Only time will tell.

The Dragon Fan Adventure

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Hei Yau Gabriel – 9

The sun shone brightly over Xi'an, the ancient starting city of the Silk Road. Fourteen-year-old Sarah stood beside her parents at the railway station, watching a long, blue and white train roar to a halt. "That's the China-Europe Railway Express," her dad explained, pointing to the modern designed train. "It carries different merchandise from China to Europe – just like the old camel caravans, but at an incredible speed!"

Sarah's family own a small shop that sells hand-made silk Chinese fans. That morning, they sent a big box of fans to a store in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, "Mr. Karimov, a merchant and an old friend of mine ordered them for his little daughter, Aisha's sixth birthday," her mother said in delight. "Aisha said the fans remind her of the Silk Road stories her grandma told her."

That afternoon, Sarah's mom got a worrying call. "The box is missing a fan!" Mr. Karimov said over the phone. "It's the one with a golden dragon painted on it. Aisha has been talking about it for weeks!" Sarah had a heavy heart. She painted that dragon herself, adding the tiny red and gold details. "I have to find it!" She pledged.

Just then, Sarah's cellphone buzzed. It was a message from Arman, a boy from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, same aged as Sarah. They'd become pen pals two years earlier, thanks to a "Silk Road Youth Art Exchange" activity her school organized. Kids from China, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan sent each other drawings and handwritten letters about their hometowns. Arman sent Sarah a sketch of Samarkand's landmark, Registan Square, and Sarah mailed him a small hand-made silk bookmark with Terracotta Army design. Arman loved trains and knew everything about the China-Europe Railway. He had even drawn her a map of its network in his last letter, which Sarah thought mimicked a spiderweb. Sarah typed quickly, "Can you help me, please? A silk dragon fan went missing on the train to Tashkent!"

Arman replied instantly. "I'll check the railway station here! My uncle works with the cargo team. The Express stops in Samarkand before Tashkent. Let's track it together!"

For the next couple of days, Sarah and Arman worked nonstop. Sarah asked her dad to call the railway office in Xi'an. They learned that the box has been opened briefly at a station in Kazakhstan for customs inspection. "Maybe the fan fell out there," her dad said. Arman talked to his uncle, who found a witness. A janitor saw a small, colourful fan on the platform floor. "A tourist picked it up," the janitor said. "She was going to the Penjikent ruins in Tajikistan."

Penjikent was an ancient Sogdian Silk Road city with old temples and murals – Arman had drawn it in one of his letters, describing how he visited there for a school trip. "I can go there!" Arman offered. "Penjikent is a short journey from my city, and my uncle drives a truck along the new Silk Road highway. He can take me!"

Sarah sent Arman a photo of the dragon fan. "It has 'friendship' in Chinese written on the back," she told him. "That was my masterpiece. I spent days in drawing and decorating the golden dragon!" Without delay, Arman started off with his uncle. They drove past modern highways and camel caravans – old and new Silk Road meeting side by side. Arman sent Sarah photos of the desert and camels, just like the scenes he'd drawn in his letters.

Later that day, Arman arrived at Penjikent. The place was vast and flooded with people from different countries. He walked through the ruins, asking tourists if they had seen the fan. Nobody gave a positive answer, and after an hour's search, Arman felt frustrated and was about to give up. Just then, an Iranian woman told him, "I saw a girl with a pretty fan in the museum nearby."

Arman dashed to the museum. Immediately, he spotted a girl with braids looking at a display of the ancient Silk Road paintings. In her hand was the dragon fan! “Excuse me, lady,” Arman said politely, “That fan belongs to my friend Sarah. It’s a gift for a little girl in Tashkent.”

The girl smiled. “I found it on the railway platform. I’m a university student from Turkey – here for a Silk Road photo contest. The fan is so beautiful. I wanted to take a photo of it with the ruins.” She handed it to Arman. “Please tell Sarah I’m sorry that I kept it. I just loved the dragon!”

Arman rushed to send a message to Sarah. “I found it!” Sarah jumped in an exhilaration. That evening, Arman took the fan to Tashkent. He met Mr. Karimov and little Aisha, who hugged the fan tightly. “Thank you!” Aisha said. “Now I can have it at my birthday party tomorrow!” They all had a wonderful dinner together at Karimov’s place.

A week later, Sarah got a big parcel in the mail. Inside was a box of Uzbek baklava, a Turkish hand-woven carpet square with colourful Silk Road patterns, and a photo: Arman, little Aisha and the Turkish girl standing beside the China–Europe Railway Express. Aisha was holding the dragon fan, smiling happily. There was also a letter from Arman, written in neat, careful handwriting. “This little adventure isn’t just about trains and fans. It’s about old and new friends with a kind heart. Your fan brought all of us together.”

Sarah smiled as she ate a piece of baklava (sweet and nutty as Arman described in his letters) with her heart sweetened and warmed by the snack. The sun set over Xi’an, and Sarah thought about the ancient Silk Road traders and the new railway drivers. They all shared the same vision: a desire to connect, to share, and to be kind. The spirit of modern Silk Road is about people like her and Arman, linked by a railway, a pen pal letter, a dragon fan, and a promise to help each other.

The First Caravan, The Glory of Tang Dynasty

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Ho Shing Brandon – 10

What is the best way to truly experience the wonders of the ancient world? Brandon is an ancient history fanatic although he is just turning 10. While his friends are busy being digital gladiators and video games, Brandon lived among real emperors and kings. His parents, tired of his obsession, had dragged him shopping for New Year treats and decorations, but he'd escaped from the modern mall to look for his favorite sanctuary.

Brandon slipped into 'Curios & Chronicles', escaping the busy street decorated for Chinese New Year. The shop smelled of old books and leather, a welcome change from the sweet scents outside. Red lanterns and paper cuttings glowed along Hollywood Road, but Brandon was searching for something more exciting than decorations.

In a shadowy corner, Brandon found a strange grandfather clock. Its dials were marked with words like "Epoch" and "Destination." He turned the dial to the year 700, the height of the Tang Dynasty, and pulled the red lever. Suddenly, the machine screamed like a banshee. A bright light swallowed him up. The world melted away into a vortex of sound and colour.

He landed hard on solid and sun-baked earth. The roar was gone, replaced by the shouts of people and the clatter of horse-drawn carts on wide, paved streets. The city walls reached high into the clouds. The people, dressed in splendid robes of silk and finely woven cotton, moved through the crowds with confidence and pride. This was Chang'an, alive with preparations for the Lunar New Year—red banners fluttered, and the scent of dumplings and sweet cakes filled the air.

Brandon was overwhelmed. The shops were bursting with silks, porcelain, and exotic spices. Han Chinese merchants walked with an air of authority, their businesses thriving, treated with immense respect by all who passed. He saw some tall, rugged-looking nomadic people, dressed in traditional attire, listening intently to the Chinese merchants, like thirsty students at a well of wisdom.

A young official noticed Brandon's strange clothes and decided to help him.

"Who are you?" the official asked, his eyes narrowing slightly at Brandon's t-shirt and shorts. "With those strange clothes, where are you from? You seem lost."

"I am Brandon Chan and I come from Hong Kong." Brandon replied.

"You come from me," the official laughed. How coincident that his name was Li Hong Kong. He managed the volatile West Market. He decided to take the boy under his wing.

Li Hong Kong introduced Brandon to the strength of the Tang Dynasty. "We are the centre of the world," Mr Li declared. "Our Emperor ensures peace. The surrounding nations—Turks, Uyghurs, Mongols—all come here. They respect our civilization and seek to learn our culture and trade methods."

Brandon stayed in Chang'an for a few days, swept up in the excitement of New Year preparations—watching lion dancers rehearse, helping hang red scrolls, and tasting festival treats. He began to reflect on the nature of history about the Silk Road he learned from school. It wasn't just dates and battles; it was real life, vibrant and complex, far more real than his history books could ever convey.

One afternoon, Turkic merchants argued fiercely with officials over tea bricks. Their voices were thunderclaps in the market air. The Turkic merchants, tall and intimidating, demanded a refund. The Chinese officials stood their ground.

"We must solve this problem!" Brandon insisted to Li.

"This is complex!" Mr Li claimed.

Brandon used the clear, loud voice he learned from his public speaking class to cut through the noise. "Silence, everyone!" His voice was a knife slicing through thick smoke. He used body language to command the attention. "Let's use mathematics to solve it!" he yelled.

He drew a table on the ground with a sketch, applying modern math logic to calculate the value, proposing a fair compromise. His methodical presentation and precise calculations convinced both sides, saving the day.

Brandon reflected on how skills he considered boring in modern school were vital here. Math was the universal language of trade.

Later, by a river outside the city, a little girl fell in. The inland villagers panicked. "I can swim!" Brandon shouted. He jumped in like a dolphin. He quickly reached the girl and brought her to shore. The villagers were deeply impressed by the boy who could "walk on water."

He realized swimming was a modern necessity, a skill unknown to many here. Knowledge was currency, more valuable than the silk in the market.

That night, Li Hong Kong gave Brandon an exquisite jade pendant as a New Year blessing. Brandon picked up a strange wooden wind instrument. It was an ancient clarinet. He tried to play. The sound was a clumsy squeak, like a mouse in distress. Li laughed and happily taught him the ancient method.

"You have helped preserve the glory of the Empire," Li said. "You possess a wisdom that bridges worlds."

A white light enveloped Brandon. He hugged the jade pendant tightly. He reflected on the journey. He had been a part of history, not just a reader of it. The Tang Dynasty wasn't just respected; it had earned that respect through openness and wisdom.

He stumbled back into 'Curios & Chronicles'. The shop was quiet. His stomach was still hungry, but the cold jade pendant was real.

"Find something interesting?" the shop owner asked with a weird smile.

Brandon held up the pendant. "Yes. I solved a trade problem, saved someone, and learned a little music." He smiled and walked out onto Hollywood Road, feeling that the lanterns outside held a slight, enduring shimmer of the prosperous Tang era and the Silk Road. He felt different now, wiser, knowing history was an ongoing, vibrant journey. He rushed home and started writing his time travelling adventure story during the holiday break.

Seven Spices of the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Chan, Ming Hin Andrew – 10

I heard a loud "clack!" as the wooden shuttle fell. I looked up and saw my mom staring at her shaking hands.

My name is Wei, a boy living in Chang'an. My mother weaves the most beautiful silver silk in our town. Traders from countries I'd never even heard of come to buy it. But one day, everything changed. My mother's hands started shaking and she couldn't make them stop.

"Your mother's sickness is getting worse," the doctor said, looking worried. "She may never weave again."

The next morning, I heard two Buddhist monks talking outside our gate.

"Have you heard? The Seven Magical Spices from Delhi cured a soldier who couldn't move!" one monk whispered.

I got so excited my heart started beating fast. Maybe the spices could fix my mom! But Delhi was three months away over deserts and mountains. Could I even make it there?

I remembered a trader from Delhi who bought my mother's silk. He told us he traveled a long route that traders called the Silk Road.

To heal my mother, I decided to go to Delhi for the Seven Magical Spices. I packed twenty rolls of my mother's silk and left her a note: "I'm travelling the Silk Road to find the Seven Magical Spices. I'll bring them back to make you better. I promise."

I found a group of travellers and traded two rolls of silk for a camel. I joined their group and we started the long trip to Delhi. We passed by mountains and cities. One day, we entered the Taklamakan Desert. The sun was hot and the sand kept blowing in my face.

"Help!" someone shouted from far away. Following the sound, I found a man sinking into a patch of quicksand. I remembered the rope in my bag and quickly got it out.

"Here! Catch this!" I shouted. He grabbed the rope and I pulled as hard as I could. My arms hurt but I didn't let go. Finally, he got back onto the solid sand.

"You saved my life!" he said. "Why would you do that for a stranger?"

"We have to help each other. That's what my mom always says," I replied. I told him why I was going to Delhi and he told me he was a merchant from Persia.

"I know Delhi! There's a spice shop there that has what you're looking for, but the shopkeeper makes everyone pass a test. A lot of people failed it." He handed me a map. "Here, this map shows a faster way to go. Be careful, there are robbers on this road."

Weeks later, we crossed the desert and reached the Kabul mountains. Suddenly, our group was surrounded by robbers. They pointed their knives at us.

"Give us all your stuff!" the robbers yelled.

I was very scared but I had to do something. I held up one of the prettiest silk rolls and said, "This is the best silk from Chang'an. It is rare and sells good price. Take it and let us go." The robber leader looked at the shiny silk, then at me. He was quiet for a long time.

"Go," he said, waving his hand. "Get out of here."

I couldn't believe it. He let us go! After we were safely away, a man from our group walked beside me. "That was very brave," he said. He told me he was a medicine trader. As we travelled, he taught me how to tell real spices from fake ones.

I didn't know then, but this was the most important lesson of my trip.

After a few more weeks, we finally reached Delhi. The market there smelled amazing with warm scents of spices. I found the ancient spice shop in a small alley. A boy about my age came out to greet me.

"Are you looking for the Seven Magical Spices?" he asked. I nodded and told him about my mother.

"You must pass my test first," he said. "The magic only works for people who really know their spices." He placed seven bowls in front of me. "Tell me which spices they are. You only get one chance."

I was nervous but I remembered everything the medicine trader had taught me. I smelled and touched the spices carefully: cardamom, star anise, ginger, cinnamon, black pepper, turmeric. Finally, there was saffron, a spice that costs as much as gold.

"You passed!" the boy said. "However, there's one last secret. To make the magic work, you must grind the spices with something that belongs to the sick person. We have to do it right here."

I knew exactly what to do. I pulled out a piece of my mother's silk and gave it to him.

The boy smiled. "We have everything we need."

The trip home felt even longer, but months later, my camel finally reached Chang'an. I ran into the house and found my mother lying in bed, too weak to move.

"My son, where have you been?" she asked softly.

"I brought the magical spices!" I cried.

I made her the tea with the Seven Magical Spices. As she drank it, I told her everything: the desert, the man in the quicksand, the robbers and the kind trader who taught me about spices.

Seven days later, I heard the most beautiful sound: click-clack, click-clack. My mother was weaving silk again! Her new silk pattern showed my whole trip. There was a long road with little camels. She even wove in the man I saved from the quicksand and the robbers we met in the mountains.

"It's your adventure," she whispered and squeezed my hand. "My brave son and all the kind people who helped you."

Now people come from all over the world to buy our silk. When they ask about the pattern on it, I get excited and tell them, "It's about my adventure on the Silk Road!"

It'll remind everyone that for two thousand years, the Silk Road has been about more than trade—it's about strangers becoming friends, about impossible journeys made possible by kindness.

Now we work together, creating silk that tells stories of the road that saved her. Traders say it's the most valuable silk on the entire route—not for its quality, but for its message: the Silk Road's greatest treasure isn't silk or spices, but the connections between people brave enough to help each other.

The Truth about the First Chinese Explorer to Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Cheng, Feldman Max Tszho – 9

138 BCE, Han Dynasty, Chang'an, China

Wars had been on for years, but there was no sign of an end. Roads were filled with sorrowful faces. People felt heartbroken and struggled from hunger. Some faced the unimaginable pain of losing everything during the war. Even Emperor Wu, who once commanded great power, found himself without money to buy weapons. His mighty army was now weakened. They were hopeless for better future.

"Get ready everyone," shouted Che-hao, the palace leader, packing his backpacks full of supplies for the journey. "We're embarking on a quest to trade silk for gold for Emperor Wu, who needs to buy new weapons!"

Che-hao spent years studying the Silk Road journey, dreaming of venturing to Rome to exchange valuables for gold, which could help Emperor Wu to fight for his empire. He paced back and forth, eyes bright with determination. "We must bring the strongest camels and horses! Gather the most precious silk, spices, gemstones and tea!" He commanded.

The crowd buzzed with a mix of excitement and nervousness. Someone raised a voice of caution, "Be careful, Che-hao! No one has ever return from this journey!" But Che-Hao was undeterred.

"This could be our last chance to help Emperor Wu to win the war!" he insisted, ignored the worried murmurs, "Together, we can bring home treasures to protect our land!" they all understood the journey would be filled with challenges, but they also knew how crucial their mission was.

Che-hao exclaimed, rallying his team. "Let's make history!"

As his slippers dropped from his candle, making a bang, Che-hao embarked on his journey to Rome, the fabled 'Gold Empire.' He was not alone, eighty-nine warriors accompanied him, each possessing high stamina and experience.

As Che-hao and his warriors soon bounced ecstatically across the border, the challenges of the Silk Road quickly became apparent. In the vast landscape of the desert, sand stretched under the harsh sun, air shimmered with heat. Dry climate drained them faster which water reserved for the journey to alarming levels, each sip became precious.

One night when they stopped for rest, faint shadows appeared in Che-hao's eyesight, curious but worried, he went to investigate. Out of the blue, a group of bandits jump in and started stealing. "Help! They're robbing us!" he yelled, his warriors grabbed their swords to fight and chased the bandits away, unexpectedly they realized half of their supplies was gone! Everyone felt distraught. "We are running low on supplies. How are we expected to fight our best?" echoed through the crowd.

As the murmurs grew louder, morale was faltering, Che-hao felt devastated too, but they could not give up, at this moment, in this place. He raised his hand, calling for silence. "Listen! I understand your frustrations. We all feel the strain. But let's transform this into resolve. We must find our way to carry this burden together. We are warriors, not just in strength but in spirit." The warriors began to murmur among themselves, "You are right, this struggle is not ours alone.", "We need to remind ourselves why we fight, it's for our families, our home." Feeling the energy shift, Che-hao released as they agreed to face whatever challenges lay ahead.

Endless scorching days turned into chilling nights, warriors were strengthless to battle the extreme weather. Sandstorms whipped through the terrain from nowhere. They saw dead bodies and skeletons along the path. They had lost thirty-four warriors, and it hurt to know they couldn't bring 'them' home.

"We have to remember them. They are Heroes."

After 398 days, they finally arrived in Ferghana, they felt a wave of relief wash over them, they quickly find a caravanserai to stay. They grinned like a Cheshire cat when settled in. After all sufferings and challenges they had faced on their journey, this cozy place felt like a dream.

Che-hao managed to find water and food for his warriors, he sprinted back to the room filled with excitements. Suddenly he heard some loud screams. When he turned around, all warriors had fainted! Before he could react, two dark-skinned Uzbeks dressed in chapons, moved quickly and chained his hands.

He and four fainted warriors were thrown in a tightly locked jail cell. "What's happening?" Che-hao felt hopeless, the joyful moment had turned into nightmare, and he realized they were in serious trouble, wondering whatever torture would the Uzbeks do to them. "Stay calm, think!" he told himself. He needed to figure a way out and save his warriors.

Even he felt extremely danger, he noticed a massive hole in the cell, and vaguely heard swords clanking and wild screams. The only thing stopping him was the muscular Uzbek who guarded them. Then he saw his warriors gradually awakening. Without hesitation, he picked up a big rock and threw to the Uzbek's head.

"I'll check the hole. If it's an escape, I'll come back for you," he whispered to his now-conscious warriors. With half-opened eyes, Che-hao crawled down, that led him to a dark and rough tunnel. But as he plodded on, it exploded into a kaleidoscope of exotic turquoise and sapphire, in shapes of flowers. He was fascinated by the colourful tiles, and noticed a flock of pigeons swarming him. The pigeons flapped their wings as if comforting him. Overwhelmed by the beauty, Che-hao dazzled, leaned on the ground, despite the chaos just happened and fell asleep.

2026, Pir Siddiq Complex, Margilan, Uzbekistan

One early morning, when the guard opened the area for visitors, he found Che--hao lying unconscious in the cave that Saint Pir Siddiq once stayed and was rescued by pigeons. Strangely, he was dressed in a one-piece robe, hands chained. The guard quickly sent him to hospital.

This yellow-skinned man was on the bed, well-taken care of, he never seen any place so modern, blinded by halogen lights. He asked the nurse beside him in Chinese, "Where am I? What's happening?" But the nurse, confused, simply handed him a booklet about the "Silk Road", the only thing she could do to beat the language barrier.

He flipped through the pages, everything unfamiliar, until he saw his portrait on the page, but signed "Zhang Qian". He was first shocked, then contemplated his journey in silence.

Finally, he spoke.

'I would like to speak to the historian,' said Che-hao, with tears rolling from his eyes, realising that he had travelled more than 2000 years, and yet no one knew the truth about him as the real explorer.

A Silk Road Adventure

St. Joseph's Primary School, Cheuk, Tsun Him – 10

“Thud! Thud!” The butterflies in my stomach danced as I hammered the last nail into the caravan, which was about to carry us on our first journey along the Silk Road. “Are the supplies ready?” Tom asked, appearing out of nowhere. Sam was as surprised as I was to see Tom after we had spent months trying to persuade him that this was a good idea. With a sudden Black Death outbreak in the nearby towns, he couldn’t risk his vulnerable mother falling more ill and not being able to afford the correct treatment.

Our relatives and friends had travelled a long distance to wish us farewell at the starting point in Chang'an in the hope of our returning safely. The fear in their eyes was obvious, especially my wife’s, but when I looked at my son, I knew I had to complete the journey to give him a better life. People often spoke about the Silk Road and how dangerous it can be. Despite this, I knew that travelling the Silk Road was the next step in my career as a silk merchant. I also knew that without a great team it would be impossible to do, which is why Sam and Tom were my first call. Sam, my oldest friend from the army, whose survival expertise was critical in completing the journey, and Tom, whose calm and methodical thinking would get us out of sticky situations.

We set off on our adventure, and over the next two weeks, we endured blistering heat and miles of derelict terrain. We came across people from all over the East and West and listened to languages I had never heard before. We once came across a tall man with light brown hair who spoke a language which he called Italian. Upon seeing that we were almost out of food, he offered us something called pizza. It was unlike anything I had ever tasted, and although we were terribly homesick, we were excited to be learning about different cultures through food. We met merchants who taught us about religions like Catholicism and Islam, and I listened to ideologies from backgrounds completely different to mine.

Days passed, and we were faced with the enormous mountains of the Gansu Corridor. The next leg of our journey was to pass between them, but on our approach, the ground sent vibrations through our bodies. “An earthquake! Get down!” I bellowed. Tom was paralysed with fear. Thankfully, Sam quickly reacted and tackled him to the ground before rocks began tumbling towards us. Once the rocks finally stopped falling, I was relieved to see that nobody was injured; however, our originally clear route was now blocked. Instead, we had to take a notoriously dangerous route, which was infamous for bandits and uninhabitable land. My body shuddered with fear at the realisation.

Scaling to the top of the steep mountain took what felt like forever. To avoid the goods falling from the caravan, we carried them and guided the camels on foot. As we reached the summit, we were fighting for air, unable to rest on the ground as it had been scorched under the sun.

We were surprised to hear the distant sound of chattering echoing around us. Curious, I crept through the bushes that separated us from the sound. I was horrified to see a group of bandits gathered around a fire pit, heavily armed with weapons. “Welcome, my friends. This is our new secret hideout; no one will find us here.” said the leader. The hideout was lit with sparkling lights and filled with thirty bandits wearing what looked like stolen silk. My heart skipped a beat as I trembled in fear.

I hurried back to inform Tom and Sam, “There are armed bandits in front of us! We can’t attack them, we won’t win.” Tom crept forward to inspect and confirmed, “Alex is right, and we can’t outrun them due to the camels.” So, we came up with a plan. Tom and I would confront the bandits while Sam would lay traps.

When the time came, we slowly led the camels away and found a flat surface to park the caravan, which we camouflaged with leaves. Sam hid and began making traps. Meanwhile, Tom and I approached the bandits. They

were hostile upon seeing us, but Tom told the bandits that we were lost and had stumbled across their compound. The bandits immediately demanded we hand over our silk just as Sam signalled that the trap was ready by squeaking like a squirrel. We immediately ran from the bandits, but adamant not to let us get away, they chased after us. We knew to look out for the string that Sam had tied between trees. The trap worked, chaos erupted, and the bandits tripped and fell over, allowing us time to escape.

Finally, we were able to complete our journey down the mountain and warned other merchants to avoid that route on the way. When we successfully completed our journey, we handed over the goods to another merchant in Jiuquan, who continued to transport the goods to the West.

When we arrived back home, the Black Death had infected our town. The streets that were once filled with hustle and bustle were now lonely and quiet. Markets had closed, and trade was suffering. Donating some of our gold to our town felt like the perfect end to our journey.

I reflected on meeting merchants from all around the world and how it helped broaden my horizons. Coming from a tiny village where everything was simple can make a person quite naive. The Silk Road allowed me to put myself in other people's shoes. I was so lucky to have this experience with my good friends Sam and Tom. My heart felt warm with gratitude as I realised that without them, none of this would be possible, but nothing could make me feel luckier or more grateful than being reunited with my family.

Journey of Hope: Brothers on the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Hui, Yiu Lang – 9

The sun shone brightly at dawn. Umar squinted at the bright sun and knew it was time to begin the intense journey. Umar and his younger brother Uzair were preparing the carriage with things that they will need for the next few days. They packed lots of silks, fruits, handcrafts and spices because they wanted to be prepared – just in case. The Silk Road extended before the caravan, a lifeline connecting distant cultures and bustling trades. Beside, their caravan stood their strong veteran camel, Kadir that was well familiar with this ancient route he had travelled on many times before. It stood there calmly with his golden brown fur glistening against the rays of the golden sun. Little did it know about the challenges up ahead.

The three of them began their long journey. Fum, fum, fum.....their footprints stumbling on the soft sand. Their hearts sank heavily as they thought of their ill mother at home. They knew they needed the money to help her get better. Their hopes for a fruitful return from this trade was ever so high, yet hopeful. Uzair stopped midway on the dunes. He declared 'I'm thirsty and hungry. Let's take a break here'. Umar agreed and opened the bag full of essential items. They found some bread with a pot of hummus they had prepared beforehand. After a quick lunch, they set foot again hoping that they had not lost much time.

They met many traders along the way. People with colorful stalls, and other travelers who shared stories and laughter. The boys set up their stall in a fantastic spot, and so they thought. The spot that would attract many customers. They were fascinated by the sights and sounds. Interesting and unique stalls lined the road, filled with beautiful textiles, spices, and delicious foods. The brothers set up their own stall, decorating it with elegant silks and freshly picked fruits. "This is it!" Uzair said, beaming with excitement.

They soon realized that business was slow for them. People walked by their stall, but very few of them stopped to buy. The brothers looked at one another with worry. "What are we doing wrong?" Umar sighed. "We have tried so hard!" Trying to attract more customers, they shouted offers and showcased their goods. "Sweet fruits! Exquisite silks! Come and take a look!" They waved at people passing by, hoping to spark their interest. Even with their efforts, it felt like the market was turning against them. Hours turned into days, and they felt disheartened and discouraged.

So they tried different ways of promoting, they observed other stalls, flooding with customers. They saw traders making sales with ease. They tried to copy their ways. They hung bright banners around their stall and even offered small samples of their fruits to people passing by. "Try this delicious apple!" Umar urged, handing out slices to those who stopped to take a bite. But still, people did not show interest. "What more can we do?" Uzair asked in frustration after another long day. "We cannot give up!" Umar replied, his eyes filled with tears. The next morning, they set up their stall again with a weakened spirit. This time, they shared stories of their mother's illness and hardships they faced. "Every purchase you make supports our aim to care for our ill mother!" they cried.

Slowly, people began to gather around their stall. They listened and were touched by the boys' heartbreaking story. People started to buy fruits, admire the handcrafts, and touch the silks. After many days, business began to pick up. Though not everything sold immediately, the boys cherished every small victory. Uzair and Umar's hard work and creativity began to pay off. Their stall, once empty, was now filled with prosperity. They realized that not only were they selling goods, but they were also building friendships along the Silk Road. Though the journey was tough and brutal, the brothers learned the value of not giving up.

They had a feeling that today would be different. The afternoon drew on, a distant roar echoed through the market. The wind picked up, whipping at the sand. Umar gazed into the swirling sands, knowing that a storm was approaching. "We must hurry before the sandstorm catches up with us!" he shouted to the caravan. "But

unfortunately for them, it was already too late. Soon they were engulfed in the raging storm. They tried their best to get out. As Umar was desperately trying to get out, he saw a glimmer of hope. There was a cave up ahead, 'follow me,' Umar shouted. Umar rode his trusted friend Kadir leading the group to safety. When they had finally arrived at the cave entrance. Umar felt that a massive burden had been lifted off his shoulders. They celebrated dancing with joy as the sandstorm did not damage their goods.

When the storm finally calmed down, they started to explore the cave. "Hey! Come here!" Uzair shouted, pointing to a glimmering light. They walked over to find a stack of old wooden boxes, some covered in dust and spiderwebs. The boys were curious so they opened them one by one. Their eyes grew wide with amazement. Inside the boxes were gold coins, sparkling jewels, and beautiful ornaments that had long been abandoned. 'We found treasure!' Uzair gasped. They hurriedly started to fill up their bags and caravans to the brim. Soon they had already emptied all of the treasure, wearing a big grin on their faces. When they finally stepped out of the cave, the sun was shining brightly, as if celebrating their discovery.

They rode home, their hearts filled with joy, thinking of their mother when they returned with the good news. The adventure along the Silk Road had brought them more wealth than they had ever wished for, and their love for their sick mother guided their way through the journey. Now they can focus on more achieving goals on Silk Road for generations to come.

New Tales of The Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Lau, Haokang Jaden – 11

A. The Start

As I walked through the bustling market with my grandson, Peter, I saw an old man with a camel on a leash. He was carrying goods from the East: silk from China, spices from India, myrrh from Arabia... He looked tired, and his clothes were worn out. His shoulders slumped, eyelids heavy and swollen, skin so pale it was practically translucent. By his looks, he seemed like he had just finished a trip from the Silk Road, and memories of my youth rushed back like a sudden gale. I felt the urge to share my stories with Peter.

At seventeen, my life had been like watching grass grow. My soul longed for adventure. Last week, my parents died in the war. Every day since, I had gone to the mosques, reading to escape despair. Impoverished and alone, I felt condemned to wait for death.

“Unless... No, too risky. But I have nothing to lose. Why not venture east and try my luck?” I thought.

In a book, I discovered an ancient trade route leading to the Far East. No one from New Rome had ventured so far since the fall of Old Rome. Though the region was war-torn and hostile, I resolved to try. Without hesitation, I tore out the map and borrowed ten copper coins from my aunt — I bought a camel, water, and provisions. My journey had begun.

Leaving Constantinople, I watched the world change: hectic cities, quiet villages, then endless roads. Loneliness washed over me. When I reached Mosul, I was famished. The town overflowed with goods, many unknown to me, but one I recognised instantly: silk, a fabric only the rich could afford in New Rome. I longed to own one until I saw the price—ten gold coins! With only four copper coins, I settled for food and drink.

B. Persia Reflection

On my way to Baghdad, I bought a dagger and rations. To continue, I would have to pass through Persia, which was at war with New Rome. Persia sought control of the trade routes, forcing merchants to pay taxes. Outside the city, nearly thirty guards stood at the gate. I was frightened. “Don’t make eye contact, just keep walking,” I told myself. As I queued for entrance, shaken, a row broke out, and chaos erupted. I seized the moment and slipped into the city.

Once I passed the checkpoint, I finally had the chance to look around Persia. The market was alive with chatter, merchants calling out, and children darting through the crowd, laughing merrily. Back home, I had been taught that Persia was disorderly, but the reality was strikingly different. Joy filled the streets, and I even saw a soldier kneel to offer a poppy to a child.

In a corner of the market, I noticed a boy begging. Though I was broke, I pitied him and saw a reflection of my past self. I passed one of my last copper coins to him, hoping it might spark a new beginning. He told me his name was Mehdi. As we spoke about life in Persia, his gaze lingered on my dagger, longing for it as a protection in wartime. I placed it in his hands as a gift, and then turned away with a quiet farewell.

For several months, I stayed in the city and worked for a living, realizing how much I had been misled. The Persians were not hostile; they were resisting the Roman invasion. I could not comprehend the minds of those who waged wars, so I journeyed onward, carrying with me the memory of their kindness and vitality.

The echoes of Persia's laughter followed me as I rode on. Slowly, the land changed — fertile valleys giving way to barren ridges, until the Plateau of Tibet loomed before me, dry and mountainous, its people hardened by war.

C. The Escape

In a marketplace in Kashgar, I encountered a group of merchants wanting to enter Tibet. Afraid of getting lost in the desert, I decided to follow. Soon after we embarked, we were ambushed by a squad of Magmi from Tubo. They killed our guide, stripped us of our possessions, and took us into captivity, accusing us of espionage. After countless days in darkness, a new prisoner arrived. It was Mehdi. He saw me and, with subtle movements, slid a dagger toward me with his foot — a dagger that looked strikingly familiar to me.

I spent hours picking at the rusted hinges of the cell door with my dagger until, with a satisfying click, the heavy wood groaned open. Mehdi quickly knocked off the guards, and we used their clothes as a disguise. I took the twenty copper coins from a fallen guard and fled Lhasa. Soon after, he revealed that he was seeking his lost sister. Our paths parted there, each bound for different destinies. Though we had known each other briefly, we had faced life and death together, and his departure weighed heavily on me.

D. Amazing China — the love of my life

I traveled through Tibet and arrived at Chang'an. They welcomed me warmly. The pungent smell of tea and the bustling markets were so different from the harsh terrain of Tibet. I saw piles of silk, porcelain, and tea sold at astonishingly low prices, a reflection of China's unmatched artistry, prosperity, and splendor. I knew I had nothing back in Rome, so I decided to stay in China and work as a translator before becoming a merchant myself. The journey was long, but when I finished it, I knew I was no longer the poor boy who had left with nothing but ten copper coins.

Now, in my old age, back in Constantinople, I see how ignorant I was then. Looking back, those adventures seem so exhilarating and dangerous. And as I finish telling my story aloud, I notice a crowd forming beside Peter. Perhaps one of the young men listening will embark on an adventure of his own.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Lau, Yik Long – 11

Jacky was a normal merchant who had a poor life with his family who were starving in China. Why? They lived in a small village, filled with narrow pass ways and giant mountains which blocked them from getting far. Jacky also had a lot of competition with other merchants in the same village. Later, after hearing about the Silk Road, a large patch connecting China with Europe, they all decided to set their sights there to make business. Jacky was involved as well. He made a caravan and decided to live in the caravan with his family as their journey to Europe began.

On their way, they met a monk who told them that the paths ahead were dangerous and they had to have faith in themselves. Soon they arrived at a large desert, where they were met by the other merchants in their hometown. They stared at each other with piercing glares, only to be met by a terrible sandstorm. Instead of stares, they now looked at each other with scared faces. Just as they panicked, Jacky shouted to everyone, 'Don't worry! If we work together, we shall be able to navigate this challenge!' The other merchants agreed and they helped each other navigate through the sandstorm, and with the power of teamwork, they successfully escaped from the sandstorm.

After dealing with the sandstorm, the merchants all formed a team called 'The Adventures' and Jacky was chosen to be the leader of them due to his big contribution of saving them from the sandstorm. Their upcoming challenge was none other than THIEVES. As they continued their path along the desert, they met the thieves. Of course, they didn't know that they were thieves at first, when they simply asked for water. Jacky thought of them as poor travellers who were lost and needed water so he gave them free water. Then after finishing their water, they asked for some food. Jacky had no choice but to welcome them on board. The thieves stole the merchants' goods as they waited for their food. That did not last for long as Jacky's son, Jackson, easily found out what they were doing as he always liked to observe. Everyone took their stuff back and threw the thieves out of their caravans. Then they continued their voyage across the desert.

After they dealt with the idiotic thieves, they continued their search for Europe. Soon, they were robbed by a bunch of bandits again, but this time these thieves were no dumbheads. I meant it, they secretly crept up to the caravans, and without anyone noticing, they stole a bunch of silver metals. Except when they tried to escape, they accidentally kicked the camel, causing the camel to grow angry and attempted to step on the bandits. Soon enough Jacky and the merchants took their stuff back and had the bandits tied to a rock, so that someone would arrest them.

Months later, they finally reached a bustling village in Europe. As soon as they arrived, they met a European kid named Zack. He was very curious about the merchants and asked them, 'Why are you here?' Jackson replied, 'We have come to do trading with everyone here. Look! This is silk for making clothes.' Jacky then carefully unrolled a bolt of golden silk, and under the sunlight the cloth shimmered like flowing water. Zack could not resist reaching out to touch it. The blue-eyed boy gasped in surprise and then burst into delighted laughter as the adults gathered around, full of curiosity. Soon enough, more and more European people gathered to do bargains with Jacky and the merchants for all sorts of stuff, with the most infamous being none other than silk. The merchants exchanged silk with the native people to get money, horses, wine and much more. The merchants also introduced tea to the villagers, and they seemed to enjoy drinking it.

Sooner, Jacky and the merchants became friends with the villagers. They communicated with smiles and hand gestures, and sometimes they exchanged languages. One night by the campfire with the villagers, Jacky introduced them 'firework' by shooting them in the sky. The villagers were amazed by the fireworks. Watching them, Jacky felt a quiet sense of satisfaction. To him, it was commonly used for celebration in Chang'an, but here it became a miracle that changed how people imagined the distant East. 'You bring more than goods,' an old

European man said in 'broken' Chinese. 'You bring ideas, stories & friendships.' Jacky nodded his head with a grin.

This was Jacky's first journey, it was not an easy one, yet he was amazed by what he saw and experienced. The silk road was not made of only beautiful moments, sometimes, they faced sudden sandstorms; sometimes bandits threatened them; most of the time, it was simply long, tiring walking. Still, it left a memorable and satisfying experience for Jacky and the merchants. They earned a lot of money through trading. Soon, Jacky's family were not starving anymore, and Jacky was pleased about what he had done. Most importantly, they have successfully connected people from around the world.

Later on, Jacky embarked on countless journeys, and guided younger traders along the Silk Road. Whenever a new merchant asked, 'Why do we travel such a hard road?', he would smile and point toward the horizon. 'As long as we keep walking, this road will live on, and the world will stay connected.'

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Eddie and the Merchants

St. Joseph's Primary School, Law, Lok Hin Jayden – 10

It was year 2220. The world was filled with advanced technology. Robots could be seen everywhere. Each robot had its own unique job. Some were teaching students at schools, helping elderly in senior homes, and cooking delicious meals at restaurants. With flying trams and hovercars, people were able to travel from cities to cities everywhere. But there was something remained the same like the time in year 2026. The new silk road was still being used for trading. The route had been expanded all over the world. Robots could travel on spaceships with plenty of space to carry goods.

Eddie, a trading robot, could fly but he also needed to ride a spaceship to carry goods. Eddie was a very friendly robot, he always had a smile on his face and the things he promised would not disappear in his mind. One day, Eddie's owner built him another spaceship because Eddie's old spaceship was getting too small. Eddie's owner accidentally ordered a time travel button, but still installed the button to the spaceship and reminded Eddie not to touch it. Eddie added a cover just in case he pressed that button unintentionally. One day, after Eddie loaded the last package in his spaceship, he was trapped at the back and had to make his way back to the front cockpit. Since his spaceship was completely full, Eddie had to climb on top of the goods. Eddie knew he had to be careful because the time travel button was right on the ceiling. When Eddie started to climb above the goods, his hands were shaking, his knees were stiff, his arm knocked open the cover and his legs pushed the time travel button. Instantly, his head was spinning, his gears were wobbly, he felt like sliding down an invisible tube. His spaceship divided into three parts. Each part turned into a camel. He found himself wearing ancient Chinese clothes. When he looked down, he saw himself in the middle of the sky. Luckily, he knew how to fly and carried his camels safely onto the ground.

Once Eddie landed with his camels, he looked around and saw some other camels and merchants. He saw many caravans walking around. He found himself in the middle of the desert. Little pieces of porcelain, spices and shattered glasses left behind from caravans. Eddie went to one of the merchants and asked, "Why don't you use spaceships or cars to travel along this desert?" The merchant replied, "What are cars and spaceships? We use camels and horses. This is the fastest and most reliable way to travel." Then Eddie finally realized that he was back in the ancient silk road. The merchants explained to Eddie that they came from Xi'an China and have been trading along the route for many years. It took them three months to plan the trip for trading with Europeans in the West. The merchants have brought along a lot of silk, pepper, cinnamon and ginger hoping in exchange for gold, silver and wool.

After talking to the merchants, Eddie walked away with his camels until he reached the top of the hill. He saw a person walking towards him. The man was no ordinary person. He was Marco Polo, the famous traveler and writer who served the Mongol Empire for many years. Eddie remembered reading a book called, "The Travels of Marco Polo", which captured Marco Polo's remarkable journey to the East, his experience in China and the cultural and tradition exchange. Right away, Eddie went up to greet Marco Polo. Marco Polo was shocked that Eddie knew his name. Eddie told Marco Polo that he was from the future. Eddie asked, "Could you share with me some of your experiences? In your deathbed, you said to a person that you haven't told half of your stories when exploring the silk road." Marco Polo shared some of the untold stories including himself seeing a dragon, but much smaller and without wings, which Eddie thought that it might be a Komodo dragon. Marco Polo mentioned that he saw a herd of unicorns and running like the wind.

Out of nowhere, a gang of masked bandits overheard the conversation between Eddie and Marco Polo. They suddenly sprang up behind a rock. They were trying to take Eddie away and believed that they could make a fortune from knowing the future. Eddie knew Marco Polo could defend himself against a gang of masked

bandits, but Eddie himself was scared. Eddie had to think of a plan to save himself. Without hesitation, he quickly pressed the time travel button on one of the camels. With a zip zap zop, he felt like sliding down an invisible tube again. And without warning, he was back in year 2220.

Eddie went back to his owner as soon as his spaceship landed. His owner asked, "Where did you go?" Eddie replied, "I went back to the ancient silk road and met some merchants who were trading different things like silk, pepper, cinnamon and wool. I even talked to Marco Polo in person! He had shared some of his fascinating untold stories. However, it could also be very dangerous to travel on the ancient silk road. After the experience, I think the time travel button was the best gift in my life!"

An Unbelievable Silk Road Journey

St. Joseph's Primary School, Lee, Tsun Hei – 10

Hello everyone, my name is Li and I was adopted in Xi'an. When I was a kid, I was abandoned by my parents because they thought that it would make their lives harder. Since the person that adopted me was a Buddhist, he guided me to become a Buddhist to help and care for people to prevent them to experience the pain I did.

As a Buddhist monk, going on thrilling to death adventures and sharing inspiring teachings always was a dream come true to me. After a long wait, my master finally commanded me to Europe to experience a breath of fresh air. At that moment, I was like a dog with two tails and was full of the joys of spring. Without a second thought, I swiftly packed all the supplies I needed for the long way to Tipperary and was burning with curiosity "I wonder what would happen in the remarkable trip!" Eventually, on the fifth of January 642, I embarked on the odyssey to finish travelling the silk road.

When I started off from Xi'an, I unexpectedly came across a group of people that made my jaws drop and eyes widen in shock... It was Tang Sanzang, Sun Wukong, Sha Wujing and Zhu Bajie! Each one of them was equipped with various kinds of gear. Sun Wukong had a Golden Cudgel; Zhu Bajie owned a Nine-Toothed Rake and Sha Wujing kept a Demon-Subduing Staff that was like a wolf in sheep's clothing. While we were strolling along the silk road, we chatted enthusiastically about how things have been going. I have just found out that Sun Wukong defeated a water demon without even giving any effort and Sha Wujing had adopted a vicious and terrifying-looking tiger just for fun. Those are incredulous! I was having a whale of time and thought it would last forever. Little did I know that something will happen that will tear my heart out...

During evening, Tan Sanzang courteously asked, "It is time to go to India, let's go!" Only then did I finally realize that I had to split up and finish the voyage all by myself. I was down hearted and said my farewells to them and thought, "I need to finish the journey to make them swell with pride!" Before he left, he bestowed me a robe made of silk which was a pearl of great price. I thanked his lucky stars and was on cloud nine!

Here came a terrifying part was travelling through the Takla Makan Desert. The weather was scorching hot, making it barely possible for anyone to survive. Things were chaotic there! At First, I was elated about the upcoming adventures. However, in the middle of nowhere, I found a person that was almost going to bite the dust because of dehydration. Fortunately, I brought bottles of water before the trip, so I generously lent one to him and said, "Here, you'll need this to survive." He thanked me profusely and swallowed it up at the speed of light. That time, I was as proud as a peacock and walked away. I continued walking until a sandstorm suddenly occurred! When I escaped the horrifying scenery, I breathed a sigh of relief and was all smiles.

At night, I turned on my flashlight, and you won't believe what I saw... Mashhad! The view there was drop-dead gorgeous and easy on the eyes. Since I was huffing and puffing, I decided to take a rest and recharge my batteries. I purchased a mouthwatering snack from a nearby shop which included appetizing hamburgers and a side of succulent French fries. Afterwards, I sat on a bench and dozed off for nearly 2 hours! Only then did I know that I burnt the midnight oil! I panicked in fear and was trembling tremendously while my heart kept telling me to go on. Therefore, I stayed on the course and carried on.

A few moments later, I arrived at the Pamir Mountains. The weather was wet than ever, letting my clothes constantly soaked. During the evening, I witnessed a petrifying accident of two mountain bikers. They were almost going to fall off the cliff. Within an instant, I grabbed both in the shirt and pulled them back up with all my might. Thankfully, no one got cut to the quick. They thanked me from the bottom of their hearts and hugged me in joyful tears. I put on a cheerful face and said, "It's alright, just be more careful next time!" They nodded their heads in agreement and learnt their lesson. Saving them was a feather in my cap! I travelled through thorny and painful parts of the mountain, but I kept pushing myself to keep my chin up. In the end, I reached Mediterranean Sea, the

end of the silk road. I thought to myself, “How did I just travel 4000 miles within that short amount of time?” Without anything to say, I just sat down and gazed at the bright stars in the peaceful night...

“Cluck, cluck!” the chickens screamed. The deafening voice immediately bestirred me. The joyful laughter of the children caught my eye, and I walked towards them slowly. I said loudly, “Hello everyone, my name is Li, and I am from China. Does anybody want to learn about Buddhism?” Since everyone never learned about any religions, they all agreed and said, “Me! Me! Me!” There, I taught them why everyone should be an optimistic person and care about people more. They all had a ball there. Before I left, I gave them the silk robe that Tan Sanzang gave me as a souvenir. There were bouncing off the walls because they never had seen it before.

This experience made me broaden my horizons. It was memorable and will be etched into my memories! Hopefully I can take on more journeys in the future and desire that there won't be any more natural disasters happening. What a journey!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Liu, Hin Ching Colman – 10

As I set these words to paper, my mind vividly retraces the journey that shaped both my life and my homeland. My name is Zhang Qian, and thirteen years ago, I embarked on a mission from my King to carry the treasures such as gold, silver, and other valuable goods of my nation to distant lands.

It began when Emperor Wu summoned me to the palace. He spoke of sending our goods to foreign realms, to build alliances and strengthen our economy. He expected to build up political connection and other civil matters support whenever there will be any possible crisis in future.

He told me, "Zhang Qian, I ask you to embark on a journey for our country. I truly believe only you can undertake."

I was astonished. Why me? Did the Emperor truly trust me, or was I merely the only one available? Yet duty called, and I replied, "Thank you, my lord, for entrusting me with this great task. I am deeply honoured."

"Excellent!" he declared. "I grant you one week to prepare and bid farewell. A troop of guards will accompany you for protection." At home, my family received the news with both pride and worry – some fearful I might never come back, others brimming with heartfelt admiration. My parents and my siblings looked worried since they had received the King's order.

When the seven days passed, I boarded a carriage with my personal belongings and homemade food prepared by my parents to eat on the trip to the palace, rested and ready. Climbing the grand stairs into the hall, I bowed before the Emperor. "I trust you are prepared," he said. "These guards will ensure your safety. Here is a map, a compass, and the details of your mission." A guard passed me the scrolls and I felt how heavy this mission was. As I rode away, I felt confident. Little did I know this journey would test not only my body, but my spirit.

The early days were gentle, crossing familiar lands with ten loyal men at my side. But once we left the empire's borders, the true trial began.

Before us stretched the vast Taklamakan Desert – a merciless expanse where water was scarce and the sun burned without remorse. I still remember first stepping onto those sands. The heat pressed upon us like a weight. Days melted together under the endless travel. Our bodies grew weary, and my spirit began to dim. All around, there were only the guards, myself and sand – an ocean of sand.

Yet even in that harshness, beauty awoke. I met tribes who carved homes from sandstone, living courageously with so little. They do not have soft beds to sleep, good wine to take and yummy food to eat. However, their resilience stirred something in me. And when we found a small oasis – its trees, grass, and clear water. It felt nothing short of a miracle.

With every step, I became more than a diplomat – I became a traveller. Conversations with local elders blossomed into friendships. I learned of their hopes and fears, and though at first it puzzled me that none wished to leave the desert, in time I understood. This was their home. The place where they were born, grew up and surrounded by people I loved.

After weeks in the wilderness, we finally reached the Western Regions – a land alive with vibrant markets and echoing with the sounds of trade. Stalls overflowed with different goods such as spices, fabrics, and crafts. Here, I

beheld the wider world with my own eyes – merchants from far-off lands, nomads' rich with stories, artisans forging tools for adventurers like me.

One evening, seated in the buzz of a marketplace, it struck me. My journey was more than a trade route – it was a thread tying distant worlds together. I bartered silk and gems from home for stories, knowledge, and trust. During the silent night, I missed my family so much, especially my siblings who play and argue with me i usually think that they were annoying but without that annoyance my family would be incomplete.

Yet through all the market temptations, my purpose remained clear – 'Find the Yuezhi'. Months of relentless travel and trials passed before I located their territory. I approached them not as a conqueror, but in friendship, hoping to honour the Han Dynasty with dignity.

They were proud and noble people. I recalled meeting their chieftain, who watched me with curiosity and caution. That moment was no mere exchange. It was the beginning of a bond. Over shared meals and daily tasks, I slowly earned their trust. I spoke of our silks, our scholars, the beauty of our lands. Yet in the end, they declined an alliance.

The journey home felt different. I had traversed more than land. I had crossed cultures, ideas, and hearts. I carried back not only goods, but wisdom. The harsh lessons of the desert and the warmth of distant campfires had reshaped my understanding of diplomacy – true connection cultivates peace.

When I returned, I was welcomed as a hero, sharing tales of deserts, oases and faces I would never forget.

Today, as I reflect, my heart fills with gratitude. The Silk Road has become a symbol of how worlds can meet. I believe the paths we forged, both visible and unseen, will nurture understanding among nations and bring peace in the years to come.

I learned that trade is not merely the exchange of goods, but the slow, brave work of building friendship – a realm of shared experience. May the spirit of this adventure inspire all who dare to travel these routes, bridging cultures and uniting hearts, just as I once dared to do.

As I lay down my pen, I remain, forever, a traveller in soul – forever shaped by the journey. My story is a testament to what we can achieve when we meet with respect, pursue peace, share our beliefs and treasures, and walk forward together into the wide, waiting world.

The Caravan's Chime and the Changing of Time

St. Joseph's Primary School, Shih, Ching Yau – 10

My knees creak like an un-oiled garden gate, and my humps—once proud peaks of fatty glory—now sag slightly to the left like two deflated soufflés. I'm forty-five years old. In human years, I'm a venerable grandfather; in camel years, I am practically a living fossil. My name is Ba'er, and I've been a 'Walking thread of the Silk Road' since 1985.

I remember my first journey as a spindly-legged calf, tucked beside my mother's flank as we departed from the bustling markets of Lanzhou. The air was heavy with the scent of coal smoke, sizzling lamb skewers, and the bittersweet aroma of ancient history.

"Keep your head up, Ba'er," my mother had grunted, her bell chiming a rhythmic *ting-aling* against her chest. "We're the biological engines of the Silk Road. This ribbon of dust stretches 6,400 kilometres, stitching the East to the West. We don't just carry silk; we carry the Nation's Heart."

Today, that same bell hangs around my neck. It is The Caravan's Chime, a silver-toned memory of a world that moved at four miles per hour. This is my final trek. We are heading to Ürümqi, the crown jewel of the Xinjiang region. My master, Lao Chen, whose skin is as wrinkled as a sun-dried prune, patted my neck.

"Old friend," he whispered, his voice a rough velvet. "One last dance across the dunes? We have tea to sell and a legacy to finish."

We set off, a small line of camels and caravans laden with fine silk and delicate porcelain. The journey from Lanzhou is a beautifully brutal endurance test. As we plodded past Zhangye and Jiayuguan, the landscape offered us nothing but scorching heat. The sun was a blinding gold coin tossed into a pale blue sky, while the freezing nights could turn a sneeze into an icicle before it hit the sand.

"Water! I'd trade my soul for a drop of water!" cried Xiao Li, a young apprentice caravan traveler, wiping sweat from his brow.

"Patience, boy," Lao Chen replied, pointing at me. "Look at Ba'er. He's been walking since before your father could crawl. He knows the desert doesn't give gifts. Earn them."

I puffed out my chest. While the humans complained, I focused on stubborn rhythm of strides. I can munch on a prickly cactus as if it were a gourmet salad, the thorns providing a spicy tickle to my leathery mouth. But even a resilient veteran like me has limits.

The climax of our struggle arrived near Dunhuang. The sky turned an angry, bruised purple. Then came the rumbling.

"Sandstorm!" Lao Chen shrieked. "Down! Hide behind the camels!"

The wind howled like a thousand lonely wolves. I collapsed to my knees, acting as a living fortress for Xiao Li. I clamped my specialized nostrils shut and let my double-layered eyelashes shield my eyes from the stinging grit. Visibility dropped to zero in seconds. The sand dunes around us began to "disappear" and "reappear", dancing in a chaotic ballet.

"I can't see anything!" Xiao Li screamed over the wind's roar. "Are we alone? Where's the rest of the caravan?"

I kept my mouth shut against the dust. For forty minutes—which felt like forty years—the world was a swirling, gritty void.

When the wind finally settled, we were buried up to our bellies. The other camels were gone. Xiao Li began to weep. “They’re lost. We’re lost. The tracks are gone.”

I sniffed the air, my optimism sparking. I nudged him toward a series of faint indentations in the cooling sand.

“Look!” Xiao Li gasped, wiping his eyes. “Footmarks! But wait... Lao Chen said all marks should have been blown away after a huge storm. These must be fresh! Someone moved right after the wind stopped!”

My hope metre rose. We followed the marks. Two camel prints became four. Four became sixteen. Suddenly, around a massive dune, we saw the flickering orange of a campfire.

“We found them!” Xiao Li cheered, hopping onto my back. “Ba’er, you old genius!”

We reached the group, but we were spent. My humps were floppy, my fat reserves used up. We desperately needed a miracle. Lao Chen, seeing our exhaustion, diverted us toward a hidden oasis near the border of the mountains.

“Miraculous leaves!” Lao Chen exclaimed, plucking a handful. “These are rumored to provide energy for a month. Eat, Ba’er! You deserve a buffet!”

I munched the leaves, my eyes filling with thankful tears. The Silk Road is never truly easy.

As we approached the outskirts of Ürümqi, a high-pitched *hum* began to vibrate through the soles of my feet. It was rhythmic, modern, and incredibly fast.

Suddenly, a streak of shimmering silver tore through the horizon. It was the **Lanzhou–Xinjiang High-Speed Railway**.

“Look at that,” Xiao Li whispered in awe. “Call it the new Silk Road. Those passengers will reach the city in two days, while we’ve been chasing the horizons for months! The world has finally caught up to our footprints, hasn’t it?”

The silver dragon surged past us. I stopped walking and let out a loud, vibrating *bray*—a camel’s version of a “Hello!”

In a window of the passing carriage, a young girl pressed her hand against the glass. She waved frantically, her eyes wide with wonder at the sight of a real camel. I felt a pang of joyful melancholy. My bell chimed one last time.

The old road was evolving. This new rail isn’t just about freight; it’s about **harmonious inclusivity** and **a World that Belongs to All**. China is sharing its treasures—technology and a boundless welcome for every nation and culture—at the speed of light.

As we reached the final depot in Ürümqi, I saw a large crowd. Lao Chen led me toward a gleaming stone pedestal near the station entrance and the people began to clap.

“What’s happening, Lao Chen?” Xiao Li asked.

“The old ways aren’t forgotten, boy,” Lao Chen smiled, patting my sagging humps. “Ba’er isn’t retiring to a farm. He’s been appointed the Living Ambassador of the Silk Road. He’s going to stay here at the station.”

So, my journey didn’t end in a dusty field. I spend my days in the shimmering glow of the high-speed rail. I’m the bridge between the ancient dust and the modern rail. Come to pet my nose and hear the story of the camel who witnessed the revolution of The Silk Road!

Lethal Trade on the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tam, Karl Alec – 10

Hello friends, my name is Marco Polo! I bet you guys have heard my name before. I was one of the first people who travelled on the Silk Road and I wrote all about it. However, there was one story which I kept secret from everyone until now and today I'm going to share it with you.

As many of you know, I had an amazing time traveling along the Silk Road and living in China. However, did you know that, long before the deadly outbreak in Europe ever occurred, someone from a town on the Silk Road hatched an evil plan to kill the Mongol emperor and millions of Chinese people by spreading the Black Death, also known as the Bubonic Plague?

You may be aware that I had a close friendship with the Mongol Emperor of Yuan Dynasty of China. I travelled along the Silk Road when I was in my teens and eventually arrived in China— the most advanced country I had ever visited, as an adult. There, I found a fantastic civilisation, with paper, gunpowder, and printing already developed long before we had them in Europe. There were also lots of advisors for the Mongol Emperor, but many of them were foreigners as the ruler did not seem to trust his Chinese advisors so much. One of these advisors was called Piotr. He is the one I mentioned earlier, from a town in Central Asia along the Silk Road.

We advisors told the Emperor a lot of stories from our different countries. I always felt that Piotr felt jealous of the Emperor and his power, and didn't like Chinese people. However, I loved Chinese culture as it was so advanced and interesting to me. I told a lot of things about the western world to the Emperor and he shared lots of information about China with me. We trusted each other and quickly, he made me his most trusted advisor. However, I definitely didn't trust Piotr. He always smiled and acted friendly, but I suspected he was dishonest. Chinese advisors particularly disliked him because it seemed that he look down on them.

One day, when all the advisors were eating breakfast together, Piotr told us all that he was going to give the emperor a special surprise gift as a token of his devotion to him. We all felt that this was strange because Piotr was not a kind or generous man. The Chinese officials were looking at each other and thinking that Piotr was trying to cause trouble.

Later that night when everybody was sleeping, Piotr crept out of his room into some dark bushes. However, he did not know that some Chinese officials were following him secretly. He sneaked into a secret hut just behind the bushes and looked behind him to make sure nobody was following. Little did he know that the Chinese advisors were hiding in the bushes just a few feet away. Inside the hut, there was a group of gangsters who had come from the Silk Road. They were from Piotr's home town. 'Is this it?', Piotr asked. 'Yes. This bottle contains the deadly virus which will spread the Black Death, the plague that hit our village. We are some of the lucky survivors.' 'No! My village was destroyed by this plague. I want the Emperor to die from this plague, and let it destroy the whole of China so that we can rebuild our city and make it the strongest on the Silk Road. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!' He laughed like a maniac. He had no idea that some of the Chinese advisors were listening to what they were saying.

The next day, the evil advisor entered the palace with a wicked smirk on his face. "My wise and wonderful emperor, this is a special gift delivered from my amazing home city of Akapotion on the Silk Road that is famous for its potions and medicines. This is a potion called Thead, it will make you immortal." The Emperor felt excited after hearing those words and was going to drink it when a few Chinese officials barged into the room. They told the Emperor everything they had heard and warned him not to drink the potion.

At first, he didn't believe the Chinese advisors and even blamed them for trying to get rid of their rivals.'Rubbish! Piotr, they are just jealous of you and your wonderful gift. I will send them all to prison, then I will drink your gift and become more powerful than ever!

The Chinese advisors thought they were going to die in prison and the Emperor was doomed. Fortunately, Marco Polo trusted the Chinese advisors and convinced the Emperor to listen to them.

The Emperor thought about what Marco said. 'I tell you what, Piotr, you drink some of this first. Marco thought quickly.' Let him do it in the cellar downstairs. If anything happens to him down there, it won't spread to the rest of us.' Piotr had no choice. He followed the Emperor's orders. The next day, everyone discovered Piotr had died in his cell. No one went to open the door of the cellar to collect Piotr's body because they didn't want to spread the plague. Luckily, the Emperor and the whole China were saved from this terrible virus.

After this incident, the Emperor learnt to trust his Chinese advisors a lot more. China became a lot more richer and stronger than ever before and the Silk Road grew more and more popular!

A Silk Road Journey

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tsung, Ngo Yin – 11

On a drowsy afternoon, as I remembered I was in a Silk Road exhibition. I saw stunning ancient vases, amulets, plates and even mini sculptures. As I scanned through the artifacts, I fixed my eyes on a lustrous smooth golden horse. My fingertips were slightly touching the glass, something was definitely strange almost off. Although I didn't know what it was I sat down on a resting couch and chewed on a candy as I looked at the ceiling, the annoying ceiling light shined at my eyes. Suddenly, when I looked forward, a wave of light shined at my face, it felt as if I had blacked out or something, everything blurred at my view.

When I opened my eyes, the candy in my mouth was half chewed, though it didn't look like I was indoor like I was before, I was in a scorching desert, I think. Before I could even react, a satisfying sound of bells filled my ears, when I tried to stand up again, a person reached for my hand and carried me up. I looked around the endless desert before I muttered, "Ummm, first of all, who are you and secondly where am I?" He replied blankly, "Wow, you must have fell so hard u lost your senses, you are in the path of the Silk Road!" While he was talking I looked at him carefully he was wearing a pale blue jacket, we were probably about the same age. Then it hit me I was in the Silk Road, memories filled my head, I must have time travelled or something! "Hey! What's that you're eating?" he questioned. I mumbled, "HIGH-GOO, the candy brand." He paused and asked confusingly, "What's candy whatever. My name is Kenny and I'm leading my caravan to trade some you know, stuff. Anyways wanna join?" "Yeah, absolutely", I almost instantly answered .There was about 20 people. Though, I thought, maybe he knew something I don't, maybe he knows how to go back to the future. I followed him. As I hopped on to his camel, he gave me some tasty dried fruits. He quickly introduced everyone to me and asked if I had anything special to trade. I took a look at my pocket. It was all completely covered or barricaded with sand, but eventually after a bit of searching I found a small bottle of oil and a souvenir disguised as a gem or amulet. I decided that I was going to trade them if I had a chance. I chatted with them explaining how I possibly time travelled and introduced them to the modern world. In exchange, they told me about the deserts, the animals and their adventures. It was sure fun. They seemed confused and called me "high". After that we clearly became friends.

For the next few days, we travelled together relentlessly! Sometimes if we had time at night, we would have a campfire. Kenny would often play his pips from the Western Regions, while I cheerfully him my school anthem. Laughter filled the air! Soon we slowly became best friends.

One day, a sandstorm appeared without any warning. It headed towards our direction rapidly, we ran as fast as we could! However it was too late, it swirled us up like a tornado, we got flung left and right and got tossed up and down! As we held on to a boulder. Kenny exclaimed," This sure is a dangerous situation! Though, there is something I've wanted to say for a long time, it was nice being a friend, and when you get back to that world of yours I promise you I will meet you again! He held on to my hand, tight this time. Then just after he said that, we got separated, I fell on to the soft comforting sand, I yelled, "I'll miss you!" As I said that I could feel a wave of sudden dizziness, as a bright path of glimmering light shimmered at my face again, this time even brighter, I felt calm. I could hear a faint of probably Kenny at that time.

"Kid Wake up! We are closing soon!" My ear rang! I slowly opened my eyes sleepily, almost devastated because of what happened a few minutes or seconds ago, only to see the face of an angered security guard. I was back in the future, finally, I didn't know if I was happy or not. Though, I still got up embarrassingly and got up. I started to think about that few days I spent with Kenny, was it real or fake? Was it just a dream? I sadly went into the souvenir shop to buy something to cheer myself up, I picked a few souvenirs, they reminded me of Kenny. I looked up at the cashier and I said, "Here. Just these." When I looked at his face, I caught a glimpse of

Kenny smiling. Finally I figured it out, that cashier was Kenny, probably at least, I smiled at him. He moaned, “You look familiar.” “We might be destined to be a family or something!” I joked. “You’ve got a pretty good humour, you remind me of my son! His name is Alfie!” After that he quickly showed me a photo of which seemed like Kenny!

As I left, I remembered, Alfie, he looked like Kenny I mean he has to be, Kenny promised.....

New Tales of China's Silk Road: The Monk Who Carried Wisdom Westward

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tung, Yan Wang – 11

More than twenty centuries ago, when Chang'an was the beating heart of China and one of the world's greatest capitals, a monk named Daoming stood beneath temple eaves carved with dragons. The bronze bell tolled with a deep resonance, reminding him of the harmony between heaven and earth. Red lanterns swayed gently in the breeze, and in that moment he vowed to carry the spirit of China westward.

His master's words echoed in his mind: "Chinese wisdom should not be kept private. Share it, and the world will prosper."

With this charge, Daoming packed scrolls written in flowing calligraphy and a pouch of fragrant tea. He stepped onto the Silk Road, the great artery of trade and culture that bound nations together, and began a journey that would weave distant lands into one fabric.

The Silk Road was alive with caravans, horses, and merchants carrying treasures that defined civilisations. Silk, so fine it shimmered like moonlight and clothed emperors and kings. Porcelain, ringing like a bell when struck, called "white gold" in the West. Printing blocks, which transformed the spread of knowledge. Compasses, guiding ships across seas. Gunpowder, destined to reshape warfare.

Daoming watched merchants trade spices for silk, horses for porcelain vases, and stories for laughter. He realised that trade was not only about wealth. It was a bridge, a way of weaving distant lands into one shared tapestry.

In a Persian village, children gathered around the monk, curious about his shaved head and simple robes. They asked questions, and Daoming answered with kindness. He taught them Chinese calligraphy, showing how writing could be both art and meditation. The children marvelled at the flowing strokes, understanding that wisdom could be expressed in beauty.

In return, they shared their dances, their music, and their laughter. Daoming taught them the Chinese game of tangram, while they taught him melodies that echoed along the road. Wisdom, he realised, flowed in both directions.

As he travelled further, Daoming saw how Chinese wisdom increased prosperity. Farmers adopted irrigation techniques, turning barren lands into fertile fields. Merchants learned to use the abacus, speeding calculations and improving trade. Artisans copied porcelain glazing methods, expanding industries and crafts. Wealth was no longer just coins. It was the prosperity of shared ideas, inventions, and cultural exchanges.

In Samarkand, a bright city full of colours, Daoming saw tall buildings with blue domes and busy markets. People sold fruits, cloth, and spices that smelled sweet and strong. Scholars showed him their books, mixing poems and old stories. Daoming shared Chinese medicine scrolls, and they taught him about healing with saffron and pomegranate. He realised Samarkand was like a giant meeting place, where people from many lands traded not only goods but also ideas and wisdom.

Later, in Alexandria, Daoming walked through streets lined with marble columns and bustling with scholars from many lands. He visited the great library, where knowledge from Greece, Egypt, and India was stored. There he shared Chinese maps and learned about astronomy from local scholars who charted the stars above the

Mediterranean. In that city by the sea, he saw how wisdom could travel across oceans as easily as caravans crossed deserts.

In the great cities of Europe, Daoming introduced tea ceremonies, teaching respect and mindfulness. He shared calligraphy, teaching balance and patience. He told the great stories of "Journey to the West", showing that wit and courage could overcome trials.

In return, scholars taught him star maps, artisans demonstrated water wheels, and doctors shared herbs unknown in China. Each exchange was a gift. Chinese wisdom softened hearts, while Western discoveries sharpened minds.

Crossing a mountain pass, Daoming paused to rest. Snow lay heavy on the peaks, and the wind carried echoes of distant voices. He thought of the countless travellers who had walked this road before him and those who would follow. In that quiet moment he understood that the Silk Road was not only a path across deserts and mountains, but a path across time itself, carrying wisdom from one generation to the next.

When Daoming finally reached the Mediterranean coast, he realised his journey was more than the spread of discoveries. He had carried the spirit of China westward, silk and tea, stories and riddles. The world had become warmer, smaller, and richer. Trade connected countries, ideas sparked inventions, and compassion bound people together.

The story of Daoming is not merely about one monk. It is about the Silk Road itself, a place where countries shared their treasures, where trade built bridges, and where compassion connected the world. China's gifts of silk, tea, porcelain, gunpowder, compasses, and stories did not remain within its borders. They sharpened minds across the globe, mingling with other traditions to create a more diverse, cultural, and humane world.

Even today, the tale of Daoming continues to resonate. The Silk Road lives on in digital highways, global trade routes, and cultural exchanges. Its lesson remains unchanged: prosperity comes not from isolation, but from connection, and China has always been at the heart of that connection.

China's wisdom and inventions travelled far beyond its borders, shaping the progress of nations. Silk brought beauty, porcelain carried artistry, tea offered calm, and the compass guided explorers across seas. Gunpowder changed history, while stories and calligraphy inspired minds. By sharing these treasures, China helped other lands grow stronger. The Silk Road showed that when China opened its hands, the world received gifts that transformed daily life, science, and culture.

The monk's journey became more than a tale of travel. It was a reminder that China's spirit of generosity and wisdom can light the path for humanity. When hearts are open and knowledge is shared, the world becomes a home where China's heritage continues to guide and inspire generations.

Tang's Journey to the West

St. Joseph's Primary School, Wan, Tsz Chung – 9

Once upon a time, a monk called Tang was sleeping at his home. He dreamt that the Buddha encouraged him to travel to the West to get the Buddhist scriptures for helping the Chinese people. When he woke up, he realised that this would be a meaningful achievement and therefore decided to prepare for this adventure. He packed all his stuff quickly and set off early.

Tang took out the map and searched for the routes. There are two routes to the West. One is shorter but more dangerous because there are beasts like lions and tigers. The other route is longer which passes through the Silk Road. The Silk Road is a complex network of ancient trade routes that is famous with the exchange of goods and cultures between China and the West. Tang decided to explore through the longer route.

Two weeks later, Tang arrived at a town near a desert. He ate a lot of good food. He tried some of the town's local dishes cooked with bak choi, broccoli and mushroom. Although he did not eat any meat, he still thought the food was lip-smacking. There were a lot of decorations on the food. He liked the bak choi most as it was scrumptious and dressed like a classics text. After the meal, he was so full that he could hardly walk. He chose to stay at a hotel that night. Suddenly, a white bone monster broke into his room and threatened to kill him! Tang was not frightened but he calmly read some scripts from the Buddhist classics. The monster felt painful and could not move towards him anymore. Finally, the monster gave up and flew away.

Next day, Tang resumed his journey to the West. Later, he visited another town where all people there have different cultures from that in China. Everyone would shake hands when greeting each other. They are required to pray before meals and sleep. Even they have to bow at ninety degrees when giving thanks and respect to others. He was attracted to these cultures so much. He wrote them down in his diary and thought he could teach them to the Chinese people after he returned to China.

Three months later, Tang had travelled long distance toward the West but he had no idea how long he would further need to finish the journey. He started to feel sad and frustrated. One day, he met some businessmen in a market where he chatted with them for their lives. Some of merchants are travelling to the West to sell goods and artworks made with porcelain, while some of them are travelling to China to buy silk, tea and vases. Tang understood that they are making a lot of money because of these trades and became rich. At an instant, he realised that he could also make himself rich by doing trades. At last, he decided to give up his adventure and spent time becoming a great merchant.

Although Tang did not finish his journey successfully, he earned a lot of money before returning to China. However, he had never forgotten the Buddha's belief in helping any people in need. He donated the money to the poor people, bought food to the low-income families and built more temples to spread the Buddhist spirit. Everyone loved and respected Tang.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Yeung, Ho Chun – 11

In a remote village in China over 2,000 years ago, a hardworking widow named Mei lived with her two children, Jun and Li. Their lives were simple but filled with love. When illness stole their mother's laughter, local healers tried countless potions and incantations, but failed to cure her. They called her condition hopeless when they thought she couldn't hear them. But one starry night, Li overheard an old merchant speak of a magical remedy that could heal any ailment coming from the distant West, along the legendary Silk Road, where marvelous fruits and wondrous potions existed. "We must find it!" she declared to Jun, eyes sparkling with wonder.

At dawn, they packed simple provisions—like rice and water—and cherished tokens—a small doll and a carved dragon—and ventured toward the towering, snow-capped mountains surrounding their home. As they climbed, the air grew thin and cold, making their breath visible like tiny clouds, yet they fueled each other with memories of how their mother would weave tales of brave warriors, mythical creatures, and enchanting adventures.

While navigating a rocky path, they met a wise old person beneath a tree covered with flowers that shone like stars. Hearing about their quest, he smiled and handed them a beautifully drawn map. "The Silk Road is not just a path for trading goods, but a bridge for trade, culture, and friendship woven with threads of magic," he said. "Kindness and cleverness will guide you."

Descending onto the busy Silk Road, they were swept into a world of color and sound. Merchants displayed silks that glowed, loads of bright spices, and fruits that looked like gems. They tried sweet figs and fragrant honeyed pastries, feeling as if they were tasting the world itself! Artisans showed amazing skills; a potter shaping clay as if it were alive. "Is it magic?" Li asked. "It is skill and understanding," he replied, "each craft carries stories from faraway lands."

Further on, a merchant sold glassware that sparkled with rainbows. "Every piece contains a whisper of magic," he winked. Nearby, musicians played ballads that wrapped around them like a warm blanket, making the very trees seem to sway.

Their joy was interrupted when belligerent bandits blocked their path. Jun was pusillanimous, but Li remembered the wise man's words. "Aristocratic gentlemen, we seek medicine for our moribund mother," she said, her voice steady. "We have no gold, but we can offer stories!" Enthralled, the bandits listened as the children spun tales of dragons and heroic quests. The leader laughed, "You have spirit! Pass freely, but we demand more stories upon your return!"

Days later, they arrived at a grandiose city where buildings sparkled under the sun. At its heart stood a grand clinic adorned with intricate designs that whispered ancient wisdom. Inside, a kind doctor with hair like spun moonlight greeted them. "We seek the magical medicine!" Jun exclaimed.

The doctor's eyes twinkled. "Ah, true magic lies not merely in potions, but in communion and lore." He led them to a room filled with herbs and aberrant ingredients from many lands, each carrying a story of its own.

As the doctor explained each herb and its properties, Jun and Li felt a stirring of magic within them. "This herb from the West grants strength, while that one eases pain," he said, as if revealing the secrets of the universe. "Together, they create a powerful elixir—a potion of healing."

With sparkling eyes, they watched as the doctor combined the ingredients, swirling them in a bowl. The mixture glowed with a soft light, filling the room with a pleasant aroma. "This will bring your mother back to health," he assured them.

Carrying bags filled with magical herbs and newfound wisdom, Jun and Li began their journey back home. With each step, they reflected on the enchanting world around them, where even the air seemed to hum with possibilities—possibilities they could harness because of what they had learned.

When they finally returned home, the setting sun cast a magical glow over their dwelling. Mei rested weakly beneath the cherry blossom tree. The doctor, who had accompanied them, examined her with gentle precision. With each sip of the elixir, a warming energy coursed through her, reviving her strength.

Days passed, and Mei's vitality returned. She embraced her children tightly. "You brought back true magic!" she exclaimed, her eyes shining.

Gathered under the cherry blossoms, they shared tales of the Silk Road—the musicians, the foods, the bandits, and the wise doctor. They realized the real treasures were the lessons in empathy, bravery, and the unbreakable bonds of family.

They began sharing these stories with villagers, illustrating how the Silk Road was a magical path for cultures, trading not only goods but dreams and hopes. They taught about the healing herbs, showing how love and care weave their own potent magic.

In their little village, they sparked a new kind of enchantment—one of shared joy, nurtured friendships, and a deeper connection to the wider world. They showed that love and kindness can light the darkest paths, and that the greatest journeys are those of the heart, connecting everyone in the wonderful tapestry of life. And so, the magic of the Silk Road lived on, forever revealing the beauty within their shared humanity.

The Most Precious Cargo

St. Joseph's Primary School, Yeung, Ka Hei – 9

Imagine a world without sweet, juicy grapes. Today, we can buy them easily at any supermarket. However, two thousand years ago in China, a single bunch of purple grapes was more expensive than gold. This is not just a story about fruit. It is a story about a brave merchant named Yeung, his wise camel Rocky, and a dangerous journey that changed the world forever.

Yeung was a young and ambitious merchant living in the bustling city of Chang-An. The streets were always crowded with people, but Yeung felt empty inside. He wanted to see the world. More importantly, he wanted to find a special gift for his mother. She was old and weak, and her only wish was to taste the legendary "sweet pearls" from the West.

"I will bring them back, Mother. I promise," Yeung whispered, holding her wrinkled hand.

He spent all his savings to buy fine silk and porcelain. He loaded them onto Rocky, his faithful camel. Rocky was not just an animal, he was Yeung's best friend. He had humps like mountains and eyes that seemed to understand everything. As the saying goes, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." With hope in his heart, Yeung led Rocky out of the city gates, walking towards the setting sun.

The journey was grueling. They walked for months. They crossed freezing mountains where snow bit their skin like needles. They trekked through scorching deserts where the air shimmered with heat.

Eventually, they arrived in a magnificent foreign land—perhaps Persia or Rome. Yeung had never seen such sights! The buildings were made of white marble, and the people wore strange, colorful clothes. In the busy market, the air smelled of exotic spices—cinnamon, pepper, and mint.

Yeung sold his silk for a fortune. He filled two heavy bags with gold coins and precious jewels. He was rich! However, he did not forget his promise. In a quiet corner of the market, he found a farmer selling purple fruit. Yeung tasted one. Pop! The skin burst, and sweet, cool juice filled his mouth. It tasted like honey and sunshine. "This is it!" Yeung exclaimed. Instead of buying more jewels, he bought a small leather bag filled with grape seeds. He carefully placed them in his chest pocket, closest to his heart.

The journey home was dangerous. Yeung was eager to return, so he pushed Rocky to walk faster.

One afternoon, the sky turned a bruised purple color. The air became strangely still. Rocky stopped walking. The camel knelt down and refused to move, making low, grunting sounds. He was trying to tell Yeung something. "Come on, Rocky! We need to hurry!" Yeung shouted impatiently, pulling the rope. "Time is money!" Yeung ignored the camel's warning. That was a big mistake.

Suddenly, a low roar began in the distance. Whoosh! The wind hit them like a giant invisible wall. A massive wall of sand rose up to the sky, blocking out the sun. It was a sandstorm! The wind howled like a thousand angry monsters. Sand whipped Yeung's face, stinging his eyes and filling his nose. He could not see his own hands. In the chaos, they wandered off the safe path. The ground beneath them changed. It was no longer hard earth. It was soft, shifting, and hungry.

Slurp. Yeung felt his boots sinking. He tried to lift his foot, but the ground held him tight. It was quicksand—the silent killer of the desert. "Rocky!" Yeung screamed. The poor camel was also trapped. Rocky

struggled violently, his large eyes wide with terror. But the more he kicked, the deeper he sank. The sand was like thick, wet concrete. It was already up to Rocky's belly. The problem was the weight. Rocky was carrying two huge bags of gold and jewels. The heavy treasure was pulling the camel down to his grave. Yeung managed to crawl to a solid rock, but he held onto Rocky's rope. He pulled with all his strength until his hands bled. It was useless. The gold was too heavy.

Time was running out. The sand was reaching Rocky's chest. The camel looked at Yeung. In those big, watery eyes, Yeung saw fear, but also trust. Rocky was waiting for his master to save him. Yeung looked at the bags. Inside was enough gold to buy a palace. Enough gold to live like a king. If he cut the bags loose, he would be poor again. "I worked so hard for this," Yeung thought, tears mixing with the sand on his face. "If I throw it away, I have nothing." Then, he touched his chest pocket. He felt the small bag of grape seeds. He thought of his mother waiting at home. He thought of all the lonely nights in the desert where Rocky kept him warm.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," Yeung cried out against the wind. "Forgive me, Rocky. I was greedy." Without hesitation, Yeung took out his sharp knife. His hand trembled, but his heart was firm. Slash! Slash! He cut the thick ropes holding the treasure. The heavy bags of gold fell into the sucking sand. They disappeared instantly, swallowed by the desert.

Immediately, Rocky felt lighter. With a mighty roar, the brave camel used his last bit of strength. He kicked his legs and lunged forward. Yeung pulled the rope, screaming with effort. Slowly, inch by inch, Rocky pulled himself out of the deadly trap. They collapsed on the safe ground, panting heavily.

Weeks later, a ragged merchant and a thin camel limped into Chang-An. People laughed at Yeung because he returned with empty hands. "Look at the fool," they whispered. "He went all the way to the West and came back with nothing." Yeung did not care. He went straight home. He hugged his mother and showed her the seeds. He planted them in their garden. He watered them with care and patience. Seasons changed. Winter passed, and spring came. Tiny green shoots broke through the soil.

Three years later, the vines were heavy with clusters of purple jewels. When Yeung's mother tasted the first grape, her smile was brighter than all the gold in the world.

In conclusion, Yeung lost his fortune, but he gained something far more valuable. He brought a new taste to China, a gift that would last for centuries. The Silk Road was not just a trade route for money; it was a bridge that connected hearts. Today, whenever we eat a grape, we should remember the brave Yeung and his loyal friend Rocky. They taught us that while gold is heavy to carry, love and culture are the most precious cargo of all.

New Tales of Silk Road

St. Joseph's Primary School, Yeung, Marcus – 11

Ahh, the popular, intercontinental highway used for trading purposes and spans all the throughout Asia and Europe, is known by everyone as the Silk Road. First used on 114 BCE, the Silk Road is one of the busiest trading routes used by traders, businessmen and consumers alike at the time. During the period of which it was still operational, it was mainly used to deliver silk from China all the way to Europe, and European goods to Asia. However, sadly, it disappeared in the late 1400s.

And this is the untold story one of the most unappreciated people in the entirety of history, and his excellent pal.

Our story begins in a humble town near Chang' An', where a small, little boy lived. On that cold and breezy night, our protagonist wasn't doing anything heroic, he was just sleeping and snoring. Just when he was deep in sleep, undisturbed, he heard a soft knock on his door, followed by quite a loud one.

"It's me, Bill!" – a small, chirpy and sharp voice said. Reluctantly, the boy got up from his bed, went to the door, and opened it.

"Who is it?", he said, almost dozing off.

"Oh, don't make me repeat myself, I'm Bill! Come on, Tom, you promised me that we'd go off at night and look at the Silk Road! How can we do that if you're just going to sleep all day, huh?"

"Exactly. And it's not 'day', it's in middle of the night!" Tom snapped. To him, sleep was more important than anything else. After all, he was the kind of person who would sleep all day long. It was simply infuriating to be woken up at midnight. Nevertheless, with one forceful yank, he still found himself outside of his house.

As the two left the town to go visit the Silk Road, a beam of light showered upon the old village. It was no ordinary beam. It was strange, electrical, unnatural and it seemed to be coming from the other side of space and time itself. That's when a warp portal opened, revealing a colossal intergalactic spaceship, even bigger than Jupiter itself. It was at that moment when the village was lifted right off of its base.

Nearby, some peculiar three-eyed creatures were guarding the abduction area, so as not to let bloody, horrid, man-slaughtering secrets of the company whom they worked for leak out, and then they saw the two kids gasping at the scene. Fidgeting, worried that they might get fired, the three beings quickly came up with a plan to trick the two kids.

"The Intergalactic Quantum-Cryptomining Company," they murmured behind. But the two boys were too dumbstruck to say anything, let alone inquire the three three-eyed beings that were now standing beside them.

"They steal towns that are rich in Quantum Ccrypto, a rare treasure that is thought to be a mirage and believed by many to have emerged from the clashes of cultures and trade routes, then they pulverise all the inhabitants of that town. Finally, those good-for-nothing thugs sell the Quantum Crypto and toss the then-wasted lands into oblivion. We were lucky to have escaped our fate," one of them said, literally lying through its teeth.

"Wait, what?" Tom asked, still partially awestruck.

"It's true. They took our homes and we never saw our friends again," the being said. "But we can help you get your home back."

"Why'd you do that?"

"It's because we don't you kids to suffer the same fate as we did. But also, we're mainly doing it because we want revenge on the company."

“We could help you bring your family back,” another being said in a fake-friendly tone, shoving the first one aside.

It was strange for some three-eyed beings to help kids on their quest to bring back their family, but seeing as they had no other choice, Tom agreed.

“Yay! We’re going on a quest!” Bill shouted jubilantly, jumping up and down in the air.

“It’s not going to be easy,” another three-eyed being said, pulling out a sheet that looked like a blueprint for some sort of plan. “First of all, through trial and error, we found out that the Quantum-Cryptomining company has a secret entrance portal to their base located on the other side of the Silk Road, Kazakhstan probably. We tried going inside but they caught us almost immediately due to our large and bulky bodies.

We want you to go inside and break their Quantum-Cryptomining device, which may be tearing your town apart for Quantum-Crypto as we speak. It looks like an almost-flat cylinder which has been flipped over. It’s the only way you can save your family. So, are you going to execute our plan or give up hope?”

Tom sighed. “Alright.”

And thus began the long and treacherous journey towards the other side of the Silk Road. Our heroes were parched, quenched and dried to the point where they were sure they were about to die. Then, finally, the two kids and the three beings arrived at Kazakhstan, an arid, dry place full of bandits.

“According to my book, this place is full of bandits, so we’ll have to tread carefully,” Bill said, eyeing the occasional bushes that appeared on the way to the secret entrance.

It was a strange, eerie and unwelcoming place, not ideal if you’re going there alone. As the two children approached the entrance, they felt weirder and weirder, almost as if the scary signs outside were a warning for them to heed.

Finally, they were just beside the entrance. Unaware that the aliens were tricking them, they got unwillingly pushed into the hole, seeing one final sight of reality before it faded away from their narrow, short-lived perspectives.

“Goodbye! It was nice having you around! Have fun rotting inside!” one of the beings shouted.

They found themselves in a spacious, almost ethereal realm, incapable of escaping, trapped. Just as they were praying what was going to be their last prayers, a beam of light flashed in front of them, a sliver of hope, shining on the weak, plus, it guided them to what appeared to be a secret wormhole that led to the company’s base...

The Silk Road

*St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Campbell,
Mackenzie Danica – 9*

The soft sand went through my sandals, the sun shone brightly, which was making us exhausted and hot. We were travelling from Xi'an to go to Syria. We had walked for a very long time. So, I suggested to spend the night here, my camels agreed.

We were sleeping peacefully in our tent, when suddenly I heard a strange noise outside. I quickly went outside and realized someone was stealing our stuff. So, I swiftly woke up the camels and they caught the thief. He explained that he was a merchant like me and thieves had stolen all of the things he was going to sell. He really

needed some things to sell, because he was very poor and he desperately needed money. I told him he could come and stay with us, but I did not know what a big mistake that would turn out to be.

I found out this name was Cassiuse. He worked very hard and I really appreciated his dedication. I trusted him a lot, but soon my big mistake took place. We were setting up the tent as usual when it happened. I said, "Cassiuse can you please tie the bag full of things that I am going to sell on the camel." "Sure," said Cassiuse. "By the way what are the names of the two camels," he asked. "They are Cotty and Tike," I said.

I was too sleepy to keep talking, so I fell asleep. The next day I found out that Cassiuse had betrayed me and left with all my things. I cried out loudly and I think Cotty and Tike understood. They came to me and hugged me tightly.

I knew I could not give up so I kept walking, because I still had some things to sell in that were in Tike's pouch.

We had been walking for hours, when I suddenly spotted Cassiuse in the corner of my eye. I was about to shout out to Cassiuse and scold him, but then I saw some big tough thieves on horses surrounding him.

One thief said, "Hand over that bag or else we will kill." Cassiuse quickly replied, shouting. "No, this is not yours and I don't care if you kill me or not, I will not give you the bag."

Finally, I understood that Cassiuse was trying to protect the bag. It must have been that, during the night thieves came and Cassiuse noticed them and he protected the bags full of items.

The thieves started to step closer. I had to think fast. I knew I had to act smartly, because I could not fight the thieves. I started to think of the items that were in Cassiuse's bags. Suddenly, I remembered that there were spices in a wooden box in one of the bags.

I shouted to him, "Cassiuse, hold the bag tight! Don't forget about the magic dust in the bag." At first Cassiuse look very confused but then he understood and played along.

"Yes! The powerful magic dust. Don't make me use it on you thieves," said Cassiuse. "Magic dust! We are not scared of your childish threats," said the thieves.

I shouted, "You have been warned."

Cassiuse quickly opened the bag and took out the box. Then, he pulled off the lid. He took a big pinch of strong red pepper and he threw it at the thieves faces. POOF!

A cloud of spicy dust filled the air, the thieves were having a difficult time. One of them got the pepper in his eyes and another one got it in his nose. They could not see or smell anything.

"Now Cassiuse! Run to Cotty!" I said in a hurry.

Quickly Cassiuse ran to Cotty. I helped him up. "Go Cotty! Go," I yelled. The camel ran as fast as his legs could take him. He galloped down the sandy path, and the thieves were nowhere in sight.

After a long time, they stopped, because they found a safe place to rest. Cassiuse climbed down from Cotty and held out the bag, his head hung low like he was ashamed of himself.

"I am truly sorry. I didn't steal it. I am so foolish for not waking you up. It was because I was too scared and I did not want to disturb you. So, I took the bag and led the thieves away from the camp. It was such a bad idea. Sorry, I failed you," explained Cassiuse.

I looked at Cassiuse, he was scared and he was trembling, the courage that had almost gotten him killed. I didn't pick up the bag first. Instead, I placed both hands on Cassiuse's shoulders.

"Look at me Cassiuse, you didn't fail me. You were braver than anyone I have ever met. But you have a pure and nice heart. You are not a thief and that was my terrible mistake. You are my guardian," I emphasize.

A single tear dropped from his eye and rolled down his cheek. "You still call me your helper after all I have done?" he said.

"No, I call you my friend," I said, giving a big smile. "You are not only my friend, you also my partner. From this day on, we will travel and watch the road together."

In Syria, the silk sold for a big price. And the dried fruits were claimed to be the sweetest in the market. Soon, I had a big pile of money. I handed Cassiuse a big amount of the money not as a salary, but as a start of a new partnership.

The Silk Road teaches you to always carry still, beautiful dried fruits and coins to trade with others. But always carry a bit of red pepper, not for eating but just in case thieves come. It is the best defense!

The Lost Merchant

*St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Chan,
Shuen Hang Merak – 9*

It all started when the spice merchant and his group were happily chatting about all the things they could trade, the languages that they could learn and all of the new friends they could make while travelling along the Silk Road.

Nothing could possibly go wrong... That is if you don't think about the terrible sandstorms that might occur in the desert, or the horrible avalanches that may happen on the mountain peaks. What the spice merchant didn't know was that everything was going to change, and everything was going to go terribly, terribly wrong.

When they reached Arabia, they decided to settle down and call it a day. When the spice merchant woke up with the group, they ate breakfast and was about to leave. At that moment the spice merchant needed to use bathroom. The group didn't realise that he was gone and so they just left without him. When the spice merchant returned he saw that they were Three quarters left to Samarkand and there was absolutely no way that he could catch up although he tried. Running after them made his camel tired and dehydrated, he was exhausted and it felt like he only had a little drop of water left in his body. So, he drank six bottles of water, which helped but his exhaustion did not go away. He continued walking after his friends, thinking that he would be able to catch up to them.

He was wrong. He walked into an evergreen environment, he was too tired to turn around and walk back. Suddenly, a white wolf came running towards him. It's sounds were pleading, it's puppies were taken by a fierce, large dog. The large dog was no match for the merchant's powerful spices. The merchant searched for the large dog and used his spices to tame it.

Then with his "pets" he set off once again, soon they came across a wide river which was usually frozen. The merchant decided to throw some his bags of spices across the river before paddling across with the dog and wolf. Then came their first challenge: an enormous jungle. There was a path so they didn't have to swing on vines like Tarazan, and it was a peaceful jungle with just a few panthers and tigers. Once they finally made it out of the jungle they realised that they had arrived in Beijing.

The spice merchant soon realised that they had arrived thirty days earlier than they would have on their old route. This gave him time to see what amazing things he would be able to trade for. After his group arrived, they bombarded the merchant with questions. He explained his journey to them and as for the wolf and dog. They became his trusted guards. Forever.

Silk Road's Time Traveler

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Cheng, Tsz Tsun – 10

Ben waited until everyone in the house was fast asleep. Then, he crept through the hallways into the room that was now filled with his late grandpa's belongings. "Grandma warned me not to do this... but I was just SO tempted, I must see what's inside. "Ben slowly turned the doorknob so that no sound came out, and pushed the door open gently. To his surprise, there wasn't much in the room apart from a sizable, dusty, old box in the middle of the room.

He opened the box with his eyes closed, and it revealed a bright, glowing necklace. Ben thought it was cool, so he tried it on, when he suddenly felt super tired... so he lay down and passed out on his bed while the necklace began to glow mysteriously...

"Spices! Come get every spice here!" Loud shopkeepers in a crowded market were shouting and selling all goods from Europe to Mainland China. Ben woke up in a time that was twenty-two centuries ago, smelling cooked lamb and seeing everyone rushing and circling the big red stalls on the streets. Ben slowly made his way to one of the stalls and asked, "What is happening here?" "Don't you know, this is a big trading market from Europe. Many citizens rely on the important Silk Road's trade such as wonderful food, stunning art, horses and of course silk." Said the salesman.

Ben suddenly remembered during his history class, Miss Collins mentioned that back in the days there were important and massive trades between East and West. Ben realized, "The Silk Road! This is the trade route between China and Europe!" He sought the opportunity to ask travelers what they usually trade. "More than goods, it spread knowledge, religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and innovations like gunpowder and paper making." Replied the travelers. Ben was shocked because he thought it was only for merchants and valuables.

Ben saw a clock ticking. "DING DING DING!" He suddenly flew to 1453 CE "Whoosh!" Ben felt a bit dizzy at first and then, he was stunned to see that the Silk Road's trade ended and the streets that used to be crowded and filled with people were all gone. He rushed to a bulletin board and it explained that trading caused heavy taxes and even blocked the road, so the travelers couldn't keep up with the taxes so the original Silk Road ended shortly after 1453CE.

The necklace shone, and Ben felt sleepy once more. He had to find a random pile of hay, lay down, and fell asleep. When he finally opened his eyes, he was back in the house and went straight to the basement to think about what had just happened to him. Ben made a big project about the Silk Road and shared it all around the world. Many history museums relied on Ben's information, and soon enough, a 10 year old became the most clever and richest kid ever. Not just having money, Ben was also well known as the young kid who is a historian that knew better than anyone about the Silk Road

The Last Day of My Journey to Samarkand!

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Choy, Shing Hin – 10

I am Tom, a silk trader in the year 670 CE. I live in China, where silk is more valuable than gold or any other goods.

Our journey began in Guangzhou, a bustling southern port. From there, we traveled north overland to load our precious cargo. We carried 1,000 bolts of fine silk and hired 10 sturdy Bactrian camels—these two-humped beasts can store fat in their humps and water in their stomachs, allowing them to travel for days or even a week without food or drink in the harsh deserts.

We made our way along the great trade routes, passing through oases and avoiding the worst stretches of the Taklamakan Desert. Finally, we reached the banks of the Amu Darya River (known to some as the Oxus), near the lands of the Sogdians. There we waited for Sogdian middlemen—skilled merchants who control much of the trade between China and the West. They buy our silk and carry it onward to distant Rome, Persia, and other lands.

A single bolt of silk fetches around 600 copper coins these days, so 1,000 bolts represent a fortune! One bold Sogdian trader approached me and offered to buy 50 bolts outright. That came to 30,000 copper coins—a staggering sum! He explained that a Roman general needed the silk urgently for his commanders' winter cloaks, as the cold winds were fierce this season. I accepted the deal, collected the heavy load of coins, and prepared for the long return journey.

On our way back toward China, disaster struck one night. Bandits emerged from the darkness, intent on stealing our wealth! I quickly signaled my hired guards to ready their weapons. In the chaos, I spotted a crossbow lying on the ground—perhaps dropped by a fleeing traveler—and picked it up. I fired, and the bolt pierced one attacker instantly. My loyal guards stood firm, keeping watch through the night until dawn broke and the danger passed. We pressed on safely to Guangzhou.

When I finally returned home, my family and friends rushed to greet me. They had been filled with worry—afraid I might have been attacked or lost everything on the perilous roads. I told them of the great profit I had made, and their shock turned to joy! I generously rewarded everyone who had helped me along the way, sharing the coins as promised. At last, we celebrated together as a family, grateful for my safe return and the riches the Silk Road had brought.

What a thrilling adventure it has been! May the roads remain open and the caravans prosperous.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Chun Yin Cyrus, Hung – 10

It was the year 70 BC, during the Tang Dynasty. In the bustling city of Chang'an, a brave merchant named Long Wei got ready for a long trip out in the west. His caravan was packed with all sorts of things: for example, fine silk, bottles of perfume, bags of fresh food, glassware, and expensive jewelry. The Silk Road offered big rewards, but it wasn't for the cowards.

Leaving the big city gates, Long Wei joined up with other traders and friends for the rabid and risky road ahead. First up was the super hot Gobi Desert. Days felt like years under the burning hot sun, and nights were freezing, as cold as Antarctica! Along the way, thorny cactuses filled the land, and travelers often saw scary, creepy scorpions skulking across the sand. But the promise of wealth kept him and his crew pushing toward their next destination.

After weeks of tiring travel, the caravan and merchants reached a small town called Huang Lung. It was like a silver lining in a cloud, full of colorful markets and friendly people. This was a common place for merchants to rest and stock up. They also saw a huge, beautiful Buddha statue at the temple. After a few days, the merchants repacked and headed off to their third stop.

From Huang Lung, the caravan and crew went north into the mountains. The air got colder, and soon snow and ice covered the path. The ice spikes were as sharp as a giant sword. Luckily, people in nearby towns offered them shelter and hot soup. Long Wei traded his silk for more gear and even gave them some expensive jewels as gifts.

The higher the caravan climbed, the colder and tougher the trip got. Blizzards swept through the passes, making them stop and wait for the winds to die down. Their fires barely stayed lit because the storms were too strong and blew them out instantly. Long Wei wrapped himself in many layers of clothes, but his fingers still went numb.

The most dangerous part of the mountains was the icy pass. The path was narrow, making it tricky for the caravan to get through. Even though it looked super risky, Long Wei's resolve grew stronger. He believed that good luck only came to those who faced hardships.

Finally, after weeks of struggle, the crew came down from the snowy peaks into what felt like the entrance to Europe. Here, silk was worth more than gold. Nobles and kings eagerly wanted his goods, and business was booming. But what really surprised him was how different the culture was from the East, especially their food and clothes.

Finally, as Long Wei returned home, he united with his family and they happily lived ever after. His caravan wasn't just filled with riches, but also stories, new friendships, and knowledge. As he looked at his caravan, he knew he'd travel again. He realized the Silk Road wasn't just a trade route, but an unforgettable experience for life.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Devolz, Theo – 11

Even though the Silk Road became quiet for a while, it came back to life in 2013. Now, more than 150 countries are part of it, sharing goods and knowledge once again. It is because of the secret caravan of the Silk Road.

In the bustling city of Changan, a curious boy named Oolong dreamed of exploring the world beyond the mountains and rivers. He discovered a glowing silk scroll hidden inside an old chest. The scroll whispered to him: "Follow the stars, the Silk Road holds a secret."

Last night, Oolong packed a small bag, climbed on his camel named, Muhammed and began his journey westward. The Silk Road is full of surprises!

He met a girl from Persia who taught him how to paint with crushed gemstones and an old lady from Rome who taught him how to cook pasta dishes such as carbonara and cacio e pepe.

But the biggest surprise came in the desert. As Oolong followed the stars, he found a hidden oasis guarded by a talking dragon named, "Draco."

Draco told him that the Silk Road was not just for trading goods, it was trading dreams. "Every traveller who believes in miracles leaves behind a dream," Draco said. "And every dream helps build the future."

Oolong was amazed, he wrote his dreams on a piece of golden silk. "One day, children from every country will learn, laugh and build amazing things together."

Draco smiled and flew into the sky, carrying Oolong's dreams across the world.

Years later, the Silk Road was a place where robots delivered books, food and flying cars to everyone in every country. Kids from different countries played music together and magical scrolls helped people to understand each other's languages.

And somewhere, deep in the desert Oolong, Muhammed, and Draco blessed the dreams of travellers, waiting for the next brave child to follow the stars.

The Silk Trader

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Dorwart, Ruth Sunflower – 8

The merchant named Robert had just woken up, and he had new silk to sell. He went to the market in Beijing and set up his tent where he would sell his silk. But when he tried to sell it to the first person, they refused. Robert thought to himself, "Why did they refuse? Did I make it too expensive? This has never happened before! He tried selling it to his friend thinking there was no way his best friend would refuse him. But the same thing happened! He thought, how is this happening? Robert was from Italy, so he didn't understand why people wouldn't buy his silk. So, he asked a local person if they could explain. The person told him that Italian silk was very luxurious, so people thought it had to be for the emperor.

Robert decided that he needed a new business plan. Somehow, he needed to sell his silk to the emperor! Robert needed to get into the Forbidden City, he went to the castle homing the emperor. A guard saw him and said, "Hup! Who goes there?" Robert said, "I am a merchant from Italy." The guard looked worried. "Well the emperor is in a very bad mood. I don't think you should go in." Robert replied, "Don't you think the emperor is like that because he needs new clothes?" The guard said, "Hmm... Let me go ask him."

Robert waited a few minutes before the guard finally came back. The guard said, "You were

Right! The emperor said he was in a bad mood because he needed new clothes." Robert replied, "Well, I have some very fancy silk that he could have. The royal tailor could make clothes out of it." Then the guard said, "The emperor wants to invite you inside."

Robert went inside the Forbidden City palace. The Emperor and his tailor met Robert. They offered to trade one hundred. grams of spices, a kilogram of gold, and three thousand porcelain bowls to Robert for his silk. Robert accepted the deal. To celebrate their business partnership, the Emperor and Robert ate some dim sum for dinner. After dinner Robert

began his journey back to Italy with the treasure he had traded for. He was ready for the journey ahead and excited to see his family when he got home!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Hau, Hei Yee Brienne – 9

One bright and sunny morning, in the bustling market of Dunhuang, two kids, Xia and Aladdin were playing tag, chasing each other around the stalls while greeting the stallholders and shopkeepers. The two kids were friends since they were toddlers as they lived next to each other. Aladdin came from an Indian family who sold spices. He was a kind-hearted and curious boy. Xia was a Chinese girl whose parents operated a fabric stall. She had shoulder-length raven black hair, a pair of large black eyes and a rosebud-shaped mouth. However, both of their family business could barely make ends meet because their stalls were small and inconspicuous at the corners of the market.

Suddenly, a sandstorm swept in. Everyone stopped whatever they were doing and rushed to take cover. Stallholders hurried to snatch their goods and close their stores. Travelers that came to buy goods fled away. Others scrambled to find a safe spot to hide. Just when Aladdin and Xia were dashing home, they saw an old man lying on the floor. Without hesitation, they darted to the man's side to check his breathing. Luckily, the man was still alive but breathing weakly. They immediately dragged him into Aladdin's house. Aladdin fetched some mint and waved it underneath the old man's nose, successfully bringing him back into consciousness. The man struggled to open his eyes and murmured groggily, "Where...where am I?" "Oh! Thank goodness you're awake! I'm Xia and this is Aladdin, you're safe with us." Xia exclaimed. They helped him sit up and gave him some water. "Thank you for saving me," the man said feebly, "I am an antique merchant from Persia. I travelled along to trade but I was robbed halfway. I was running out of water and food..."

A few days later, the merchant got back on his feet and was going to leave. To show his gratitude, he took out an old and worn-out oil lamp and gave it to the kids. He told the kids, "This is the only thing I have left, I hope you don't mind." The kids thanked the merchant and bid him farewell.

After the merchant left, Xia and Aladdin quickly examined the antique, "Maybe it is an enchanted lamp with a genie inside." Aladdin joked. "Let's try and see!" Xia suggested. Aladdin rubbed the oil lamp hastily. The oil lamp began to pulse with a dim inner light. A voice whispered, "Hello, can you hear me?" There were a few seconds of silence before the kids burst with excitement. They could not help but jabber their many wishes until the voice stopped them and clarified, "I am not a genie and I can't grant wishes." There was another moment of silence, followed by a sigh of disappointment. "If you're NOT a genie, then what are you?" the children chorused. The voice replied, "My name is Tianyu, a flying apsara who was painted on a cave wall somewhere in this city. My duties were to scatter flowers, play music and dance, living a happy life forever. As time went by, a feeling of emptiness grew deep inside me. I became curious about the vast world outside. More importantly, I wanted to experience real life in order to truly understand it. One day, a wise old monk saw my longing. So, he transferred my spirit into this oil lamp, so that I could travel in Caravans to see the world. Throughout my journey, I have visited various countries, witnessing the complexity of human life. There was sorrow and happiness, cruelty and kindness, cowardice and courage, despair and hope. The human life sings one universal song, but in different languages. Now I have seen everything and my wish is fulfilled. It is time for me to return home. Will you help me go back to where I belong?" Tianyu asked.

Guided by Tianyu, the kids arrived at a hidden chamber in the Mogao Caves located at the edge of the Gobi Desert. Stepping inside the chamber, the children's eyes widened with wonder at the sight of a gigantic painting covering all the walls and ceiling. At the centre of the painting, a giant Buddha was sitting on a lotus throne. His face was calm and gentle. His half-lidded eyes seemed to hold a universe of peace. He was surrounded by hundreds of flying apsaras who were floating gracefully and playing the flute and pipa. While Aladdin was dazzled

by the beautiful gestures of the flying apsaras, Xia spotted a blank space on the wall where the paint had faded. There was Tianyu's home.

The oil lamp started to shake and emit a shower of golden light. Out of the light, Tianyu appeared in celestial robes with wide billowing sleeves and flowing ribbons. She hovered around the chamber and revealed a valuable piece of knowledge which could help the kids' families. "A final gift for your kindness that brings me home," announced Tianyu. Then she dissolved into the chamber wall, perfectly filling in the missing space. A gentle and knowing smile played on her lips. She was no longer a static figure on the mural, but a celestial spirit with wisdom and compassion.

Months later, in Dunhuang market, two stalls were flooded with customers. Xia's fabric was now famous for its vivid and radiant colours of sunset gold and crimson, dyed by two rare plants — turmeric and saffron. Culinarian, gourmets and food lovers snapped up Aladdin's secret recipe of spice made by those same plants. With the knowledge taught by Tianyu, the children bloomed their family business and lived a prosperous life.

My Adventures on the New Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Hui, Sun Yue – 11

When I first heard the word "New Silk Road" from my parents, I imagined it as a boring, dusty place in the deserts and seas of China—full of nothing but cactuses, camels, hidden treasures, raging sandstorms, old ships, pirates, and people carrying bolts of silk. But the more I heard and learned about it, the more fascinating it became. I wanted to discover it for myself, imagining I was right there in the middle of it all.

As I stepped onto the first page of the New Silk Road, I suddenly found myself in Europe—a place I'd never visited before. While exploring, I spotted some truly rare things I'd never seen: robot cats and dogs! I was stunned. These creatures had half-robotic bodies and half their natural animal forms—something so unique I was sure no real place had animals like them. As I kept wandering, I realized every kind of animal was the same: a wild mix of biology and machinery.

Eventually, I reached a magnificent golden gate with black letters carved into it: "Once you open this gate, you will be transported to another place." I thought my adventure on the New Silk Road was over, and my heart ached because I still wanted to explore more of Europe's wonders. I took a deep breath, said goodbye to the place, and stepped through. Little did I know, my real adventure was just beginning.

The next second, I was in the Middle East—another key stop on the New Silk Road. Without hesitation, I started searching for interesting things. This time, instead of rare animals, I noticed strange shadows on the ground. When I looked up, I was speechless with shock! People were flying through the air! After watching closely, I saw what they all had in common: each person wore a powerful flying engine strapped to their back. It was an incredibly cool invention, but also dangerous—I watched people zooming at full speed, nearly crashing into one another!

To stay safe, I hurried into a nearby coffee shop to avoid any collisions. But the moment I turned around, I was already somewhere else!

It turned out the coffee shop had been another hidden gate, cleverly disguised, leading me to a new country. I carefully observed my surroundings and felt something familiar, though I couldn't quite place it. Then I spotted a panda poster on the ground and realized: I was back in my homeland, China!

As I looked around, I saw a weird yet familiar landmark—the Great Wall of China! But it looked completely different. Instead of just rocks and sand covering parts of it, the entire wall was protected by glowing robot shields. Even the visitors were all robots; I was the only normal human there. I kept walking until I reached one final gate with a message carved on it: "Did you enjoy this adventure? Share what you learned during this journey to return home."

I thought for a moment and simply said:

"After this adventure, I learned that the world is quickly changing into a more innovative place. The Silk Road doesn't just sell silk, spices, art, and traditional goods anymore—it now trades advanced technology like robots, headphones, tablets, and so much more. People even sell autopilot airplanes!

As the history of the Silk Road evolved into this modernized version, all kinds of technology, science, innovation, creative ideas, and cultures have flowed into the New Silk Road. Not only has more technology entered, but so has more friendship. The Silk Road is truly the bridge connecting our past to this exciting new future."

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Kong, Tsz Yu Juliette – 8

A long time ago, Princess Janelle stepped quietly into the dark, whispering trees of the forest. She was searching for her beloved missing sister, Janela. Poor Janela lived in the forest because her parents' hearts were cold toward her. Every teatime Janelle would say, "Please wait 30 minutes", so that she could sneak away. She carried a heavy basket of warm food and cool water for Janela, hiding her tracks so her parents would never know.

Sunday was finally here! Janell's heart danced with excitement because she was taking Janela for a walk on the famous Silk Road. Janelle wore a bright, red silk dress that looked just like a picnic blanket. Janela wore her favourite plain purple skirt and a pink tank top. As they walked along the dusty path, they met Janelle's friends, Azalea and Alisha. They laughed and talked under the bright sun. Janela felt so happy to have new friends!

Janelle had a special mission: she had ordered some precious green jade and needed to find the merchant. Alisha pointed down a path and said, "I know this route well! Just go down that steep, rocky hill and you will see the merchant." Janelle followed the advice, holding Janela's hand tightly.

As they hiked down the steep road a mysterious man appeared from the shadows. "Hey there! Are you looking for the merchant of goods?" he asked in a scratchy voice. "It's this way. I have lived on the Silk Road for many years, so you can trust me."

Janelle and Janela followed him, but suddenly, they stopped. Their hearts sank. It was a cold, quiet dead end with nowhere to go! Janela tried to scream, but her voice felt small in the empty space. Suddenly, a kind voice called out, "I will help you!" It was Alisha's mum! She guided them safely back to the busy bazaar, where they finally collected their beautiful jade.

When it was time to return to the tall stone castle, Janelle's parents looked at the two sisters together. Their hearts finally softened. They hugged Janela and said "Janela, you can be part of our family again."

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Kwan, Ying Hei – 9

One sunny morning, a poor girl named Cherry woke up. She lived in China. She was going to get some milk from her cow, named Berry. She found that her cow had no more milk to sell to the supermarket. So she called her mother and her mother said, "The cow is very old, so she will not always have milk." Cherry said, "But the cow has no milk! We have to exchange the cow for money and food." Though they were very sad about it, they had no choice but to exchange their cow.

The next day, they packed up all their stuff and went on the journey to exchange their cow. They were very excited when they walked through the woods to the Silk Road. They were very hungry because they had no money to buy food. A kind person named Tom was rich and his father said he should not give food to the poor people. When his father was doing something else, he whispered to them, "Here, this is for you!" Her mother quickly said, "You know you do not need to give us food, right?" He said, "Yes, I know, but you are hungry!" They kept the bread and continued their journey.

The next cloudy morning, they were walking in the rainforest and it suddenly rained. Her mother was so scared that she would be ill. She ran to a nearby tree to get a large leaf and covered her and her own head like an umbrella. A random man who wore a gold necklace and many shiny rings came and said, "You cannot even afford an umbrella, you are so poor!" Then he walked away from them. They met a kind person after that, who she knew from before. He was Tom. This time, he handed an umbrella to her, so she asked him where his father was. He said, "My father said the road is too far away, therefore he went back home."

At night, they were very tired and they walked into a budget hostel to sleep for the rest of the night. The cow had to sleep on the grass outside the hostel. The hostel was a disaster and everything was broken. The next morning, they walked for one more hour, then they arrived at their destination, Europe. After that, they found a store where you could buy animals like a horse, a sheep, or a donkey to ride on, so her mother asked the owner of the store if they could sell the cow and get some money from the owner. The owner accepted the deal and gave them one hundred dollars. They were pleased.

They bought some vegetables and beef and kept walking for over a month. They saw some kind of vehicle and it could go on water. Then somebody told them that it was a ship and it only cost three dollars to ride the ship back to China. When they got on the ship, it was so magnificent and she ate a lot of abundant food, and they slept well on the ship. The ship was so big, with plenty of rooms, so they could do different activities like games and swimming, etc. They were overjoyed by it. When they got back home, she was very delighted about this beautiful trip and she said she would like to go again, so she planned for her next trip.

The Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lam, Hei Wun Cherish – 8

I am a slave... At least I was, before I became a Greek heir.

As the bright rays of sunshine shone on Lin Jin, the Chinese merchant, he woke up. He called me to bring his usual breakfast and his cup of hoji cha tea. He said, "Girl, we are about to travel along the silk road and trade things. Polish the horseshoes at once and put them on all of the horses. Fill the bags full with water and grains for the horses. I fumbled about to comply, I quickly packed, my bag with water and food, while I continued to think about my plan to become the next emperor.

Once we finished packing we started silk road, we saw shimmering mountains of gold and silver coins, clear glassware that could be used as a mirror, colourful linen carpets with pictures woven into them. The Lin Jin was in paradise! While my master traded a jade stone for a gold nugget, I stole two pieces of gold, they were so beautiful. We stopped for a short rest, when I suddenly noticed a gang of robbers hiding behind rocks. I stepped closer to them and asked if I could join them. They laughed and mocked me, saying "What could a child do?", I was furious, I killed them with a rock and took a dagger.

The very next day, I was very tired, but I still packed my things trying to stay busy when the prince came. I saw an amethyst peeking out of the horse's bag. The strong white Stallions wore golden horseshoes that shone brightly like sunlight on a sunny day. Their glossy manes and tails shimmered like silver fresh from the furnace. The prince slid down from the horse. He had black eyes and hair like coal. He wore a white chiton with sandals. He was the Greek prince. I immediately knelt and said, "Hail to Cassid, the prince of Greece". He asked how I knew him and I answered that I was Greek. I was captured in the war. He told me that he would bring me back to the palace. My master tried to protest, but he was silenced as soon as he opened his mouth. I was so happy. After a long journey we arrived at the palace. I saw the King and Queen, they, told me that I was their long-lost heir.

Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lam, Or Wing – 11

A long time ago, in a peaceful village in China, lived a curious girl named Mei. Her favourite part of the day is when she finishes her homework and sits down to hear her mother's stories about the Silk Road – a long and windy path that connected China to different and far countries such as India, Persia and Rome. Traders travelled back and forth on this road with camels or horses and cargo carts, bringing items and cultures. Mei dreamed of seeing those places, being responsible for trading to different countries.

One morning on Mei's 18th birthday, her mother gave her a gift – it was a roll of beautifully smooth silk!

"Take this with you," her mother said. "Spread the beautifulness of our village to the world!"

Mei was thrilled, she was more excited than ever. She joined a caravan of merchants and started her journey towards the Silk Road. The journey was full of surprises. Mei travelled across hot deserts, climbed snowy mountains and rumbled through busy cities. In the middle of her journey in India, she met a friendly boy named Jose. He was selling items that can only be found in India and telling funny stories about his home. As time passed, Mei and Jose became good friends. They shared traditions from their countries, helped each other through tough paths and laughed under the moon at night.

In Persia, Mei saw bright fabrics and she listened to music she had never heard before. She traded her silk for a golden bracelet and a carved elephant statue. In Rome, she saw buildings at different heights and met people who had never seen silk before. They were amazed by its softness, smooth textures and shininess. Mei traded her last piece of silk for a tiny music box which played sweet and soft tunes.

After many months, Mei and Jose returned home. They were no longer just travellers, they became explorers! And every journey, their bond grew as well! Mei told her family about the friends she made and the wonders she saw. Her mother smiled proudly and said, "You've brought the world to us!"

Now in the future, the Silk Road looks different. People travel by trains, planes and even through the Internet. They still trade goods but they also share ideas, music and stories. Mei's journey reminds us that even though the world is big, friendship and curiosity can connect us all.

Dreaming of the Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lam, Yu Kiu – 11

Sitting in my boring classroom, I tried to keep my eyes open, but they kept fluttering shut.

“Katie?! Why are you sleeping?” I jolted straight up to see Mrs. Chen, my horrible GS humanities teacher... well, not quite. Our original teacher had gotten into an accident and couldn't teach us for the rest of the year. Then Mrs. Chen, the substitute, arrived. She was short and tiny, constantly frowning and angry, clutching her huge signature purse that was probably bigger than her head. She was absolutely horrible and loved screaming at me.

“KATIE! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU? FIRST YOU FORGOT TO BRING YOUR TEXTBOOK, AND NOW THIS?! GO STAND OUTSIDE—NOW!!”

“Phew,” I sighed. Relief washed over me as I slumped my shoulders and walked out of the classroom, yawning. I leaned against the wall outside and slowly started falling asleep...

“WAKE UP, YOU SERVANT GIRL!” a man shouted in Mandarin.

I was utterly confused. I could understand it, but who was speaking? It couldn't be Mrs. Chen—the voice was male, and she definitely wouldn't speak Mandarin. “I SAID, WAKE UP!”

The man shouted again. I finally opened my eyes to see a man with the thickest beard I'd ever seen staring angrily at me and some other girls dressed in rags. He pointed furiously at a bunch of heavy sacks and immediately ordered us to carry them down. Just then, I realized we were on a carriage! The other girls scrambled away, but I sat there, frozen, not knowing what to do.

I thought, “Where is this place?” I tried to look for something to help me, but before I could reach for an axe, the man pulled out a whip. I was so scared that I jumped to my feet and ran.

While carrying the bags to the port the man pointed to later, I moved closer to a tall, gentle-looking girl who seemed older than the others. “Hi! Uh, do you know where we are and who that man is?” I asked.

She looked confused. Then I realized she was Chinese! Embarrassed, I asked her again in Chinese. She replied, “I'm XiaoLin. My parents were poor, so they sold me here. It's sad—most of the girls here were either sold or kidnapped during an invasion... Oh my god, I'm sorry. Um... I think we're traveling on the Silk Road, and that man is the local merchant or trader who bought us. How do you not know, though? It says so right there, and you certainly remember your trade, right?”

“Uh, haha, yes, I definitely remember it—just forgot, ahaha...” I remembered my friend telling me there was a GS humanities test about the Silk Road today! If I ever got back, I was going to be well-prepared.

So, I asked XiaoLin if she could tell me some facts about the Silk Road. But she rushed forward, put her sack down next to the port, and totally ignored me! Ugh! I looked for another girl to help me with my crisis when it started raining cats and dogs!

Ughhh! I walked back to the carriage like a soaked dog and saw something. I tiptoed over and took a peek.

I found a scroll and was surprised by my discovery. I decided to steal it and ran!

“A THIEF!!! CATCH HER!” the trader shouted.

I sprinted into the forest. My textbook was hanging from a tree! I grabbed it and blacked out immediately.

“Quiz time,” Mrs. Chen called out.

I woke up and saw the entire class watching me. “I’m ready to go,” I said, thinking, “Maybe Mrs. Chen’s lessons aren’t that bad after all!”

Time Travel Back to the Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lam, Yui Kiu Jasper – 10

While I was listening to my teacher talk about the history of the Silk Road in humanities class today, there was suddenly a bright flash and I lost consciousness.

When I woke up, I found myself surrounded by two muscular men wearing leather robes, but their upper bodies were bare. One of them was pushing down on me! A fancy king in a colourful coat and wearing a necklace of coral was gobbling up raw beef. Oh man, did I travel through time? My mind raced — I remembered all of the stories; this was the meanest Xiongnu ever! What should I do?

I looked around, finding that I was not alone in the tent. Right beside me were two men, one squished under a tougher looking man. He was dressed in a silk robe, so he was definitely not a Xiongnu. Right after, I noticed something on the wall: a round instrument with a long handle — it was my favourite Ruan!

Just then, the king shouted, “You are spies! Guards, take them away and chop off their heads!”

“Wait! I’m not a spy! I’m a musician. I play the Ruan!” I yelled as loud as I could.

The guy next to me shouted, “Yeah! We are musicians! I’m a drummer!”

The king looked at us confused and waved his hand. The guards took the instrument from the wall while another guard brought in a huge drum. The big guys let me go. “You better play something good, or else!”

I quickly whispered to my neighbour. “Keep it light and slow.”

I played my best lullaby, something relaxing and soothing. Before I knew it, the king and all of his guards were snoring away. I turned to the drummer and exclaimed, “Let’s go!”

And just like that, we escaped!

Afterwards, I found out that the man who escaped with me was Zhang Qian, a member of a caravan. He told me that his group had come from Changan (today’s Xi’an). They passed the magical Crescent Moon Spring, crossed the desert, and climbed the Pamir Plateau before meeting the Xiongnu. He was eager to continue his journey to find the Da Yuezhi — Tokhara — and persuade them to join forces against the Xiongnu. He invited me to join him.

“Absolutely!” I called out, never thinking that I could play a part in discovering the Silk Road.

We continued our trek westward and soon arrived at a lively town. Merchants were shouting, trying to sell their goods to everyone passing by.

“Welcome, young travelers!” An old man smiled at us. His blue eyes sparkled, and his hooked nose made him look a little funny. “Come see! My silk is the finest in the Samarkand market, which is made of gems.”

I shot back, “No way! That is made from threads spun by silkworms.”

As we wandered through the vibrant market, I was amazed by all the colors and sounds. There were Arabs selling cool spices, Africans showing off luminous blue gemstones, and Chinese vendors with fancy lacquerware and silk. The smell of freshly baked bread made my stomach rumble.

Zhang Qian asked around relentlessly. “Do you know how to get to Da Yuezhi?”

“I don’t know; I just came from Kashgar.”

“I came from Baghdad!” another exclaimed.

A clever merchant from Istanbul, sitting on a colourful rug said, “If you buy something, I’ll tell you,” his eyes twinkling dishonestly. I noticed a little girl with a headscarf gently tugging at my sleeve. I followed her away from the crowd into a quiet alley.

“I am from Da Yuezhi. We left our old home and found a rich land to live in,” she said seriously. Just as I was about to ask her more questions, I heard Zhang Qian call for me. I waved, but when I turned back to the girl, she had vanished.

Zhang Qian walked up. “Who were you talking to?”

I thought for a moment, unsure if I should tell him. Since the Da Yuezhi were living peacefully now, I did not think there was any reason to mention it. I was determined to keep the Da Yuezhi out of trouble.

Years passed and eventually Zhang Qian had to go back to the Han Dynasty to report to the emperor. Even though we did not find any allies for war, we learned a lot about different cultures and tasted some really delicious food! Thinking about the amazing meals, I couldn’t help but remember the grilled lamb legs — my mouth watering...

“Jasper, wake up!”

A loud voice pulled me back to reality. I opened my eyes to find that Mr. Yu, my teacher, had tapped my shoulder while my classmates laughed around me. Was it just a dream? How could it feel so real? As I wondered this, I suddenly noticed that I was holding the date the girl had given me in my palm. Without thinking, I put it into my mouth. It was so sweet! I couldn’t help but smile...

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Lee, Chit Hei Wesley – 9

Once upon a time, there was a big kingdom with a very brave prince called Oscar. The kingdom had no more food because it was in the middle of the desert. So, the brave Prince Oscar set out to the Silk Road to find people to trade with the kingdom's only wool left. He also brought thirty men just in case they faced enemies.

On the way to the Silk Road, Prince Oscar met a lot of new friends and traders. They chatted about how fabulous they thought the trading would be and about the wonderful Silk Road was. After a while, they heard an old traveler crying, "Please don't take my spices, I have a family that need to be fed!" A bunch of bandits were bullying him and taking the man's food. So, Prince Oscar called his men to capture them and give the spices back to the old trader. The trader thanked the prince and gave him a compass which was very useful for finding places.

After that, Prince Oscar found a place with a lot of shade to rest. They rested for a while, then continued the trading journey. They saw the end of the desert and the start of the mountains that were very high. These mountains are enormous! Luckily, Prince Oscar brought a tent so if they felt tired they could rest by the trees and eat the fruit from them.

But when Prince Oscar was walking, he heard a loud woosh. It was a giant storm! They quickly ran away avoiding the giant storm and started hiking in the mountain. They walked for a day, and it started to snow! They were happy because it was very hot before. The snow was so comfortable that Prince Oscar and his men fell asleep.

After a while they woke up and continued their journey. Finally, they arrived at the big trading market with people from different places coming to trade! The prince was looking for an old granny's food trading center. It was a place that traded the most delicious food of all time. Prince Bab found old granny's shop on a corner! But it was being robbed! Prince Oscar quickly grabbed his sword and slayed a thief. Soon he called his men to attack one hundred thieves! They were scared at first, because there were only thirty of them. But because of the kingdom they used their full power and fought against them. There were sacrifices made and many were hurt but, in the end, they won!

After Prince Oscar and his men won, there were only twenty men left. So, the granny thanked Prince Oscar and his fellow soldiers and gave them a lot of free food. Prince Oscar also used his wool to trade for some more food! Their supplies were more than enough now, but Prince Oscar thought it would take too long to walk back to the kingdom, because he was already starving! As the people saw what Prince Oscar did, they offered them a few horses to take them back home. The prince said, "Let's go!" And their journey back to the Kingdom started.

This time it was a lot easier because they didn't have to walk by themselves. But the powerful storms almost made Prince Oscar fall! Then they met a duck. Prince Oscar thought it was super cute and kept it as a pet. And then they met a super tired trader who had been walking for hours to get home. Prince Oscar was a very nice guy, so he offered the trader a lift back to his home. The guy thanked him and Prince Oscar finally arrived at the kingdom! There were no guards because they were too hungry. Once Prince Oscar opened the door, the king looked at him and said "OMG!" Prince Oscar quickly gave the king the food he got. The King said, "Thanks Prince Oscar, now we will have a feast!". Everyone was super happy to eat again.

During the feast, the king and queen had a long talk about how happy they were, while the prince was writing down his diary and playing. Prince Oscar said the bag of food was very big he almost fell off his horse carrying it! The kingdom was once starving and now had food to eat. It was all thanks to Prince Oscar discovering the Silk Road and bravely going there to trade. Even though there were many difficulties such as storms and bandits, it was worth it!

Cammy's Silk Road Adventure: A Camel's Journey Across Time

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ng, Colin Hayson – 12

Hi! I am Cammy the Camel. I live in the Han Dynasty around 2000 years ago, and I accidentally traveled to the year 2025 while walking through a sandstorm in the middle of the Gobi Desert. While trotting through the New Silk Road, let me tell you about my journey along the Silk Road in the Han Dynasty.

My journey began in the city of Chang'an, the heart of China. The city was filled with merchants calling out to trade their goods: fine silk, porcelain, fragrant tea, and paper. My master told me that silk was as valued as gold in faraway lands in the west.

As we headed west, the city of Chang'an slowly disappeared, and we entered the endless Gobi Desert. The blazing sun was unbearable, and worse, we faced sandstorms frequently across the desert. When we finally reached the end of the desert, we were faced with steep, snow-capped mountains. The journey was much tougher than expected.

Although the journey was tough, I gained invaluable experience through traveling to other countries, such as Persia, Arabia, and the Roman Empire. Our journey not only traded goods but also exchanged a wide range of knowledge and culture. We brought paper and printing techniques to the west, enabling the spread of knowledge there. In return, we brought back scientific knowledge from Arabia to China, such as astronomy, mathematics, and architecture.

My Silk Road journey was not just about trotting, but about helping people share stories, dreams, and wonderful treasures with the world. I hope my New Silk Road journey will continue to make the friendship between the East and West blossom.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Ng, Hoi Tai Carter – 8

One scorching, hot morning in 130BC, the Chinese Emperor summoned me. He gave me a mission, he told me to go trade beautiful silk, porcelain, jade dishes and more for gold, silver, wool and spices. He also lent me guards to protect the goods.

We first crossed freezing mountains. While we were on the mountain, a pack of wolves attacked us! We grabbed our weapons and fought back, the fight kept on for hours. The wolves couldn't hurt us, because of our shields and armour. The wolves got scared and ran away.

After the freezing mountains we trekked through scorching hot deserts. In the desert we saw a group of bandits with swords, bows and arrows, but luckily, they didn't have shields. We didn't have any choice but to fight, we targeted their chests and shot arrows, finishing them off.

After a whole month, we finally finished our journey. We settled down in a village, I let a half of the soldiers go look for a safe place to set up camp, while I went to trade our wares and meet different people. I also learned new languages!

I went to the west to trade with beautiful silk, dense porcelain, round dishes and colourful jade for shiny gold and silver, I made many new friends and learned about their countries and inventions that they made. After a while, the soldiers came back they had found a safe spot, we set up a few tents. During that time, we got three big bowls of water for our camels to drink and three big bowls of food for us!

The next day was freezing cold, we put on our jackets and covered ourselves with blankets and stayed in our tents to rest. In the afternoon it wasn't too cold, so we went out to trade more and more friends. We tried delicious local foods.

A few days later, we had to go back to China. We had to travel through the hot desert again. This time there were no bandits. However, there were evil soldiers trying to take our goods. We fought for two days and the other team ran away, thankfully nobody died. Once again, we travelled through the freezing cold mountains, we didn't encounter any predators and we managed to take a day to rest. During the rest day, we played with snow, we had a snowball fight and built a snow man.

It took a month to get to China and we told the Emperor everything, shared stories, and gave all of the wares we traded for to him. The Emperor was very pleased with my work, he gave me 25% of all the earnings as a reward. With the rewards, I set up my own trading company to continue the journey with the Silk Road.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Penarotti, Lea De Lima – 9

This is the tale of a Chinese merchant called Zhang. He was a jade merchant from Khotan during the Ming Dynasty. For many years, he travelled the Silk Road between Khotan and Sogdiana, finding new clients for his fine jade.

Every one of his journeys covered 2,400 km, taking months to be completed. He used to cross vast deserts and cold mountains with his shipment of jade, facing difficult terrain and wild nature.

Because Zhang was an experienced traveller, many young travellers from his village would ask him for advice, including an ambitious and jealous young merchant called Wong.

Wong would spend hours and hours telling his neighbours and friends about his successful business trading silk. He would say that jade trading was something from the past, while silk trading would make you rich.

Wong would rave about his connections with the best silk producers in Suzhou and Jiaxing, and how they could easily produce large quantities of the best silk in China. Many young merchants believed Wong and started to buy silk from him.

One day, a soldier called Tian decided to ask Zhang, the experienced jade merchant, if he believed that Wong was telling the truth and his sales were great, or if Zhang thought he was lying. Zhang's reply was that being a merchant was hard work and business was not as easy as Wong described. Zhang's recommendation was for Tian to continue his successful career in the military. Tian was relieved by Zhang's honesty and shortly left for a new campaign out of town.

When Wong heard that Zhang had advised the young soldier to avoid Silk Road trading, he became furious at losing a potential client and decided to take action against Zhang.

He waited for Zhang's next Silk Road trip and paid a group of Bedouins from the Arabian Peninsula to ambush Zhang and steal his jade. During the attack, the Bedouins stole his horses and tied him up on the outskirts of Sogdiana.

Just when Zhang was about to lose hope, a battalion of Chinese soldiers led by Tian marched through the cold desert night and freed him.

They asked him why he was tied up and he replied, "I'm not sure. I remember that some Bedouins beat me up and stole my jade. All of it!"

Tian had an idea of how to find out who could have done such a thing. He decided to follow the Bedouins. Zhang remembered the direction they went, so he pointed them there. After a few days of searching, Tian's battalion found the Bedouins' village. They found Wong in a tent dividing the stolen jade. Zhang recognised his jade on the Bedouins' table and took it back, while Wong was arrested.

When Zhang got back to the village, he told the young merchants his story and said that Wong's reputation as a merchant was ruined. A lot of young merchants confessed that they had been scammed by Wong and that they were relieved he had been arrested.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Sir Ching Hayden, Lai – 10

On a sweltering midday, a ten-year-old Darius waited in the dusty caravanserai area of Samarkand. Clutched in his sweaty hand was a jade pendant—his family's heirloom. His father, a ceramic trader, was very ill. A healer had said that only the special ginseng root could cure him. As a result, Darius was determined to trade the polished jade pendant for that special ginseng root in order to save his father's life.

As time passed, Darius saw a large group of new travelers stopping nearby. They wore bright red clothing, which looked completely foreign to him. Knowing his father was in need, he built up his courage and walked up to a boy about his age named Ming. With butterflies in his stomach, Darius held out his hand with the jade pendant perched on his palm. Not understanding what Darius meant, Ming shook his head. Just as Darius was about to turn away, Ming's father approached. He explained kindly to Darius, with broken words, that they did not need a rock to feed the peckish horse, which had been pulling their cart. Instead, they needed food and water for the tired horse.

Darius's heart sank with disappointment. Then he pointed to the empty gourd and toward a nearby well, begging silently for water. It took a moment for Ming to apprehend what Darius meant. Without hesitation, Darius immediately began to help Ming heave bucket after heavy bucket of water. After half an hour, the gourd was full, and the thirsty horse happily slurped up the water. Because of this, Ming's father beamed with gratitude. He reached into his pocket, took out the very root Darius needed, and handed it to him as a token of appreciation! Darius was over the moon. Not only did he get the ginseng root, but he also got to keep the jade pendant!

As Ming's father prepared to leave, Ming ran back to Darius. Clutched in his hand was a crumpled piece of paper—the recipe for making the ginseng root medicine. He gave it to Darius as a symbol of friendship. In return, Darius gave Ming a beautiful clay pot crafted by his father as a gift. After saying farewell, Darius walked back home.

When Darius's father saw him return with both the root and pendant, he asked how it was possible. Darius told his father the whole story. After a few days of taking the medicine, his father recovered fully.

This story not only taught Darius that the Silk Road connected more than places; it also connected people through friendship. He also learned that being kind to others can bring wonderful things in return.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tam, Nga Chi Audrey – 10

The hot sun shone gently as it set in the dry, barren desert of China. A gust of warm wind blew my dark hair across my face while I rode across the vast, broad desert on my pungent-smelling camel that smelled of unwashed socks. My team of merchants observed a map of Osh to prepare for when we arrived in the city. We were heading to Osh, a huge city in Kyrgyzstan, to trade silk and pottery with the local traders. I had mischievous butterflies in my stomach; I was excited but nervous to reach a country so far away from my homeland.

Suddenly, I heard squealing from the other merchants. I looked up from my map and saw a city with many lush tall trees and cozy stone huts in the distance. A gigantic grin spread across my round face as my camel paced across the golden, blazing-hot sand. I looked down at my simple long pink dress and thought about how much I missed my late father, who passed away on a journey to Tajikistan. One of the other merchants teased me, "Qing Wei, you can just ride on your camel at the same pace; we're just going to check it out first so we know if it's safe for you out there," all of the other merchants sneered. The other merchants' camels dashed through the sand and left me alone with a broken heart.

As I was thinking of a way to get back at those spiteful merchants for being sexist to me, as I was the only female merchant in the caravan, I heard some loud neighing. I looked back and saw a middle-aged man with red hair and blue eyes, wearing a red and brown shirt with gold embroidery, riding on a snowy white horse. "Hi there! I'm Umar! Are you visiting Osh? I can show you around!" exclaimed Umar cheerfully. "I'm Qing Wei from China, and yes, I'm visiting Osh to trade silk and pottery," I answered, trying my best not to show my sadness from what had just happened. Umar kindly gave me some Shyrdak rugs and Kalpak hats for free because he collected too many from Balasagun, another city in Kyrgyzstan. Umar rode away humming a song, and I didn't feel as bad anymore; it seemed like my broken heart was covered with a bandage. I grasped tightly onto the camel's reins and spurred the camel to speed it up. The sadness and anger blew off me as if they were dust on my shoulders as I galloped through the desert.

At last, I arrived in the vibrant and bustling city of Osh, where the fragrant aroma of cumin, dried chili peppers, and grilled meat filled my nose. There were floods of citizens that had come to shop, traders exchanging goods with foreigners, and busy shopkeepers constantly thunderously marketing their merchandise. When I was looking at the scrumptious street food, there was a gentle tap on my left arm, and I saw my fellow merchants. I immediately pretended to look fierce to warn them not to be mean to me. Before they could do anything cruel to me, I felt something tugging at the load of silk on the side of my camel. I noticed it and whipped around; I then saw some hooded men in black who blended into the evening sky. I leapt off my camel, and the men halted, as if they were mice spotted by a hungry cat. The awkward men dashed off into the darkness, leaving some sheets of precious silk lying on the rocky ground, which they had attempted to steal. I turned to the other merchants, full of pride, and asked proudly, "Now who's weak?" The men hung their heads in embarrassment and envy. "Let's not waste time! We've got to go to the castle to trade!" I announced confidently, trying to lead the team. The others rolled their eyes sarcastically and grumpily followed, as they wanted to shop for longer.

The glistening bright moon shone gently on us while we rode on our camels to reach the castle in the middle of the city. I was staring and felt tired on the way because I had barely eaten anything throughout the day; my stomach grumbled so loudly that the other side of the world would hear it! After an hour that seemed like forever, we finally arrived at the majestic castle of Osh. It was made out of millions of cashew-colored bricks, and the castle had four towers. On each tower, there were some arched windows illuminated with brilliant light from inside. The main entrance was doorless, which led to a luxurious and grand living room. I was stunned to see such an amazing sight. We strolled into the castle when suddenly some guards blocked us from going in. "What are you doing here? Are you trying to steal something? The king's crown just got stolen!" asked a guard with an enormous mustache gruffly. "No, we're just here to trade our silk and pottery," I answered calmly. The guards gestured for us to let us in, then brought us to see the king. They led us to a carpeted room where the king sat on a luxurious throne at the back of the room. We bowed to the king, and one of the merchants said,

"Your Majesty, we are here to offer your kingdom silk and pottery." The king accepted the goods and offered us some timber in return.

We then left the castle feeling satisfied for finishing our task and found an inn to rest in, where we also found ourselves some delicious food. From this exciting journey, I learned that confidence and self-belief are the keys to success, as I proved to the other merchants that females are not weak and can do what males can.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tang, Sum Yee Gladys – 9

Just a normal day, I woke up to do my job, which is a servant. I took Princess Alice to her dining table and served her food. Alice finished her food and said with a sparkle in her eyes, "I had a wonderful coincidence with my prince in the dream last night. He lives 2,200 years ago and we have to travel far away beyond the Silk Road to meet him in person. Let's start our adventure!" I was surprised but still agreed. She packed some precious gold, electronic devices, silver and silk and took her pet camel along. I called her guards. We pressed the magic button and together we went back to 2,200 years ago.

We arrived at the starting point of the Silk Road and began our journey. The road was covered by hot and dusty sand, the walking path was surrounded by huge mountains. It looked very busy and dangerous and people travelling around. Walking through in one straight direction ahead, we met people from around the world, such as Arabs, Europeans, Indians and even Mongolians. We struggled with how to communicate with them as we spoke different languages, but surprisingly, we made lots of friends by using hand gestures or even facial expressions as our way to know each other. It was amazing to share our culture, ideas and religious beliefs too. The true experience was something that we could not learn in books. We didn't feel alone as we continued our journey with new travelling partners.

After days of our journey, we were running out of energy a bit. What made us worried was that Alice started feeling sick and suddenly she fainted. We had no experience in handling this by ourselves. I felt lost, with my hands shaking and hoping that God can guide us on. Suddenly, a man called Jack came in. He was a doctor. Jack checked Alice's pulse and heartbeat by using some Western medical equipment. "Alice has got a fever. She will be well tomorrow after my prescription. Let her take a rest." said Jack.

That night seemed to last a very long time. I could not sleep well, staying beside Alice the whole night. With the hope that sunrise brought, Alice woke up finally and she looked good. "Her fever is over." "No worries," said Jack. We all felt blessed as Alice was fine. "Thank you, Jack. I am so lucky that I met you. If you planned to walk along the Silk Road, are you interested to continue your journey with us?"

Together with our new partner, we climbed up mountains, passed through rivers and grasslands for weeks. Every day was a brand-new start to us, with lots of amazing experiences. One of the most interesting activities along the Silk Road was the exchange and trade of various goods. While Chinese people sold some luxury silk, dishes, tea and also papers, Western people sold precious metals such as gold and silver, and even horses. Alice suggested, "What if we sell some of our goods that I packed earlier?" I quickly answered, "Of course!" Alice took out the goods to start our "first business" and attracted people around us. They were especially interested in our electronic devices and curious about how they worked! An hour passed and we were so amazed and shocked by how many things we sold and even made some nice exchanges. We exchanged our items for a few horses, wool, rugs, stones and even a violin!

Soon we arrived at the entrance of a small village, which was the last checkpoint near our destination. We saw some people having a party and they were dancing happily. Some Chinese people were performing a peacock dance, Spanish people were dancing flamenco and Western people were dancing ballet. The place was getting crowded, filled with people cheering all around. While people danced, Alice took out the violin and started to ask people how to play. Suddenly some people rushed over and even started playing the violin professionally. We all sang along and danced together. Soon it was almost sunset. Everybody picked up some sticks and set up a campfire together. Alice and I were curious and confused about what they were doing. Some Westerners brought food and started grilling it over the fire, and they called it a "barbecue." As Chinese people, this was the

first time that we tried some Spanish food, Indian curry and European dishes which were all new to us. They all tasted wonderful!

The sky started turning dark, and some generous Mongolian people brought Mongolian yurts for us to sleep in. So, we packed our stuff inside and decided to spend our night here. In the middle of the night, I felt the wind blowing towards us and saw a shadow drifting by. I was scared and woke Alice up. We both were scared but still stepped out of the yurt to see what happened. However, we saw nobody was there. When I turned back, I found that one of our bags was missing, and it was the one filled with our gold coins! "Oh no! Someone stole our gold coins! What should we do?" I screamed. Alice answered calmly and said, "No worries, it was just gold-coin chocolate but not real gold!" We all laughed loudly.

The next day, the sun was shining brightly. We walked until our destination and arrived at the castle. I was so excited. "We finally reached the castle and can meet your prince soon!" But then Alice replied, "I have already found someone that I became enamoured with." She held Jack's hand and they both showed their blissful smile. I was so happy for them. The trip across the Silk Road was really a fruitful and an unforgettable time for us!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Tsang, Katie – 9

I am a merchant who sells treasures and spices in Rome. However, I don't have many customers so I usually play with my pet camel, Silky. My life was dull and boring.

Today, I left to sell my shimmering jade at the local market as usual. Just as I was playing with Silky, a Chinese woman approached me and said secretly, "The Chinese Emperor, Tang Taizong, wants to meet you. Please bring along all your treasure and you must travel along the Silk Road. Thank you." And just like that she left.

I watched her leave, my mouth open in surprise. I was in doubt at first but then considered this as an opportunity to get my goods sold in China, I immediately rushed to pack all of my gems and spices. After saying goodbye to my friends, I set off with Silky.

Along the never-ending journey, I kept wondering why the Chinese Emperor demanded me to China. I was anxious and exhausted. However, the fascinating view swept my worries away as soon as I entered the border of China.

Kashgar Old Town was like a maze with mud-brick homes and carved wooden doors. I was drawn by the vibrant ethnic atmosphere. To my surprise, there were bustling markets in the busy alleys. People were really interested in the goods I brought along. It was a shame that I had to save the treasure for the Emperor.

After that, I was travelling in a totally different zone through the Taklimakan Desert. The sand at my feet started to float higher and higher. There were golden sand dunes everywhere forming a gigantic sea of sand. I was feeling dry and isolated. Just then, a sand storm had started. The wind blew menacingly, sand slapped at my face without mercy. My whole body was covered in sand and my sight was blurry. Silky moaned helplessly by my side. Suddenly, a beautiful white sand fox appeared out of nowhere, swishing its bushy tail. It blinked at me then something magical happened. The sand storm calmed down and the view was clear again. I wanted to take a closer look at the fox but it had disappeared already. I thought childishly, "Perhaps, it was a guardian sent by the Emperor to protect me along the way?" I shook my head and continued to walk on, feeling a bit secured.

I kept on walking pass the largest lake in China, the Qinghai Lake; the breathtaking rainbow mountain in Zhangye Danxia. Finally, the outline of Taiji Palace in Xi'an became clearer. A guard at the palace gate stopped me and asked, "Who are you?" I pointed at my treasure and replied politely, "The Emperor invited me here. My name is Priyanka, a merchant of spices and jewellery from Rome."

As I stepped in, I looked up and was awestruck. An enormous, golden palace extended endlessly in front of me. The servants urged me to continue walking, as I entered the hall, I realised there were paintings of sand foxes along the wall. In the centre of the room, sat the Chinese Emperor with a dignified manner.

He greeted me politely yet with an intimidating tone. “Nice to see you, Priyanka. I adore the treasure you sold in the market and I want them all. In return, I would give you the magical fox which protected you along the Silk Road. With it, you can travel around the world to discover more valuables and make a fortune. There is one more condition. Once a year I need you to send someone to pass one of the treasures you found along the Silk Road to me. What do you think?”

I have always wanted to see the world, especially after this expedition, I clearly understood that I could not be stuck in one place. The magnificent work of nature along the Silk Road opened my mind. Plus, the magical fox would be a great company with Silky. Without much hesitation, I agreed eagerly.

This unbelievable trip connected the West and the East afterwards. To myself, that might be the end of my first journey through the Silk Road, but yet a fabulous new chapter of an adventure by me, Silky and Mr. Fox awaits.

The Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Wong, Kwun Yiu Attis – 10

In ancient times, the Silk Road was created, connecting the East and the West. It exported not only goods but also ideas. Along this path, travelers carried beautiful fabrics and incredible inventions that would change the world.

One sunny morning in Chang'an, a boy called Yi Xian has been busy for the past several months, working on something special. One day, inspired by floating plants in a stream, he pounded tree bark, rags, and old fishing nets into a pulp, mixed it with water, and spread it on a fine screen to dry. The result was light weight, smooth sheets – paper. "Finally!" he shouted. "I did it! I finally made my first sheet of paper!" He was thrilled.

He knew that his invention could help everyone – for students to write down their notes, or for merchants to keep records of their trade. He was determined to share his invention to the rest of the world. He carefully wrapped the paper in silk and set off on his journey.

The first few days were easy. However, it started to get hotter and hotter. Yi Xian had to climb steep mountains and cross harsh deserts. He even got lost along the way. But luckily, he met other travelers that helped him get back on the right path.

Some days, he slept on the mountains in freezing temperatures. He kept shivering, it was hard to sleep. He was very thirsty and hungry, he survived just on the water and food that other travelers gave him. One clear night, while trying to fall asleep, thieves snuck upon him. They opened all Yi Xian's bags and stole the samples of the new paper invention along with some important notes. Yi Xian was awoken by the noise and confronted the intruders with his lantern. The intruders bolted down the mountain past sleeping travelers and into the narrow streets of the nearby town. Yi Xian was smart and because this was a Chinese speaking town, he was able to alert the town guards about the thieves. They were eventually captured.

Despite all the challenges and difficulties he faced, he never thought of giving up. Even on the journey! Although they spoke different languages, people exchanged ideas and Yi Xian realised that they are all inventors like him! They walked together for the rest of the journey. Yi Xian felt safer walking in a big group so no one could steal his invention.

After days and days of walking, they finally arrived at Samarkand, a famous trading hub. Even though Yi Xian was exhausted, he set up a booth for his invention. At first, everyone walked past his booth without looking at him or his invention. Until a curious scholar walked up and asked, "What is this?"

"The future of communication." Yi Xian answered. He got everyone's attention. They all gathered around to listen to his explanation for this white rectangular object. They had never seen something like this before. After listening to him, everyone was shocked. They could not believe that the young boy in front of them created such an amazing invention. A merchant really wanted the paper to record his trading. Soon after, people started to bid for it with their best possessions, like gold, spices and rare horses. After some time of haggling by the merchants, Yi Xian finally agreed to a fortune of 200 to 300 grams of pure gold, 10 sacks of saffron spices and the heavenly white horses called Ferghana. Yi Xian achieved a huge success.

The Silk Road played a huge role in his success, by allowing him to travel to other countries. Without it, people from other places could not know about his invention and could not benefit from it. Yi Xian returned to Chang'an a rich man and was able to feed and provide wealth to his generations to come.

“And that’s the story of your ancestor.” Mom said.

“Wow!” I was amused.

“They are a part of our family’s history, they taught us the importance of connection, as well as perseverance. Remember when you wanted to give up violin? Now you understand why I told you not to give up. Yi Xian would have never achieved what he did if he gave up during the hard times.” The story finished and I felt a deeper sense of connection to the past. It inspired me to explore new ideas and embrace challenges. I want to create my own stories and make a difference in this world regardless of how big or small it is. “Good night.” I said to mom. As the lights went off, I closed my eyes and dreamed of the endless possibilities that await me.

The Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yeung, Yan Kiu – 8

A long time ago, on the famous Silk Road, four brave travellers were on a long journey. They were, Chen from China, Yumi from Japan, Julia from Spain, and Priya from India.

Each traveller carried something extraordinary. Chen brought Chinese rice and dumplings, Yumi brought delicious Japanese tea and Sake. Julia brought olive oil and churros and Priya brought curry powder. One afternoon, they accidentally met under a tall tree beside a sandy road. At first, they were shy because they all spoke different languages, but soon, they began to communicate using simple English words, gestures and big warm smiles. "Hello! I am Chen from China, " Chen said, "I have some vegetable dumplings. Do you want to try?"

"Konnichiwa! My name is Yumi," the girl said smiling at her new friends. Surprisingly, Priya brought two camels. Each of them could ride on a camel and at night, they shared their food and drinks. They were full of surprises. Chen had never tasted churros before and Yumi was amazed by the spicy curry. They all loved the warm tea. They laughed and talked, learning about each other's' cultures. Julia danced flamenco, Chen taught them some Kung Fu moves, Yumi taught them how to bow politely and Priya showed them that with the camels they could travel faster and safer so they decided to continue their journey together.

Suddenly, a group of travellers arrived. They lost their way on the Silk Road. The four friends immediately shared their food and camels. The travellers thanked them, telling them that they were leaders of a great trading city. Because of their kindness and generosity, they were invited to open a new Silk Road market where people from various countries could meet and trade.

The four friends were ecstatic they started as strangers, but now they were more than just friends. They were helping to connect the world. Their friendship was the beginning of a new Silk Road.

Aurora's Silk Road Treasures

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yeung, Yin Fay – 11

Hi, I am Aurora Chris! I am going to cross the Silk Road in China! My family and I went on a ten-day Silk Road tour.

We started the tour in Xi'an. We rode horses along the road. I enjoyed the view so much! Suddenly, my mom shouted, "Aurora! Look!" I turned around to see Mom inspecting a shiny piece of metal. I said, "Eww! Put it down!" Mom told me it was a coin. I turned back, put the coin in a bag, and started looking for more. By the end of the day, I had collected 37 coins! I carefully put them all in a bag. I couldn't wait to show Granny when we got home.

On Day 2, we ate some fresh fruit for breakfast. We rode horses again. It was so hot! I was sweating a lot. We stopped at a lake to rest. The tour guide said we could swim in the lake! I jumped in and splashed around. A girl came over and asked to play with me. We splashed each other for about 30 minutes. Later, we continued the tour. I shared a horse with the girl. She told me her name was Celeste Smith, and we became friends. I gave her one of the coins I had found.

Days 3, 4, and 5 were also very fun. Celeste and I kept talking about the beautiful views and the things we found.

When Days 6 and 7 came, Celeste and I woke up inside the horse carriage and saw an old man dressed in orange. He was selling food and toys. We got off the carriage and started looking for things to trade. I took one of my coins and traded it for a bag of candies.

On Days 8 and 9, we turned around to head back. I was tying my shoelaces when something caught the corner of my eye—a shard of porcelain! I picked it up and showed Mom. She said we could keep it.

On the last day, I felt sad because I was going to miss this tour. Celeste and I exchanged contact information and signed a photo for each other. Goodbye, Silk Road!

The Naughty Camel that Hated Cinnamon

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Young, Chun Hei Ryan – 8

Yang Xi was a 22-year-old young man from Chang'an. He wanted to trade three bags of cinnamon for gold. He was confident that he could find buyers in Rome because, the Romans in the city were very rich. He brought his camel named "Jingle Belly" with him and started his journey along the Silk Road.

When Yang Xi stopped and had a rest in Dunhuang, he found Jingle Belly huffing at the bags of cinnamon. The next day when he counted his bags, he noticed that he had lost one of his bags of cinnamon. He didn't realize that Jingle Belly hated the smell of cinnamon and hid the bag in the sand when they passed through the desert.

When Yang Xi arrived in Rome, he found that all the bags of cinnamon had disappeared. A kind stranger came out and told Yang Xi that his camel threw the bags of cinnamon away in the desert. Yang Xi was very angry. He had nothing to sell to the Romans. In order to earn gold, he ordered Jingle Belly to perform a camel dance in front of the Roman baths. Jingle Belly's kicks and movements were so funny. The crowd laughed and gave them gold coins as a reward. Both Yang Xi and Jingle Belly were very happy.

Yang Xi bought some carpets in Rome and one female camel named, "Silly Italy" which became the wife of Jingle Belly. They returned to Chang'an. and lived happily ever after.

A Modern Hong Kong girl in Emperor Xuanzong's Court

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Young, Teagan Elenor Lilou Wenzel – 11

Goldie was scared; this was her first sale on her own. Her Mom and Dad were Hong Kong goldsmiths and they had always helped her, before. She clutched her stylish, designer jacket, checking that the heavy, golden statue she had come to sell was still safely hidden. It was.

Goldie had left Hong Kong early this morning on a high-speed train to Xian to sell a statue of Confucius. She had just left Xian's high-speed train station to take a taxi to meet her buyer when everything had changed.

There was no more asphalt, taxis, or train station. All the street signs were gone. The street was gone—it was just a muddy space. All the modern buildings were gone. Xian's ancient City Wall, however, had gotten bigger, newer, and now surrounded the city.

People were dressed as if a historical drama was being filmed. Courtiers with flags, on ponies, announced that Emperor Xuanzong would read his newest poem today, here in Chang'an...

...Somehow Goldie had gone back in time to the height of the Tang Dynasty when Xian was called Chang'an...

Chang'an City Guards suddenly rode Goldie down—she looked suspicious in her weird clothes and the Emperor was arriving.

As Goldie was dragged away the Emperor called for the peculiarly dressed girl to be brought to him.

Chang'an was the terminus of the Silk Road in the Tang Dynasty and foreigners brought unusual wares. Goldie's clothes were strange. Maybe she was a foreign merchant?

Goldie remembered studying Classical Chinese at school and, haltingly, spoke. "It is true," she said. "I am a merchant. I followed the Silk Road to find a worthy buyer for this..." Goldie pulled the beautiful, golden sculpture of Confucius from inside her jacket and presented it to the Emperor's senior attendant.

Emperor Xuanzong was amazed, especially as he was about to present his new poem "I pass through the Lu Dukedom with a sigh and a sacrifice for Confucius". He demanded to buy the statue and invited Goldie to the evening's feast.

Emperor Xuanzong was celebrated all night by the courtiers and his guests. In turn, he honoured them, especially Goldie who had brought him the golden statue. He ordered gold bars, beautiful bolts of silk, painting scrolls and poem scrolls be given to Goldie as payment for her statue.

After the party Goldie was brought to her room by attendants as Emperor Xuanzong had requested she stay in a guestroom after the party. She first woke when a servant stoked the fire in her room. Later, she searched for the bathroom until she remembered, from school, that she needed a chamber pot!

Goldie awoke, groggy, in her bedroom in Hong Kong, amazed at the detailed dream she had had the previous night. Then she turned her head and saw: a mountain of gold bars; a pyramid of bolts of fine silks; and heaps of paintings and beautiful calligraphy poem scrolls piled beside her bed...

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Margaret's Coeducational English Secondary and Primary School, Yung, Tsz Yu Scarlett – 9

Do you know who am I? I am the son of the famous Chinese emperor in the Han Dynasty. I had a big mission to accomplish. It was from my father. I needed to go across the Silk Road to India and all the way to Europe to trade items from China. It would take months to get there because all along the way, it is 6,000 kilometres. “How could I do that?” I thought. I remembered my father said that I could do this with my bravery, so I trusted him. There were 4 servants, sent by my father. There were merchants that held paper, silk and other precious goods. There were soldiers, also sent by my father to protect me. Last but not least, there were diplomats that opened routes and documented our travels. It was called “The Silk Road” because China’s silk was valued for its vivid colours and luxurious appearance, so everyone loved it. I brought 50 silks, 50 tea bags, 80 sheets of paper and 10 compasses to trade 100 pieces of glass, 10 bottles of wines, 5 precious stones, 2 horses, gold and silver. We also took about 15 camels to ride.

Our journey began from the heart of ChangAn, the capital of China. It was located in Shanxi Province and was the largest city in the world. Soon, we arrived at a desert – the Gobi Desert. The fiery and harsh glare of the sun beat brightly down on the Gobi Desert. The flaming ball of fire set the sky ablaze. Half of us had heatstroke under this unbearable heat. A lot of the poor camels struggled and couldn’t walk, so we stayed there until the camels recovered and could walk again. A few days passed, and all camels recovered, except one – Night. “Sh–sh–she died?” I asked a servant. “Yes, she did,” replied the servant sadly. “We will honour her later today, but now we need to move on like nothing happened.” So, we did.

Weeks passed, and at last we came to a freezing mountain – Tianshan. Tianshan was surrounded with a bed of frosty snow. Our bodies were wrapped with winter clothes, but still everybody quivered as the sharp wind blew around us. The chilly air pushed against us, making it harder to climb up the mountains. At night, a thief tiptoed to our sleeping area and suddenly stole our silks! Everyone was furious about it. Suddenly, an idea popped into my mind. “Servants, whoever gets back the things will get the gold that we will trade.” Before I finished speaking, servants zoomed out of bed and ran as fast as lightning to get back the silks. A few minutes passed, every servant rushed back here. A servant held all the silks, but he was short of breath. Everyone thanked him for his amazing bravery.

Months passed, eventually, we came to India. Everybody gasped at the incredible things in India. Soldiers protected me from people that came near. Everyday in India was crowded with people waiting to trade stuff with each other. The sea of people was always pressing in on me. After trading the things my father told, I saw a street show that was performed by a dancing boy. That boy was dressed in colourful clothing that I liked. “Who is that?” I asked. Suddenly, I noticed a sign that said, “This show is performed by the Prince.” After the show, I ran next to the Prince, and said “Hi, I am the Prince of China, and you are the Prince of India, right?” We got to know each other, and started to introduce our countries. The Prince of India told me and even taught me Buddhism, like how we need to do meditation to have a peaceful mind. How cool is that! So, in exchange, I taught him some Chinese culture like paper and gunpowder. Finally, I gave some sheets of papers to the Prince and he gave me some bags of spices. My father would be happy because I got additional spices! For the next few days, we stayed in India to make new friends, learn new languages and taste Indian food, such as curry.

Two months later, we reached Europe, or to be exact, Rome. Back home, father always admired that Rome’s glass was shiny, clear and beautiful. So, the first item I bought was Rome’s beautiful glass. I used 30 silks to trade 100 pieces of glass. I also used more silks to trade 100 bottles of wine. After trading the valuable stuff in Rome, I

tried some new food there like Pizza Bianca, Puntarelle, Porchetta...It was lip-smacking! For my favourite part, I drank wine! It was nectarous! Suddenly, I remembered that I needed to trade some gold and 2 horses! How could I forget?! I rushed into almost every shop in Rome. I found the 2 horses, but I still couldn't find the gold, what should I do?

Right away, a girl with eye-catching dresses came out. "What are you looking for?" asked the girl politely. I discussed with her and she told me where the shop was located. I thanked her and said, "May I know your name?" She replied with a smile, "I am the Princess of Italy."

"Wow, what a coincidence! I am the Prince of China!" She said that actually my father and her father were friends and she loved Chinese culture. We spent weeks together and started dating. She taught me western music and arts, and I taught her Chinese dances. We were both surprised sometimes by each other's culture. At last, we fell in love! I took her back to the palace in China and we got married.

This Silk Road adventure was amazing! I could appreciate different cultures. I learnt to solve problems in times of difficulties. The best part was I got to marry the Princess of Italy!

Mary's Extraordinary Adventure on the Silk Road

St. Mary Canossian School, Li, Ching Yin – 9

Mary was a primary four student who loved reading very much. One day after school, she went to the library. A golden light beam from a book caught her eyes inside the library. The book was called Journey to the West. Curiously, she took that book and opened it. Suddenly, the book sucked her into a black hole.

In the blink of an eye, she landed on a pile of soft sand. When she was awake, she found herself in a desert. In the distance, three strange-looking figures and a white horse were approaching. As the figures went closer, she found out that they were Monkey King, Pigsy, Sandy and Tong Monk!

'Hey where does this kid come from? Are you a monster?' said Monkey King as he scratched his head and looked her all over. Mary was shocked but delighted. She said, 'Aren't you Tong Monk and your disciples from Journey to the West?'

Tong Monk said gently, 'Kid, why are you alone? This is the Silk Road and it can be dangerous.'

'The Silk Road?' Mary asked as she was remembering what she learnt in General Studies class. It was a trade route from China to the west.

Pigsy chimed in, 'All I know is that you can find good food along this road.'

Sandy said, 'Little girl, where are you from? How do you end up here?'

Mary thought for a while, and she said, 'Actually, I'm from the future. I opened a book called Journey to the West and ended up here.'

Tong Monk smiled and said, 'How interesting! Since you're here, why don't you travel with us? We're going to India to get the scriptures.'

So, Mary joined the journey along the Silk Road.

After a while, they reached an oasis city. There were many buildings and the markets which were filled with people wearing different clothes.

'This is Dunhuang,' Tong Monk explained to Mary. 'It's important city on the Silk Road.'

In the market, Mary saw many camels carrying silk, porcelain, tea to the west and bringing back grapes, walnuts, glassware and spices from the west.

'Wow, this is the trade network connecting East and West that my teacher taught me!' Mary said.

After a while, they saw an old man who was interested in kids. He said to Mary gratefully, 'Hi, kid! Are you from China?'

Mary nodded and said, 'You could say that. Have you lived on the Silk Road for a long time?'

'I've been trading on this road since I was young. This road isn't just for trading goods, it's also a bridge for cultural exchange. Our music, dance and eating habits have all been influenced by this road.' The old man said, his eyes were crinkling.

Mary suddenly understood. 'So, this Silk Road connects places and people!' she said.

Monkey King jumped over and said, 'Just like the four of us! We come from different backgrounds but we're travelling together. That's also a kind of connection.'

Suddenly, Mary found herself vanishing.

'It seems that I have to go back to my world,' she said.

Tong Monk patted Mary's shoulder and said, 'This journey was short, but what did you learn?'

Mary thought for a moment, and she said, 'Just like what Monkey King has said, the Silk Road isn't just a trade route. It's also a bridge connecting different cultures and people.'

Piggy handed Mary a bag of raisins and said, 'Take these for the road and eat it whenever you're hungry. Remember to visit us next time!'

As a golden light beam flashed through her eyes, Mary found herself in the library, holding the copy of Journey to the West. She was so excited that she told the whole class about it the next day. Even nobody trusted her, they were all interested by the stories of the Silk Road.

Whenever Mary ate raisins, she could still remember that journey and how people along the Silk Road connected the world through diverse exchanges.

The Silk Road of China

St. Mary's Canossian School, Chin, Annie Sze Wing – 10

The Silk Road of China is known as a network of cultural trade routes stretching from the heart of China to distant lands. In ancient China, when the Silk Road was still not built yet, it was just a dry piece of land. Only China had silk and did not want to share it with others. Mei, a dedicated young silk weaver, worked tirelessly in her family's shop. Mei was renowned not only for her exquisite silk-making skills but also for her vivid imagination. The silks she wove were wrapped in stories; every piece had a picture of a fantastical creature she designed herself, ensuring none of them were plain.

There was one especially splendid piece: the creature on the fabric looked mysteriously realistic, and swirling clouds seemed to dance on its surface. Only Mei knew what that particular piece was for: foreseeing the future and its threats. As well as that, the creature on the fabric would jump out and help her if she summoned it.

One crisp, golden autumn day, the silk that Mei kept with her always—the one that could foresee the future—vibrated with overwhelming energy that Mei could hardly believe. The fabric trembled in her hands, its vibrant colours swirling and shifting like a living thing. As she gazed into its depths, her heart raced with a mix of exhilaration and excitement. A vision appeared on the surface, bright and clear, but the content was dark. The vision: They had just finished closing the shop when a wizard with evil thoughts controlled a griffin to steal all the silk in China. Mei was not terrified; instead, she was already making up a plan in her mind.

As night stars turned the sky into a shade of silver, Mei was ready. She was armed with a loyal creature that had been kept a secret for many years. She spent her whole day training her secret creature in case there was a battle.

Wingbeats filled the sky, ruffling the treetops as it landed. Mei looked up; a magnificent creature loomed in front of her, its red fire scales sparkling like rubies twinkling in the darkness. The evil wizard slid off the griffin, his eyes full of hatred, burning rage, glowing red. “You! The worthless silk girl, give me all of the silk in China, the strongest, toughest, and the most beautiful silk.” His voice was full of venom, like a snake. Mei, however, was not scared; she spoke calmly, “Why do you need silk? That does not make you a better or more powerful person!” The wizard was definitely not used to someone talking back; he screamed with full rage, “Smolder! Attack this girl; that will teach her not to talk back to me ever again!” Mei did not even flinch a bit as Smolder the griffin stepped closer with each step, his nose breathing fire and smoke.

Mei rolled away from the griffin, muttering something under her breath. A high-pitched sound pierced the silent atmosphere, “Koto!” shouted Mei. Koto was a creature, a hybrid, half kitsune, half phoenix. Mei hopped on Koto, and the ultimate battle eventually began. Smolder blew fire everywhere, burning trees and killing lots of little animals. Koto was meant to be good; she healed the forest and then the little animals with her mind. Koto jumped up and landed square on Smolder's back, breaking off the evil wizard's connection with Smolder. Smolder's eyes turned brown, deep with confusion. The evil wizard screamed with such pain and anguish, and his body convulsed with spasms so powerful that they silenced everyone. “Koto, go and heal him.” Even though the wizard did try to harm her, she wasn't going to let him suffer this. Koto touched her nine tails on the wizard. The wizard's spasms weakened as he fell into a coma.

Three hours had passed before the wizard, all powerless, woke up in Mei's shop. Mei asked gently, “Why do you need so much silk?” The wizard choked out weakly, “All the other countries do not even know silk except for China. I just want to get some for my country!” Mei's eyes widened; her mind opened with a bright light. Visions poured into her head: people from other countries sleeping on hard wooden beds, wearing hot, stuffy clothes made from garbage waste, and people begging for something softer to use. Mei now knew why the wizard wanted all the silk, so her mind started organising a plan. She began spending her days in her parents' shop designing a route that would connect China to the rest of the world.

Mei worked on this day and night, checking and finalising her design, ready to present her unique idea to the public. But the night before her presentation day, she heard rumours about lots of people disagreeing with the idea and voting not to build it. She dumped the idea of presenting it to the public and focused on building it

herself secretly, without drawing too much attention. She worked on the Silk Road every night when everyone was asleep soundly with their lights turned off. Brick by brick, the Silk Road was built. By the mid-15th century, Mei was finished; people started to notice.

The wizard that Mei captured worked as her bodyguard as she walked the bridge that she built. Mei carried silk from China to other countries, selling the silk she made and soon became successful. Others saw her success; one even asked her how she achieved it. Mei was delighted to see people getting interested in her design.

People started copying Mei and sold silk around the world. Some people even started selling other things. Soon people all around the world started using the Silk Road to trade different things with China. Nowadays, people all around the globe have learned the history and the purpose of China's Silk Road. Mei and the wizard's wish had finally come true, transforming not only their lives but the world itself.

China's Silk Road Journey Along the Silk Road: A Story of Modern Travelers

St. Mary's Canossian School, Luk, Tsz Yin – 10

The Silk Road was once a lifeline of empires, a ribbon of trade stretching from Xi'an in China to the Mediterranean. In 2025, it is no longer caravans of camels that cross deserts, but travelers with backpacks, cameras, and high-speed train tickets. Yet the spirit of discovery remains the same.

Amira, a young historian from Cairo, arrived in Xi'an, the ancient capital where the Silk Road began. Standing before the Terracotta Army, she imagined merchants loading silk onto carts, bound for Persia. Today, Xi'an is a bustling metropolis, but its old city walls still whisper of dynasties past.

She joined a group of fellow travelers:

Valerie, a photographer from Norway, chasing the colors of desert sunsets.

Chen, a Chinese engineer retracing his ancestors' footsteps.

Corinne, a writer from Canada, eager to capture the human stories of the road.

Together, they set off westward, following the path of history.

Their train carried them to Dunhuang, where the Mogao Grottoes glowed with murals of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and celestial dancers. Valerie's lens captured the faded pigments, while Amira explained how monks once sheltered travelers here, offering wisdom alongside tea.

Outside, the desert stretched endlessly. The travelers climbed the Singing Sand Dunes, listening to the wind hum like ancient chants. They realized that the Silk Road was not just about trade — it was about survival, faith, and imagination.

At Jiayuguan, the western end of the Great Wall, Chen grew quiet. His grandfather had told him stories of soldiers guarding this frontier, watching caravans vanish into the horizon. Now, tourists wandered the fortress, snapping selfies.

Chen whispered: "This was the edge of the world for them. Beyond here, everything was unknown."

The group felt the weight of that boundary, a reminder of how courage once meant stepping into lands unseen.

Weeks later, they reached Kashgar, the legendary city of bazaars. The Sunday Market was alive with spices, silks, and handwoven carpets. Corinne scribbled notes furiously, describing the Uyghur vendors, the aroma of cumin and lamb skewers, the swirl of languages — Mandarin, Uyghur, Persian, Russian.

Here, the Silk Road's essence was most alive: cultures colliding, blending, and reshaping one another. Valerie photographed a craftsman hammering copper, while Amira bought a scarf dyed with pomegranate skins, a tradition unchanged for centuries.

As their journey ended, the travelers gathered in a teahouse. They realized the Silk Road was not a relic but a living story. High-speed trains had replaced caravans, smartphones had replaced scrolls, but the human desire to connect remained unchanged.

Corinne wrote in her journal:

“The Silk Road is not about silk or spices. It is about people — those who dared to cross deserts, mountains, and cultures to find one another. And we, too, are part of that story.”

The Silk Road continues, not as a single road but as a network of memories, stories, and exchanges. Every traveler who walks it today adds a new thread to its tapestry. Amira, Valerie, Chen, and Corinne returned home, carrying more than souvenirs — they carried the spirit of the Silk Road itself.

Dayuan's Trade

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Yip, Hing Lui Chloe – 12

Delegate Zhang Qian fell into the lush arms of the Fergana Valley, exhausted after being chased to death by the Xiongnu in the desert. As the sun hung low in the sky, he felt bathed in the brilliant grasslands, cities lifted their heads to the mountains that looked ever so near. The air was heavy with the smell of fruit and the far-off sounds of laughter and commerce—nothing like the emptiness he had experienced.

The weight of his mission burdened him like the heavy bag on his shoulders. Sent by Emperor Wu of Han to form alliances against the Xiongnu, Zhang's goal was to obtain Dayuan's military support. Having been saved from the clutches of the Xiongnu not once, but twice, he had developed a taste for bitter failure. What use were the alliances when faced against such tireless enemies?

As he walked towards the royal palace, golden-armored guards glanced at his wary face, hands on their sword hilts. With the remains of his Han credentials clenched in his hand, Zhang straightened his back. He was going to face this, just like how he had faced death in the desert.

The throne room's interior shone with wealth. With piercing eyes that seemed to see right through Zhang's soul, the King of Dayuan sat on his golden throne that glowed in the sunlight. He listened to Zhang's journey to the west, his people's hardships, and the Xiongnu's impending threats.

"Your Majesty," Zhang pleaded, trying his best to hide his exhaustion. "Your alliance is sought by the Han Empire. We can fight the Xiongnu together and ensure our peoples' peace."

Curious, yet skeptical, the king leaned forward. "What does the Han give me in exchange for my allegiance? My kingdom wouldn't be convinced by words alone."

Desperation flashed across Zhang's face. "Silk, knowledge, trade routes—our cultures together can bring prosperity to our lands." Zhang tried to stay as collected as he could.

The king furrowed his brows. "Indubitably, silk is a treasure, but empty promises aren't enough for me. I need evidence of your strength."

At that moment, the king motioned for his attendants to escort Zhang to the royal stables. Zhang's thoughts raced as they strolled through the halls. How could he persuade the king? He needed something concrete, something to win over the King's trust.

When Zhang entered the stables with the king, he saw something that would alter his mission. The Fergana horses, magnificent creatures that seemed to capture the essence of the valley. Their strong muscles rippled beneath their skin as they moved, and their black coats gleamed in the sunlight.

Zhang imagined Han's and Dayan's army on these creatures, how they could easily win this battle. It dawned on him then that, although his efforts to build an alliance were failing, he had made a discovery that might change China's destiny.

He saw more than just an animal, but a representation of strength and hope. He had encountered the most extreme weather conditions, traversed deserts, and now found himself in front of creatures capable of carrying the empire's dreams.

“These horses are indeed special,” The king remarked, “They are bred for strength and endurance, and their powerful trait is a testament to their power.”

Zhang took advantage of the situation, saying, “By securing them, Your Majesty, we will have the strongest cavalry in the fight against the Xiongnu! The horses will have a huge advantage over their opponents, who will not be able to function well in the heat. We will provide silk, trade, and protection for the horses in exchange for their services.”

The king considered Zhang’s proposal. The atmosphere shifted as stories of Zhang’s journey continued to paint a picture of the resilience of the Chinese. Zhang told the king about the great country of China with its cultural diversity and the ability for both countries to become a success together.

In a sudden, the stable doors flew open with a “bang”, and a group of Xiongnu raiders came rushing in, their faces twisted in rage. They had followed Zhang and wanted to sabotage him before he could meet with the other tribes in an alliance with him. Unfortunately for them, the knights sprang into action, pulling their swords out of their sheaths and charging at the raiders to defend their kingdom.

As Zhang’s heart raced, he grabbed a pitchfork nearby and felt the adrenaline flush into his veins. The horses neighed in fear, but Zhang knew they were the key to winning the battle. He fought alongside the guards, dodging blows while concentrating on securing the horses.

Zhang mounted the horse in a swift movement and rode the horse at full speed with unmatched force while he expertly wielded his pitchfork with perfect accuracy. Zhang and his horse turned into an unstoppable force and along with the soldiers’ help, they pushed back the Xiongnu and defended the Kingdom of Dayuan together.

Zhang dismounted, panting hard after a good fight. The king walked over to him with an expression of amazement on his face: “You fought like a true warrior, Zhang Qian! You help carry the weight of a great empire, and your bravery is admirable. Yet my army is the only shield of our kingdom, I cannot send them away to fight for distant land. But I see your desperation when you look at our horses. Take them, let them be the answer to your war.”

Zhang nodded his head. “These horses have the potential to change the lives of many people. Together, we will be strong enough to stand up against Xiongnu.”

The king extended his hand, and Zhang took hold of it firmly, sealing the deal.

As Zhang left, he thought about his journey.. Although his expedition did not succeed in achieving its original goal, he had obtained knowledge which would allow him to change the future of China. With the Fergana horses, Zhang Qian rode toward his country to write a new era of prosperity in history for all of China.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Lo, Kwok Yan Sherraine – 10

Imagine caravans winding through sunbaked deserts, carrying treasures and tales that would shape the destiny of nations. The Silk Road was more than stone and sand: it was a vast network of trade routes connecting East and West from around 130 BCE to 1453 CE, formally established by China's Han Dynasty. It facilitated the exchange of not only goods like silk, spices and precious metals, but also ideas, cultures and technologies, connecting civilizations across Eurasia. Along the Silk Road, bustling cities like Chang'an and Samarkand became melting pots of languages, religions, and inventions. Merchants carried not only silk and spices but also stories, music and philosophies that shaped civilizations. Each exchange told a story, and each trade helped build human progress.

Fast forward to 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative to reimagine the Silk Road for the 21st century. This ambitious plan aims to enhance global trade and stimulate economic growth through infrastructure development, connecting China to Europe and beyond via land and maritime routes. Modern railways now echo the ancient caravans, carrying goods from China to Europe in days instead of months. Highways and digital networks in Central Asia help ideas spread faster than ever.

Speaking of which, the Road now stretches across the universe. It all started when Europe extended the Silk Road to Africa, who shared the goods by boat to South America. Lastly, North America and Oceania received the goods through airplane delivery or, on behalf of North America, by having four annual meetings in Mexico with South America to exchange, one time each according to the four seasons. This act makes the whole world involved, economies improve and countries can learn more different cultures from each other, not just trading, such as African artists painting murals inspired by Asian calligraphy, South American musicians blending Andean rhythms with European symphonies and chefs fusing flavors into dishes that tell stories of continents united. The world turned into a global place where people share art, ideas, and mix traditions through festivals.

Yet, the story does not end on Earth's surface. As the old stories say, celestial visitors — aliens fascinated by Earth's diversity— arrived to learn about human ingenuity! We asked them to help us continue the Silk Road and also offered them silk woven with nano fibers, a fusion of tradition and technology to mark our first trade. In return, they gifted us with extraordinary vials of telepathy elixir that pulsed with energy and ensured us that it was safe. The aliens also told us that we could use it to interact with them miles away, and they will introduce to us to any other newfound species during the annual meeting we planned. That day was an important day because we not only discovered living creatures outside Earth, but also continued the Silk Road intergalactically. Also, we learnt that if we succeed in world peace, we have a chance to make universe peace happen—which would be a miracle.

I am a very proud descendant from ancient China, the great land that helped start this amazing and special legacy long ago. I love watching how the Silk Road has changed so much—from bumpy, dusty paths in the hot desert that camels walked on, to super exciting trips across the stars to faraway galaxies. Humans and aliens now unite to explore the unknown as the universe keeps getting bigger and bigger every day. The Silk Road might never end! People who have traded through the Silk Road can come together to continue the Road through unknown planets, or possibly, through different dimensions using powerful creations made by the united civilization. Perhaps one day, the Silk Road will not only link worlds but dimensions, just as we thought of, forging a harmony that transcends time and space. Could this be the exciting dawn of peace for the whole wide universe, coming from those old, happy days of trading goods and being best friends?

Hannah & Han in Chang'an

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Or, Michaela Audrey – 9

“HELP!” Hannah screamed. “Stop the train!” *Hmph!* Hannah thought. *I didn't sign up for this at all! Oh, horrors of horrors!*

Hannah was an arrogant nine-year-old girl who always thought that she knew everything about life and took things for granted. Today was extremely boring for her as she was traveling with her parents to Xi'an on the High Speed Rail train. The train zoomed so fast that the scenery outside the window blurred into streaks of green and grey, and she was clinging onto her seat for dear life.

Suddenly, a voice in Hannah's head started whispering to her.

Hannah! Do you want to get off this train?

“Yes! I'd rather be home playing video games!”

Hannah, how about I take you somewhere else?

At that moment, Hannah felt a tingling sensation. To her astonishment, she had been lifted right off her feet! When she looked up, she was already sucked into a portal. Before Hannah could yell out for help, the portal had already swallowed her.

An Unexpected Adventure

“THUMP!” Hannah landed in the middle of a bustling city filled with people wearing long robes and colourful headscarves. The air smelled of spices, and the streets were lined with stalls selling pottery, fabrics, and food she had never seen before.

“Ugh. Where am I *now*?” Hannah muttered and rubbed her eyes frantically, as if it would snap her back to reality. Yet, she did not panick much, since she was fascinated by her surroundings. Suddenly, a kind-looking man with a long beard and bright eyes approached her, carrying rolls of shimmering silk in his arms.

“Welcome to Chang'an, young traveller. My name is Han. I am a merchant of silk. You look like you are a foreign traveller from the way you dressed. What are you looking for?”

“I'm...I'm... Hannah. I was just on a train to Xi'an... and... I got lost ...”

Han chuckled, “I do not know about Xi'an and train... We are now in Chang'an, the sovereignty of the Emperor Wu of Han. This is the beginning of the Silk Road where merchants from all over the world come to exchange goods.”

Hannah widened her eyes and thought dubiously, *The Han Dynasty? Wasn't this more than two thousand years ago?*

“Don't worry, Hannah. Come over to my silk stall. Let me introduce you to my wife, Mei, and have some snacks first.”

Han led Hannah to his stall, where piles of silk shimmered like crystal in the sunlight.

Mei smiled affectionately when she saw Hannah. “Welcome, Hannah. You came right on time. Please have some walnuts and grapes. Let me get the sesame flatbread out of the oven...” Instantly, the warm, nutty aroma of freshly baked sesame flatbread filled the room.

Hannah munched on the sesame flatbread while admiring the silk, “The silk looks so beautiful! I’ve never seen anything like this before.”

“Silk is very precious,” Han explained as he grabbed a roll of velvety silk to show Hannah. “It travels thousands of miles along the Silk Road. Let me show you what we can get in return!”

After they finished eating, Han and Hannah strolled through the marketplace. Hannah saw merchants from Rome selling jars of olive oil, traders from India offering fragrant spices such as cinnamon and turmeric, and travellers from Persia showcasing glassware that sparkled in the sun. She also enjoyed the exotic music and dance performances. Everywhere she glanced, she saw people different from herself, yet all talented and having a marvellous time.

“When we exchange goods, we also exchange ideas, languages, and ways of living. That is how cultures grow richer. The Silk Road is indeed a bridge between hearts and nations.”

“But isn’t it dangerous and lonely to travel so far? Don’t they miss their families?”

“Yes, it is extremely difficult. Many merchants endure storms, bandits, and hunger but the true hardship is loneliness. This is why we merchants make this place a home away from home, helping and caring for each other, and building friendships across cultures.”

Hannah paused here and contemplated how lucky she was – living in the present-day Hong Kong where she could travel by plane and reach her destination in just a few hours. She could even order her favourite snacks from across the world. More importantly, her family is always by her side. However, unlike how everyone was so friendly here, the people in the modern days tend to communicate coldly with their mobile phones instead of genuine interactions. Suddenly, she felt a deep sense of humility and gratitude that she never had before.

At that moment, the vibrant marketplace began to fade. The colours blurred, and the sounds of merchants calling out their trade items grew faint. Hannah felt herself being pulled away.

Back on the Train

“Hannah, wake up!” her father’s voice broke through the haze. Hannah opened her eyes to see her parents smiling at her.

Hannah sat up, her heart racing. *When did I fall asleep?*

“Did you have a good nap?” her mom asked while stroking her hair.

“Yes. I had the most amazing adventure. Mom, where’s Chang’an?” Hannah asked eagerly.

“Sweetheart, it is exactly where we’re going to now – Chang’an is the present-day Xi’an.” Mom grinned.

Hannah gasped delightfully, “Mom, can we buy a silk dress and grab some sesame pastries later?” Hannah said excitedly as she got up from her seat.

Hannah’s parents exchanged curious glances. “Hannah... you seem so different today.” They said with a puzzled look. Hannah didn’t reply and only gave her parents a mysterious smile.

Hannah knew that the lessons she learned from the Silk Road Adventure would stay with her forever. It’s not just about reaching the destination or trading goods, but about extending kindness to one another along the journey, despite our differences. Most importantly, she learned to be grateful for what she has – like cherishing the time she’s spending with her parents traveling to Xi’an.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Lee, Miriam – 11

Hua thought of herself as a rather decent artist. She enjoyed spending days in a cramped studio, either making porcelain vases or painting her designs onto pots. They could sell and trade for pretty prices. Hua liked art and without family, she needed the money, so why not, she thought. It was a great deal, and it was a great life.

Others praised tortoises, horses and even some mythical creatures like phoenixes and dragons. Hua never wanted to believe it. But painting those images on her sculptures proved lucrative and it wasn't like she didn't appreciate the elegant way those animals were depicted. She found it fun to paint radiant phoenixes. To her, they were elegant.

Hua had just finished a new vase, one with a lovely phoenix carved onto it, so she placed it in the kiln. "This might take a while," she murmured wryly to herself, twirling her hair with her fingers. She stopped once she remembered they were tainted with sticky clay. She'd be setting out for Egypt by the end of the week.

Outside, the street was bustling with people. Ever since the Silk Road, Hua's town had been entered by all types of bizarre animals that could come straight out of myths like camels. She wondered if they were worshipped by the other countries. Camels' backs were oddly shaped but they were good for riding and hauling goods, she had noticed. They were pretty tall, too. Could they run as fast as horses? Hua didn't think so.

All too quickly, the day she was to go to Egypt came. She wore her best pleated Mamianqun—which was, once again, another garment named after the horses many worshipped—and packed up, setting out with a large satchel strapped across her chest. Hua boarded her usual carriage, and greeted the others, "good morning, everyone."

"Ah, good morning, Miss Li!" the driver beamed. "What pottery have you been making for Egypt?"

"The usual vases and pots," Hua shrugged. Since she wasn't into small talk, she zoned out while the others chattered away about new creations and myths. A soft clink jostled her out of her mindless state. She was a bit puzzled until she realised it came from the box she had stored her goods in. Nothing could prepare her for what she saw after opening it: her newest vase was gone, in its place a phoenix the size of a rat was staring back at her with beady eyes. Hua slammed the box shut, gasping audibly. Everyone glanced at her, with concern or with shrewdness.

"One of my pots got chipped," Hua lied through her teeth. "Guess I'll have to see if they sell any Kaolin to repair it..." The others stopped caring as soon as she started explaining the process of fixing chipped pots. Taking a deep breath, she re-opened the box. Still there. So she wasn't hallucinating... Hua stuffed the mythical creature into her satchel, pulling back when she felt her fingers get nipped. Since it was rat-sized, it was pretty easy to fit it into her satchel. Hua knew it would eventually grow way bigger. She was probably the worst person to take care of mythical creatures, since she didn't read any scrolls that talked about them. Would it burn her satchel? How big would it grow? Should she just abandon it? Her once empty mind was now occupied and spinning with questions.

That evening, the group stopped by an inn to eat and sleep. Hua made a run for the hills. Near the bottom of the hill, she opened her satchel. The phoenix shot out like an arrow. It was now the size of a rabbit...Hua clasped her hands over her ears as it squawked, which echoed like an earthquake around her. She wasn't too far from the inn so she hoped no one would come looking for her. As the phoenix was still flying around, she started sprinting back to the inn. However, to her dismay, the phoenix followed her as if it was her shadow.

“S—shoo! Get away from me!” Hua persisted, flailing her arms at the fiery bird desperately. “I’m a random potter, I don’t believe you exist and I don’t know anything about you!” The phoenix cocked its head, but stayed by her side. Maybe it had imprinted on her... Hua sighed and watched it sail across the night sky. It was actually kind of beautiful, the twilight sky dimming in contrast as its golden feathers wavered proudly. Hua *did* appreciate its elegant nature...and it didn’t seem like it would leave her alone anytime soon. Sighing, she accepted her new position as a phoenix caretaker, naming her new pet “Feng”.

“Alright, then...” Hua opened her satchel. “Let’s go back for dinner.” Feng understood, settling back into the satchel comfortably.

That night, Hua let Feng sleep next to her.

By the next day, Feng had grown to the size of a pheasant. Hua pondered on how she would keep it hidden if it kept growing rapidly. Still, for now, Feng would fit in her satchel. Hua joined the rest of her group and they set out for Egypt once again.

After a few days of travelling with little breaks, they arrived. Hua immediately bid the others farewell and ran off with her bulging satchel. She decided to buy a cradleboard, and let Feng peek out from within it. She slung it onto her back and started her usual selling and trading routine.

On her way back, she got a personal carriage. Her now turkey-sized phoenix sat next to her as she sketched it on her notepad. As soon as she got home, Hua bolted straight towards her studio, setting up a corner for Feng and hanging up the sketches she did on her way back to get started on. Hua never understood the appeal of myths, but now...perhaps, she thought, it might be good to let a bit of whimsy come into my life...once a while.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chen, Sze Ying Sonia – 11

The sun rose behind the mountains, but this sun was strangely different to the one I knew, pinker, and more piercing. As it burst through mountain peaks, it brought with it a lashing wind, and red sand blew up into my face.

It had been an arduous, tiring journey from Bianjing upon the painful rolling back of my camel, but it was my last option, as the spice I needed for my father's chronic respiratory illness was nowhere to be found. We'd squeezed out every coin for the doctors, but even the most skilled practitioners couldn't cure it, and searching the markets and stalls, even trekking the mountains, was fruitless.

As the red sand cleared, I squinted at the large, misty-rose colored sun, and below it rose towers with curved tops. A lopsided wooden post was nailed to the tallest tower in sweeping, curling characters, along with some Chinese in tiny print at the corner that confirmed my suspicion: I was at a Samarkanese trading post. The hustle and bustle of haggling men, along with scuffling, shoving and blooming smells assaulted my senses. Setting my jade collection down, I crouched and waited for merchants willing to trade.

A bird squawked as it fluttered above me. I squealed, then reprimanded myself quietly: men shouldn't scream like that. A group of men pushed their way towards me, all simultaneously drawing out rows and rows of Qingyuan Tongbao – Chinese coins. My heart sank. I had been hoping for a new spice, not more money.

A man's coughing caught my attention, and I shooed the others away. He had to have a cure. The trader's smoky irises flickered over my pieces of jade. As I stood up to acknowledge him, a small maroon box, lined with gold filigree, fell out from the deep folds of my clothes.

The man tilted his head and pointed. Reluctantly, I unlatched the clasp, presenting a stunning carving of a jade phoenix. The wings were delicately fanned out, tipped with gold plating, the tail feathers dissolving into flames. As I admired the jade carving, I saw my father's eyes, clouded over with disease, his hands shaking and weak.

"Yang, this is for you. Keep this close, however far you are from home," he had wheezed.

The trader's rough touch jerked me back to reality. I shook my head ferociously, attempting a steely gaze. As I did so, a few locks of dark hair escaped from the tightly bound cloth on my head and I thrust them back in. As the man moved closer, I caught a strong whiff of a bitter, smoky scent. I pointed at my nose, sniffing, then his clothing, hoping my quizzical expression would help him understand what I was trying to request.

From his sagging garments, the Persian drew out a medium-sized, strong-smelling pouch. He coughed violently, then thumped on his chest, took a small pebble-sized clump of golden resin from the pouch, dunked it in his flask, and took a long swig. The man mumbled something like "muh," repeating over and over again. He held the flask to me. I took a small sip, tasting dew and earth, along with a tangible sweetness. The taste of its name on my lips was familiar, yet I had only heard of it during my earlier trades several years ago.

The word came back to me – myrrh. I hadn't paid it much attention then, but now, it was as if thunder had struck me.

"Respiratory diseases! You can heal it by boiling it in water and adding oil? Can it heal... father?" I gestured to the pouch, and he reached for the phoenix.

No. Please, no.

I offered other pieces of jade to trade, but his gaze remained firmly on the phoenix. Finally, I relented and whispered my goodbyes to it as I traded it with the man. Maybe I could trade and give some of my belongings to others one day in the future, and give them as much hope as this small pouch gave me.

I lost track of time as I rode off into the desert on my loaned camel, the rose-tinted sun yellowing into a warmer one, the dry sand turning into fields. I returned my camel, shouldered my jade and sprinted towards our cottage.

As I burst through the door, mother was easing a dollop of congee down father's throat. She rushed to envelope me in a warm hug, staining my shoulder with tears.

"It's been almost two years, and we thought..." she trailed off, voice cracking. "Father's got worse."

I quickly boiled some water on the fire and dunked in the golden resin clumps from the Persian, praying it would work.

A gentle wind blew outside. Stray leaves from the willow tree rustled and let go from the branches. As they softly swirled by, I could almost see a phoenix flying to distant lands, a gold-flecked tail disappearing past the window frame. Smiling, I wondered who would receive the phoenix next, and how their stories would intertwine with mine through this piece of jade.

Maybe the Silk Road was not just about a means for trading, but for the stories we left behind and the ones to come.

Maybe, one day, I'd see the phoenix again.

Pouring the hot concoction into a small bowl and adding some oil, I helped father sit up, then gently put the bowl under his nose. A small sip. Then another, his milky eyes seemingly clearer.

I unwrapped the cloth from my head, letting my silky dark hair fall over my shoulders. Father smiled. Then, he spoke for the first time in years, his voice ragged.

"Yangjing..." The dam of tears I had been holding back this whole trip broke, and I crumpled as our family embraced, whole.

"My daughter." That was the only thing I needed to hear right at that moment, holding the aspirations and hope from the Silk Road like the weight of the jade phoenix.

"My girl."

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Zhan, Tsz Yui Natalie – 11

"You are disgraced from your acts of theft and your confessed admission of your guilt, and for that, you will be banished from Chang'an, no longer bearing the title as a cartographer, but send goods to people on the west by the Silk Road. You are exiled," the judge said, casting a frigid, piercing glare on me. "Case dismissed."

I sat in my seat, paralyzed. That was a death sentence. There were whispers from the crowds, staring at me as if I was the last meat on the plate. I hated it. Why do they stare at me like that?! Silence. The crowds turned away.

Back home, I didn't mutter a single word, my mind stuffed with the thoughts of a new identity. Two days later, I squinted through the curtains of my bedroom. The merchants have come to collect me. My job? Deliver gifts to an outpost near the Persian border in exchange for their goods.

Me and the other merchant began our journey. The hilly terrains that acted as a good omen now reared like the jagged teeth of some slumbering giants, never letting travelers forget their traces. I sank my foot into the ground, grazing my toes, expecting sloppy soil, and in return – saw-edged slabs. I yanked my foot out in agony!

We trotted through the Jade Gate, entering the Taklamakan Desert. Under the sweltering furnace, the camels surged forward. The intense heat distorted my vision. The sky began to stiffen, sprawled with a shade of plum red, seeped generous rays onto our blistering backs. Sunset. I jerked my head around, signaling the other merchant to stop. He came to a halt and tied a strap around his camel. I plopped onto the sand, instinctively yelping from the heat. "Come on, you'll die of exhaustion from standing anyways," he told me. I gnashed my teeth again, forcing myself to sit. "By the way," I spoke to him, "after all this time, isn't it weird I don't even know your name?" He laughed, "Wu Pan. Yours?" I smiled, "Zhao Yang."

After we regained a full night of energy, we resumed skirting across this vast, deadly sandy sea. Months later, we finally reached the Pamir Mountains. I collapsed in front of this formidable barrier. "Finally! No deserts!" I screeched excitedly. "Save it," Wupan warned, "this is the 'Roof of the World'. Here, the sky is close enough to touch." I shut my mouth immediately. Ahead of us, the hills sharpened into a woven piece of art – but deadly. Our camels shook their heads, snorting. I felt sorry for them. We camped in caves where mummified bodies of failed travelers lay. I couldn't sleep every night. I guarded this wooden box fiercely, containing ceramics and spice. One night, Pan gave me water to quench my thirst, and I gulped it down. Yikes! It was icy! I sobbed. "The mountains eat the proud," he always says. "But they feed those who listen."

My throat was screaming at this point, yet I pressed on, ignoring my sweat. One night, I lay awake. A low thump came. The shadows nearby shifted. My eyes widened as I let out a gasp of terror. Out of the gloom appeared a group of men, their silhouettes of rusted armor. I peered closer. Each bore a blood-stained tiger symbol on their gnarled cheeks. "Pan, wake up," I whispered, shaking him. He snapped open his eyes. "We need to run!"

One of them raised a spear, his dark robe wisping out behind him, booming, "HAND OVER YOUR GOODS, OTHERWISE YOUR LIVES!" It's too late to run. We have to fight. In moments of chaos, I picked up a sharp rock and thrust it at their heads. It definitely injured one of them. They charged. The first clash was of steel and sand. Their leader reared back whilst I thrust some rocks at him. He dropped with a howl, his face gaunt and terrified. With their leader gone, the bandits had to retreat...

Suddenly, I heard a thunderous yet motherly voice. "You have gotten rid of the Heishu Bandit. And for that, I shall grant you a wish." I leapt in shock, slowly peering out of the cave. Breams gleamed in the dusky night sky

brightly. “Do you hear what I’m hearing?” I whimpered to Pan. He nodded. “Don’t fear, people of mine, for I shall protect you when swords fail. I am Chang Qing, the goddess of this desert. You have done me a favour, and in return, yours.”

For once, my throat failed me. I stuttered, overwhelmed with fear, “T–take us to Sasanian Empire please.” “Thank you for your courage,” the goddess bellowed. I saw a glimpse of a glowing figure. Suddenly, swirls of darkness came and engulfed us, as I jolted Pan’s arm nonstop, screaming... Then came light.

I opened my eyes. Bustling markets lay before me. I slackened my grip on Pan and strolled past, unable to believe my own eyes. “Trading for grapes!” A person shouted. I approached his stall. I eyed the purple berries in clusters curiously. “May I sample them?” I asked. He didn’t have a clue what I was saying, so I took out silk clothes from my box and handed them to him. His fingers touched the folds. Afterwards, he nodded vigorously, so I took some grapes, ripped apart their tart skin and found soft flesh inside. It tasted sugary and juicy.

“Carpets and dyes over here!” Again, I approached them, gave them a stack of parchments, but they scowled. Hence I took out a ceramic mug. They agreed immediately. Then I traded some more with others, exchanging spices with leather or pearls. I even got to meet the emperor – Yazdegerd III. He examined us and confirmed we were no threat, then wrote a letter to our emperor.

I returned home, not as a disgrace anymore, but as the living legend of the Silk Road, my rucksack heavier than ever.

The Threads of the Past

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Chui, Tze Ling Celeste – 10

It was a gift that Jade was not expecting. She had already received red envelopes from her family, so she was surprised when her grandmother asked to speak with her privately. When they were alone upstairs, her grandmother took an ornate wooden box from the bag she was carrying and placed it gently into Jade's hands. "You are twelve now," she said with pride. "It is time for you to have this. It has been passed down in our family for generations." Jade moved her fingers to open the clasp. "Not here!" commanded her grandmother. "Wait until you are alone. When you are ready, you should wear what is inside." her grandmother spoke with urgency. Nodding, Jade placed the box carefully in her own bag, contemplating the mysteries that it might contain.

That evening, when Jade was finally alone in her room, she lifted the box from her bag and examined it. It was elegantly carved and seemed to have withstood the test of time as there was not even a scratch on it. Fingers trembling slightly, she opened the clasp and lifted the lid. Time stood still. Her mouth dropped open in awe. Jade had never seen a silk scarf with the richness and shine of the one that lay in the box. She could barely imagine the skill of the hands that had woven the sapphire blue material. Golden stars adorned its pattern, but the most striking feature was at the centre of the scarf. A striking white stallion, reared with its forelegs off the ground as if readying for battle, had been embroidered so perfectly that it appeared almost living and breathing. Taken aback, Jade remembered her grandmother's instructions. The scarf felt impossibly light, like liquid gold in her fingers as she placed it around her neck. That was when it happened. In a whirl of colour and sound, the world spun and the wooden floor of her bedroom vanished from underneath her feet.

When her feet landed again, Jade found herself standing on a magnificent path. Close by, she spotted three red haired men with bushy beards riding chestnut brown horses toward a great city. The horses were saddled with bags containing incredible treasures: sparkling sapphires, gold coins and even pearls. Two of them wore woollen tunics, but the man at the front wore a shimmering silk tunic. They wore high leather boots on their feet, worn from long travels. Curious, Jade decided to follow the noble looking horsemen on their journey. As they approached the city, which was surrounded by incredible walls of rammed earth, the three men exclaimed with excitement and quickly merged into a crowd of people. From noblemen dressed in intricate silk robes to lines of tired-looking camels, one could find it all here!

Entering the city, she looked up and saw the Tsingling Mountains rising to the south, impressive palatial structures, and many workers busily constructing a magnificent square pagoda. Up until then, Jade had not understood where she was. But the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda was impossible to mistake. Somehow, she was walking through the ancient capital of Chang'an!

Ahead of her, she spotted two Zen looking Buddhists carrying scriptures and asking for directions in the bustling marketplace. There, she also saw the same three men she had been following. They were exchanging their horses and treasures for masses of silk and ornaments. All around, people of varied ethnicity and cultures rushed past her toward different stalls, eagerly exchanging their goods in return for perfumes, porcelain and even paper. Jade simply could not believe her eyes at how trade was performed in the past!

At that moment, she saw a girl weaving silk alone. Although Jade herself was not experienced with weaving, she found herself drawn to the girl. The girl was creating a garment on a loom, threading the silk with nimble fingers.

“You have such incredible skill!” Jade marvelled, approaching the girl. “How long have you been weaving for?”

“I have been weaving for five years,” replied the girl, smiling. “Weaving is a skill that has been passed down from my ancestors. Although I would love to teach you, I sadly cannot because if we teach strangers that come from the Silk Road, we will be seriously punished.”

“The Silk Road? What’s the Silk Road?” Jade asked.

“People travel this great Silk Road from many different regions to trade. While silk is as good as money here, foreigners simply cannot get enough of it. They would even exchange exotic treasures for our silk.” the girl said proudly.

“Really? Then what are your hopes for the future?” asked Jade.

“I want to become the greatest weaver of silk. Everyone on the Silk Road will admire my elaborately designed silk garments and flock to my store. Even the Emperor himself will hire me to personally weave his silk clothing!” replied the girl excitedly.

Jade was awestruck by the girl’s ambition. She looked down at what the girl was weaving, and her heart stopped. The blue material and stars could have been a coincidence, but the flashing mane of the great white stallion was unmistakable. The girl was weaving the very same scarf that Jade was wearing around her neck!

Just as the incredible truth dawned on Jade, she felt the scarf pulling her through time again. Back safely in her room, she sat in wonder, thinking about everything she had just seen. She had spoken with her ancestor from centuries past, in a different world. A world where the skill of her ancestor’s hands had woven together the life she now enjoyed. She touched the silk scarf, which was still tied around her neck. How incredible, she thought, that it had lasted all these years.

At that moment, Jade had a new realisation. She must weave the next part of her family’s story. She was the next thread in the design.

The Lucky Dragon Delivery Service

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Ng, Wan Chi – 9

A young girl named Agatha lived with her beloved father, Stefan, in a stunning cottage with elegant tiles and grand windows in Chang'an, China. Every day, Agatha loved going to the caravanserai to watch merchants load invigorating smelling spices and silk. However, what Agatha desperately yearned to do was to go on a Silk Road caravan journey!

As Agatha turned sixteen, her wish came true when Stefan announced that the Emperor Zhangzong had ordered him to go to Constantinople to trade with the Byzantine Empire, and he decided to bring her. Agatha started preparing meticulously for the imminent journey and kept imagining what a pleasant odyssey the trip would be. Four days later, Agatha and Stefan settled themselves in their brand-new leading caravan cart. The whole caravan was 128 meters long, with muscular camels and sturdy carts holding precious silk, fine porcelain and rare spices to be traded.

Their journey to and beyond the west of China was very enjoyable, passing Dunhuang and, four months later, on to Samarkand. Samarkand was a fortified city halfway between Persia and China. It was fortified to guard against raids from Mongol tribes. While they rested at Samarkand, Agatha scrambled to inspect a trunk of sapphire-blue silk where she was astonished to discover a baby dragon which had robin-blue scales and enchanting magenta eyes. "What are you doing here, and what is your name?" asked Agatha. "Yawn . . . salutations! I'm Raindrop, and I wish to ask whether I may accompany you to Constantinople?" Agatha hesitated so Raindrop frantically mewled, "Please let me stay . . . I promise to help protect your silk—dragon's word!" Agatha relented and let Raindrop remain with their caravan.

After four more months, the caravan finally arrived in Baghdad, where they would trade two carts of silver for their load of fragrant spices that were not available there. Baghdad was the first large Muslim city that Agatha had ever seen and she was entranced by the gracefully shaped dome roofs, and astounded by the beautiful mosques each guarded by four tall minarets from where Inams or Muslim priests would call the people to prayer. After resting for a few days in Baghdad during which time they replenished their supplies, Stefan led their caravan into the desert to resume their journey. He planned to pass through the cities of Palmyra and Antioch and then proceed to Constantinople. Some hours after leaving Baghdad, Agatha heard an ominous stream of footsteps sounding in their wake. Agatha could hardly imagine anyone making their way through the deserted dunes, except for . . . bandits!

Since her childhood, Agatha had heard blood-chilling stories about vicious bandits attacking and stealing from innocent merchants on the Silk Road and anyone who fought back would meet a fate worse than death. Glimpsing the burly bandits sprinting after them, Stefan spurred the camels, but it was too late. The bandits had caught up, howled triumphantly, waving their emerald-green hornet embroidered flag as they seized the carts holding the palatial silk and pulled them away into the desert.

Suddenly, Agatha remembered she had Raindrop! "Raindrop! We desperately need your help!" Agatha whispered urgently. Raindrop took one glance at the scattered caravan, fluttered lopsidedly and flew away. Agatha felt betrayed and angry. Hadn't Raindrop promised to guard the silk? Stefan apparently didn't mind at all, and he claimed, "Well, it isn't for the faint of heart!" and consoled Agatha, who was teeming with fury. Stefan reminded Agatha that they still had the silver from the spices traded in Baghdad and had other goods to trade so it would still be a tremendously exhilarating adventure! Agatha was grateful for her father's attempts to cheer her up and finally succumbed to hearty laughter. Two months later, they arrived at the Byzantine Empire's capital city

Constantinople which famously had the Bosphorus Straits separating its North half on the continent of Europe and its South half on the continent of Asia.

Entering the grounds of the palace of the Emperor Alexios Angelos with their bulky carts, Stefan and Agatha seemed entranced by the grand Roman columns and steps of the Imperial Palace with its many courtyards. To the right, they could see the beautiful cathedral known as the Hagia Sophia built by the Emperor Justinian I. Peeking over the marble roof of the Palace were the walls of the huge Circus of Constantinople where chariots and horses were raced. Suddenly, Agatha noticed several worn-down carts filled with elegant silk to the side. She sprinted across and checked the carts thoroughly, then clicked her tongue in understanding. “Dad—our carts of silk!” Stefan goggled at the carts and broke into a grin of relief. Then Agatha noticed Raindrop squatting next to the carts, but he was now a majestic full-grown dragon. “Oh my! Raindrop? So, you must have actually flown away to save our carts of silk, and you brought them here to Constantinople! But how did you grow so fast?” Raindrop was tremendously annoyed by her query, and growled, “I’m offended. I gave you my dragon’s word that I would protect your silk . . . and dragons grow extremely fast!” After this heated conversation, it was finally time to deliver their goods, and Stefan stepped inside to meet with the Imperial Trade Minister.

Soon, Stefan came out with four carts filled with gold traded for his porcelain and silk, goods that the Byzantine Empire did not make but valued highly. This was in addition to the two carts of silver that he received in Baghdad for his rare spices. To thank Raindrop for his aid, Agatha and Stefan brought him back home to Chang’an, where they found out Raindrop had a passion for caravan journeys. Every time there was a Silk Road caravan journey, the family would also bring along “Raindrop the Guardian” and, after a while, Raindrop became famous, and was called The Lucky Dragon Delivery Service.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Yau, Yuet Kei – 11

In the year 5134, humans had already made a living on Mars. Yet, a sudden and violent shift in the Martian climate led to a worsening food shortage. To ensure their survival, the citizens of Mars urgently needed rice grains and viable seeds. The Martian leader entrusted a venturesome warrior named Zero with the mission to land on Earth and find a viable source of uncontaminated seeds.

"Explorer Zero, you must understand that this mission concerns our very existence. May the odds ever be in your favor." He winked at Zero encouragingly. Zero's gaze was steely with determination. "It is an honor to be entrusted with this quest. I will spare no effort, and I will do everything in my power to bring back the seeds that are vital for our survival."

He piloted his spacecraft toward the blue and green planet. During his descent, he saw an immense, winding line stretching endlessly across the landmass, like a beautiful hallmark of Earth. It resembled neither mountain nor river. Intrigued, he decided to land there—only to discover later that it was the renowned Great Wall.

For days, Zero trekked southwest along the Wall. Even fate seemed to laugh at him when he dropped his communication device. "Life is so cruel; my food supply is plummeting, and I will perish of hunger soon," he mused. Weakened by hunger and exhaustion, he eventually collapsed upon a patch of wildflowers. At that very moment, a fierce gust of wind swept over him, and a piece of silk—as smooth as flowing water and as delicate as glass—came to rest on his hand.

When he opened his eyes, the world around him had transformed. Scrambling to his feet and looking down, Zero jumped so hard he almost shed his own skin. He was no longer in his bulky suit. Instead, he was dressed in full armour, the kind soldiers wore going into combat. A troop of soldiers had suddenly appeared as if by a simple magic trick. The architecture was weathered, as if he had fallen through a crack into the past. Looking up, he saw a gate plaque etched with two profound characters: Chang'an. Just as a heavy tide of hunger threatened to pull him into unconsciousness, a warm hand offered a snow-white steamed bun.

A steady voice spoke, "Brother, eat this and rest well." The man was the renowned Zhang Qian.

Zhang Qian told Zero that he was on a mission for Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, journeying westward to forge an alliance with the Dayuezhi people against the relentless Xiongnu confederation. However, his mission had been repeatedly harassed by Xiongnu cavalry. Determined to repay Zhang Qian for his heart of gold, Zero assisted him with his futuristic combat weapons. With the strength of a warrior from the future, he helped Zhang Qian's troop repel Xiongnu attacks across deserts and grasslands. At a cliff, he used a sonic device to lure the enemy into a trap, sending a myriad of Xiongnu soldiers to fall into the pit of Tartarus.

After the battle, Zhang Qian clasped Zero's hand, sighing in awe. "You are an extraordinary man. Your aid was like angels descending from heaven."

Zero, however, simply gazed westward at the Brobdingnagian sea. After an awkward silence, he mumbled, "I have crossed a river of stars to seek seeds to sustain my people on Mars."

Upon hearing this, Zhang Qian chuckled, "That is easily accomplished." He then ordered his soldiers to bring forth more than a dozen massive sacks. They were filled with a treasure of seeds: millet from Guanzhong, rice grains from the southern lands, and even grape seeds brought from western countries. "May your planet receive

all the food it needs to ensure everyone's survival, from a newborn infant to a frail elder. May your planet thrive and grow, just like the seeds I am giving you now," Zhang Qian announced, handing the sacks to Zero.

Zero received them reverently. His fingers then brushed the radiant silk stored in his breast pocket. He gently placed it over Zhang Qian's shoulders. "This comes from a thousand years hence. May it guard you on your journey." The silk shimmered under the setting sun, as if blinking in agreement.

The next dawn, Zero awoke in the same patch of wildflowers near Chang'an, the seed sacks still clutched in his hand. He retraced his path to his spacecraft. As the hatch sealed shut, he heaved a sigh, knowing he had fulfilled his mission.

Some years later, Zhang Qian finally reached the lands of the Dayuezhi. When making camp, he would often unfold that piece of silk. "Once, a remarkable man from another world came to me," he would muse to his followers. "He gave this silk as a testament to our everlasting bond across dimensions. We will never part, as long as this piece of silk stays with me." From then on, he began to call the trade route, once known simply as the "Western Path," by a new name: the Silk Road, in memory of the silk and the name of Zero, which sounded similar to 'Silk Road'.

And under the reddish-hued sky of Mars, the first green shoots broke through the soil. Within their roots pulsed the memory of a "road" woven from silk—a journey that spanned not just continents, but the constellation of stars and time.

Lou Lan

St. Paul's College Primary School, Wong, Yin Pok – 11

Wei En An, Kai had been bullied for three years, starting from his first month at St. Isidore College. On December 17th, desperate, Wei worked hard to reduce his weight. After a year, it did—but the taunts did not.

In his third year, a transfer student arrived. Wei fell for her immediately. Elena, sharp and confident, stepped in with punches the first time she saw the bullies bullying. “They’ll get you,” Wei warned. “Let them try,” she said. Instead, Ms. Fai did—detention for “inflicting damage on innocent classmates.” Wei defended Elena and failed. Even so, the bullies’ taunts thinned. “Cowards,” Elena mocked.

The summer before Wei’s fourth year, a new, unknown virus made the headlines. At term’s start, students and teachers went on long absences—including Elena—and the tormentors returned. By October, hospitals overflowed; people scrambled for supplies; lockdown hit in November. No school. No bullies. Wei finally had tranquillity—until relatives fell sick. The government reported peaking deaths, and the country grew grey.

One night, after a nightmare replaying the village fire which killed his cousin, Wei woke to a white glow outside his bedroom. In the living room stood a pale, silent figure.

Ahh! What is this?

The figure lifted empty hands. “I won’t hurt you.”

“D—don’t come closer.”

“I’m Lars. I came because you and your country is suffering.”

“Are you... a doctor? A ghost?”

“Spectre. There’s a prehistoric city, Lou Lan. Its treasure can oust this plague and heal the fallen.”

Wei stared.

“Many incredible things begin unbelievable. If you’re brave enough, I’ll take you.”

Wei glanced at the ancient photo of his great grandparents flattening a hill, then back. “I’ll go.”

“Good,” Lars said. “Get ready.”

Lars magicked themselves onto the street and used Qing Gong—ancient travel magic—to carry them at impossible speed. They dashed through streets and out the city, racing over mountains and deserts, skirting dunes and oases, covering hundreds of meters in strides.

Lars’ magic faltered. They slowed. Ruins appeared into sight. The ruins shifted. Houses erupted from the sand, reconstructing to its original form. *Oh my god.*

They explored the eerie, lifeless streets, spotting ancient tools and furniture inside homes. At a crossway, a tall statue stood. Its ceramic fingertip pointed toward the council house. They warily entered it.

Inside were ceramic files, tables and chairs. Finally, they reached the treasury, brimming with coins and banners coated in dust. A damp scent and faint humming attracted Wei to the left corner. He swept valuables aside, revealing a camouflaged trapdoor. Lars nodded encouragingly. Wei pushed it open.

The humming grew. A narrow, dark tunnel stretched down before him. He crawled in. Lars morphed into an orb and followed.

I'd at least crawled for ten minutes. Jagged shrapnel scraped his arms; he cursed his short sleeves. Is the tunnel endless? How deep are we? What if I am flattened by earth or trapped by a dead end? No. I can't think like that. The people rely on me. I must finish this.

A glimmer. He accelerated and burst out, sprawling on smooth stone. He examined surroundings: candles and lanterns studded walls; moss draped from a high ceiling. On the left, a waterfall gushed sparkling water; on the right, five dark doorways. He slid into the water, which illuminated in cyan. His cuts healed quickly. *Magic water!*

Who built this? How could anyone dig so deep? Where did the water's magic come from?

Lars emerged from the tunnel. "Continue?"

Wei nodded and pointed to the second doorway from the left. Wei rose from the water and soreness returned. Together they stepped into a dim corridor of green stone walls and torches.

They ventured deep in. Wei froze as a mirror appeared before him, reflecting faces of him in fear, doubt and guilt. Then his mother's face emerged, beside a beautiful vase. Whispers rasped, "Confess your guilt." Wei remembers the vase and what happened. But he couldn't bear to confess.

No. Millions of people are counting on me.

He took a deep breath, trembling, and said, "Mother, I..." Wei blinked back tears. Lars patted him. "Mother, I...I dropped the vase while examining it...I know it's grandmother's passing gift to you. I didn't admit it because I feared punishment. I'm sorry." The face smiled, "But at least you finally admitted..." The mirror shattered and the duo continued.

They reached a fork. They proceeded to the left and entered a big room. When Wei stepped forward, the floor disappeared and was replaced by water. Lars yanked him back. At the other side of the room, a transparent, screaming Elena appeared. The bullies were whacking her with belts. "Jump into the water, and she will be safe." Wei looked at the fathomless water and back. He wouldn't let Elena face pain. He leapt.

Glub, glub, glub...Wei sank deep down. He woke up in a humongous chamber. He was on a tower, and far on another tower was a pedestal. "Give up something valuable for the cure. A treasure...For a treasure." A resonant, hollow voice boomed. Wei hesitated. *What should I give up? Pocket money? No way. Is part of my body efficient?* "I—I give my arm." "Not enough." The voice responded. *What else? If I give my memory, I'll lose my identity. But for Elena, my family, all the innocent people who perished to the merciless plague, I'll do it.* "I give my memory." Wei said. An emerald bridge appeared between the towers. Wei walked over and saw a gleaming opal. He grabbed it and vanished.

One month later

"There he is!" A woman's voice shouted. "Oh, my son!" Footsteps thundered in his ears. A worried face appeared, gazing down at him. Then came the face of two men and a girl. Wei was lying in the ruins of Lou Lan, exhausted. "Wei! You saved the country! The unfortunate people who died in the plague came back to life! It was wonderful!" The girl's face exclaimed, panting. "Wei?"

"Who are you?"

When Tomatoes Were Forbidden

Stanford American School Hong Kong, Nie, Anxin Alice – 10

Hey there! I'm Anaya, a totally ordinary Chinese middle schooler—well, except for one thing: I *love* tomatoes. I adore their bright, sour-sweet flavor when raw and the soft, velvety texture when cooked. Tomatoes are my secret weapon in the kitchen. I make spaghetti with rich tomato sauce, comforting tomato-and-egg soup, and my personal favorite—tomato fried rice. People always say I have a gift for cooking... especially with tomatoes.

The night before our final middle school exams—June 9th—I was cramming about the history of the Silk Road (it's on the test!). My eyelids grew heavy, my body felt strangely weak, and just as I drifted off... everything changed.

I found myself in a lavishly decorated Chinese palace. Portraits of the Ming Emperor—yes, *that* Ming Emperor from our textbook—hung everywhere. Before me sat a wooden table with a single plate. On it rested a large, gleaming red fruit crowned with leafy green stems: a tomato.

I barely had time to process it when a stern voice barked, "Taste tester! Stop gawking and eat the devil's fruit!"

Devil's fruit? Right—the Ming Dynasty, when tomatoes were feared as poisonous. And somehow... I was the emperor's taste tester.

Without hesitation, I took a big bite. Juice dribbled down my chin as I chewed. The guard's jaw dropped. "You actually ate it?" he stammered. "Is it... tasty?"

I nodded eagerly, swallowing. He studied me carefully. "No signs of illness," he muttered, then cautiously bit into the other side. His eyes widened. He chewed slowly, swallowed, and whispered, "Perfect."

"Perfect for what?" I asked.

"We need to prepare a dish—right now—for the emperor. Our current chef is inexperienced. But you..." He looked me up and down. "You seem like you've cooked for ten lifetimes. Will you cook for us?"

My heart raced. A chance to be the imperial chef? Before I could think, I blurted, "Yes."

Moments later, I stood in the palace kitchen, ingredients laid out before me. "Begin," someone said.

I grabbed a knife, diced the tomato with practiced ease, and tossed the cubes into a pot. I lit the stove, then chopped potatoes and added them too, finishing with a pinch of black pepper. Soon, a fragrant tomato-potato soup simmered.

I served a bowl to the emperor. "Tomato soup," I said. "Please try it."

He lifted a spoonful, blew gently, and sipped. His eyes lit up. "Divine!" he declared. "Where did you learn to cook like this?"

I panicked—how could I explain I was from the future? "My mother taught me," I lied softly.

He smiled warmly. "She must be extraordinary."

That night, I lay in bed, replaying his praise over and over. It took nearly 45 minutes to fall asleep.

When I woke, sunlight streamed through my window. I was back at my desk—drooling on my open textbook. My phone read: June 10, 2025. Exam day.

On the school bus, I spotted him—the palace guard. Heart pounding, I tapped his shoulder.

He turned. “Hi, I’m Ethan, the new kid. How are you?” he asked with a friendly smile.

“Oh—uh, hi,” I stammered. After an awkward pause, I found my voice: “wanna share some tomato chips later?”

His eyes sparkled. “Yeah!”

Set for India

Stamford American School Hong Kong, Ukumori, Usei – 9

My name is Yusei and I am a Japanese. I travelled to Chang 'an. It was the most fabulous city I had ever seen. Then I saw a beautiful girl and I fell in love. After that we got married but we had one big problem, we couldn't afford a house. I really needed the money. One night, I thought and thought. I started to get very tired and so I slept. I woke up and went outside. I went to every place I could work at but I kept on getting rejected but then this happened. I went to the city wall and saw a job application for a big jackpot of money. The job was about going to India with a camel team. They would guide me and keep me safe. I immediately got a pen and signed up. While I was signing, I saw the price after it's done. I was the only person from China to sign up for this job.

I knew that the journey would be very hard because India was far away and they just started. The camels were a bit slow and it's very hot. So the journey started. The camels walked and walked. It was so hot and the whole team was tired but did not give up. We were four hours into the journey but were not even close to India. So I got some water and ate. The whole team did the same.

The camels were fine, but not the team. We were too hot and we saw a temple in the desert. We thought that it was very weird so we checked it. The whole team got off the camel and checked it out. After that, we sat on the camels and started off our journey to India. We wished to have a superpower and teleport to India. We were already exhausted and didn't want to go to India anymore. We ate breakfast and started going after a few hours. We saw a kind of broken structure and saw a treasure chest lying on the ground.

The whole merchandise team got a bit happy. We hopped out of the camels and walked to a chest and opened it. A golden light appeared and shone over the whole merchandise team. It was a beautiful gem necklace so we put it on the bag and hopped to our camels. But then, we heard yelling from a distance. BOOM! BOOM! We saw a war happening but then the Americans who were in the war spotted us and came and all of us were scared.

The Americans said, "surrender your loot and gems." We struggled as we tried to run away. The other North Korea spotted them and fired, buying us the time to run away. One of the merchandise members had been shot at the leg so we all panicked as we tried to heal the member. The war stopped, as the Americans won.

We saw a town crossing by, so we went inside the town and took a break and after a whole day. We hopped in the camel and began walking saying goodbye to the town. Something bad happened as we walked through the hot desert. As we walked through the sand dunes, night fell. They slept, then the third day came. But then, we ate and walked more. We were half way to India. We saw another structure so we hopped off of the camels and wandered inside the structure. We saw treasures again, excited about the fortune that was brought to us.

As we walked delightfully back to the camels, we heard shouting and saw another war. The whole merchandise team got some weapons for back-up plans. We had to be prepared to fight off bandits, who attacked and robbed the caravans. We managed to escape and then the Queen of China saw me and my bag of stolen gems. The Queen was impressed and persuaded me to stay. I thought it was a good idea. But I remembered I had a family and I had to afford a house. Sadly, I made a very hard choice to ditch my family and stayed with the Queen. I was still torn between the two.

Half of the merchandise team said to ditch my family but the other half said to decline. I was having the hardest time of my life. I was not sure if I wanted to live with the Queen. The Queen tried to bribe me with more gems. I thought for a few hours trying to decide. I decided to decline the offer and stay with my family.

The Queen got mad and stormed off. We were pretty close to India so we were happy. Our merchandise team was tired so we went inside the town to rest for a couple of days. After that we said goodbyes to the town and kept on going, as we walked through the hot desert. All the hard work paid off when we reached the borderland of India. We celebrated and saw people waving. We were ready to sell our loot. The crowd loved it. We sold them all out.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

The French International School, Ashokchakravarthi, Akshatha – 11

I gulped as the curtains rose, it was time for the silk road play, the one we had been preparing for it for weeks; Me and my friends walked onto the stage. Since we were the main characters, we had to do ours together. They all looked expectantly at me when we reached the mic, so I guessed it was my turn to speak. I remember I had to say who the father of the silk road was. I tried to clear my throat. “Hi, the father of the silk road is Chang Lai?” I could tell by the chuckling audience that it was the wrong answer. Suddenly, lightning flashed through the stage. We didn’t know what was happening, we couldn’t even see anything, we only heard what seemed like a giant landslide. Suddenly, everything was gone.” Where are we?” Alexis grunted trying to stand up. We weren’t in the stage anymore. Alexis furrowed her eyebrows. “Are you okay, Alexis?” Mia asked, concerned. She looked us in the eye.” Do you realize that this was the exact setting in the play we were performing?” she said. Before anyone could reply to this statement, Sydney screamed. “Look there!” We all saw the signboard. The words 130 BCE were engraved. “Wait, wasn’t it the exact same year the silk road was discovered?” I realised. We all threw confused glances at each other. An old woman eyed us suspiciously and motioned for us to come. “Nǐ láizi líng yīgè shídài ba?” She said. “Nǐ zěnmē zhīdào?” Alexis asked. We all looked at Alexis and the woman. We were confused; how did Alexis know what the woman was talking about? Oh yeah! None of us except Alexis knew Chinese! “Guys we need to talk!” Alexis said, anxiously. “Alexis what’s wrong?” Mia asked. “The woman knows we were from another time; she explained that we had stepped into another person’s foot and we must do everything they did in this year before the year ends or else we will be trapped in this dimension forever,” Alexis explained. “And the woman said she will help us,” “But how can we trust that woman?” Sydney whispered—shouted. “I know English,” she croaked. We all froze. Finally, I found the courage and walked to her. “I’m sorry,” I said, “But you know that we’re from another time, we don’t know anyone from here, we don’t even know who to trust,” The lady smiled. Then she turned serious. “What I said is true, you must travel in the footsteps of the people who first invented the silk road, here is a basket of all the things you must sell.” Alexis, me, Mia and Jade, lugged the heavy basket and started our treacherous journey. We meandered through the road, not knowing where to start. I looked at Alexis. Our eyes met. Her eyes were glassy. She rushed in front of us and declared, “Guys, here are the countries we must go to and trade things: Central Asia, India, Persia, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe,” “But Alexis, how are we going to cover all these countries by ourselves?” Mia asked. “Easy, we’ll split into two teams, our time limit is one year, so around 45 days for each of these places,” Alexis explained, “Come on guys, we can definitely do it!” This statement seemed to motivate us and soon a plan was agreed on. We would all finish doing China first and then Me and Mia would do India and Persia, while the others would do China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and Central Asia. We started selling all our food first, the smell wafted towards everyone who was walking. Eventually, business started coming and we were bargaining, selling and chatting. After about 6 weeks’ worth of trading and selling, we were finished with China. “All right,” Alexis shouted, “One country down!” Only me and Alexis managed to not burst into tears. We all knew what was next. Sydney motioned Alexis to her side as Mia stood beside me. After several byes, we split up and walked in two directions, not looking back. “Jade, do you want to ride those elephants?” Mia asked, pointing to a young woman shouting to rent elephants. I nodded and we ran up to the lady. Before we could ask anything, the old lady shouted in delight. “How much is one of those dumplings?” I quickly answered and said, “Just one of those elephants,” The lady grinned and pushed the elephant towards us. “First trade by ourselves!” I grinned joyously as I helped Mia climb up the elephant, “Off we go to India!” As the moon came up to the sky, Mia and I jumped off the elephant, we were in India! After a goodnight’s sleep, Me and Mia started trading. Our customers loved everything they always wanted more. 45 days whizzed past us and soon we were climbing on the elephant again, ready to go to Persia, our last country. Me and Mia arrived there, more motivated than ever and selling things was a breeze. People already knew us from friends. Some even traded things for us for free! That night, as we were about to go to sleep, a tear slid down Mia’s cheek. “Will the others be okay?” she whispered. “Of course,” I lied confidently. The rest of our days zoomed past, and we were

setting the empty basket on top of the elephant, ready to go to China. “Hi guys, I missed you,” Sydney screamed as she and Alexis ran towards us, back in China. We had a group hug right there. Me, Sydney, Mia and Alexis scrambled back to the old lady, forgetting about our wariness. We stood in front of the old woman panting. Our hands were rough, and our eyes held a secret world. “We did it,” we chorused as the old lady smiled. We all stepped into the portal and went back to the auditorium hearing people say the silk road repeatedly. It was an amazing feeling!

The Third Brooch

The French International School, Atayi, Sophie – 10

“Xīnyán, you forgot your backpack!”, called my dad.

“Sorry, but I’m so excited for the school trip through the Hexi Corridor!”, I said.

“It’s going to be so fun!”,

As we drove to the airport, I thought about the journey. The plane ride would be from Beijing to Jiayuguan, then a short bus ride to the road’s start.

I looked at the busy streets, surprised that there were so many people at this hour. The leafy trees outside the Temple of Heaven stretched like giraffes reaching up to eat the clouds, which were floating away slowly as if they had not a care in the world, and just like that, we had reached the airport.

I ran to greet my friends, Jiǎqí and Shūyí. As I waved goodbye to my dad, I felt a surge of happiness run through me, I was so excited to go!

I clutched the brooch that my Nainai gave me. It was a family heirloom dating back to 200BC. Family legends said that there were three brooches in a collection, and if you joined them together something magical would happen. One in a museum along the Silk Road, one in Weiyang Palace, and the last one with me. Mine was in the shape of a crescent moon, with a phoenix spreading its wings in a pre-flight position embroidered on it..

Finally at the Hexi corridor, we visited a museum where a guide showed us another brooch, almost identical to mine, but instead of a phoenix, there was a peacock, and instead of fire, there was water.

I touched my brooch again, feeling the details. The other brooch must have been a part of the collection! There was a tiny bump at the bottom of my brooch. I pressed it. Something whirred, then clicked. I blinked, and when I opened my eyes, I was in a completely different place.

This hasn’t ever happened before, it must be because we’re near the other brooch!

I looked down, and to my surprise, I wasn’t wearing my worn out sneakers anymore, but stunning Xiuhuaxie, a chinese traditional type of shoes. Both brooches were pinned onto my uniform, making a circle with a gap in the middle.

I surveyed my surroundings, people were chattering loudly, but when they walked past, they seemed to quieten. The women and I wore the clothing style known as Ruqun, and the men wore Shankus.

I fished into my pocket to find my phone, but all there were were a few scrolls and a brush.

I wondered if I was dreaming.

Had I lost myself with no phone in the middle of a 6,400 km road with only three scrolls, a brush, and two brooches to survive? Surely not!

I sat down on a rock, watching the people walk on. As two ladies passed by, I asked if they could spare me some money.

“Why is the princess begging for money?,” one asked.

Princess? I thought to myself,

There’s absolutely no way they were talking about me, but I wasn’t going to leave without double-checking. I ran to the nearest merchant and asked,

“ Do you know who I am ?,” I asked.

“ You are the princess,” he replied,

“Which is why I’m going to need you to come with me.”, he lurched forwards and grabbed me, just as two men in imperial guard’s clothes rose up behind him to help in my capture. One seized my wrist and pushed me onto his horse. We rode until my body ached, but fortunately, we came to a stop at an inn. Finally, I got some rest. Just enough to make the pain subside.

In all the rush, I had forgotten to ask where we were headed, so I did.

“We’re going to Weiyang Palace, your home.”, the soldier said.

My home?My home is in Beijing, not in Weiyang Palace!

The ride to the palace was a long, treacherous journey, we faced many obstacles, such as bandits, deserts, and salt flats. It took many days, and we had to swap out our horses for camels, but at last, we were there.

The palace was a massive 4.8 square kilometers, known for its size and luxury. I looked smaller than an ant next to it.

We were ushered inside to meet the emperor. He was sitting on a large throne, stairs leading up to it to make him look more imposing. My imagination ran wild, thinking of what he would do or say to me. Would he be happy, disappointed , or mad. Luckily, it was the former.

“I am so happy to see you, my long lost daughter!”, he cried.

“Hello Father”, I said, guiltily hatching a plan to escape the palace and go back to has 2025. As the legend said, the last brooch was in Weiyang Palace, so all that I had to do was to locate the last brooch, and make the wish to go back home.

Right after I got settled into my suite, I dashed out of the door to find the precious object, bumping right into the emperor.

“Oh, was I bothering you?”, he said,

“No, but I heard that your palace has the biggest collection of brooches in the region! I really wanted to see them.”

“Anything for you!”, he replied.

We walked across the large hallways until finally, we got to the jewellery room. It was a large walk-in wardrobe, adorned by shelves filled with dozens of brooches, but the last one, in the far end of the room, was the one that caught my eye. It was in a mandorla shape, and there was a curved line going through the middle, one side was light yellow to match the phoenix, and the other, light blue to match the peacock.

Suddenly, I grabbed it, and shoved it into the gap in between the brooches. A blinding light split through the room, and I was back on my hotel bed, sweating heavily as I fell deeply asleep.

The Siblings Who Found Their Way on The Silk Road

The French International School, Bouttou, Soulayman – 10

Chang'an, China. In the heart of this ancient city, lives a wealthy family of five. The parents are successful ceramists, they create the most exquisite dishes and vases. Their three children, Qiang the strong and responsible eldest son, Hui their middle daughter who impresses everyone with her wisdom, and Jiaohao the youngest and very brave boy, enjoy an easy and good life but do not show any interest in learning how to make ceramics. Unfortunately, one winter, both parents fell ill and could not work anymore. The doctors tried every medicine they had, but could not find any remedy to that mysterious illness. However, they had heard about a potential cure from travellers and traders from the West. Qiang, Hui and Jiaohao were determined to help their parents at any cost, and one night they gathered in their dark and cold bedroom to lay out a plan to travel all the way to Baghdad, find that cure and come back to their parents as quickly as possible. They would depart the next morning at dawn with some food and their parents' horse carrying some ceramics to sell along the way to earn money.

They leave a note to their parents and start walking north, towards Mongolia. After a few days of walking they meet a giant: the Great Wall of China. It is even more impressive in reality than whatever description in books or tales they ever heard. After crossing the Great Wall, Qiang, Hui and Jiaohao are amazed by the very flat landscape with beautiful mountains in the background in the Mongolian steppes. The people who live there are nomads and are glad to greet the three siblings from Chang'an. They welcome them for a much needed comfortable rest in their yurts, these white round-shaped tents where entire families live together. Indeed, until then, the siblings who were used to comfort and warmth had mainly slept in forests. After a couple of days in Mongolia, and to thank them for their hospitality, the three Chinese youths give their hosts a beautiful set of blue and white ceramic plates and continue their journey towards Baghdad.

Their next stop is the charming city of Samarkand. They are very surprised by the local dishes: they use rice just like back home, but it is not sticky nor white. Instead, it is yellow and served mixed with meat, vegetables and lots of spices. At first, Qiang and Hui were a bit reluctant to try. But the brave Jiaohao, although the youngest, tried it without hesitation and loved it so much that he traded one of his parents' gorgeous vase for the recipe and bags of spices. They loved waking up with the call to prayer resonating in the city, and going through the lively markets where people from all over Asia and Europe gathered to buy and sell their precious goods.

On the way from Samarkand to Baghdad, they had to stop by the coast of the Caspian Sea: they had never seen the seaside before. It was a fantastic moment, one that will stay with them forever. The gentle waves and salty smell in the air are unforgettable.

Finally, after almost 9 months on the roads of Asia, they reach their destination. Baghdad is the most vibrant city they have ever seen. Beauty is everywhere, in the very detailed architecture, in the colorful food and in the rich clothes. They notice many shops selling what look like remedies, and decide to enter one of them. An old woman, wearing a long blue dress with gold embroidery, welcomes them with a smile. Qiang pulls out a piece of paper from his pocket and shows it to the woman. It was a drawing, made by the wise Hui who knew that language would be different in Baghdad, of the plant they were told would cure their parents' illness. The shop owner's eyes opened wide and she disappeared behind a curtain at the back of the shop. The siblings wait impatiently for her to come back. When she does, she is carrying a box with the medicine inside. Qiang, Hui and Jiaohao jump and hug in happiness and relief. They agree to give the old lady their most beautiful ceramics in exchange for the remedy: three vases, two plates and four bowls showing their parents' beautiful skills.

The journey back to Chang'an is incredibly long as they are anxious to see their parents again and hope that it's not too late. When they finally reach their home, it is very quiet. They get more and more worried, until they hear noise from the backyard. They rush outside and find their parents busy making their usual beautiful ceramics. They all hug and cry and laugh at the same time. After a few moments, the parents explain that their illness miraculously disappeared in only a few days after the children had left. Since then, they had been waiting for their return and continued to make ceramics to keep themselves busy and not worry so much.

After this incredible adventure, the children realise they have to learn how to make the ceramics. And now, the family has an even better network of trade: the parents will continue to make their craft, and their children will travel all along the Silk Road to sell their ceramics all over Asia and beyond.

The Travel from China to Europe

The French International School, Bruchet, Sacha – 9

Once upon a time in China there were two brothers that always wanted money. So one day they went to a park called The Park of happiness. They got together and started talking about how to get more money. They were talking for 45 minutes, then they came up with an idea. It was to put all the money together and with that money, they will buy some plant seeds to grow plants.

It took around 3 and a half months to grow the plants. After it grew, they started selling them and found success. With that technique they started doing that over again.

Every night, they went to a park. One of the nights, one of them said that they should buy a globe, the other one did not understand why. Then he explained and said, "We should buy a globe because after we have a globe, we could travel from country to country to get more money!" But we should have a car specialised for long travels, but how to get the money for a car and we especially need a car that has equipment if we get in danger! One of them said that he will check the car shop to see how much the car cost. When he came back from the car shop, he said that the cheapest car costs 4 567.78 dollars. So they checked all the car shops and the cheapest one costs 1 212.03 dollars. The only way to get the car is to work very hard. Later, they finally got to buy it. Once they bought it.

The next night they started planning to take the new tales of China's silk road. The next day they started travelling from China to Europe. Apparently it takes 20 – 30 days. So there they went, trying to hope to get more money in Europe. But when they reached 2 days, they found a box in the middle of nowhere on a camel so they opened the box and it was actually a trap they got kidnapped and the kidnappers made them fall asleep! When they woke up they saw that they were in a cage and they heard big footsteps coming towards them. He was big, all hairy and he said, hello my name is Captain Jones and this is my crew, I will only let you go if you give me your car and all your money! The poor brothers got face to face and started talking for a while and 5 minutes later they said that they prefer staying in the cage. Captain Jones got mad mad and started screaming and screaming so loud it broke one of the glass pieces of the cage. He screamed so loud that he didn't even see that the glass broke. A few minutes later he went somewhere but they didn't know where so they tried to break the glass to make a big hole and escape. While they were breaking the glass one of the crew heard that they were breaking something, so he came to them. They hid the broken hole of glass and the person of the crew thought that he just heard some random noise that wasn't them. So, they continued breaking the glass until they could fit through it.

Once they got out, they rushed to the car and put on full speed. They found out that there was a pile of gold next to the cage so they took it and rushed away. Meanwhile when they left Captain Jones went back to check if they were still in the cage. When he saw that they were not here he got so so mad and started screaming he made all his crew and him to not hear anything for a whole month! The poor people kept on going in their car for 10 days and 7 hours 27 minutes and 56 seconds until they saw a sign that said Europe with an arrow. Pointing west. So they continued for 3 hours 7 minutes and 28 seconds until they finally arrived in Europe.

They never saw what Europe looks like because they didn't have enough money to buy a plane ticket. When they arrived, they realised that in Europe they don't use dollars, the Europeans use Euros. They went to a money exchange. They installed a store in the market place and it actually turns out that Europeans buy a lot of Chinese stuff that they don't find in Europe. With that much money and that much stuff from China, they need to sell all the Chinese stuff and then get the money the customer gives us and they can go back to China to get even more stuff from China and go back to Europe and always do the same thing until they can buy a house, a phone and a proper job to earn more money. 8 years later they got all of that and a very good job, they are all doctors.

In 2 years they will be a normal person that doesn't need to beg on the streets, fight with other people and do meetings every night to make plans to get more money. They will just live happily. 14 years later, they got so much money that they could even buy their own plane and millionaire house. 35 years later, they are suffering at the hospital for 2 months and now, one of the brothers has already passed away because of an unexpected

turbulence in the aircraft . The other brother is still surviving . He left the hospital 2 weeks after the other brother passed away . But he had to come back 2 weeks after he left the hospital to see if their heart was still breathing . It turns out that his heart is not working a lot anymore , that means that he will also pass away soon . 4 days later , he is at the hospital . He could not breathe well and a few minutes later he passed away. Afterwards , their story was very popular . Their grave was in the richest cemetery and a lot of people were visiting it to see all what they did and their travel from China to Europe.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

The French International School, Cang, Marion – 10

Now, during the year 2026, China is very populated, and fancy. But before? There was once a road in China, the Silk Road. Right now, Hyacinth and her friend are discovering it.

"Hyacinth, what do you think? Should we write a text— or paragraph about it? It seems cool." asked Hyacinth's friend, Ethan.

—Nah.. But I wish there was some way to discover more about it. Replied Hyacinth without doubt.

—Okay, but... How exactly?

—You see, it says it used to be in Chang'an— Now Xi'an, and it was very useful for trading from China to Europe.

The friends started discussing, until it was dark. They planned to go the next day, to Xi'an, because it was the Easter Holidays. At least, they only have four days left. And there was a stable next to Hyacinth's house. They borrowed two horses and later set off on their journey.

A few days later...

They finally arrived at a stop. Hyacinth asked for a faster route to the Silk Road.

"At right is the Ancient Chinese Jade Library. Then, after you turn left, well... it is the closest way to the Silk Road," stated a man while pointing right. "But then, I ask you to transport this silk to Xi'an

"What? How are we supposed to do that?" asked Hyacinth. Thinking and asking herself where Ethan was.

—All...All you have to do is transport this silk tapestry and clothes to Xi'an

—Okay... I guess we can, but first, what is your fastest transport? Asked Hyacinth again, curiously.

—Well, you arrived on horse, and

After they finished discussing it, Ethan asked his friend if it was confirmed that they would do that. And he just came out of nowhere.

"Well, we have to, I guess. AND WHERE IN THE WORLD WHERE YOU?" Hyacinth snapped. As they packed up for their journey, Ethan asked for a map so the elderly guy gave him a map.

"That's gonna be in handy." stated Ethan.

—Yeah, but I'm *not* in the mood of being chatty. She muttered.

—Okay, sure. Let's go.

They had a long journey, by going past rivers, muck swamps, rainforests...

—Ethan, I'm hungry, but don't make us stop at a swamp full of frogs AGAIN.

—Alright, we'll just not stop, then. Take this. He handed some sushi to her.

—Were'd you get this from? Hyacinth asked uncertainly.

—A while ago, well— not a while ago, but near the Jade Library. It was a restaurant. And without realizing it, they were there!

“Here, someone told us to deliver silk. Silk, from the Silk Road.” stammered Hyacinth nervously not knowing who to talk to, her hands trembling at the sight of TONS of unknown people. Finally, a kind man replied their response:

“Thank you. Here is our trade for the precious silk.”

—A...a *scroll*? Ethan faltered.

—Not *just a scroll*, a scroll of the ancient history of the Silk Road.

—But, I thought there were only some in the Jade Library...? Asked Hyacinth with uncertainty.

—Apparently in the ancient wars, maybe a spy from Anhui stole one, perhaps. Replied the man generously, calmly.

—Umokaybyethanks. Stuttered Ethan. Both of them took their horses, and ran. *Trot trot trot gallop gallop*.

They reached Xi'an, and realised there were actually *two* same scrolls. The citizens of Xi'an were kind enough to let them keep one.

“A piece from the 1400s, right here. It also says that Marco Polo traveled there, and the transmission of Black Death...But it's deserted now...” whispered Hyacinth with the 'precious' and ancient scroll in her hands. They left for the plane back home, and— guess what? They realise they were *very, very* stupid. They didn't take the plane! For Anhui! Now, they are two days late for SCHOOL!

Epilogue:

“Hyacinth, Ethan, would you explain why you are late for school?” Asked their teacher. “We're going to start a project on the Silk Road. Now, come on.

—It's a long story, and we have something perfect for this project, replied Hyacinth before Ethan could even say anything. We went to Xi'an and.....

No Other Way

The French International School, Chu, Bianca – 9

“Legend has it, millions of years ago on the Silk Road, there was a magical porcelain cup that can restore health by drinking from it. Emperors from China were constantly searching for them but no one has ever been able to find them. People say that only the one with the purest heart and with the righteous mind would earn the cup. Some say that the cup is hidden inside a forest in China, some think that it has been broken and part of it has been placed on the Emperor's saddle, some think that it's buried inside a tree in the Great Wall Of China.” My grandmother has told us this story many times and I have not heard it since she had a stroke.

My dad was in a car accident a few months ago on the way home from work as he was picking up pizza. My mom said he was crossing the road when a car ran a red light. The police called and we all rushed to the hospital. Dad was hit badly during the accident and he fell into a coma. Doctors said it would take a miracle for him to wake up.

I need to go to Grandma and see if she has a way to heal Dad. She always has some herbal remedies, she's like potion maker and whenever we get sick, she would whip up something and we would never need to see the doctor. I guess this time is different, Dad is in a much worse condition. Grandma always talked about these legends that can heal lives, she must know something that can help! If the legend of the porcelain cups actually exists, can we use it to save my Dad? I went to see Grandma but she had lost her ability to speak, but when I told her about Dad she teared up. She pointed at a book on her bookshelf. It was an emerald colored book with golden carvings and weird looking symbols. No words. I have never seen a book like this... I flipped open the book and it was titled *The Magic in the Silk Road*. I started reading but there was nothing related to the cup. It was getting late and I dozed off.

I woke up with a headache, I opened my eyes expecting to see my room but there was a donkey licking my face! Wait a minute, a donkey, where am I?. I quickly jumped up and walked out the barn.

I was not in my era because I saw people wearing long robes, they looked like the people from the Silk Road. I saw people from all over the world, Asians, Europeans etc. People were on camels. I think I was transported back to the Silk Road. Maybe Grandma sent me to look for the cup.

Suddenly, I saw a creature that looked like a fox, it was orangey brown and had rabbit-like ears. It stared at me with gazing eyes. I went closer and I realized the fox was limping. It was a Tibetan fox! Grandma told me that they have mysterious spirits. Curious, I followed him...

It led me to a forest. It stopped walking and howled. I looked it in the eyes and saw the fox was bleeding. He moaned and licked his wound. I grabbed a leaf to try to help him stop the bleeding but I realized there was something stuck to his wound. A deep cut from something sharp. He had a piece of white sharp porcelain stuck to his leg. I ripped part of my rope and wrapped the wound. He got up, still limping but led me in the forest where pillars of rocks gathered in a circle. Weird, this is all so odd but made sense in a way. Grandma keeps repeating the story of the porcelain, Dad is in a coma and I am in this dream. The fox's wound had a porcelain cup stuck to it ... so maybe this is where the cup is.

The fox howled and in minutes, a pack of wolves came around the circle. I was scared that they would attack me but at the same time I can feel that they were here to protect me. I thought about my Grandma and my Dad in the hospital, he needs me to find the cup for him.

I stepped inside the circle of rocks, I took out the piece of broken porcelain and placed it on the ground.

Suddenly a few foxes that also looked injured came inside where I placed the broken porcelain piece and they each carried in their mouth other pieces of broken porcelain cup. When the last fox put down the piece, something started happening, they started to come together and formed a perfect porcelain cup. I must be dreaming and I know I am dreaming but this must be the porcelain cup that Grandma keeps telling us about.

“Sweetheart, wake up! I want to check on your dad,” my mom said. I slowly opened my eyes, but the dream lingered in my mind— the foxes, the broken pieces, and the cup. Had I really brought it back? I looked around my room, but there was nothing. Reaching for my glasses, I was startled to see what looked like a shadow of a cup on my bedside table. I quickly put my glasses on and gasped; the porcelain cup was sitting right there! Could this be the one from my dream? I hesitated before grabbing it and running downstairs.

I put on my coat, took the cup, and jumped in the car.

When we arrived at the hospital, I filled the cup with tea and rushed to Dad’s room. I opened his mouth and poured the tea inside. At first, nothing happened, but then I saw his hand twitch. “Daddy, it’s me!” I cried.. His eyes fluttered open, and he looked at me. For a moment, he seemed confused, but then he recognized me.

“ Wake up!” I shook him! He opened his eyes. I don’t think he knew who I was but then he turned away and looked again.

“Hi, sweetie!”

“ I miss you so much! Please never sleep again! I cannot wait for you to go home,” I whispered back.

I thought this was all Grand ma, she was Daddy’s savior and she is our savior.

The Big Adventure of the Silk Road

The French International School, De Rocquigny, Anna – 9

Once upon a time there were three brothers: Arech, Fibian and Pent. They heard of a ball in Europe that would be on the 31st of December. At this ball, they were to meet a special girl and see if they could marry her. Little did they know, the ball was in Pala, India, and they would have to cross the silk road. Days passed and they were getting excited until the big day arrived!

They grabbed their camels and they started their journey to Pala! After days and days of travelling they realised that they had to cross the silk road. The huge road was where you could buy amazing leather, clothes, shoes and silk. It is mostly found in the desert. It was also dangerous as there were robbers and very strong sand storms!

They did not have enough money to buy clothes for the ball, so they needed to find a job. Arech had to work at a flower shop. Fibian went home to help his mother and his sister so that he could earn more money and Pent had to help to clean the camels that they had to ride to the Silk Road .

Once everything was ready, they set off on their adventure. They rode their grumpy camels across the desert for ten days and ten nights. Until they finally arrived at a busy bustling market. The market was full of stalls selling pet snakes, hand woven baskets, jars of spices and beautiful clothes made of the finest silk you could ever have.

Fibian heard a noise from the stall. He stepped forward and saw five robbers pushing a girl and telling her to give them all her money. Fibian ran forward to stop them. He said, "Leave her alone!" He grabbed a bowl and cracked it on their heads. Before the robbers could get them, Fibian pulled the girl and ran towards the camels. Then she said thank you and asked where the brothers were going. They said that they were going to a ball. She said she would want to join them.

They continued their journey .When suddenly a sandstorm hit them and blew Pent away . When the sand storm was finished they realised that Pent was gone. Arech and Fibian tried to find him, but the girl knew best. She had lived in the desert her whole life and knew that all they had to do was wait. After two days and two nights of waiting they found him walking lost around the desert. Arech screamed his name so that Pent could hear him .When Pent heard his name he lifted his face and saw them jumping up and down to get his attention. Pent ran to them and greeted them with excitement. Then Pent realised that he did not know the girl's name. So he asked what her name was and she said that her name was Elena Dundas .

They continued their journey and Fibian and Elena fell in love so they decided to get married. They stopped their journey in Mumbai to get married. They decided to have a small wedding with the brothers. After the marriage Arech and Pent realised that they did not want to go to the ball because they preferred to stay close to their family. They all said that it was wonderful that they decided to stay in Mumbai because it had everything they needed .So they all lived happily ever after in Mumbai.

The Silk Road: Ling's First Trade

The French International School, Derbaudrenghien, Lauren – 9

Many moons ago, in a small village near Chang'An, lived a family of traders. Twice a year, they would travel far on the Silk Road to trade silk and jade against Western goods.

In their absence, their daughter Ling stayed with her grandfather. "Granpa, she often asked, tell me more stories of the Silk Road!" Her grandfather, a retired trader, loved to tell tales about India, wild horses, amazing landscapes and foreigners. He also taught her how to negotiate a good deal...

Ling's parents always refused to take her on the road. Spring was approaching, they were preparing for their next trip. Ling decided to hide in the back of their caravan...

After many hours on the road her parents found her hiding under the tarp covering the cart. It was too late to turn back. At first, they were very angry, but later on, they felt proud that she wanted to come with them.

The trip to India lasted several weeks but she never complained. Their destination was a fascinating town full of colours and smells where goods from Europe are traded for goods from China. The local merchants know Ling's parents well. "Welcome back!", they shout, did you bring beautiful silk? "We have tasty vegetables from Europe for you!". Ling helped her parents to unload the cart and feed the horses.

While they negotiated, Ling wandered around the markets. She loved to see people shout, laugh and shake hands on a deal. She wanted to get involved. In her leather bag she brought a porcelain bowl that she hoped to trade for a wool coat for her grandpa.

As she turned a corner, she saw exactly what she wanted. In the shop there were no adults, only a boy about her age. "Are your parents here?" asked Ling. "They are busy so I'm running the shop" he replied. Ling pulled out the bowl from her bag. The boy knew that people in Europe love those. "How much do you want for it?" he asked. "I will trade it for this!" she said, pointing at a beautiful wool coat on the wall. The boy thought about it for a moment then held out his hand. Ling grabbed it and they shook on it. It was Ling's first trade!

When Ling reunited with her parents, she explained what happened. They were a bit worried but also quite impressed with their daughter. After spending the night in a local hotel, they mounted their camels, attached the cart full of textiles, exotic foods and precious stones to their horse and left the city. During the trip, Ling would sing songs and even draw on small pieces of paper, a recent invention from China.

Weeks later, they arrived back to their village and unloaded their carriage. Ling hugged her grandpa, told him the story and gifted him the coat. He was so happy and proud of her. From then on, Ling would always travel with her parents on the Silk Road. *The End*

Ancient Times of China's Silk Road

The French International School, Granger, Livie – 9

I was tired, I had a really high fever and vomited a lot. I woke up and saw the beautiful village in China. I could smell yummy, scrumptious and delicious different pastries. My sister was very excited, energetic and forced herself to sleep a lot because we were going to Europe to see many large and big monuments. We had to walk because, in our time, it was 300 years before Christ. A lot of people were travelling (walking) to Europe to see their ancestors' villages or houses or anything!

But when I was walking I saw something strange, like there are bumps of the same colors on something very long... I peered out to look (because I am very sneaky and very much of an explorer).

I found a type of door on the mysterious, peculiar bumps. I walked through the door and gasped. I saw maps written in a time I didn't know and had weird and wiggily writing. But wait, when I was in school in history class with Miss Nelson, I saw the same type of handwriting...Oh! Oh wow ! I have just realised that that was ancient time writing!As I was scared,fearful and frightened,I ran as fast as I could,fast as lightning!

But the moment I stepped out, I lost my trustful, courteous and respectful family. At least there were tons of polite people talking to me yet they were wearing Chinese symbols with animals on them. I felt weird because in my time, before I went curiously inside the bumps with ancient handwriting. Later, I was starting to get scared so I urgently tried to find my family.

Unfortunately I couldn't find them, but a nice lady walked up to me and said "Young lady, are you lost " then I replied softly,"Yes." Later on she told me "You have the power of the lunar tiger. One of the most important mythical creatures. " After, she gave me all the good courage in me to believe in myself, super heartwarming. But the legend says I will have a new power to be a Lunar tiger but I wanted to spend more time and not spending time with my family

I had a vision that I would get lost forever,forgotten , but I told myself to believe in myself .And so I did.I was walking elegantly near the farm but it wasn't there because of the ancient time ... I finally figured out that I travelled time because there were no buildings, no food ,and everyone had to eat grains beneath the ground.

We were walking a lot to try to go back to the future . I was scared but had to finish this journey. I had to trust myself. At least I had bags of grains. Afterwards, I found a cave with prehistoric drawings. I decided to explore it. As soon as I walked in, I went through emerald and ruby crystal curtains. There was a train and on it it said "Leaving SILK ROAD AND GOING TO EUROPE." I walked in then saw the same symbols on the bumps earlier. I realized that that train was the bumps. As I travelled through time it looked brand new.

As soon as I entered, it was leaving that road and all the way to Europe. I hoped and prayed that my family was there. As soon as I walked out, many people were coughing badly and feeling sick. I thought they caught the plague! I calmly walked to see what was going on, and I realised that they were on the China silk road! I remember because one day when I was sick I asked my mom to tell me a fantastic story about the SILK ROAD and she said many people get sick and catch plagues when they are in or walking on top of the Silk Road. I tried my best to not get sick and lost because then I would be even worse condition. I fell asleep on the Silk Road because I was too tired. After two sleepless nights, I closed my eyes and had terrifying nightmares about losing my family. I woke up, startled by a strange light and annoying noises, and saw a train on the road! I feared this would be the end, and I would never see my cheeky sister, amazing mom, or funny dad again. Remembering the kind lady's advice to believe in myself, I ran toward the train but fell on its

hood. I knew the passengers were sick, but I had to risk it to find my family. Inside, I spotted them and felt overjoyed! A beautiful girl called my name and told me to believe in myself. She gave me a little lunar tiger toy, and I wondered how she knew my belief. Later, an old woman pushed me, breaking my arm and twisting my ankle. A rude man harassed me, claiming I was poor, but he was poor too.

I wanted to find a way to walk and found bamboo sticks, so I decided to do crutches and look, peering everywhere for my family. At last I fainted. Staying unconscious, well it was too hot and I felt sick. On my way for my search, there were fossils, human bones I mean. It was terrifying and plus because there was a small pouch on it and it said "HELP ME" and it was in wood. It also contains a woolen fabric and I used it to dress up. But... That was my sister's pouch or the same one, petrified, I continued my search with nightmares about it. I saw a wooden chair with blood on it in one of my nightmares.

So with a brave face, I continued. Later on, I climbed up a tree and saw a family. My family. They were booking something, a resort maybe and but they were looking obviously for me. I called them and when they saw me they were crying tears. I told them to not even shed a tear. Furthermore I gave them a tight hug and I really enjoyed it. I love them along with I told them to never stay out of sight and they said that they've always had a dry eye in the house in their dreams. I was thinking what they said before, that I'm a wonder, really a wonder.

The Weaver that Shows the Past

The French International School, Griveau Dashnyam, Mara – 11

The town was small, travelers rarely remembered its name, yet old enough to feel the weight of every footstep that passed through it. It rested along the Silk Road like a pause between the two deserts, a place where camels drank, dresses got mended, and people slept without asking too many questions. The walls of the houses were cracked by sun and wind, enough that their colors faded into the same pale browns as the road itself. Most trailers stayed only a night. A few stayed longer, drawn not by comfort, but by the woman who wove silk at the edge of town.

Her name was Yan, though many learned it only after sitting with her long enough to feel at ease for some reason. She lived in a narrow cottage where a wooden loom stood beside an open window. She offered tea before trade, asked travelers where they were going and who waited for them there. She listened in a way that made people speak more than they planned. Her silk lay folded on low shelves, dyed in bold, but soft colors like evening light and vintage stone. Every piece of silk was always 10 gold coins. Not more, not less. But when touched, it felt warm but distant. As if it was impossible to take off.

The memories flooded fast. A spice merchant who originally bought it for his wife, woke in the silk cloth with aching legs and the memory of dragging himself across sand under a burning sky. A young guard dreamed of holding a dying stranger whose name he somehow knew although, never seen before. The dreams were vivid and complete, filled with fear, love, and exhaustion. They did not vanish with the morning. People carried them through the day, uncertain which memories were truly theirs or if it was a sign, some said.

Some travelers returned to Yan in fury, accusing her of black magic and called her a witch. Others returned in silence, shaken but grateful. She never denied what the silk did. She only replied, “The road has carried many lives. It does not forget them, and I weave them back to life.” When asked how she learned such weaving, she smiled faintly. “I listened long enough.” She did not lie, but something in her twisted her insides. She thought of all of the stories her mother read to her in bed of the famous weavers around town, wishing Yan would fulfill her desires of Yan being a wonderful weaver.

Rumors spread along the Silk Road. Some trailers sought the town, hoping the dreams would warn them of danger ahead. Others avoided it, afraid of what they might be forced to remember. The trades slowed down. The market thinned. Children went to sleep hungry, the elders began to worry.

They invited Yan one evening as the sun sunk. She stood before them calmly while they spoke of lost coins and frightened visitors. When they demanded she stop, her voice shook—not with fear, but with sadness. She explained that her silk was woven from old cloth gathered along the road: worn robes, old curtains and abandoned bags. “Every journey leaves something behind,” she said. “I only gather what was never meant to be forgotten.”

That night, Yan did not rest. She wove until her hands bled, thinking of until the first light crept through the window. By morning, her house was empty. The loom was gone. The silk had vanished.

In time, trailers returned. Dreams faded. The town began to breathe again. Yet on certain nights, travelers woke with the sound of footsteps outside their doors, or the smell of dust and old smoke in the air. Some swore they saw a woman walking the road at dawn, carrying a bundle of thread on her back.

Yan wasn't in stock for several days until one evening, a new piece of silk got woven by Yan herself, but something seemed different but no one could prove it. The cloth was a peculiar dark blood, due to the suffering

of Yan that night. A little boy, Zhen, bought it for his dad for only 7 gold pieces, not knowing what the nightmares it would bring to him...

The Trip to Save the AI Cargo Ship!

The French International School, Jain, Suhani – 9

A few years ago, something amazing happened. My stepdad and his friends built an Artificial Intelligence (AI) cargo ship in our backyard! Every day after school, I'd watch them connect wires and fit pieces together like a giant puzzle. Sometimes, I even got to hand them a screwdriver or sketch an idea on my stepdad's favorite notepad. The ship wasn't huge, though. It was about the size of a big boat, and it could only fit seven boxes. Even the motor was just one meter long! But to me, it looked like something from the future, and I was so proud of my stepdad.

One week after the ship was done, my stepdad got a very official-looking letter from the Eastern Union. He read it over and over, looking super worried. I finally peeked at the letter, and my jaw dropped. The letter said he could take the AI ship on its first delivery – across the ocean to England! But there was a catch: if the boat didn't reach the west in five hours, the Union's representative would destroy it. That made me furious. How could anyone want to wreck something so cool?

But then, my stepdad sighed and said, "I can't go. The village is throwing a party for me and my coworkers that day." He looked right at me and whispered, "Maybe you could take the ship instead." I froze. Me? I was only ten! But when I saw the hope in his eyes, I felt brave. I nodded. "I'll do it," I said, my voice shaking.

On the big day, I hugged my family, stuffed my backpack with snacks (thanks to my dad), and climbed aboard the AI cargo ship. The engine purred as I steered away from the dock. My heart was thumping so hard, I thought it might jump out of my chest!

The journey was wild. I saw tall, grassy mountains and others topped with snow. Rainforests dripped with water, and bright green trees sparkled in the sun. After what felt like forever, I reached a village by a shimmering blue lake. A young man with huge, round eyes came running up to me. "You must be collecting goods," he said, handing me a carton filled with brightly colored spices. "These are India's best! No need to trade, it's a gift." I grinned and thanked him, the spicy smell making my nose tingle.

After leaving India, the ocean stretched out forever. I ate a tuna sandwich (my dad made me pack it) and watched the waves. Two days later, I spotted a sandy shore—Arabia! Two fishermen waved and hurried over. "Good day! Want to trade? We have pearls and amber!" their eyes twinkled. I let them onto the ship, and they picked a box in exchange for their sparkling treasures. I felt like a real explorer!

A few days later, I reached the busy city of Turkey. The streets buzzed with people. A lady in a bright scarf walked over. "Are you here to trade goods? What do you have?" she asked. I gulped and said, "I have a box of iron and steel—maybe for some minerals?" She looked at me for a long time, then nodded and brought me a heavy carton full of shiny rocks. As I loaded it onto the boat, I felt like I was part of some grand adventure.

I traded fruit for silk in Egypt, too, and everywhere I went, people were kind and curious. But soon, I realized I was running out of time. After a few hours of smooth sailing, a little voice in my head started to worry. The sun was setting, painting the sky orange and pink—and suddenly, I remembered the time limit. My heart leapt into my throat. Only ten minutes left!

I asked the cargo ship to go faster. The ship zoomed ahead, faster than I thought possible. Everything around me became a blur. In my head, I counted down—5... 4... 3... My hands were sweaty and I held on tight. 2... 1... I could see the dock getting closer and closer. 0! With an earthquake-like bump, the ship landed at the dock just in time.

I did it! Against all odds, I had delivered the cargo, made new friends, and saved my stepdad's invention. My stepdad, who had come by plane to wait for me in England, ran to hug me, and I felt ten feet tall. It was the best adventure of my life, and I'll never forget how valiant I felt—like a real hero.

Twenty-two centuries ago

The French International School, Jaziri, Janna – 10

Twenty-two centuries ago, there lived a young girl named Lan, a name that means “orchid” in Mandarin. She lived in Beijing, right beside the grand Forbidden City.

Lan was always quiet, just like the ethereal lake she loved to visit. Birds chirped in the sky, their songs floating on a calm breeze through the trees and over the water lilies she gazed at during sunset.

She had a brother named Zi Han, a name that means catalpa tree in Mandarin.

One rainy day, soldiers burst into their home and dragged Zi Han away. Lan’s hands shook like leaves in the wind, her heart pounding as she wondered what to do.

The next day, Lan and her mother were summoned to the Forbidden City. There, they faced Emperor Li Tianqi, seated on his magnificent golden throne lacquered in gold and carved with dragons that seemed to crawl across its surface. “Hello,” the emperor said. “You must be wondering why I called you here.” “Yes!” Lan replied.

“Well,” he continued, “we have been searching for someone brave and courageous to travel the Silk Road. Your brother agreed to go.”

“What!” shouted Lan’s mother.

Lan cried out through her tears, “The last person who went there never came back!”

The emperor smiled. “Zi Han and I have made a deal. If he returns with the JADE DRAGON’s Eye, a treasure hidden deep in the mountains along the Silk Road, I will reward him richly with gold, rice, copper alloy coins, and the honor of dining with me every day, along with his entire family.”

As he spoke, the emperor nervously kept caressing a strange emerald dragon eye amulet hanging around his neck.

Lan was quite sagacious. She immediately felt something suspicious. Why had every other man refused this so-called “courageous” journey?

She decided to take matters into her own hands.

That night, she made a plan to sneak in and reach her brother. Zi Han had not yet left; he was still preparing for the trip. At dawn, the emperor’s soldiers would escort him to the edge of Beijing, to the start of the great Silk Road...

It was midnight and Lan had started to pack her bags not knowing what she was about to face. She had packed 9 mooncakes for good luck because 9 was one of China's lucky numbers for longevity and completeness for her long journey. She had also packed her favorite snack which is a century egg, a compass, her great grandfathers manchou and put on most importantly for good luck, her great great grandmothers gorgeous emerald jade necklace with a locket which she could only open in case of an emergency!

It was 7am and dawn was at 7:05am in Beijing, she sneaked out through her wooden door and rode her beautiful light brown Ferghana horse and also left a note

The Silk Road Journey

The French International School, Jungers, Hugo – 9

Over hundreds of years ago, there was a family who went to visit the Silk Road. They saw the people who crossed countries on their camels and the family really wanted to buy some souvenirs and take a photo. The first shop had a gem from the Gobi desert and they also had many fossils from the Sahara. There was one trader who came all the way from Rome to China by foot just to sell his gold and clothes for a legit price. They bought a lot of things and the kids really liked the camels and horses. It was way too expensive for the family but the dealer gave two discounts : One because they were kids and the second one was because they thought it was too expensive. They bought a horse that was easy to bring home because it was well trained and easy to use. They saw silk made from every corner of the world and they were very excited to spend their two day vacation in the Silk Road. There was tea that came from China. It smelled and tasted amazing. There were also precious metals like gold, silver, platinum and ruthenium.

The cultures and religions were a big part of the Silk Road. There were Christians and Catholics everywhere. The family was shocked and surprised by how much the cultures and religions meant for the people of the Silk Road. The trader that sold them the camel made a huge explanation about how this place evolved and what people wanted here. There was one Emperor that ruled the lands and his name was Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. He was a huge part of the Silk Road and did a lot of things. After a huge explanation about this, it was time to go to bed.

The next day, when the family woke up, they saw a huge camel licking their son's face and it was hilarious. The little boy was laughing so hard that all of the people around heard him laughing. An elephant , a magician and a banana that the magician was eating , came across the camel and he made the camel turn into a magic carpet. The people around the camping site were shocked by the magician 's magic powers but the family was not shocked by this type of spell that the magician made. They said thank you to the magician and the children were riding it like it was some type of birthday present. The parents were extremely angry with the children and they said sorry.

The program was to look around and get some happiness with the family but it turned out to be chaotic so instead they just went to a brunch. Somewhere in India , Agra , somewhere near the Taj Mahal.

The Impossible Journey

The French International School, Leong, Natalie – 9

Long ago, in the age of kings and emperors, lived a family, neither wealthy nor poor. Their son, Li You, only six, carried a bright smile and playful spirit, forever teasing his twin sister, Li Mei. She, with sharp eyes and flowing black hair, was serious yet caring, balancing his mischief with care. Their faithful dog, Dian Dian, never strayed from their side. Life was simple, filled with laughter and warmth—until something happened... One day, their grandmother fell deathly ill, and fear gripped the house. She was their soul, the one who had took care of Li You and Li Mei since infancy. Hospital costs were impossible, but silk remained. As they worried, Li Mei's sharp mind lit with hope: trading at the silk road.

"What if we... trade at the Silk Road?" she asked, bracing for her parents' reaction. Silence fell, then came the roar. "WHAT?! The Silk Road is nearly impossible to travel!" She fought back, insisting it was the only way. After a long argument, they gave in. India would be their destination. Indian have a great fondness for silk. In India, silk is rare and precious, which makes it highly valued. They will also bring their puppy, Dian Dian, with them. One week later, they were ready for the journey.

They were now near the border of China. Li You clutched the map tightly. He wasn't a hunter, but he found a pond and plums big enough to feed the family. His dad used silk to make hammocks— They had so much silk that Li You doubted India would even take it all. His mom preferred to keep the silk for trading. The map had been drawn by his father, using the scrolls he had found about the silk road. Li You studied it, then marked what he believed was the shortest route with chalk. Li Mei complained the safer path was wiser, but Li You told her their grandma was dying. They didn't have much time. She gave in. Dian Dian licked his face, a nuzzle of comfort. The next morning, they set out for the route. Time to actually leave Xi'an...

Each morning and night, they dragged themselves through the burning heat, hoping for food or even a pond. The desert was cruel, full of cactus and endless sand, and caves were the only safety when storms came. One day, a massive sandstorm rolled in, fiercer than any before. They ran for cover and found a cave that felt strange, and suspicious looking—smooth walls, no scratches, no uneven floor, like someone had lived there for years. Li You thought it was waiting for them. That thought barely formed before something bashed him at the back of his head.

He woke to complete darkness, confused and disoriented. Slowly, memories returned—the cave, the fainting, the storm. But where was his family? A groan answered him, though it wasn't his own. As his eyes adjusted, he realized he was trapped inside a prison cell, shadows shifting beside him. He reached for the stick he had once collected and lit it as a torch. Something heavy rested on his arm. He froze, spinning the light. It was Dian Dian. He hugged her, unsure what to do next. He decided to wake those 3 shadows on his left, which he was sure that it was his family. One by one, they woke up. They gathered together, hoping for some answers to their question: Where exactly are they in? A trap? Suddenly, something rattled the bars. They leaned forwards, wondering millions of things at the same time. A man loomed over them.

"Welcome to your prison, I am Leo, the assassin that caught you guys," the unfamiliar man smirked. "You were a very easy victim, compared to others," Leo smiled thinly.

"This is a... very creative prison," Li You muttered, frowning at the wooden walls. Leo had told them they only interrogate, never kill, and that the next questioning would come later. As soon as Leo left, Li You whispered his plan: ask for three hours to rest, plead for privacy—no guards, then burn the bars. When finally alone, they set the fire. Small but steady, it worked, leaving a hole just wide enough, without spreading. Amazed at their luck, they slipped out, only to hear voices and a camel's whimper. A man was beating it cruelly. They waited until he was gone, then agreed to take the animal with them. At the cave's entrance, the camel bowed its head in thanks. Together, they left the cave and its troubles behind.

They named the camel Sha Li. With Sha Li, the journey was faster. The camel carried them when they were tired, plus detected and warned them of sandstorms so they could hide in caves before the winds came. Sha Li could also detect food and water, so they have a lengthy meal every day, that gave them more energy and can travel more kilometers than before they were prisoners. Soon, they reached a city in India. Trading was easy—every piece of silk gone in 1 day. Li You knew they had enough money to heal his grandma, with more to spare. They were also traded with something else instead of money, it was a boat! Dian Dian also refused to leave without Sha Li, so the camel came too. Together, they set off again.

It took them five months to get back. With Sha Li, the trip felt lighter—no rivers to dodge, no getting caught in a storm, and more energy and food. When the city finally appeared, Li You and Li Mei walked home with Dian Dian and Sha Li, while their parents hurried to the hospital, hoping stronger medicine would save their grandmother. Weeks passed in quiet prayers. Then came the news—she was healed. The house shook with joy. Even Dian Dian barked and Sha Li snorted. They were stronger, their lives full of adventure.

A Journey On The Silk Road

The French International School, Lesieur, Guillaume – 9

On a hot sunny day in Europe a boy named Franz glared at the merchant he was gonna steal from. He reached out his arm to grab an apple but just before he touched the fruit a strong hand covered his mouth Franz fell unconscious as chloroform was inhaled. He was brought to China to work as a slave .

TWO YEARS LATER...

Franz gained enough money to buy his freedom. He heard that the fastest way to go to Europe was by taking the silk road, he left right away. The next day, he arrived at the entrance, full of people selling supplies. Franz looked at the food, his stomach grumbling with hunger. He had spent all his money on a map and a big bottle of water. He hadn't stolen since he was in Germany but he had no choice. He looked around and targeted the closest food stand and grabbed a piece of bread but the seller caught him!

- You dare ! the merchant screamed. He grabbed hold of Franz's ear, pulled it and struck his cheek. Hard. He spit out a bit of blood and prepared for the next hit aimed to break his nose, but just before his fist hit its mark a girl with chestnut eyes knocked down the seller with a roundhouse kick. She grabbed his arm (Franz's arm) and told him to hurry and follow her. They ran towards both their dreams, to the Silk Road, to Europe.
- Thanks for saving me there...
- Of course! I wasn't just going to leave you there. My dad taught me martial arts for self-defence and apparently for saving too.
- I was so surprised that all I could do was gape at that kick you gave that seller.
- I'm Sherry.
- Franz.
- Are you going to Europe ? she asked
- Yes, to Germany where my family lives, he replied.
- I'm going to Europe but I'm not sure where... I might be going to France.
- Where's your family? Franz asked.
- My mum passed away when I was young and my dad abandoned me and left for the army. What about you, have you lived in Germany before?
- Yes, I lived there before I got kidnapped to work as a slave in China, the whole time I was here, I was counting my money, hoping to find my freedom with enough coins. I have a brother and a mother in Germany.
- I'm sorry to hear that. Would you want to walk the road to Europe with me ?
- With pleasure ! he said, relieved that he wouldn't have to face this alone.

They quickly became friends. They decided that they would travel west, past the Gobi desert. The road will split into several paths linked to other routes such as the Great Royal Road in India. The road will end at the Mediterranean sea, which is their destination. They started their journey passing west when they reached the Gobi desert, the sun was blazing hot but they had to pass by the desert before sunset or else they would have to sleep in the desert. They walked for so long Franz's tongue was so dry he asked Sherry for the bottle water but when she reached for the bag she cried out :
- It's gone!
- Huh ? You mean it's not in the bag?
- Nope. It must have fallen when we were walking !

They walked on until both of them were too dehydrated to go on. They fell unconscious, their dry bodies heating up in burning sand.

They woke up in a tent, there was a person in his late thirties What were young lads like you guys in the desert ? This ain't no place for people who don't have any water. You kids are lucky I had to go out of the tent to tend the camels, otherwise you two would be frying in the sand, left to rot. I'm Sam, by the way.

He handed over two cups of water to Franz and Sherry.

- Thank you.
They thanked him and left right away.They continued their road in the desert. They finally arrived on hard ground but that was at midnight,They started walking again but then the bush next to them moved then they heard a GRRRRRRRRR!

A snarling grey wolf came out of the bush, and circled around them. And at the most unexpected moment he pounces and attacks Sherry. It inked its sharp teeth in Sherry's leg. Sherry howled in pain, as her blood flowed uncontrollably into a puddle of red on the ground.

- Sherry ! No !

Sherry was groaning, on the verge of death. Franz was white with fear then remembered he had a big piece of meat in his bag. He took it out quickly and hurled it as far as he could. The wolf glared at Franz with insane red eyes but then scurried for the meat. Franz picked Sherry up and sprinted away from the wolf.

He then saw a small troop of chinese traders coming their way. Franz went around the small troop asking desperately if they had a doctor with them. Luckily someone indicated them to a small man . His name was Dr Zhang Zhongjing. He looked calmly to the injured girl and brought her straight to his coach at the back of the group. His coach was spacious. It took him a long time to stitch her horrifying injury. He said that there was a small chance she would live but all of a sudden, she opened her eyes and gasped for air. The doctor said that they will be able to continue their journey when she recovers.

3WEEKS LATER...

Sherry and Franz were ready to go. She was fully recovered. They packed their bags and left. They walked strait and saw that they had arrived on the deck of the Mediterranean Sea. That's where they said their goodbyes .Franz went to Germany and Sherry went to France.

Time Travel in the Silk Road

The French International School, Puget, Timothée – 9

January 2026. It was not the only time I was doing a playdate with Victor. We jumped in the pool and suddenly it took us to the 1400s. It was incredible that we landed on magnificent, brown Chinese horses. We were part of a large group of people, travelling in the desert mountains. Some have camels and the others have horses. I saw a leopard over there. I was scared. Everybody was scared. We threw a big piece of meat and the leopard ran away.

One hour later, I was so thirsty and Victor looked very tired. I was feeling like everyone was happy. I didn't realise why immediately. But two minutes later, I discovered why. We were getting close to a very big and colorful city. When we arrived at Lanzhou, the city, everybody rushed to the hotels that were almost fully booked due to all visitors travelling there. It was starting to be late. I guess it was 9 pm. We went to a small hotel for the night.

I didn't have money so we needed to do the ditchwatcher and clean the floors of the hotel but they still give us a small bowl of rice each day. We needed to go to bed at midnight because of all the hard work. We were staying in this city for three days and three nights. It gives us time to sell silk, visit Lanzhou, the city and rest in our small hotel. We sold a bit of silk to the chef of Lanzhou. In fact, when we landed on our horses, I found silk on my horse. I asked someone if it was ours, he said yes.

Let's have a rest, tomorrow is a big day. I will sell silk. The next morning I sold a lot of silk. It bought us a lot of money. We decided to save money for the next city. After three days of resting, we went back on our horses. Salomé, my friend that I met during the trip told me that "We still have one month to get to the next city". He told me that the next city was Xian. As expected, one month later, after a very long journey on our horses, we finally arrived at Xian.

We went to a big and luxurious hotel. It had a giantic swimming pool. We jumped in it and landed back in our swimming pool in 2026. I looked at my watch and I realised that we were only gone for five minutes. My mum called us for dinner. We ate a pizza and an apple pie. It was yummy. And for our adventure, we will keep it a secret.

A Thousand Miles of Secrets

The French International School, Rambaud–Chanoz, Henna – 9

Long ago, in a city called Chang'an, which is now the modern city Xi'an in China, there lived a passionate girl named Lingling. Lingling was a nine-year-old girl who had hair as long as you could ever imagine. Her magnificent hazel eyes looked like gold. Unfortunately, her dad, Li Chen, had caught a disease called "The Shaking Fever", he was suffering so much he almost collapsed. He started to have bumps everywhere and had a burning hot forehead, the family was panicking with worried thoughts. This morning, the Emperor's messenger had delivered a letter saying that Lingling's dad had been chosen to be part of the Great Trade Routes where merchants would trade silk with other countries. Lingling knew she had to step in, she had heard a neighbor say that there was a merchant from the west that was selling rare herbs that grew in the Middle East. When Lingling was a child, her parents would teach her the art of sericulture and the secret behind silkworms, she got praised a lot for her talent. Lingling's heart was beating, "Will I be able to cross the massive Taklamakan desert?" "Will I be able to climb the towering Pamir mountains?". All of a sudden, her father started choking...

Panic surged through Lingling as her mother rushed to Li Chen's side, but the nine-year old's mind was racing. She knew the caravan was leaving at dawn, and her father's only hope was the herbs. Lingling grabbed her sharpest shears and with a single snip her lustrous hair was gone. She traded her colorful tunic for her father's plain merchant robes, tucking her remaining hair into a pocket. She looked in the mirror and saw a young, determined apprentice. Packing her precious silk scrolls, Lingling looked her mother in the eye.

"I will go in his place," she whispered firmly. "I will find the herbs".

"No Lingling, you shall not go. It is too dangerous," replied Lingling's mom.

"Mother please, it is my wish to save dad. Please," Lingling insisted.

"For once, you shall go. If it is what you wish, take care," murmured Lingling's mom.

"Thank you mother, I promise I shall save dad no matter what," Lingling vowed. She adjusted her heavy silk pack and slipped into the caravan before her mother could say another word.

The heavy gates of Chang'an opened with a deafening creak, signaling the start of the trek. As the camels began to plod forward, Lingling huddled deep into a wagon, her heart hammering against her ribs like a trapped bird. She could hear the rhythmic sound that went "clink-clink" of the caravan's bells that drowned the distant cries of the city, and for the first time, the vast, dusty horizon of the Silk Road stretched out beneath her eyes. As the golden towers of her home started to fade into a blur of sand, she realized there was no turning back. It was a journey of a thousand miles, but it was the only way to find the medicine. With one final look at the city, she took a deep breath and stepped into the unknown.

Days turned into a blur of scorching heat and swirling dust. The Silk Road was not the golden path Lingling had imagined; it was a brutal stretch of dry earth and jagged rocks. Every morning, the caravan leader's whistle blew, and Lingling's feet, which were all blistered, had to get back to work. She kept her head down, guarding her precious silk scrolls which felt heavier, with every mile. One afternoon, the wind started howling with a terrifying whistle.

"Sandstorm!" a merchant cried. Before Lingling could hold on to the wagon, a wall of blinding sand slammed onto the caravan, swallowing the whole path. The world turned yellow, as the desert rose up. Lingling pulled her father's robe over her eyes, stinging from the sand. She could hear the camels grunting and the merchants shouting but their voices sounded a Thousand miles away. Suddenly, she woke up on a camel.

"What happened?" asked Lingling.

"The boy woke up," muttered one of the merchants, annoyed.

"I am terribly sorry sir," responded Lingling, trying to sound like a boy.

"Silence!" he commanded.

The golden dunes of the Taklamakan desert eventually gave way to a horizon of jagged teeth that seemed to bite into the sky. These were the Pamir mountains, the “Roof of the World”, the air was so thin it felt like breathing through a silken veil. As the caravan began the ascent, the rhythmic “clink-clink” grew slower, echoing in the icy canyons. Lingling’s breath came in ragged gasps, turning into puffs of mist in the freezing air. Her father’s oversized robes, once a shield against the sun, were now useless. One evening they camped on a ledge overlooking a dizzying drop, Lingling noticed a group of foreign traders carrying herbs that smelled exactly like what her neighbor had whispered. Her heart suddenly gave a violent thud, “Could those herbs be the cure to my father? ”.

Lingling rushed to the traders.

“Could I trade silk for those herbs?” she asked breathlessly. Recognizing the quality silk, they agreed. Tears of joy blurred Lingling’s vision. The return to Chang’an was exhausting, but the moment she reached home her fatigue vanished. She embraced her parents and administered the medicine, watching in relief as the rare herbs instantly began to heal her father. Generations later, Lingling’s grandchildren shared the story of the girl who traded her hair for her father’s life. They realized her journey did more than bring home a cure; it helped carve a legendary path. Lingling’s brave footsteps became a bridge between East and West, where silk, medicine and bold ideas were traded across the centuries. Her courage was a single thread in vast tapestry, proving that one girl could connect a world a Thousand miles apart. Courage is the thread that binds the world together, one mile at a time.

Adventures of Bibi on the Silk Road

The French International School, Saurel, Alexandre – 9

There once was a long, long road called the Silk Road. On it was a man called Bibi. He kept on sleeping and eating and never went outside for almost 23 years ! Yes, 23 years .

His mom was 49 years old. She was very angry with Bibi and his laziness. One day his mom had had enough. So she said, "Bibi, you must go to work!" After convincing Bibi for two months to work, he finally agreed. Since Bibi didn't really go to university he couldn't find a good job. The first day of his job, Bibi thought it was going to be easy . As soon as he arrived at his job , someone told him to enter a room. Then someone handed him a contract , and said "If you sign this contract you will be able to work here, but read it carefully!"

Bibi had no idea what a contract was. He also didn't know what a signature was, so he signed a random signature. The biggest mistake he made was that he didn't read the contract!

The next day, Bibi went to the Emperor's palace who said, "You need to deliver this ice cream recipe to France".

Then the emperor's assistant took the ice cream recipe and put it in a bag.

"You will have several people with you during the journey," said the Emperor. Suddenly, three people came.

One named Kaze, David and Louis. Then Bibi stepped out of the palace with his companions.

They started in Beijing and decided to take the silk road. Bibi crossed Beijing to Arabia, then took a boat to Europe. But as he was crossing the sea the waves started to rise higher until there was a storm. The next day, Bibi and his companions woke up somewhere they didn't know. It turns out that they woke up on an island.

Bibi's companions were strong at maps. Turns out, the island was in the middle of the sea!

The island was quite big and there were a lot of sheep. So at night they would eat one sheep.

A week later they heard strange noises. Suddenly they saw many cyclops.

Bibi told his companions, David, Louis and Kaze to hide.

Bibi hid in a bush, David hid in the farm, Louis hid in the cave and Kaze hid on the sheep farm .Bibi is strong at speaking languages.David is strong at navigation and maps because he was a navigator. Louis is strong at hunting because he was born in Siberia and every day he would go and hunt with his dad.

Kaze is strong at cooking and fighting. A cyclops saw Bibi and captured him. Kaze immediately went near the cyclops and heard that they would roast Bibi for dinner.

Kaze went to find Louis and David . When she found them, she told everyone what the cyclops just said.

Louis had a plan. He would attract the cyclops and Kaze would go and save Bibi with David.

So Louis attracted the cyclops by doing a silly dance, meanwhile, David and Kaze went to save Bibi.

Louis escaped the cyclops and went to see Kaze, Bibi, and David.

That night, Kaze cooked lamb and they all went to sleep. When Bibi woke up, Louis, David and Kaze were already building the boat. He was amazed at how fast they built the boat.

Hei said, "Wow we can definitely escape!"

Days later, the boat was constructed and Bibi's companions all hopped on. They were lucky to have excellent food. They were on the boat for one week. Two weeks later they spotted an enormous boat.

The boat conductor let Bibi and his companions go on his boat because their boat was too small.

Kaze was a bit worried, so she started to explore the boat alone until she found a shelf with doors.

When she opened the door of the shelf she saw dead skeletons.

This time she was worried so she rushed to her companions and told them what she just saw.

When her companions found out they all got really worried. When they tried to escape the boat, it was too late!

The captain was waiting for them in front of the boat's exit! Suddenly the captain took Bibi and David to a room while Kaze and Louis hid.

When the captain wasn't here anymore Louis and Kaze went to find Bibi and David. Louis discovered where the captain had imprisoned Bibi and David. When he told Kaze, she was shocked. "They're in a cell, like prisoners!" she cried.

Louis had a plan to sneak into the captain's room and steal the keys. That night, Kaze crept in, stole the keys, and unlocked the cell. By then, David and Bibi were starving. Louis shared his extra food with them. Once they felt better, Kaze led the group to the captain's room and threw him into the sea.

David took charge of the boat, bringing them to a welcoming island filled with trees. The locals offered them fresh drinks and a villa! But their fun didn't last. The next morning, they woke in a dirty area with people working as slaves. Bibi recognized the flag. "We're in Colombia!" she gasped. Suddenly, they were captured.

The next day, they had to work. As night fell, Louis found a packet of chips and water. At midnight, Bibi and her friends sneaked to their boat and escaped. It was luxurious, with hotel-like bedrooms, a swimming pool, and a jacuzzi. The next day, waves grew bigger, and they spotted a tsunami approaching the island. The massive waves destroyed their boat, and they found themselves sinking.

Kaze managed to breathe underwater, and they swam to an island, sure it was France. At the palace, they shared an ice cream recipe with the king and queen, who loved it!

They promised a reward to them and the emperor. When Bibi returned to China, everyone recognized him, just as Kaze was known in Japan, Louis in Siberia, and David in Denmark.

One week later, they had another mission.

The Precious Box

The French International School, Sublet, Blanche – 9

Once upon a time on the famous silk road in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, there was a silk merchant named Zafar Khan. He had dreamt for years of bringing his daughter, Soliha, on the long journey to Rome with him. When she came back from school, Zafar offered her to join him. She had stars in her eyes.

The next day, they went to the bazaar to buy some new clothes. They also bought a tent and a female camel named Gobi (like the Gobi desert). She was very friendly, as the seller said. Gobi was only two years old and was already so special to Soliha.

It was the last day of school. At recess, everybody wanted to know more about the adventure she was about to have. She explained everything step by step. Everyone was amazed. That night, they packed their bags and she went to bed early. Soliha had a great night filled with beautiful dreams. The next morning, they placed their bags on Gobi. They had a big healthy breakfast and headed off.

It was a long journey. They crossed deserts as well as mountains. They continued their voyage. In the middle of a giant sandy desert next to a little oasis, they installed their tent for the night. Soliha had brought a travel diary. It was full of wonderful stories, drawings of dunes and the caravan. It also had plenty of facts. For example, the name of the stars guiding them through the night.

The next morning, Zafar and Soliha got woken up by sounds of different instruments. They stepped outside and saw a group of people. They went to say hello. The other travellers were from Chang'an, Delhi, Alexandria and Khotan. A girl from Rome called Maria Bianchi welcomed them very warmly. She invited them to share breakfast. They happily said yes. Now everyone was gathered around an old dusty carpet. Soliha and Maria became instant friends. With the help of a stick and sand, they chatted together. They spent the rest of the day exploring and playing in the dunes. At night, they shared a feast filled with kindness, joy and peace.

On their departure day, Maria offered a wooden box to Soliha. She and Zafar opened it with excitement. Inside, it had a delicate, beautiful and old stunning piece of glassware. The magnificent patterns, colors and shapes reflected brightly in her eyes. In return, Soliha presented a precious silk pouch. Maria's face beamed with delight. These luxurious gifts were a memory of their friendship and a symbol of the rich cultural exchanges on the Silk Road.

A few months later, they returned to Bukhara. Once they arrived back home, they decided to keep Gobi with them. After all, she had been so kind and patient. She could help Zafar at the bazaar. Back to school, all students were curious to know about the trip. So she did a presentation on that magical adventure.

Silk Road Adventure

The French International School, Turler, Bianca – 9

Hello readers, my name is Emma Lovegood and this is my pet parrot, Wandy. We are here to tell you our adventure to mysterious places! It can be a little scary but yet incredible. Cuddle up and let's begin this journey!!! In this adventure we will talk about this very very long road. Do you know where it is? No idea? Well, let's find out together!

The adventure started when Wandy and I made a time machine. To test it out, we needed to decide where and when to go. I kept thinking, I don't know where to go but I know I would like to go to the future! Suddenly, I ran to the GIGANTIC tablet attached to the wall of the machine and typed in the location that Wandy dared me to go and where I needed to input the year, randomly I chose year 4525. When I was about to enter the year, a strong gust of wind slapped the open windows. It scared Wandy and made him fly as fast as he could towards me. He slapped his wings on my face and hurt me with his claws. At the same time, the doors of the machine started to close, the light started to fade, the floor was trembling. WHAT WAS HAPPENING!!!! Then I heard a big BOOM sound!!! The engine was on ... and we blasted through the air like a rocket launched to the moon.

Everything happened so fast. I was still trying to understand what was happening when a big black cloud swirling towards us like a tornado started to get me dizzy and I fell into a dream. A moment later, I slowly woke up, sweating as I found myself lying on burning yellow sand, blue sky and shiny bright light. When I gently opened my eyes, blinded by the sun, I couldn't believe what I saw. There was nothing but sand around me ONLY SAND! WE ARE IN A DESERT!!!!

'WHAT!' I screamed, where are the skyscrapers and the new technologies? Is this our future??? I wish I was dreaming but obviously this is the reality. Thank God, Wandy was with me. We know we have to get out of the desert but how? Let's just walk. We kept walking and walking for a long time. Just before we died of thirst, a voice said:

Hello, are you ok? Are you lost?

A human being!!! Yeah! I screamed out!

He continued and said, you looked lost! What happened to you?

I explained to him our journey, the Time Machine and how we finished in the desert completely lost without our Time Machine .

Wait a second you are not from here?!!

No I am not, I teleported from the year 2026 with the Time Machine that we have lost!...but excuse me what year are we? I asked.

We are...wait... I don't know what you are talking about? Year? What does this mean? He replied with a confused look. Anyways!If you want, you can follow me and my friends as we are going to trade with other people from other countries and maybe, you will find your Time... whatever Machine.I felt released and pleased to find some help but I couldn't resist to ask, what road are you talking about?.

The Silk Road!!! He joyfully said.

WOW!, we went back to the Silk Road trade time I whispered to Wandy.

If you want I can make a deal with you, he added. The deal will be that I will help you to get out of this road to find your Time Machine and you will bring me to where you are from, in the year 2026... whatever that means?

Does this sound good to you?

I was so happy that I concluded by, Yes of course,let's do it!

By the way, my name is Ahmed! What's yours?

My name is Emma Lovegood and this is my pet parrot Wendy!

We all started our travels together with my new friends.

I followed the group and after several exhausting long weeks, we arrived in India. There, I smelled a lot of spices. Some spices were too strong that it left my nose keeping the smell for hours. Some were different colours such as red, yellow, orange or brown. I was sneezing all the time. One day, Wendy and I wanted to try the famous Indian Curry that has loads of spices. When I tried the curry for the first time, it was so spicy that my tongue was on fire but yet, very tasty. Despite these new exciting experiences, I was still worried about not finding the machine. We continue our journey to the West.

At last, we arrived in a big, noisy, cosmopolitan city that they called Constantinople . We were In Persia, in a country that we name Turkey today, in Istanbul.

WOW! I was so amazed by my adventure! Walking by the souk, I felt into so many beautiful carpet shops that I had to see.

That is really soft wool, I said, after walking bare foot on an exposed carpet. I turned my head, intrigued by a smokey scent and I saw some other locals men making kabab. They have a whole lamb meat on a metal stick roasting from a side fire, where they cut some meat off and put it in a thin layer of backed dough. Suddenly, by luck, I saw the Time Machine hidden behind a large colourful carpet. I went towards the Machine and left the group of trading people behind for a minute, I was so happy and relieved. I will finally be able to go back home. I went to find my new friends to say my farewells and kept my promise to bring Ahmed with me. We went together inside the machine, entered the year 2026 and got ready for the take off. The Machine launched and the teleportation began.

The Story of the Mysterious Hole

The French International School, Vastine, Kelia – 9

One day a family went to visit an old road called “The China Silk Road,”.It is quite famous.The family had one older sister called Chloe of eleven years old and a younger daughter called Jessica of seven year old. The dad was called Tyler and the mom’s name was Lily. The day they went to visit the road it was a sunny day.

When they went in the taxi they were all so excited their parents said that there would be a map with a story of

what happened .They arrived one hour and thirty minutes later. They got their tickets and their map and set off for their adventure. They had to walk a bit and then they arrived. The girls were already exhausted but their parents said to drink some water and they will be fine.Their parents asked Chloe if she could read the story out loud.Chloe accepted and started read:”One day a family had not enough money so they decided to sell silk on a

Road. Everyday they would bring a lot of silk and come back with none. They thought it was really helping the family so they kept on doing it and when they had enough money they didn’t stop they continued and it was passed along to their family.” The sisters said it was a nice story but they wondered how did they sell it on a road when there are cars. Their parents then explained that at that time there were no cars people would only

walk or they used camel or donkeys,the next second the girls understood everything.They

were all surprised to see that the view was so incredible.they really loved it there,but they

knew that in the afternoon it would get crowded.Since they knew it would get crowded

they started taking a lot of pictures.they started getting hungry so they went to a close by

restaurant.Chloe ate chinese noodles,Jessica ate french fries and the parent ate

salad.Once they were done their meal they went back to the road.When they saw the road

they were surprised to see that there were over one hundred people.They tried to stick

together by holding hands all together but somebody walk in between them and they were

separated.Chloe and Jessica were holding hands and the parents were holding hands.

Chloe and Jessica got so scared they ran and screamed “ mom and dad !“but there was

so much noise the parents didn’t hear them.they kept on looking for them but suddenly

they fell in a hole they screamed so loud but nobody heard them.When they landed they

saw the road,not the one they saw before it looked less old and they saw people trading

silk. That’s when they realised that they went back in time.They tried to go back but the

hole was gone. They were so frightened.they asked people how to get back to their year

2025~2026 but they laughed so hard and said there was no time machine and they

laughed again.Then Chloe suddenly had an idea. She had her phone. She tried to call

them but there was no signal. They thought there was nothing to do so they took a picture

but they couldn't stop thinking about the hole so they went back to the hole and it was open. They were so happy. When they went in they went back to the old road. It was way less crowded than last time so they saw their parents right away. Their parents were so relieved to see them. They went directly home. They talked about the story that happened but their parents didn't believe them. At the end they didn't care if their parents believed it or not they were just happy they were back home. The next day they watched the news on the TV and they saw twenty people were missing. They were so shocked. The parents were at work so they didn't see and their auntie was mopping the floor so she didn't see too. The girls suddenly realised that all the people that were missing could all have fallen in the hole on the China Silk Road. They still thought if they got out with the hole how did the others not. They started to think the missing people didn't fall in the hole but suddenly the tv news said their last seen place was The China Silk Road. They were terrified and wondered how they got out and the others didn't. Then Jessica said that it could maybe not be because of the hole but Chloe still thought it was the hole. Then Jessica suddenly realised that she was wrong because the tv suddenly showed a picture of the hole that was wide open. Chloe was right the whole time. All the missing people had fallen in the hole. They were so curious how they got out and the other people didn't. The next day was a Saturday. The parents decided to camp in the dark forest for one night. The girls immediately started packing. The girls loved camping. They loved how they could sleep in tents. They went walking to the woods. The walk was a thirty minute walk and the girls were exhausted when they arrived. The night came. The parents were fast asleep. The girls couldn't sleep because a weird noise kept bothering them. The girls decided that they would check what it was. They got out of the tent and followed the noise. The girls then saw a weird looking man. He saw them and he was shocked. He immediately asked where they got their necklaces.

Ao Yun's Lost Silk Kitten

The French International School, Yang, Alice – 9

I am so excited to go to the Silk Road with my mother and my silk kitten, Snowy.

“Ao Yun! We need to go visit the Silk Road! Quickly!” cried my mum, sounding like she was going to explode from stress. “Okay,” I replied. “Come on, Snowy. We are going to visit the Silk Road!” I was so excited because I love silk. There is a Silk Road visit rule: Everyone can only visit the Silk Road once per year, on December thirty-first. And they give each child a gift. I put Snowy in my silk bag and went off.

On the way to the Silk Road, I asked my mum, “Could you tell me about the Silk Road?” My mum replied, “The Silk Road wasn’t just a normal road. It is a road for trading silk for something in exchange.”

“Interesting...” I said.

At the entrance, there were about one hundred doors standing in front of a policeman or policewoman. We rushed to the entrance.

“Welcome, welcome...” said the policeman. Today, as it was the visit, no one was trading. I put my hand in my silk bag, and I didn’t feel Snowy. I lost her! I just got Snowy and now I lost her!

“Are you okay? Why do you have that horrified look on your face, as if you just remembered something terrifying?” my mother asked.

“I just lost my silk kitten,” I said.

“Oh! I saw someone pick it up. Let’s find her together.” I saw a girl holding Snowy.

“Excuse me. Could you please give my silk kitten back to me?” I asked, feeling shy.

“Of course!” she said, handing Snowy back to me. I was happy to have Snowy back.

Suddenly, I heard someone announce that we should come to the center to pick our gift. I was the last in the queue, and when it was my turn to pick my gift, there was nothing left for me. I started crying and walked very quietly back to my mum, but then a policewoman handed me a box. She bent down and whispered in my ear, “Here is your gift. It’s a magical one.”

I felt a burst of joy right then. This time, I ran to my mother. She asked me curiously with a smile, “Why are you so happy? Did you get a lovely toy or something? You have that big smile that you wear when you are about to giggle.”

I answered her with a grin, “No, but a very kind policewoman gave me this box and said I have a magical gift, unlike the others.”

She gave me a surprised look. We ran back home. Inside the box, there were three immortal little drinks that we needed to consume and one drink that could change a non-living being into a living one. I gave it to Snowy so that Snowy would become a real kitten instead of a fake kitten, and I gave the three immortal drinks to the three of us. Just the wish I wanted.

The Discovery of the Silk Road

The French International School, Zhang, Zoe – 9

Hello, readers! It is the Lin family! My name is Lin Lan Lan, and this is my annoying bookworm brother (although he is very knowledgeable), named Lin Ling Se. We have finally explored the Silk Road. My brother is a really big scaredy-cat, and we made a journey from our village to Europe and back again. This story will explain what happened and why we didn't stay in Europe.

Twenty years ago, in the ninth century in Xi'an, it was dawn when I woke up with excitement. Father and Mother said that sometime in December, I will be having a little brother, and his name will be Ling Se. I did not dare to wake up our parents because Mother was getting ready to go to the Chinese hospital because she was pregnant and very tired. Last night, she had taken care of me and fell asleep at four-thirty in the morning, and right now it is five. In this village, we have to go to school or work every day (except when you are sick or if you are a pregnant woman). Weekends do not exist for our poor villagers! My parents always said that when you wake up in the early morning, you should go back to bed and sleep; otherwise, you will be sleepy at school, and we will receive a bad note. And remember our deal? No bad notes—only good notes! I thought about it and got scared that Father and Mother would get angry and punish me, but I got out of bed, opened the door slowly, and saw Mother. I quickly climbed back into bed and said to myself, “Okay, I will go to sleep, and then I will tell them that I woke up early and BOOM! The End.” But I did not get punished! Instead, I got a lot of incredible things, and they said it was all okay!

Then, when I graduated five years ago, I was proud of myself because being an explorer is really difficult. I told my brother that I needed to do a report on a certain continent called Europe. He was really afraid (he is eighteen years old) but just graduated last week because he wanted to be a teacher. He said, trembling, “Fine, but we have to bring all of my books and take memories of our family.”

A few hours later, we gathered everything we needed and did everything except for one thing: say goodbye to our family, friends, villagers, neighbors, teachers, and our mayor. My younger brother was whining not to go and hoped our parents would say he didn't need to come. But no, he had to come. We went out of the village, and I started making a map while Ling Se read to calm himself down instead of helping me remember the way to go home. Slowly, I felt my anger rising, and then I couldn't help it; I shouted in my brother's ear:

“DO YOU WANT TO GO HOME OR NOT, HUH? IF YOU DO, HELP ME WITH OUR MAAAAAP!!!”

“Okay, okay, sis, relax, reeeelax! I will help you when I finish my book.”

“NO, NO, NO! I SAID NOW, NOT AFTER YOUR STUPID, USELESS BOOK!” I shouted.

“Okay, I’m done now, and I’m going to help you with the map,” said my brother calmly.

A few months later, I learned how to control my temper. We had settled into a daily routine, and a few months ago, we arrived in Italy.

“Finally, we arrived in Europe, little bro!”

“Yeah, thanks for helping me when I missed Dad and Mom! And one little favor—please stop calling me little bro.”

“Fine, but now I want to explore this European country!”

Soon, I discovered different cultures in different countries—like, for example, their food, their habitats, and the animals in their countries.

“Now that we have entered Europe, can we go back home?” said Ling Se.

I disagreed and said, “To be a teacher, you need to know world history and a bit of all the languages!”

Ling Se said he did not know about all this and wanted to explore every country in the world. I thought to myself that he didn’t realize that everything was a lie! I giggled under my breath. Ling Se asked, “What is so funny?”

“Nothing!” I lied. Soon after that, we explored all the countries in Europe.

One morning in France, I met a Chinese woman named Wang Lin, and together, we talked and talked until she said something that still haunts my brother and me: “Both our parents died yesterday!” There weren’t many details on how that happened, but luckily, there was a letter. It said that Father had been killed by a thief using a gun, and Mother had killed herself; she said she couldn’t live without Father. I cried and cried all the way to our “second” house.

“Why are you crying?” asked my little brother.

My new friend explained everything about our parents’ deaths and showed him the letter. We all burst into tears. With kind words, we agreed to go back to our real home, to our old village. For months and months, we traveled back home. But when we arrived—surprise! It was not at all our village. Instead, everything was different. I asked the older people, and together they said that it had been 100 years since our parents died. I realized then that the Silk Road was not just a simple road, but also a trading route and a time machine.

I soon became a legend for exploring a road to Europe.

The Awakening of the Dragon

The Hong Kong International School, Tegarden, Margaret – 10

Chapter 1: A New Day

It was time to wake up. Zhu Ming slurped up her congee, hugged her parents, and left. She packed what she needed and set off into the pine woods that bordered the road.

There was some wintry light filtering through the pine needles. Zhu Ming's sharp eyes quickly spotted thin branches she needed for the firewood. After, she found a low-hanging branch and expertly tied the firewood on with string to dry. She set off to get water and skipped through the knee-deep snow. She shuddered as she passed a snake.

As she walked, she started to hear something else; it sounded like a birdcall, but it whistled in a little tune that no bird she had ever heard before sang. As she neared the lake, the louder and clearer the whistling became. When she finally reached the lake, she stopped in surprise. Sitting at the lake was a middle-aged man. He had black hair, brown eyes, and a kind smile. He wore silk robes with long sleeves that covered his hands. The robes were yellow with red on the hem and the end of the sleeves.

"Hello, Zhu Ming," he said brightly, "it's very nice to meet you. My name is Fei Long."

Zhu Ming's mouth fell open. "How do you know my name? Wait, let me guess. Are you a fortune-teller?"

"No, actually I came here to make an offer," he said kindly.

"What kind of offer is it?" She asked with interest.

"Sit down and let me tell you." He said. "This may come as a shock, but you are very special, Zhu Ming." Fei Long said.

"Why?" She asked, confused.

"You are a dragon spirit."

She laughed. "Are you pranking me?"

"Actually, I'm not. I'm here because I need to take you to a school where you'll learn stuff like magic. Of course, I won't force you to do it."

"If I go, won't my parents be worried?"

"Time passes differently in the school. If you spent a day in there and came out, it would still be the same time as when you went in."

"I'll go." She said after a while.

"Well, since that's settled why don't we go in?" he asked. "I'll lead the way."

Fei Long walked towards an old oak tree. Its branches were gnarled with age, and there were strange symbols carved all over it. A door was carved on the trunk, and it was glowing faintly. Then Fei Long pushed the door and, surprisingly, it opened. Standing at the threshold, Zhu Ming could see a huge palace swarming with children doing magic. Some were levitating rocks or playing hopscotch in midair. Zhu Ming saw one morph into a dragon!

"Amazing, isn't it?" Fei Long asked. They stepped in.

Chapter 2: ROAR!!!

Zhu Ming's classes were going well. She aced morphing but nearly tore a paper fan in handicrafts. She went over all this mentally as she snuggled into the covers of her caravan bed. Soon she fell asleep.

In the middle of the night, Zhu Ming suddenly woke up. Someone screamed. Zhu Ming bolted out of bed. She quickly changed and snuck outside. There was a fire burning on the road. As she watched, some strange men wielding bows and arrows and swords and spears rode on horses onto the road. Zhu Ming suddenly realized who these men were. They were Mongol raiders.

Zhu Ming nearly screamed. She couldn't fight them! She was just a little girl! Then Fei Long's voice crept into her mind. "You are very special, Zhu Ming. You are a dragon spirit." Zhu Ming gritted her teeth. She couldn't let them hurt her family or others! In a flash, she transformed into a dove and flew away. As she landed by the oak tree, she transformed back into a human and opened the door to school. She needed help!

"The Mongols are invading!" She yelled urgently. "I need help!" Immediately people rushed out of the bedrooms.

"What's going on?" Xi Shu asked.

"Raiders have taken over the Silk Road!" Zhu Ming cried. "We need to defend it!"

Children began getting ready to battle instantly. Soon they were ready. They took to the air in a swarm, rising to the heavens. The dragons flew to the Silk Road, landed on it, and transformed back into humans, catching the raiders by surprise. The children immediately began attacking, using a barrage of spells and transformation. Lucia, from Italy, turned into a wolf and nimbly attacked invaders. Xi Shu blowtorched them in white-hot flames. Ragsak, from Kashgar, used a flying carpet and bombarded raiders with mini cannonballs.

Suddenly, Zhu Ming was cornered by a man with glowing eyes. With a roar, he turned into a dragon! Zhu Ming morphed into her turquoise dragon form, and they grappled in midair, trying to gain the upper hand. Zhu Ming was more agile, but her opponent was stronger. As he pinned her to the ground, two dragons rushed to her aid.

“Run, Zhu Ming!” one yelled.

Zhu Ming recognized that voice. “Mom?” Her parents attacked the dragon ferociously, but the other dragon batted them away easily. Terrified, Zhu Ming summoned a wave from the lake and pushed the raiders away from the road. Then they were gone. They didn’t seem to like water. Everybody celebrated.

Her parents rushed over. “Zhu Ming, are you hurt?” Her mother asked.

“We knew you could do it!” Her father cheered.

“Did you know the whole time I was a dragon?” She asked.

“Exactly.”

Later, as Zhu Ming danced along with the others, she smiled. The Silk Road really had linked them all together.

The Magical Adventure of the Silk Road

The Hong Kong International School, Zhao, Evelyn – 8

Tina couldn't believe it – she'd been chosen for the Silk Road writing competition. She raced into her bedroom and seized a book about the Silk Road. Page after page flew by. The ancient traders, the camel caravans, the shimmering silk – it all felt so real. Her eyelids grew heavy. Heavier. Then everything went dark.

When Tina woke up, she was surprised to see herself in the middle of the desert. Suddenly, a cute bunny appeared and started to scamper away. Maybe she wants me to follow her, Tina thought, so she raced after the bunny. The bunny led her to a man standing in the desert.

"Hello!" the man greeted Tina. "I am Qian Zhang, the founder of the Silk Road. You've met my pet, Honey."

Tina gasped in shock, but replied "Hi, I'm Tina from Hong Kong. Why am I here?" "You are here because I am taking you on an epic journey along the Silk Road!" Qian replied. He pulled out a silk carpet. "Let's use this to travel," he said. The trio climbed onto the carpet and were whisked away to their first stop, Chang'an.

Tina, Qian and Honey glanced in wonder at the bustling streets of the city of Chang'an below them. "Wow!"

Tina gasped as Qian landed the carpet. "Chang'an is such a busy city!"

"Chang'an is the starting point of the Silk Road in history," Qian began. "Chinese were really good at making silk, but they could only sell silk in China. Travellers gather silk, tea packets, and pottery to trade these goods for perfume, jewels, and spices from different countries along the Silk Road," Qian continued. "These trades brought a big success, linking countries together."

"No wonder it's called the Silk Road." Tina nodded with understanding. Honey squeaked and pulled out the carpet. Time to go! They soared into the sky. The magic carpet carried them above the ocean.

"There's Marco Polo." Qian pointed to the man with a turban and thick beard standing at the front of a ship.

"He is heading back to his hometown, Venice, after staying in China for seventeen years via this Maritime Silk Road. Look, the ships are loaded with many treasures from the Far East, and one of the most amazing things is asbestos." Qian said. "What's asbestos?" Tina asked curiously. "It's a fireproof treasure made from a special mineral in China," Qian explained proudly.

Tina was fascinated by the glorious old Silk Road and praised with respect. "Grandpa Qian, you started all this. You are truly great!" Qian stroked his beard and laughed heartily.

Suddenly, waves crashed like thunder, sending spray high into the air. Then – a clock! It appeared right in front of them, its hands spinning wildly, blurring into a silver circle. The trio shared a panicking look, but before they could say anything, they started to fall helplessly towards the earth.

The trio landed on soft seats in a cabin. "What's this?" Qian asked desperately. Tina glanced around and laughed.

"We are on a high-speed train! We must have travelled to 'the Belt and Road.'" "What's that?" Qian asked in confusion.

"Your Silk Road still exists! It's called the Belt and Road initiative now, and it's bigger than ever!" Tina explained proudly.

The train arrived at its destination. "C'mon, Qian. It's my turn to show you the New Silk Road." Tina said.

They hopped off the train. On a railway track close to them, a gigantic train with hundreds of carriages rolled past. "Eeek!" Qian screamed. "What monster is that?" "This is the China-Europe Railway Express. It's a golden passage connecting countries in Asia and Europe." Tina smiled. Qian asked curiously, "How much silk, tea, and porcelain can fit in these carriages?" "They carry much more than that! High-value-added goods such as automobiles, mechanical equipment, and electrical products have become the main export sources of the railway. They also bring back cargoes from Central Asia and Europe to China," Tina explained. "They are like 'steel camel caravans.'" "Wow, this is amazing!" Qian praised.

"Can you take us to Pakistan?" Tina asked Qian. Qian nodded. As the trio climbed onto the carpet, Qian flicked his fingers, transporting them over a river. "We are now flying over the Jhelum River. Look down there—see how the hydropower station shines like a pearl? It was built by Chinese engineers and it uses the strong water flow to make electricity," Tina introduced. "The electricity from this station lights up thousands of homes. It

helps the local economy and culture!” “Truly incredible!” Qian was filled with pride. “Was this made by learning from the old waterwheels?” “Maybe!” The two laughed.

Suddenly, an idea popped up in Tina’s head. “Qian, can you take us to Hong Kong’s West Kowloon Cultural District? There is an exhibition, and friends from other countries are sharing fun stories.” she asked. Qian nodded, and with a wave of his hands, they arrived there in a flash.

An uncle from Kenya said, “Made-in-China mobile phones help us connect to the world. They also help us sell our coffee everywhere.”

A teenager from Vientiane said, “China helped us build the Boten–Vientiane railway! Before, it took me five hours to visit my grandmother, and now it only takes two!”

An elderly grandpa from Italy said, “Now, we can eat spaghetti in Hong Kong and enjoy embroidery from Suzhou!” Everyone laughed.

Qian turned to Tina and said, “That was an impressive journey, and I am so proud that China has such a profound impact on restoring the country’s old maritime and overland trade routes! However, it is time to say goodbye. Please keep on working on this great wave of globalisation that will enrich our country—and the world!” Tina nodded firmly and waved farewell as Honey and Qian faded away slowly.

Tina woke with a start. That was a dream! Tina thought. “Tina, have you thought of your story yet?” Mom asked. Tina grinned. “Yep! The perfect story.” she replied with a mischievous smile!

A Trip to Persia

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Chen, Nathaniel – 8.

Persia, 1000 years ago

Suddenly, a giant sandstorm engulfed him, choking him and his friends. “Where are all of you?” Daming bellowed. He waited for what felt like eternity, not hearing a single response. He scavenged the area around him, only to find nothing except an ancient scroll that may have belonged to his friends.

Gobi Desert, 2026

“Mr Wang, may I go to the bathroom,” requested Daming.

“Yes, but be quick, we have another lesson about the Silk Road with Ms Li in 5 minutes.” As Daming hurried to the bathroom, he found a piece of faded paper on the cobbled street that looked like an ancient map. Without thinking, he hurried to Mr Wang and showed him the map.

He scrutinized it and stuttered to Daming:

“In my 27 years of working as a tour guide, this is ... nothing other than a map of the Silk Road, but to find one in this flawless condition is extraordinary.” In disbelief, Daming replied:

“Why are there weird sculptures on the map?” He pointed out the structures, felt a sudden jerk and the desert disappeared before his eyes.

Persia, 1000 years ago

He woke up in a place that he recognized from his history lesson as Persia in the late 1300s. There were sculptures that he had never seen before; a thought suddenly struck him—the figures were the exact same figures on the map, and the surrounding scenes looked the same. The map was a Time–Space portal, but he could not find it on him. Daming thought that he would be stuck in Persia forever, until a little girl approached him and said,

“Can you help me find my family? I’ve lost them in this desert.” Daming also saw someone who looked like her brother standing right beside her. Daming learned that the girl was Amid and her brother was Hussain. When he asked about his map, they said they were headed to a sorcerer who could open a Space–Time portal. Amid and Hussain agreed to exchange goods for help finding their family. They first stopped at a blue and gold temple shining in the ambient light with grand stone columns and carvings of griffins and bulls on them, intricate artwork, and Persian rugs with rich floral motifs embedded into them. Behind the temple, was an arched door that led to a room that looked like one of the grandest rooms that he had ever seen. They then learned that the room led to a camel stable. They hitched a ride on a camel, and all of them vomited within the first 10 minutes of riding. When he asked where they were going, they were all holding paper bags over their mouths.

They finally told him where they were going after 1 hour of getting seasick, and the answer surprised him; they weren’t even halfway there yet. Just as they prepared to set off for another painful hour of camel riding, they saw all their worst nightmares combined into one. A giant sandstorm hit them and knocked all of them off their camels. He hit what seemed like a rock, felt an excruciating pain, and his vision blacked out. When he woke up, the sandstorm had passed. He could not see his friends or anyone else within his vision. He scavenged for what felt like an aeon, only to find a scroll that had the name Amid on it, and a Boot that had the name Hussain. He scavenged the surrounding area and found an oasis that had footsteps leading outwards. He then collected as much water as he could and followed the footsteps to a small temple where Amid and Hussain were laying down on the ground, motionless. He asked the nurse beside both and asked if they were okay. The nurse said that they were okay, but they needed to rest for a few days before they could walk again.

A Few Days Later...

After many more days of enduring sandstorms, floods, and earthquakes, they finally reached the magic sorcerer, who lived in a solid gold temple encased with gemstones that looked like they came from another world who told them that he was the one who made them endure these challenges, and that if they succeeded, he would give them back their mom. He then said that they were the bravest kids that he had ever seen, never giving up even under pressure, and that they never stopped even when they lost a member. He said that he would then open a portal for Daming and return Amid and Hussain's mom to them. Seconds later, their wish came true: a swirly sky-blue colored circle that he recognized as an inter dimensional portal appeared right in front of them. The sorcerer then said: "Since all three of you have become best friends, I will give you a choice: you could bring Amid, Hussain, and their mom back to your world, or you could leave them here in Persia, unable to view the future. Daming asked them if they wanted to visit the current world, and they said that they wanted to. The sorcerer then said that they could travel to the future, but Hussain and Amid's identities would be hidden forever to prevent interference with the future. He woke up with a jolt, realizing that this was all a dream, or was it...

The next Monday...

When he arrived at school the next Monday, he couldn't stop thinking about how realistic his dream had been, all the sculptures, the temples, and the people all looked so real. When he got to the classroom, the teacher announced that there would be two new students joining the class today, Omar and Amina from the country of Syria that looked the exact same as Hussain and Amid, and when they passed by him, they even gave him a wink, and he suddenly felt a heavy piece of paper in his pocket...

The Fox, the Diplomat and the Silk Road

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Du, Wanyu – 10

The sun beat down on Zhang Qian Government Secondary Institute where Lily stood, fearing she would melt in her uniform. May appeared, and they ran into the woods.

They sprinted to their clearing faster than a cheetah, as if it all were a matter of life and death.

Stopping breathless at the familiar rock, they panted, relieved to be in the shade once more. The rock's surface was engraved with their initials. Hands on its cool surface, they felt its long history; for as long as they could remember, they had run to this very rock, in this very clearing and talked.

It was their daily refuge, the only one against the sun. As they ate, a lithe fox appeared, a mischievous smirk stuck on its snout, a evildoer calculating. Then it struck. In a flash, it snatched a long, blue key-shaped gem from a nook in the rock and darted away. A sudden chill pierced the air.

Startled by the chill, May glanced at her watch. "It's 12:45! Teacher Zhang will be furious!"

As she was speaking, she took off, Lily close behind.

At the forest's edge, they froze. Their school was gone. In its place stood a lone, dilapidated building. Soldiers patrolled smoke-choked streets. The city was a dreary symphony identical structures, its people frail and hidden, only soldiers looking healthy. Spotting the girls, soldiers shouted in an unknown tongue, then raised their guns meananingly.

Panicked, the girls fled back into the woods, losing their pursuers in the tangle of trees. At their rock, a message glimmered:

*To fix the world, you must find the key.
Follow the fox.*

As if summoned, the fox returned and beckoned. It stepped onto the rock. They followed. The ground rumbled, cracked open, and swallowed them, spitting them out into a jostling, musty carriage crammed with boxes. Through a window, they saw a man in silk holding a decorated staff at the head of the caravan. They were trapped.

A soldier opened the curtain for water and gaped, exclaiming: "Sir, there are two weird girls in the supply carriage!"

The caravan halted. The man with the staff approached, flanked by spearmen. The girls recognized him.

"That looks like Zhang Qian," Lily whispered.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why is your clothing so... awkward?"

"We are Lily and May," May blurted. "We're looking for a fox and a magic key it took." She clasped a hand over her mouth. She was not the type to do that.

The man studied them. "I am Zhang Qian, ambassador of the Han dynasty. You may stay, but under supervision. I will help you find this key." *And catch that cunning Hu Li Jing*, he thought.

"We're in ancient China," May whispered. "This is his mission to the Yuezhi."

They joined the arduous journey west. Weeks later, Lily spotted a gleaming kingdom. "We're here!" she shouted. "We're at Yuezhi!" After the long and perilous journey, seeing the gleaming kingdom of Yuezhi seemed like a promising reward. The caravan cheered, descending the slope in triumph.

In the shimmering palace, the king radiated power. Zhang Qian's bedraggled group knelt but did not cower.

"We seek an alliance against the Xiong'nu. Aren't they your enemy also? You should at least be brave enough to help your people fight off their fear. Or are you cowards?" Lily said, finding more and more confidence in every word.

The king's face clouded. It was clear that he would be hard to win over. "I want no rivalry with them. They are too strong." His deep and rumbling voice echoed across the spacious hall.

"The Han is also strong!" Zhang Qian retorted, voice defiant, yet it seemed tiny compared to the king's rumbling voice.

"Then fight them yourself," the king said dismissively, furious. "We are settled here. War would only endanger us again." Guards ushered them out.

Zhang Qian sighed deeply in their quarters. "I have failed the Emperor. I will shame the Han forever."

Just then, May and Lily, who happened to pass by, overheard and gasped.

May turned to Lily. "History can't be changed! He must return, or everything is lost."

They entered his study. Startled, Zhang Qian lowered a knife, ready to stab the intruder. "Why are you here?"

"For the future," Lily said, smiling sadly. "You must go back. Everything depends on it."

"I failed," he said.

"No," May insisted. "You succeeded. You mapped the Western Regions. You revealed the Yuezhi's political reality, saving countless lives from a fruitless alliance. Also, you proved the West existed as a connected world, giving the Han a chance to strengthen trades beyond China."

"Your journey is not a failure," Lily urged. "It is the first step. To succeed in the second, you must return."

Zhang Qian was silent, then nodded slowly. "You have a point. I will do it."

At that moment, the fox appeared, dropping the shimmering blue key into Lily's hand. A flash of light engulfed them.

They stood again at the forest's edge. The dystopia was gone. Their school sprawled before them, vibrant under the sun. The air was clean, fresh. Nothing had ever seemed better. In Lily's palm, the key gem faded, its purpose fulfilled, mission completed.

They came back to school, then noticing time hadn't changed and the first period had just begun. Heads bowed, they sat on their seats and Teacher Zhang began his lecture. As they flipped through their books, Lily noticed a drawing of Zhang Qian's troop, but in it were two little girls, trotting with them. One was faint with her head held high, and one was quiet and serious. The painting was balanced in a way of perfect harmony, a reminder of their adventure through the times. She nudged May, and they smiled, happy that their magical visit would be remembered forever.

The Fergana Expedition

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Lau, Chi Wang – 10

“General Zhang, we need to form an alliance with the Yuezhi to strengthen our military! Are you willing to go?”

“Yes, Emperor,” replied General Zhang. The general took off with his men, but little did he know, his mission would take ten long years...

Ten years later...

“General Li, have you heard the news? General Zhang failed to form an alliance but discovered a new breed of wild horses in Fergana Valley! It could be vital for our military purposes to defeat the Xiongnu!” I heard my servant yell.

“I did, Mr. Wang, but it doesn’t matter to me!” I responded.

“It does, General! The Emperor commands you to go to Fergana Valley with your soldiers and propose a deal.”

“Ha! Easy... Our army is superior compared to theirs!” I declared. “If you say so, General...”

I gathered my troops and prepared for the journey across the Silk Road. Just when I was almost finished replenishing all the supplies, I heard a knock on the door. My servant opened it, and a sweaty General Zhang entered the room. “General Li,” he said wisely, “don’t forget that your biggest foe is the desert, not the King of Fergana.” How could that be true?

We had just started our journey when I heard some of my soldiers grunting and moaning for water. Unexpectedly, the heat was scorching and we were short on water, causing some of my soldiers to die out. By the time we reached Fergana Valley, only a quarter of my soldiers had survived. I was so busy bribing the King of Fergana with silk that I didn’t notice soldiers looming around us. When I looked around, only half of my remaining army was left. Realizing that my life was at risk, I fled. Watching from the top of a tower, the King of Fergana bellowed a powerful laugh, which echoed across the entire valley.

We retreated with our heads down in shame. The Emperor’s eyes blazed with fire when we returned.

“Say what? We just lost over 1,100 soldiers? We need a smarter army, not a stronger one,” he bellowed.

“The Heavenly Emperor is right, General Li. We need to plot a plan.” General Zhang agreed. “We shall abandon this quest instantly!”

“No, Emperor!” General Zhang went down to his knees, “I have a plan...”

With General Zhang’s wise advice, I successfully plotted a magnificent strategy, enabling enough water and food sources, ensuring us a good journey. We earned the loyalty of the oasis kingdoms through gifts, and even planned an assassination plot...

A week later, 1,000 troops, General Zhang, and I set off into the desert. We planned several food stations along the road, often in allied kingdoms. When we were halfway through the path, the second group, this time with 5,000 troops, came in a different route. When we finally set foot in Fergana Valley, we set up camp outside the border and waited for the next day.

In the morning, I woke up to the sound of a parade. There was a permanent loud chattering that came from the inside of the city walls. We asked to see the King, and the guards brought us to his palace. Only me and General Zhang went in. The marble floor and ceiling were startling, showing the fancy side of Fergana. “General Li, we meet again,” the King said, with a serious look on his face.

“We are willing to trade as much silk as you wish for your horses,” I started, “Please consider this offer.” “You come as intruders. I will not accept.” he replied sternly. I clicked my finger; that was the signal. Just as planned, my troops broke through the door and stormed inside. “Now will you accept?” I threatened him. All of a sudden, the King’s soldiers and guards appeared from behind! “No.” he replied. This is the moment I had been waiting for. Our second group of troops barged into the King, tying up and killing every one of the King’s surprised soldiers in their way. The King was next. We tied him up and brought him all the way back to our Emperor.

We captured thousands of their horses along the way, and went home as heroes for strengthening our military for years to come.

The New Tales of China's Silk Road

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Leung, Ebbie – 9.5

It was a sunny morning, and the sound of splashing water reached Stella's and Judy's ears. They had been walking for hours toward the Jade Gate, hoping to see the Silk Road in person.

"How much longer?" panted Judy. "I'm getting thirsty."

"Let's stop for a drink over there. I'm getting thirsty too." Stella pointed to a small pond in the distance.

As they walked toward it, the water reflected the sun so brightly that the girls had to cover their eyes. Just as they bent down to drink, Stella suddenly screamed.

"There's a snake! Oh no! I think it's poisonous!"

As she yelled, her arms swung around and knocked Judy straight into the pond.

Small the pond might be, but it was very, very deep.

"Judy!" Stella tried to drag her up, but Judy was too heavy, and Stella ended up being pulled into the pond too.

At first, Stella thought she would drown and shut her eyes in fright. Then she realized she could breathe in the pond.

"No, that can't be possible." Stella could feel the cool water swirling around her, and Judy was right next to her, eyes wide opened.

The longer they stayed in the pond, the deeper they sank.

Soon they reached the bottom.

Then, in a blink, they were no longer in the pond at all—they were standing on solid ground, and in the distance there were people riding horses. "Where are we?" Judy asked.

"I don't know," said Stella. "But this doesn't look like the desert we were walking, and people are dressed differently." She looked around nervously. "Are we still in the year 2013?!"

"If this is not 2013, what year is this and how are we supposed to get back?!" Judy shouted.

Stella didn't know the answer to either of her questions, but was starting to get afraid.

"I can't believe I ran away from home with you to see the new Silk Road and got mixed up in a different time!" Judy grumbled.

Let's follow the horses and ask," said Stella.

"All right," sighed Judy.

After a few minutes, the horses stopped. Other people were already there, waiting.

"Finally, you came! So, what do you want to trade this time?" called the man who was waiting.

"A few silk garments for some glassware," said one of the riders.

"All right, but first, show us your silk," the man replied.

The rider opened a sack and pulled out bright lengths of fabric: red silk with painted flowers, purple silk with peacocks, white silk with golden trees and blossoms...

“Wow,” Judy whispered to Stella. “Those are beautiful.”

Another man opened a sack and took out shiny glassware. There were pieces in so many strange shapes that the girls had never seen anything like them before.

“So, do you accept our glassware?” asked the man in robes, holding out the pieces.

“Yes, we do. And do you accept our silk?” asked the rider.

“Deal.”

“Very well, the trade is made.” Afterwards they traveled in different directions.

Now, sour that they had lost their chance, Stella said, “Excuse me, can you tell us what year it is?”

But it was as if she didn’t exist. The man ignored her and kept riding his horse.

Stella stared at the horse until it disappeared from sight.

“Why did he ignore me?” she whispered.

“I don’t know. We’ll never go back home!” Frustrated, Judy sat down, feeling the heat from the ground as she stared out at the endless desert.

Stella wasn’t paying any attention. “The snake!” A startling thought had just occurred to her.

“Judy! Follow me! I think I know how we can go back home!”

Judy jumped up and ran after Stella.

When Stella stopped, Judy stared at the pond.

“Seriously?”

“Not just any pond, the pond with snake—it brought us here,” replied Stella.

“What?” said Judy.

“If I’m right, this pond can lead us back home. We used it to come here, meaning we can use it to go back. It’s like a portal!” explained Stella.

Judy’s entire face lit up. “All right! On 3, 2, 1, jump!”

This time the pond was leading the girls up.

“All right, let’s go home! I think it’s *almost* dinner,” Judy said, dreamily closing her eyes and almost letting drool drop from her mouth.

Stella padded her shoulder “ um.....Judy? I don’t think this is home.”

“WHAT?! No, NO, NO! Call 999, this is an emergency! Aw, man, I’M HUNGRY!” she wailed, moaning like a newborn baby.

Stella managed not to roll her eyes—just in time.

Apparently, in Judy’s world, “missing dinner is a crime.”

The girls heard a low rumbling, and Stella noticed that there were fewer people and camels around. She also saw that the way people dressed was different from what they had seen earlier.

“Can I trade my camel for your silk?” someone asked.

“No,” the merchant replied. “I’ve already shipped all my silk by sea. People say the Silk Road is less popular now…”

“Come on Stella, lets go back to the pond again , this is another time zone! Maybe it will send us back to our world this time.” Judy grumbled.

The girls stepped into the pond—and they could breathe again. This time, the current pushed them upward, and soon they surfaced.

“Look at the people around us!” Stella gasped. “We’re finally back in 2013!”

“Yes we are finally back! Now I get to have dinner?” Judy cried with happy tears.

But then the girls realized that the “surface” they were standing on was not land at all. They were on a ship, sailing toward Southeast Asia…

What they didn’t realize was that, while they searched for the new Silk Road, they had missed the water route to an unexplored land—the very route that had ended the old Silk Road and was now coming to life again.

Silk and Sacrifice

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Suarez, Alexa – 10.6

Sitting in a wooden chair while waiting for customers to arrive in the rural Xiang'an, Qiao had grown increasingly desperate. After endless days and nights learning how to make the finest of silk, it was not the start she had hoped for as a young woman. Her hair was as black as night with brown eyes almost identical to coffee. Her silk shimmered as if it were woven with liquid moonlight itself. It was as soft as the silence between two heartbeats.

Yet, she still felt invisible. People walked past, but with sunken eyes and empty pockets. Qiao realised she had no choice but to explore and venture into the unknown. The roads of tales and stories were her only hope.

The next day, she packed nothing but a bale full of silk, with some water and food. Her master handed her a map and warned her in a deep tone, "When the desert whispers, you listen." She set off on the less travelled path towards the sun, sands, and hopefully, salvation. The wind started to whistle warnings yet she marched as knifelike dust cut her skin. The sandstorm grew fierce as Qiao frantically searched the area. Like a guardian angel, a lonesome poplar tree stood defiantly nearby. She ran over and took cover, covering her bag to make sure her water and food did not get tarnished. She took out a piece of the valuable silk and wrapped it around her face, shielding off the violent sand. With the howls of her master's words ringing in her ears, Qiao drifted off to sleep.

Time was ticking. Qiao knew she had lost precious time. After toiling through the unforgiving sands of turmoil, she spotted something hazy in the distance. She marched forward, head down and hunched over with the bale on her back. After taking many slow trudges, she felt a change in the texture beneath her feet. Her sandals and toes were washed with salvation. She looked up. It was an oasis. Falling to her knees, she cupped the elixir of life in her hands and drank desperately. There was a deep growl. Qiao thought it was her stomach. Looking out her sand-caked eyes, she spotted a moving object. Qiao slowly crawled towards it as the blur gradually came into focus.

Its elongated neck arched over the water, its humps rising like distant dunes. Reaching out blinded, she clasped a bunch of thick matted fur between her fingers. It was a camel! Qiao felt like she had been given a second chance and loaded her silk onto its back. She gently placed her hand against its neck, then hopped on its back with joyous relief. The camel didn't even flinch as if it seemed to understand the assignment and commenced walking.

Over the proceeding suns and moons, the camel accompanied Qiao; saving her from bandits, guiding her to water, and navigating the desert when the stars were less reliant. Things were back on track. Speaking to her new buddy, she exclaimed, "Well you are quite a hairy brownish yellow fellow, so I think I'm gonna name you... Dusty!" After many monotonous miles, she noticed that Dusty started to walk with a limp. She hopped down and inspected his foot. It had gotten red and swollen. Her thoughts spiralled, "Why now, when I'm so close? If I take care of Dusty, I'll miss the meeting with the traders. But if I abandon Dusty, he might die. He is the only friend I have out here, what should I do?"

Qiao decided that she was going to save Dusty whether she missed the trade or not. She lightened the load on Dusty's back and dumped her valuable silk bales right there on the trail. He could walk a bit more. They kept hobbling until they spotted a caravan not too far in the distance. She approached them and begged them to help save Dusty. Surprisingly, a gruff mongolian horseman was the first to inspect his foot. He cleansed the wound. Unfortunately, the caravan had to keep moving on with their journey and Qiao had to wait for Dusty to rest and recover for two days. Frustration surged through her veins as it was the last of her silk and she had to trade it for Dusty's recovery. Without regret, she was glad that she had made this decision. She slowly walked towards Dusty before giving him a big hug.

During the two days of nursing, she slept beside him and comforted him. They grew an unbreakable bond. After some time, another small caravan caught up to them. They weren't traders but humble pilgrims. Instead of trading for riches, they preferred to trade for acts of kindness. One was a craftsman who fashioned a leather boot for Dusty's foot, and in exchange, he only wanted to hear Qiao's story. He exclaimed, "Huh! A young woman abandons her precious silk for the life of this slow sandy beast! How interesting."

Arriving at the trading town a week late, the great market was over. All the traders were gone and all hope seemed lost. However, the story of "The Chinese merchant who stayed for her camel" travelled faster than she did. This journey didn't end up making her village rich, it gave her something even more. A reputation. Not long after, the story had spread far and wide. She was known as the girl who saved her camel, and it made her famous. One day, a silk trader from nearby stomped to her stall and fumed, "How are you ruining my business with that boring old camel?!" Dusty lifted his head up as if understanding the conversation and spat at him, the glob flying like an arrow. The crowd laughed. Qiao looked around and replied softly to the angry silk trader, "I didn't ruin your business. A story just made mine better."

The Modern Silk Road

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Wang, Youying Katherine – 9.8

Perhaps vivid pink hues, Hello Kitty lamps and purple rugs are not the first things you'd think of when imagining a private room in a normal science lab on Lantau Island. Though, you probably wouldn't imagine someone like Lucy either. The young PhD graduate labors at her desk, cautiously examining her new invention...a machine that talks to aliens. It's ultra high-tech and rectangular-shaped, with all four sides of sporting video and voicemail functions. On this Christmas Eve, Lucy's dad, Prof. Wong is due to visit her, but he is yet to show up. Just for fun while waiting, Lucy types planet Earth's coordinates and a few Christmas greetings onto her computer, having no means to actually send them out. Just then, her stomach cramps, and she bolts into the toilet, forgetting to turn off the PC. Her dog, Lucille, oblivious of the situation, starts prancing on top of the computer.

A second later, the doorbell rings. Lucy, still in the toilet, shouts, "Come in!" She scrambles out to welcome her father. They exchange a long hug, happily showering Christmas greetings at each other. Prof. Wong smiles and says, "I brought your favorite foods: Peking duck, pizza, Christmas pudding and Chinese tea! Let's celebrate Christmas Eve!" Perched on a wooden chair, Prof. Wang announces, "I have exciting news for you, Lucy. I have just returned from the Steppe Route of the Silk Road. It is a trade route, flourishing with silk, spices, tea leaves and jade from the East. Glassware, horses and woolen rugs flow from the West. People in the eastern and western countries all benefit from trading! The tea I brought to your lab is also originally from the Silk Road!" Prof. Wong says. "Wow! That is so cool!" Lucy exclaims, "I wish I could witness it one day myself." Meanwhile, just beyond the window, what was a calm and peaceful mountain view is descending into chaos, a cacophony of voices fills the air. Something peculiar is occurring...

Suddenly, deafening knocks make the windowpanes shudder. "Who could it be?" Thinks Lucy, gingerly opening the window. Outside, stand four aliens. They have light green skin, ginormous eyes that look like insects, a small, flat nose, a big, creepy mouth formed in a perfect but frightening grin, and a head like an upside-down raindrop. They also wear a simple shirt, giving them an eerily human quality. "We have been sent from the National Alien Guard, also known as the NAG, and we are from two planets, Mars and Kepler-186f. You helpfully let us know the coordinates of planet Earth, so now we have come to do a quick inspection to see if you can keep staying here. According to our rule book, you are breaking rule 1.25. This states that the organisms which coexist on the planet must keep their home in a healthy condition and not pollute it in any way." Lucy, still in shock, gasps, "When did I ever reveal Earth's coordinates? I never did! Oh! It must have been Lucille who did it when I had a stomachache!"

It dawns on Lucy, and she regrets it greatly.

"We have inspected Earth and decided that you have no right to pollute Earth, so you must leave!" The aliens say. Prof. Wong, a more experienced negotiator, follows, "Dear friends, welcome to planet Earth. We acknowledge your concerns about the pollution of Earth, and there are organisations that want to make this problem better. We will try to solve this problem. Meanwhile, it is Christmas Eve, a time when humans usually stop working once a year to let families and friends gather together to celebrate. Let's put aside the dispute for now and enjoy Christmas Eve first. You're more than welcome to join us!" "No! You have just broken the most severe rule of the universe; we shall start evacuating you immediately!" The aliens say angrily. "Please, dear friends, we will make the earth recover to its usual condition. But we need more time..."

After countless amounts of pleading, the aliens are still opposed to the thought. They even start to arrange spaceships to take humans to the vast planet of Saturn, where they have no resources to destroy. "My friends, we

cannot deny that we deserve punishment for what we've done, though it may not be evitable during development. We've realised it and will try our best to make up. Time is what we need. Time is cherished now. Shall we have Christmas Eve for the last time? I do think you should join us for this warmest moment on Earth. I promise, you will never regret your decision." Lucy pleads, putting her hands together, desperately hoping that the aliens will show some mercy towards humans. The aliens finally gave in and agreed to try the food. "Oh! What are these foods? I've never tried any tastier ones before! I think tea is the most tantalising I've ever tasted!" "I am glad you like it. It is a traditional Chinese tea I luckily found on the Silk Road!" says Prof. Wong.

They are absolutely stunned.

After dinner, the aliens stop and discuss for a long while. Lucy feels like she has been waiting for a century. "We wish to let you have another chance at making Earth a pollution-free place. But this is all under one condition: we start trading." The aliens state, "We can give you extra time as long as you can provide these delicious foods to other planets." "Okay! We can trade food for your high-tech machines, which will help in pollution control!" Lucy exclaimed! The next day, UFOs land on Earth to do their first round of trading. Chefs proudly take out their best dishes, and aliens offer high-technology machines that help people clean the water and air. Lucy tries her invention one last time. "It works!" she gasps. "We could use it to communicate with the aliens about trading on our new Silk Road!"

The Silk Road Adventure

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Yin, Chieh Cheng Angelo – 9.11

One day, a Chinese boy named Lee who lived in Chang'an woke up and remembered that this day was the day he would go on the Silk Road and officially become a merchant! He grabbed his rucksack and stuffed all his merchandise in. There was silk, paper, tea leaves, and more. Lee charged onto the streets and towards the city gates. When the security guards checked his travel pass, Lee shook with excitement. This was the start of his journey!

After a whole month of walking, Lee finally reached the Middle East. As he entered a city, he smelled a strange aroma beside him... Lee turned his head around, and saw a whole street of spices beside him! As Lee wandered around the market, one particular shop caught his attention. The shop was small, but the spices were amazing. Smoked paprika, Mexican vanilla, Chinese cinnamon, black pepper, pink salt, spicy ginger... It seemed like all the spices in the world were here !

"Hello, may I help you?" the boy at the counter said. He had jet black hair, tanned skin, and large brown eyes.

"I will have a bag of chili pepper, please. How much will that cost?" Lee asked.

"Five dollars please," he replied, "By the way, my name is Amir."

"I'm Lee." Lee smiled. "By the way, do you have a map I could borrow?"

"Well, I don't have a map, but I could lead you wherever you want to go," Amir replied.

"My destination is Rome," Lee said. Amir's jaw dropped to the ground.

"Rome..." Amir repeated. "Can I follow you? I was looking for a chance to go on vacation anyway." Lee was stunned. After he registered what Amir said, he told Amir to pack his bag, and they were on the road.

Soon, they arrived at the Arabian desert. It was an endless sea of sand, with no water in sight. They rented two camels and started their journey through the desert. As they rode their camels through the dunes, Amir told me about his Great Grandpa Bumpy's stories.

After approximately a week of walking, they ran out of water. "We better find an oasis." Amir said. Lee was thinking the same thing. The only flaw in their plan was that there wasn't an oasis to get water from! Lee tried to think about a plan to get water. Suddenly, an idea struck Lee.

"Amir, do you have a dagger?" Lee asked.

"Yes! I do!" Amir exclaimed, "Why would you ask?"

Lee grinned. "Because I know how to get water."

As they walked on, they saw a cactus. Lee told Amir to give him his dagger. "I'm going to get us some water!"

Lee said cheerfully. He slid off his camel and approached the cactus. Shing! Lee slashed the dagger through the cactus. Out flowed a gooey substance.

"Are you sure it's drinkable?" Amir asked.

"One hundred percent!" Lee replied, as he put the substance in a flask. The goo tasted like, well, goo.

"At least we could drink it." Lee shrugged.

After even more walking, they finally reached an oasis with actual water. Amir and Lee gulped down as much water as their stomachs would allow. Just as they were about to leave, a group of bandits jumped out of nowhere, ambushing them.

"Give us all your merchandise, and we will let you live," growled a tall and muscular man who Lee presumed to be the bandits' leader. He pointed a scythe menacingly at Lee and Amir.

"Uhh... What if we don't?" Lee asked politely.

The bandit looked stunned for a moment, probably thinking "Am I not scary enough?" When he finally figured out what was happening, Amir and Lee were long gone." "Catch those stinky little kids!" he shouted.

The group of bandits ran after the boys, and sadly, they caught up with the boys' slow camels.

Amir drew his dagger. Lee awkwardly raised his fists. Before he could react, a club smacked towards him. Lee ducked just in time. Meanwhile, Amir was stabbing and slashing at a bandit with his dagger. He successfully disarmed the bandit he was fighting. That bandit's spear flew into the sky and landed in Lee's hand. Lee jabbed a

bandit with his new weapon, and it worked quite well. Amir jumped onto his camel and slapped its rear end with his hand. The camel neighed loudly and surged forward. Lee fought off the bandit he was fighting and followed Amir. The bandits chased them in hot pursuit.

Suddenly, Amir's eyes lit up. "Follow me!" he shouted. He led Lee towards a pack of wild camels. Amir took out a rope and started whipping the wild camels, then whipped his own. His camel jerked left, dodging the rampaging wild camels. Lee quickly followed him, even though he had no idea what was going on. The wild camels charged right at the bandits, who got trampled under their hooves, making them stop the chase. "So long!" Amir waved at the bandits.

After more walking, a lot of bandits, more deserts, some mountains and a couple of rivers, Lee and Amir finally reached Rome. The city bustled with life, with every corner filled with merchants selling their merchandise. Pots, vases, clothes, weapons, tables... it seemed like Rome had everything!

Lee and Amir found a spot on the streets and set up a stall. They put their merchandise on a rug, and waited for customers.

After a few months of selling things in Rome, Amir told Lee he wanted to go home. Lee also wanted to tell this amazing story to his friends and family. He also looked forward to having more adventures on the Silk Road.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Yung, Lon Ting Julien – 11

I wandered around the market, desperately looking for food. All I wanted was to see my family again. My life had changed after Emperor Xian was taken over by the vicious Cao Pi. It had not only cost me my job, but also separated me from my family. But that wasn't all it would take to make me forget them. I was going to find them, and that was my life's goal.

Just as I was about to get home, a man, around 30 years old, rushed by me with his camel. His shirt was torn apart, and his hair was as messy as a bird's nest.

"Please, sir. Please take this camel for only 7 *WuZhu coins*." The man said with a cracked voice. "I must go on a long journey to find the lost Golden Caravan, and cannot bring my camel with me. I need money to help my cousin. He is very ill."

"Umm, sir, the Golden Caravan is a myth," I told the man.

I knew that the 7 *WuZhu coins* I had left were all I had, exactly what I needed to help with getting food. But then, another thought popped up. I saw myself riding this camel back to Chengdu, where I could see my family. I haven't seen my family since my last break during my work as a general. After that, I had no transportation to go back to them and I never saw them again. I decided at last to purchase this camel with my 7 *Wuzhu coins*.

After accepting the purchase, the man said his thanks and disappeared into the busy crowd. When I got to the small house I built myself, I noticed there was mud dripping off the camel's hooves. I decided to polish it. While polishing the 3rd hoof, I saw something shine. I rubbed harder on the hoof. Below the hardened dirt, there was a mark: a golden camel, the same one of the lost Golden Caravan! The lost Golden Caravan went on an expedition to find people to trade with with their carts of gold. While on their expedition, they mysteriously disappeared. A million thoughts raced into my head. I could not only return to my family, but also be rich if I could find their base!

Seconds later, I packed enough for the trip to the Golden Caravan's secret base and to Chengdu. However, the second I walked out of my door, 11 men stood in my way, all holding wooden spiked clubs. My hand floated to my dagger that was hanging from my belt. My soldier instincts kicked in, scanning the gang. I recognized one of the men. It was the camel's seller!

"What do you want?" I asked, "I already paid your 7 *WuZhu coins*."

"You found a mark. The one of the Golden Caravan. I want my camel back." The seller hissed, "I'll give you back your 7 *WuZhu coins*, or more, for all I care."

"He's not for sale." I replied.

"Oh, then I'll just take him from you." The seller bit back.

The seller said something to the other men. All 11 of them attacked, clubs raised. However, the camel, whom I had chosen to name Jinbao, darted away like a lightning streak with me on his back. Jinbao ran all the way to a nearby valley, then stopped to rest. When I turned around, I half expected the men to be chasing us, but nothing happened. Just as I was about to relax, take a sip of water, all 11 men appeared in front of me. *How?! They tracked me down? Impossible!*

Fortunately, Jinbao got so spooked out that he ran away immediately. Unfortunately, Jinbao ran into a dead end of a nearby cave, the only exit being the entrance they came in from.

“AHA! YOU’RE NOT RUNNING AWAY FROM ME THIS TIME, YOUNG MAN!” Boomed a voice. 11 shadows emerged from the entrance of the dead end. Just when I was going to lose hope, Jinbao kicked a well-hidden lever on the wall. Chains of heavy metal flew out to capture all of the 11 men. Cages of gold dropped from the ceiling, holding them in place. After that, a piece of the wall slid out, separating Jinbao and me from our pursuers. Without thinking, Jinbao jumped along with me, straight into the waterfall next to us.

I thought we would crash into the stone behind the waterfall, but there was a tunnel. Jinbao and I ran through passages in the darkness, finding an exit.

After what felt like eternity, we emerged into a whole chamber made of gold. There were barrels of saffron, with *crocus sativus* flowers growing wildly everywhere. There were mountains of jade, oceans of lapis lazuli, fields of gold, and rivers of silk piled all around the breathtaking chamber. I stuffed as much as I could in my pockets, bags; wherever I could stuff valuables, wherever I did. I had done it. I had found gold! Enough to live like a prince. Enough to live like a king. Enough to live like a god!

When I stuffed enough valuables, I rode Jinbao to Chengdu. I would finally see my mother, finally see my father and my sister.

When I arrived at my family’s residence, they greeted me and at that moment, I spilled my sacks and barrels of gold to let them see.

“Lin! Where did you find this wealth?” My mother asked.

I spilled out the whole story of my amazing journey, the part where the man sold me Jinbao, the part where I got the thought of coming back, the part where I got ambushed, and the part where I found the valuables.

But, most importantly, I introduced Jinbao, our new family member.

After finding money and arriving in Chengdu, I knew I had completed my mission. The voyage was hard but was worth it. I had found 3 treasures to keep: My family, my wealth and my camel Jinbao.

The Journey for the Jade Necklace

The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Yung, Ning Tak Emma – 11

The orange sun seemed to sink into the ocean as Ming and his family walked across the rocky mountain path. This was the highest mountain he had ever been on. The slope was steep and he struggled to climb it, but it was worth it, because at the top, the view was unlike anything he'd ever seen. Ming's mother had to remind him that they were here to sell crops from their village, not to enjoy the view. Down below, Ming watched other travelers riding camels and dragging wagons full of goods. His sister Mei seemed to notice too, because she asked, "Mother, why don't we have camels and wagons too?" She replied, sighing, "Because we don't have much money."

The family continued towards the west until they arrived at a lively market full of people. Finding an empty spot, they set up their stall. Many people passed by, but few bought anything. At the end of the day, they'd hardly made any money, unlike the other merchants selling expensive-looking silk, tea and jade. As night fell, the family were left disappointed and discouraged.

Before heading off to the next stop, a tall traveler with a black sheep approached them. "How can we help you?" Father greeted him, showing off their goods. "Oh, thank you," the traveler replied. "But I was actually wondering if I could buy... that." He was eyeing the precious jade necklace that Mother always wore. "You see, a wealthy jewelry collector has paid me to find a necklace like that." He took out a large sack of coins, grabbing Mother's attention. "Mother, you can't!" exclaimed Mei. "You always told us how the necklace was passed down from generation to generation!"

However, Mother hesitated before taking off the necklace and handing it over to the traveler.

A few weeks later, while the parents were busy trying to sell their crops, the siblings had nothing to do. The air had started to become cooler, and the leaves had started to turn red. "Autumn's coming," commented Ming. "So is Mother's birthday," added Mei. The siblings wondered how they could make the day special for her. "We could retrieve that necklace," Ming suggested. "But how?" asked Mei.

The siblings brainstormed until they suddenly spotted something: the traveler's black sheep! They soon found him sitting nearby, admiring the view. The children quickly sneaked away from their parents and approached the traveler, who greeted them.

"Remember us? Can we have the necklace back?" Mei asked. The traveler glanced at them, and questioned, "The necklace your mother sold to me? Sure, but you'll have to look for the man who told me to find it. You'll have to follow that river," the traveler pointed into the distance. "Keep walking until you see a huge house with a garden full of fruit trees. That's where he lives."

The next day, after convincing their parents to head that way, the family walked along the river. It was crystal clear, and tiny silver fish darted around in the water. They walked for a long time before sitting down behind a rock, exhausted, hungry and thirsty. Ming looked around, hoping to find food. Instead, all he saw was a patch of trees. But when he looked closer, he saw that the tops of the trees were dotted with pink. "Peaches!" he grinned. He ran off and returned with arms full of the fuzzy pink fruit.

When their hunger was satisfied, they kept walking. Two days later, they arrived at another market. A strong smell of fresh fruit was in the air, but it didn't seem to be coming from the market. "We're going to try to sell our fruit," said Mother. "Not much fruit grows in the mountains naturally."

A morning later, they had no luck. "The customers kept mentioning a man with a garden selling fruit for cheaper," Father frowned. Ming looked at Mei. "Could it be..." They dashed towards the fruity aroma.

They finally arrived at a grand house. "This must be it." They knocked on the door, and a kind-looking old lady answered. "Good afternoon. Can we have our necklace back?" asked Mei before being invited inside.

She took them to a huge garden, where fruit trees were growing everywhere. There, a grey-haired man wearing a countless amount of jewelry was picking fruits. Mother's necklace was hanging around his neck. "This is Kang, my husband," introduced the lady. "Hello," Kang muttered without looking up. "Can we have that jade necklace back?" Mei politely requested. "No! This type of jade is extremely rare!" Kang snapped. "Unless you give me something even rarer here... a fruit I'm missing – peaches." His wife interrupted, "Husband, you know there are no peaches here." However, the children's eyes gleamed with excitement.

They dashed off to the peach trees they'd seen while travelling to the market before returning to Kang's house with arms full of peaches. Kang's eyes widened in surprise. "I've searched everywhere, and I've never seen any peaches around here!" This made the children grin. "The necklace, please," reminded Ming. "Fine. A promise is a promise," Kang grumbled.

The children ran back to the market, and found their parents packing their bags. "No luck again," Father sighed. "You know, today's your mother's birthday. We can't even celebrate, because of how busy we've been." Ming stepped forward, "Actually, we planned something."

When they showed Mother the necklace, her eyes lit up. "How? How'd you get it back?" she asked. "We'll tell you later. Right now, let's celebrate!" Mei cheered.

They sat on the top of the mountain, looking at the sunset and eating the peaches they'd collected. "I'm sorry we couldn't do something nicer for your birthday," muttered Mei. "Don't worry," Mother replied. "Spending time with you all is the best thing I could ask for." As the sun disappeared beneath the waves, the family continued to gaze out at the view, reminding themselves how fortunate they were to have each other.

Wang Zhaojun and the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Cheong, Alicia – 9

It was a snowy day. The floor was completely concealed by a thick layer of snow, but outside it was as sunny as a candle.

Inside a room full of beautiful flowers and books sat a young girl with big brown eyes and tanned skin, wearing a simple purple dress. Her name was Wang Zhaojun. She was playing the lute, feeling very calm as she listened to her own slow and peaceful music.

Her room was filled with painting, bookshelves, and lovely flowers, all masked in a sweet floral scent. The bookshelves were filled with Chinese literature. The paintings depicted her ancestors, and her closets were packed with simple, elegant clothes, for she was not someone who needed a glamorous life.

Suddenly, Wang Zhaojun had a thought: *It's such an honor to wear fine silk dresses while I am strumming the lute. Maybe people in other countries cannot wear such fine silk clothes.*

She felt terrible. A dull ache lingered in her chest.

So Wang came up with a fantastic but risky idea with a slim chance of success: to marry a ruler called Huhanye Chanyu to start the Silk Road trade, allowing people in the West to wear quality silk like the Chinese.

Wang decided to ask her brilliant sister, Zhang Ziqi, for advice.

When Wang arrived at her sister's house, filled with paintings and books, she saw her drawing. Wang inquired, "I'm not trying to bother you, but can you give me advice on how to start the Silk Road?"

"Want to find a government official?" Zhang acknowledged sleepily, tired from a mountain of homework.

"Wait! I heard your friend is a government official," added Wang. "Maybe he can tell me about Huhanye."

"Yeah sure, let's go."

Their friend Qi's house was small and neat.

"So, who is Huhanye Chanyu, and where does he come from?" asked Wang.

"He is the ruler of the Han Dynasty," replied Qi.

"Is he nice?" Wang demanded.

"Yes, and he is really loyal," stated Qi.

Wang's face beamed with pride. She had considered Huhanye a tyrannical brute but found him surprisingly pleasant. Now, they could start the Silk Road.

When they returned home, Wang was thrilled, and so was her sister.

On a beautiful Saturday morning, Wang decided to write a letter to Huhanye to discuss their potential marriage.

As she wrote, her hands trembled with jitters, and her stomach was full of butterflies. Nervously, she wrote:

Dear Huhanye,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Wang Zhaojun. I would like to see the Silk Road flourish, but I cannot do that without your help. Therefore, I would like to know whether you would consider helping by forming a union in marriage.

I look forward to reading your letter and to working with you!

Yours sincerely,
Wang Zhaojun

While writing, she thought, *We are going to make a lot of money with this*, as she carefully sealed the envelope with wax.

Then, she asked her secret agency, FBI, to help deliver the letter.

Finally, after a few weeks of waiting, the same FBI agent delivered a reply:

Dear Wang Zhaojun,

Thank you for your letter. I'm flattered you reached out. The Silk Road has potential, and I would love to be part of its success, so I am open to your proposal.

We should meet to discuss the details. Please write back at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,
Huhanye Chanyu

After reading the letter, she jumped for joy!

At their long-awaited meeting, Huhanye appeared calm, with a smile that seemed somewhat fake yet natural. He was polite in an indescribable way. They discussed details:

"Should we have 67 guests!" Huhanye demanded.

Wang shouted, "Yeah! Our thrones should be 67 meters high!"

"Yeah! And we should have 67 trillion dollars from the Silk Road!" Huhanye added.

After the discussion, their throats were so strained and dry they ended the meeting and went back to sleep for 67 hours.

On a day Wang would never forget, the weather was sunny and cool. The sun cast a luminescent glow.

Wang rode in a carriage pulled by two white-gold horses. Inside was probably Wang and her sister, as a long veil concealed Wang's face. "Are you nervous about marrying Huhanye?" her sister asked.

"No, he is pretty pleasant!" Wang answered.

She arrived at a very fancy hotel called "The Hotel of Riches." A soft smile curled her lips as she started dancing aggressively.

Finally, it was time for the vows. The priest announced, "Do you believe this marriage will be successful for your nations, so that both economies can flourish?"

Wang and Huhanye nodded.

"Great! So you are willing to start the Silk Road for money, right?"

They nodded impatiently.

"Well, perfect! You can start the Silk Road now!" exclaimed the priest.

After the wedding, Wang lived in a massive mansion with abundant staff and enjoyed luxurious foods. Their nations became strong and influential. With her newfound fame, Wang had enough wealth for jewelry and enjoyable things.

The economy in both nations was excellent. People were so wealthy they did not need to work and could still receive 670 billion for free every month.

Their nations were truly prosperous, with all the supplies they needed, especially silk and fine clothes. They were auspicious, always having everything they wanted, and everyone lived happily.

The economy continued to thrive. Trade flourished, and everyone earned plenty of money. Goods were affordable, and people lived in stylish homes.

Lastly, China became a truly successful country because of Wang's decision. China's stock soared, and the nation became extremely rich and wealthy.

The Encounter

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Cheung, Samuel – 11

NO SUBMISSION

Silk Road Trouble

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Cheung, Sze In – 9

Brrring...the class is over. "Your holiday project," Mrs Wang announced, "is to write a creative story. The theme is 'New Tales of China's Silk Road'." "Aw man not again!" Xiaoli whispered to Xiao Ming. However, Xiao Ming did not seem angry at all, instead his eyes sparkled "meet me at my house later", Xiao Ming whispered back.

At Xiao Ming's house, the two of them and a lot of other friends gathered together in Xiao Ming's house. Xiao Ming took out a red thing and said "It is called the chrono-skipper. I invented it with my grandfather". They teleported to the 100BC in the Sahara Desert when they arrived they saw people on camels and carrying things like silk and other different goods. Suddenly, some robbers started to attack the people who were on the camel. Some had good defense and protected themselves while others got attacked and died. Xiao Ming motioned them to follow him. They followed Xiao Ming to a remote place. "I'm scared!" said one of Xiao Ming and Xiao Li's friends. Xiao Ming pressed a button and then ...

Boom! The remote brought the guys into the 1940BC, where they saw people were carrying things like furs from animals and slaves ready to trade, beads that are made of silk, and even lacquerware. People began fainting and getting sick! Xiao Ming got out his x-ray and found out that they were infected by a disease called the Black Death. It made people die. They were about to give up when one of Xiao Li's friends called out, "I have a potion in my bag that can save people and prevent us from getting the Black Death!" Xiao Li's friend took out a red and pink weird potion from his pocket and said, "pour it in their mouths and they will heal very quickly." Xiao Ming demonstrated on a person and as soon as he poured the potion he woke up. "WOW" everyone cried out and everybody was so surprised by the magic he did. A few minutes later everything was back to normal.

After all the excitement was over Xiao Ming and their friends were really tired from all that walking, so after an argument of where the best resting spot is, they finally decided that the best spot was right next to a little pond in the desert. At first some people refused to help set up the area because they did not like to stay next to a pond and wanted to rest on some camels, but finally Xiao Ming convinced them and they all helped finish building the resting spot.

After they rested for about 1 hour, some people wanted to go and keep exploring but some people wanted to stay and relax some more, so they decided to split into two teams. One team will go outside first with Xiao Li and the other team will stay in the resting spot with Xiao Ming until they come back, each team has about 50 people. After everything was sorted, they waved goodbye to each other. Somehow Xiao Li was reading Xiao Ming's mind and said "Don't worry, Xiao Ming. We will come back later." Xiao Ming smiled back and said "good luck"!

Just like that they splitted into two teams, one with Xiao Ming and the other with Xiao Li. Xiao Li led the crew to China and they were very surprised because the things they were carrying were different from things carried in the desert and looked really soft and mostly polished. Later on, Xiao Li told them that the thing they were carrying is called silk. It is made by Chinese people and used for trading and clothes making. "So that's why we don't have it in the UK", Lily thought.

Soon Xiao Li and the others were lost. “Are we lost”, asked Lily. “No, I just don't know where we are,” Xiao Li replied. “We are lost”, someone cried out. Then he started to cry, which led to a chain reaction and soon everybody was screaming and crying and freaking out!! Xiao Li was really annoyed and tried her best to calm everybody down. 30 minutes later Xiao Li finally calmed everybody down by giving them silk which Xiao Li traded with glass that she bought from home.

Meanwhile at the resting spot Xiao Ming was getting really worried. “She can do it”, Xiao Ming thought even though he was getting worried now. At last, Xiao Ming decided to go and see for himself. He got out his tracking device and tracked Xiao Li's location. Some people tried to stop Xiao Ming but he was determined to save his friend. Xiao Ming searched for Xiao Li but the only clue he found was a red hat that Xiao Ming gave her for Christmas last year. Xiao Ming couldn't find Xiao Li's location. He walked and walked every step he took made him more worried. Finally, he laid down on the hard rocky ground and fell asleep.

Meanwhile, Xiao Li was going back to the resting spot. She heard a screaming voice when she turned around and found Xiao Ming laying down on the floor. She picked Xiao Ming up and brought him back to the resting spot when she arrived at the resting spot Xiao Ming woke up. Everybody was shocked. “I thought you fainted”, said Xiao Li. Xiao Ming just shook his head and said “Lets go home”. He got his chrono-skipper out and they teleported back home.

When they got back home, Xiao Ming and Xiao Li both wrote an amazing article about the Silk Road. Mrs Wang loved it so much that she gave both of them each an A+. Both of them were really happy and proud of themselves, even Xiao Li liked the idea of writing articles. After this experience, Xiao Ming and Xiao Li both learned that just try your best and you will always succeed.

The Emperor's metal

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Ching, Lauren – 11

The sun was harsh on the sandy weather in the desert. Yuxin, the little Chinese girl with her jet-black hair tied back in a bun, sat fanning herself with a bamboo fan. Her mentor, wise Master Zhi, was also one of Emperor Wu's cherished men, and the king had ordered him to acquire metals for the upcoming war against Dayuan. The smiths required the strong, hard metal from Roman mines to craft spearheads, and they were to obtain them from the nearest Silk Road market. He now sat behind her on their camel, studying the map. Yuxin hadn't expected the journey to be so arduous, but she fought the heat, heading toward a dip in the snaking, well-trodden path of the Silk Road. Yuxin remembered to do her regular Taoism practice, praying to her ancestors. She dipped her head to pray for her relatives. Master Zhi nodded and joined her, abandoning the map on the camel's back. As Yuxin prayed, she realized the nearest market on the Silk Road was still the farthest she had traveled.

The market was a small, dusty area. There was gold, glassware, spices and tea. Yuxin followed her master's lead excitedly. It was her first time at a Silk Road market! A Parthian man with a straggly white beard dressed in a šalwār and a tunic stumbled forward in his thick leather boots. He set two blocks of metal on the scorching desert sand. "Han—Jade, for pure Roman mine metal?" He stroked his beard and held out the metal. "Yes, of course!" Master Zhi exchanged materials with the Parthian and dipped his head in respect. Master Zhi examined the metal in his rough, experienced hands. "Look here, Yuxin," he said. "The metal is strong enough for the spears we will make. Let's go home."

The Han camel was in sight. Soldier Xiang buckled his belt and brandished his spear. "They haven't noticed us yet," he whispered to his companion, Soldier Wang. "All we have to do is threaten them to give us the metal. It'll be easy." Soldier Wang frowned. "I heard Han is rebuilding the west wing of Weiyang Palace. Perhaps their metal is for that purpose." He pursed his lips, deep in thought. "Hey." His eyes brightened. "We can use it for weapons against them in the war. That way, their defenses will be weaker in the west wing of the palace, and we can attack them and rule their land." Soldier Xiang let out a soft cry of joy. "We have a goal now," he replied. "Now we get off and follow that camel."

The hoofsteps were distinct, but clear. Yuxin turned her head to view the challenge they now faced. She instinctively jangled the wooden beads of her Taoist necklace for luck. Master Zhi recognized the enemy soldiers right away. "Dayuan," he croaked hoarsely. "They must be here for information. They shouldn't know that we have the metal. Quick, escape." Yuxin slid her leg down the camel's flank, and pulled the right rein. The camel veered to the right, behind a sand dune. Once they were hidden from view, Yuxin left the sack full of the metal the Hans would use to craft their spears on the camel's back. Master Zhi hopped off the camel with dignity, guiding it to stay. They both watched as the soldiers left their own camels and trudged over to their dune grimly. Yuxin signaled to her master her plan, and without hesitation, Master Zhi accepted it. Her plan was their only hope.

Meanwhile, the two Dayuan soldiers had found their easy prey. They dove in front of the sand dune, ready to deprive the Han citizens of their metal. They held their hands out, ready to seize the young girl and her master.

But they were nowhere to be found.

“What?” Soldier Xiang exclaimed. “They couldn’t have disappeared! Where have they gone, then?” He cursed, tossing his spear into the sand in frustration.

“Wait,” Soldier Wang said, looking up. “That’s their camel. And in that sack...that’s their metal.”

Soldier Xiang clapped his hands together with glee. He tumbled forward clumsily, and grabbed the sack off the camel’s hump.

“That was easy,” commented Soldier Wang. “Let’s get going.”

Master Zhi and Yuxin spotted the soldiers coming back. They ran out from their hiding spot, the long, dark shadow cast by one lonely gnarled cactus standing alone. Their destination was in sight. Yuxin’s plan really was smart—when the soldiers came back with their metal, they would’ve taken their camels. Then they would have to seal a deal with them—their metal for their horses back.

“Hey!” One of the soldiers shouted. He’d spotted the pair sitting on Dayuan’s camel. “What are you doing with our camels?”

The other soldier came out from behind the sand dune, brushing off the sand. His eyes widened as he saw Yuxin and Master Zhi.

“Well, what are you doing with our metal?” Yuxin yelled back.

There was a moment of silence where the citizens from the enemy cities glared defiantly at each other. Then Master Zhi gave his apprentice a firm pat of encouragement on the shoulder, and Yuxin spoke.

“Look, no one wanted a war against each other in the first place. But now that we have one, there’s no stopping it. I don’t want to hurt you, and I hope you don’t either. So here’s a deal. Both our parties go back and claim what is rightly ours.”

There was another long period of silence.

“Fine,” the taller of the soldiers spoke. “Deal.” He strolled over to their camel briskly, ordering the other soldier to follow him.

As Yuxin and Master Zhi settled themselves back down on the saddle of their camel, preparing the reins for the rest of the journey on the Silk Road, Yuxin couldn’t help feeling proud of herself. She had solved a conflict not with actions, but with words. She took in her hands the two heavy ropes that would lead them home.

The Harmony of Traditions

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Choi, Rui Yan – 10

In the bustling city, ten year old Liam was captivated by the world of music. Her grandmother's guzheng melodies filled their home, producing sweet, resonant sounds. Each note strumming seemed to tell a story and Liam found himself mesmerized. As time flew, Liam started following the footsteps of his grandmother, playing the guzheng, just like her. However, as he grew older, he was also captivated by the vibrant world of pop culture. The energetic beats and melodies that just make you want to dance inspired him in a different way.

One day, as Liam was playing the guzheng and an exciting idea struck: what if he could combine his love for the guzheng with pop? He chose a popular pop song and began experimenting, incorporating the graceful tones of the guzheng into the melody and lyrics. After days of practice and working, he recorded his unique rendition and shared it online. To his surprise, the video quickly garnered attention from his peers and to an online audience.

As the video spread, children in the neighborhood reached out, inspired by Liam's creativity. They formed a small band called "Harmony on the Silk Road", where Liam played the guzheng as the centerpiece of their performances. He was thrilled to see his friends take on roles of drummers, guitarists and dancers, creating a fusion of Pop energy and traditional melodies.

One evening, while browsing through his playlist for inspiration, a well known pop producer sent Liam an unexpected message. Impressed by his innovative approach on pop, he invited the band to collaborate on a new song celebrating culture. Overjoyed, Liam quickly agreed and shared this fantastic news with his band members. Overjoyed, they spent weeks in the studio, blending catchy pop beats and lyrics with the guzheng's melodic sounds.

When the single was finally released, people on the internet started noticing the uniqueness of the combination of cultures. The single climbed to the top of the charts with all those famous artists that were Liam's inspiration to start following his dreams. As the song rose to fame, the band came out with a music video, showcasing stunning visuals of ancient and contemporary landscapes, featuring Liam playing his guzheng in picturesque settings while the band danced in perfect harmony around him.

As their fame grew, Liam and his friends started hosting concerts aimed at inspiring other kids to explore music. "Harmony on the Silk Road" became a symbol of cultural inclusivity, blending the best of both worlds.

Through this journey, Liam demonstrated the power of music to connect hearts and cultures. By marrying tradition with modernity, he and his band painted a vibrant future, proving that creativity knows no boundaries.

Smell of Joy

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Fan, Jacky – 10

I'm sitting in class, bored out of my mind. What catches my attention is the smell of rancid fish drifting across the classroom, because someone has the bright idea to bring fish for lunch.

The topic of this school unit is "Explore the Silk Road. My Chinese history teacher, Mr. Chen, is talking in a very monotonous way, leaving us struggling to stay awake. "The Silk Road was a vast network of ancient trade routes connecting China and Europe." Mr. Chen mumbles through the whole lesson. All I can hear is "Blah blah blah, camel, blah blah blah, desert." Time is moving so slowly. Wait! I have actually been to the freaking Silk Road! What if I share my adventure with the class to escape the snooze-fest?

I seek Mr. Chen's permission, "Mr. Chen, may I contribute my real-life story in the Silk Road, perhaps to wake us.. no no no.. to let the class have more first-hand experience about the Silk Road?"

Mr. Chen nods in agreement. I decided to share my "never-exposed" diary on the screen. Class, let's go!

May 3rd, 2025

Today is my birthday. I ask my Grandpa, "What's my big birthday gift? You have promised me a big surprise for my first double-digit birthday!" He just grins and says, "I'm gonna take you on a far trip, to the Silk Road!"

Wait, what? My Grandpa has been blind since birth. I know that it's always been his dream to set sights across the world and discover something new. He also has a flair for cooking! I think he could be a Michelin chef if he was not blind! I'm standing there like, "Are you kidding me? Silk Road is like desserts and camels. Why there?"

Grandpa laughs, "I promise, it's gonna be fun and epic! Chance will go with us too. He's a food-loving dog and will love it too!"

So now I'm going on a trip with my grandpa and my dog. Bless me!

May 5th, 2025

We've arrived at the Silk Road, starting from Xi'an! It's so lively, and nothing like what I imagined! I used to think it was this short, dull, plain of grass that has one stall, but no! It's so much better than I expected! We walk for a while. The first thing Grandpa wants to see is some Chinese burgers! It's a bun, stuffed with some chopped meat. Chance sees a stall and starts barking. Grandpa and I come closer, and we see the greatest Chinese burgers! The shopkeeper says that it is cooked in an ancient Tang Dynasty recipe! Grandpa says that Chance sniffed it out because of its Tsaoko seasoning! My dog's so smart!

May 8th, 2025

Today, we're in a desert. Our next mission is to try the world-famous camel milk ice cream! Grandpa says it's salty and creamy, like whipped cream! I don't even know camels can make milk! Chance barks at the northwest pathway. We rush there and see a busy shopkeeper who looks like he just came here. He sees us and exclaims, "What? I just came here five minutes ago! Customers already?" Grandpa tells the shopkeeper that Chance can smell things from 30 kilometers away. Suddenly, Chance starts barking at some guy's bag. I am about to go and say sorry, until I notice something. The man's bag has ancient relics inside! He's stealing them and putting them up on eBay! Grandpa calls the police, and they come and arrest the dirty eBay relic-selling man. One cop, who's muscular and tall, like a tower, says to me that Chance has a better sense of smell than police dogs! Oh no, please don't ship Chance off to those police dog training facilities. I heard they make the dogs do one-armed pushups every day for hours!

May 10th, 2025

Our last stop is the Kashgar bazaar. We have a scent test there! A store owner invites us over and asks Chance to sniff out which bag of cumin is the highest quality one. He immediately rushes over and licks the third bag. The store owner, in financial despair, says, "That is the most expensive bag... I can already see the money fly away like butterflies." Grandpa winks at me and says, "The best spices need to be smelled by the best nose!" The shop owner is so impressed and gives us an apron with the words "Scent Saint" and an entire bag of mutton jerky!

June 12th, 2025

After the Silk Road trip, Grandpa was so moved that he actually opened a place called the Scent Fun House! It's a place where children can guess spices based on smell, and even get free bags of condiments if they get it correct! Chance is the judge. He smells the spices and if they're right, he wags his tail, and if they're wrong, he sneezes!

Today, one child asks Grandpa, "Hey, what was the Silk Road like?"

Grandpa says in the softest and warmest voice, "It's a road made of scents, laughter, friendship and sunlight. Chance smelled and saw everything. I listened and cared."

The real magic of the Silk Road is not the delicious food (which I still dream about today), it is the stories and tales we created when we went there. All the ice cream, smell tests, burgers, eBay seller, all of these was a page in an amazing story.

While I am still savouring the taste of the Silk Road, the classroom explodes with applause. Now the lesson isn't boring anymore and the smell of rancid fish is gone! Out of nowhere, I hear barking and smell something amazing. "Are those 5D effects of your diary?", the class asks. I open the door, and see Chance and Grandpa outside. They hand me a lunch box filled with barbecue skewers cooked by the ancient Tang Dynasty recipe. It's lunch time! Everyone comes over and eats my lunch, and now I don't have even one! Seriously?

The Journey on the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Guan, Claire – 10

As the clock struck noon, I hardly ran down the stairs into the living room to greet my guest. But I was too late. They were already filling the room with hundreds of presents, waiting for me or stacked in the mountain. My parents looked at me with disappointed eyes. My dad asked me why didn't you come down faster to my side and look into the horizon. I had my reasons. I told him he told me come on let's go. We have to hurry up. It's time to cut the cake. My mom announced it to the entire room. Squeals of joy filled up the room at the moment my mom said those words. I felt betrayed that my parents started the party before me, but I just had to accept it.

As they brought out the heart shaped cake, I stared at it for a long time deciding what my wish was to be wishing for a peaceful and happy year or should I wish to be better and more popular as I thought about it more and more I couldn't decide I was always a petite girl who always had neat hair and tidy outfit so I really like my life. I always wanted to experience how it felt to be on an adventure so I knew that my parents would never allow me. I decided to wish for something different this year.. as they brought out the cake and they started to sing happy birthday. I sat down in front of the cake, brought my hands together and started to make a wish. I wish to be able to travel back in time to the silk road to have an adventure there as I blew out the candle. I felt a strange talking sensation down my left foot, and then my left arm and then all my left side started to get tucked away. I tried to stop it. I tried to move away, but it all didn't work soon. A portal opened up and when I looked around to call for help, I found that all the other party guests had frozen in time. I gave up and let my fragile limp body get sucked into the portal.

As I opened my eyes, I saw a man with gray hair, crooked teeth, and a hunchback he was holding onto a crane and carrying a large red backpack on his bag. He smiled at me not in a weird way, but in a kind way. He asked me, dear are you all right? You look very troubled. I saw you fall down from the sky. Are you all right? I stared at him. The words in my head fell from this guy. I looked around. I was just hoping that somebody would show up and tell me surprise this was a prank, but no, nobody did that. I was on a mountain with trees and grass and flowers. I could hear the song birds singing the deer scalloping through the forest. I looked at him and asked where am I? The old man smiled and said well, dear you are on the silk road, of course. I stared at him, wondering how this happened. Then, when I looked up, I understood the candle was laying on the ground beside me and the candle had blown out. I thought that stupid wish had cost me such a fortune. I angrily stood up and started to walk away when the old man called behind me. Be careful there can be a lot of thieves you might as well come with me so I did.

As we journey on and on we reached a shimmering palace outside the palace were guards and soldiers so tall, I couldn't even see you in their head as stated over to us. They were swaying in the wind one by one suddenly a trumpet, played, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, bum out a man in shimmering yellow, rose with purple flowers enburdened into his robes, wearing a huge hat on his head. A long beard trailing behind him, swinging in the wind, like a graceful dancer, locked up in front of the man in the emperor is here. My mouth hung open in astonishment, not believing me that it was the emperor. The one my family has talked about for years and years, then a beautiful tall, white horse galloped out from the stables in the back of the palace. The emperor climbed onto it and announced it to the crowd. I must journey onto the silk Road now do not cry off my apps since I shall go back in as he got his horse, he walked to me blooming over me old man behind me, gave me an encouraging smile and told me to talk as I started to explain my situation to my emperor this look dark but he finally allowed one of his teachers to me into the palace to stay rest until you could figure out another way to help me.

As time passed on me and the old man slowly became better friends than ever and we slowly started to bond over the journey. When the moon came up we would gather around the tent and campfire we made and the old man would tell me stories about his past journeys. It would always be exciting and when he laughed I could see a sparkle that shone in his eyes. His stories would always make me drift into sleep but this was the last time I would see him ...

When I woke up I was surrounded by family friends and relatives. My mom and dad hurriedly bent over me and asked are you ok? As my vision cleared I saw worried faces, strange I mumbled under my breath, but before I could do anything else my vision blurred and I fell onto the floor.

Throne of the Emperor

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Ho, Chun Tung – 9

The Emperor of China made an announcement that would change everything for an Indian boy named Jay. He was holding a competition to create a new throne that would embody the Silk Road, the vast trading route connecting China to the West, stretching across deserts, mountains and jungles. The winner would get all the gold they wanted.

Jay, a skilled boy from a poor village in India, carved wood beautifully, making simple designs come alive. Jay knew he could create a glorious throne. If he won, he would be able to provide for his family. However, he didn't have the money for materials like gemstones, gold, and silk.

"Father, I want to join the competition and travel the Silk Road for inspiration," Jay said. His father worried. "Son, I have faith in your talent, but the road is dangerous, and we can't pay for the resources you need."

"The throne should represent the Silk Road. I have to see what it's about," Jay explained. "I'll trade my carving skills for what I need." His father sighed. "Just promise you'll be safe." Jay took his tools and joined a caravan to Persia, itching to get what he needed so he could build his masterpiece.

In Persia, Jay met Khan, who was brilliant and knew everything about the Silk Road. Jay was quick to ask his new friend if there were places to get jewels in the area. Khan replied, "My father is a jewel expert, trading them along the Silk Road. I can introduce you. Come!" Walking through the busy market, Jay saw people selling animals, strange foods, foreign instruments and more. He'd never seen anything like it!

At Khan's father's stall, gems of all shapes, sizes and colours glittered under the bright sun. Hearing Jay's story, Khan's father said, "For the Emperor, this is what you need." He opened a locked chest revealing a majestic diamond. Jay knew he couldn't afford it, so he offered his carving skills, pulling out intricate, small, wooden sculptures from his bag.

Khan's father was blown away by the boy's talent, striking a deal with him. "While I'd love a new stall and decorative cases for my jewels, you don't have time to make them if you plan on entering the competition. Instead, I ask that you take Khan with you. He'll be able to help you succeed. If you win, you can share the winnings with us. As a show of faith, here are some small diamonds and gemstones." Khan's father handed over the locked chest and a small pouch, sending them on their way. The boys were now in this together. Partners.

Over the next few weeks, Jay and Khan travelled to Samarkhand, a popular stop on the Silk Road. Jay was grateful Khan was with him, as he knew the shortcuts, safe routes, how to spot honest traders and how to avoid dangerous situations. As they got closer to their destination, Jay wondered, "We have diamonds, but a throne needs gold. Where can we get some without spending too much?"

Khan had heard of artists who used paper-like sheets of gold to decorate, looking just as rich as solid metal. He guided Jay through Samarkand's markets, where they met Xiang, a young girl who was a gold foil artist. When Jay offered his wooden sculptures for her family to decorate and sell, they were grateful, and gave him lots of gold leaf sheets in return. Xiang was amazed by their project and decided to join their team.

The trio journeyed to China where they were lucky to meet Li, who came from a family of silk weavers. Khan asked if they were willing to trade some of their finest silk for a precious gem. Instead, Li said she would be willing to help them build the throne and be part of their masterpiece. With only weeks left until their deadline, the group of four worked day and night. Jay hammered and chiseled away, building a wooden frame

for the throne, adding patterns and settings taken from the Silk Road. Xiang decorated the throne in gold, using it to show the many different routes to and from China. Li, on the other hand, spent time weaving silk into cushions, her designs showing the story of their teamwork. Khan cut and set the stones into the wood, making them look like stars under the desert sky.

The group finished sooner than expected, and travelled to the Emperor's palace to present their throne. They were proud of the work they had done, but were nervous as they were competing with the most famous creators. Thrones of solid gold, diamonds and jade were everywhere. "Look at all these fancy thrones. How can we win against them?" Jay whispered anxiously to his friends. Khan said, "Our throne is the perfect representation of the Silk Road. It has been built from people and skills from the Road." Li agreed, and added, "We built this together, and it tells our story of how we got here."

It was time for the Emperor to judge each throne. Each contestant explained their designs and watched in silence as he circled the thrones, testing them out, one by one. Soon, the Emperor was ready to announce the winner. "There are many thrones here today, made with the finest things in all the lands. They are extraordinary, but many only speak to money, wealth and power. However, our winner tells the real story of the Silk Road, built by people from different lands, travelling and working together, sharing their special skills. Congratulations, Jay, Khan, Xiang and Li."

The foursome couldn't believe it! The crowd clapped loudly as they collected their prize, splitting it equally amongst themselves. It was more than enough to help their families. Soon, it was time for the group to part ways and head back home, with promises to keep in touch and to visit each other along the Silk Road.

Life in a Horse–Drawn Carriage

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Lau, Chi Yan – 10

As Mei sat on her porch, she heard arguing from inside her house. She crept in to see what the commotion was, but was struck by the news she overheard. Her parents were bickering while her siblings were quietly watching in the corner.

“She’s too young!” Her mother cried. “I will not let her go!” Her father, undaunted, refused. “We can’t just leave her in your arms! And we need another pair of hands.” At which point, Mei stepped in.

“I can’t believe I’m getting sent off on a stupid ‘journey’ to sell goods while you get to live in luxury. It’s not like we’ll find any other customers outside of China.” Mei muttered to her best cousin, Xi. “Don’t worry! I’ve heard that the road is bustling, and you will soon sell all of your silk! Then, you will come back with even more riches!” Xi assured her. But Mei didn’t cheer up. In fact, for the whole day, she didn’t laugh. Or smile. Or even speak to anyone.

Then, the Big Day came. Mei, her father, and her siblings packed everything they needed and set off for the well-known Silk Road. At first, Mei sulked and pouted, but once they had arrived in Dun’huang, Mei woke up from her sleep and saw a beautiful sunset. “Whoa! This looks incredible!” Her father chuckled at that. “I told you that you wouldn’t regret this! Now you know why I brought you along!” Mei sighed reluctantly and admitted that it was quite dazzling.

The next few weeks were spent travelling all over Asia, and nothing interesting happened, although her oldest brother met another boy his age who was also travelling with his family. They got along very well, and although he had a sister Mei’s age, they didn’t have much in common. Turns out they were going the same way they were, and just like that, Mei’s brother had a friend.

Then, one hot sunny afternoon, while Mei’s Father was out negotiating with a businessman, Mei noticed a girl her age standing behind the businessman. For a second, it felt like their eyes locked. Then, the man guided the girl behind him in front of us; he introduced her as his daughter. The girl timidly murmured, “I’m Rayna, and I come from Bengal.” Then, she smiled and asked Mei, “Would you like to be my friend?” Mei was skeptical at first, but then hesitantly agreed. She had never met anyone who wanted to be friends with her before, due to her bold and boisterous personality. “Well, we’ll leave you two to it!” And off their fathers went. Mei and Rayna were left alone, and an awkward silence followed. Mei tried to break the tension by attempting to have a conversation, but they didn’t seem to have common interests. “Do you like playing in the sun?” “Not really, I find it too warm outside. I like reading and studying though!” Mei, who usually despised reading and studying, grimaced at that.

Mei woke up the next day to find her father gone. Her siblings were already awake, and when she asked them where her father was, they told her that he might already be trading, and because their stock was running low, they would be going back home earlier than expected. Since Mei was bored, she went outside, and Rayna was there, peering off into the distance. “Hi! What’re you doing out here?” She asked. Rayna seemed surprised that Mei was there and smiled. “Hi! I was just thinking about my home, and I spaced out just now, sorry!” “You don’t need to apologize, it’s fine! And also, if you want to talk about it, I’m always here for you!” Rayna sighed in relief. “Whew, I really needed to let it out. First of all, my dad dragged me along with him, and I had to leave everyone behind in Bengal! Then, he forced me to come outside with him every day, but it’s extremely hot outside!” Mei nodded furiously. “My parents are just like that as well! They always lie to me about everything!” And just like that, they found something in common and went on like that all day.

“Mei! Time to go!” The moment Mei woke up, she heard her father calling for her. “Is it time to return home?” She asked. Her father explained to her that they had finished trading their stock, so now they had to return to China. Mei felt a bit of melancholy about leaving Rayna, so she quickly ran out to find her. Rayna was there, sitting on a rock. Mei said that they were returning home and would like to be pen pals with Rayna. So they quickly exchanged addresses and said their goodbyes.

Epilogue:

17/5/1453

I miss you! How are things in your village? When will we meet again? My father and I are on the Silk Road again. I hope to see you again! When I do, I will share more than I can fit into this letter, because it is too small to say all the things I want to.

Sincerely, Your friend Rayna

“Wizard of Time” to Ancient Silk

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Leung, Moses – 9

I never expected this would happen – Feeling stunned in a mysterious ancient place where I didn’t even know where I was. Yet, it turned out to be a spectacular time travel experience – A magnificent adventure at the ancient Silk Road.

The Time Machine and Our Big Plan

It all started when my sister found out about my invention. “Yes, sis, I’m building a time machine, Wizard of Time, well, with a bit of help from YouTube and some old alarm clock parts! We will time travel to the future! Do you want to join me?” She shrieked “Cool” excitedly as she beamed from ear to ear.

“Let’s pack our bags! I just went grocery shopping with mum for Chinese New Year! I bought a lot of daily essentials and a new silk cardigan that I have to offload. I need to put my Labubu away too!” Murmured my sister. “Your favourite Labubu looks more like an ancient beast, half laughing, half grinning! We have no time to lose, let’s just go in now!” Without hesitation, I grabbed our bags and got in with my sister. My heart raced rapidly as I thought, “I hope this goes right or I’m doomed. Now, go, Wizard of Time!” I typed in the code, and the time machine’s door shut. Everything froze. A shiver ran down my spine as if it was a hard rock falling from the sky. Boom! The last thing I saw was a quick flash of light.

Oops! Chang’An?

“Ahh!” My sister and I bawled desperately as we spawned in a sandy place with a bump, out of the blue. I peered around – We saw a large city in front of us, with huge stone gates, giant red lanterns, and guards with armour and funny hats carrying swords. I thought cautiously as I stared at the protected soldiers, “They look like the people in the movie of ancient China!” My sister looked at me, then she hissed, “Oh no, You brought us to the past instead!”

I sighed, “Where are we now?” A kind old man with a long beard shuffled past as he pointed to the sign of the gate, “Welcome to Chang’An!” Utterly dumbfounded, my sister murmured, “The starting point of the Silk Road!”

Trading for a Feast

Many ordinary citizens wearing layered robes like hanfu scattered around the vibrant and bustling markets, with merchants selling aromatic spices, delicate ceramics and fine silk. My sister suddenly tapped my back and muttered, “My tummy is rumbling... but we don’t have money!” I scratched my head but was soon inspired by the traders, “I know! We could sell our stuff to survive!” My sister took out her silk cardigan, a box of tea leaves, a bag of basil, a bottle of cinnamon, a few CNY ceramic decorations and for some reason her Labubu.

“Barter time!” We sorted the supplies into groups and set up our street stall. It soon attracted a huge group of interested, potential buyers, we were in luck. Our daily essentials were exchanged for steaming dumplings and hot noodles. They smelled wonderfully and we wolfed down on these delicacies. The noodle shop owner gave us a glutinous rice cake for free because she liked our Labubu and thought it was a luck enhancer.

Wrong turn to Rome

After the scrumptious feast, my sister exclaimed, “Best lunch ever, shall we move on?” I fetched for the Wizard of Time, thank goodness it’s still with us. My sister hugged her Labubu tight and ready for a journey home. I somehow found a button to unshrink the machine as I marched in and typed in another code and ZAP! We were teleported!

But, no, it didn't feel like home. The sky was cloudless and sapphire blue. The temperature was scorching hot, and I felt the sunshine beaming at us. My sister glared at me and screeched worriedly, "Oh no! Look at that – it is Coliseum! We are in Ancient Rome – the end of the Silk Road!" "Again!" We laid eyes on those white stone buildings and marble courts, fountains with splashing water, men wearing toga with straight, eagle beak-like nose and high cheekbones, and carts pulled by animals.

Bandit trouble

In no time, a group of stern-looking men with rusty cloaks surrounded us as they raised their weapons like spears and daggers. "Look at these strange travelers, they must be the affluent traders from the east." shouted one of the bandits. He grinned at us mysteriously, showing a missing tooth, as he noticed our Wizard of Time. I shivered cowardly but my sister ran at them, she held her fist high and fought them fearlessly. In the state of chaos, my sister's Labubu fell off and landed with a soft plop in the dust. Suddenly, the bandit leader cried, "Oh! An Oriental goddess!", pointing to the innocent Labubu. They all kneeled and bowed, murmuring for forgiveness. I couldn't help but giggled sheepishly, "That monster with a furry head and sharp teeth looked nothing like a goddess!"

We grasped our opportunity to take control and activate our Wizard of time, making our best effort to escape from this undesirable predicament. I unshrunk it again and typed in "safe haven". WHOOSH! My sister and I disappeared without a trace – How could the bandits not believe Labubu was not an almighty deity?

Home Sweet Home

It was completely silent before I realised we were finally home, in my bedroom, safe. To us, it felt like we had been gone forever, but only five minutes had passed. My sister held up Labubu high as she was showing off a trophy, and exclaimed in her proud, sarcastic voice, "The goddess protected us!"

I agreed with her as I reflected – What an unexpected and unforgettable adventure! Now, everytime I eat dumplings or see Labubu, I will remember this amazing time travel, in the ancient Chinese and Roman capitals – a magnificent adventure to the Silk Road.

The Dragon Legend

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Li, Maggie – 10

The three dragons moonlight, starlight and sunlight are the commanders of illumination. Long ago they fell to the earth. before they floated back up to their commandment quarters they left their right eyes there to symbolise their power and their glory . if you collect all of their eyes you could grant a wish. after all these years there has been no confirmed sightings of even one dragon eye leaving finding them all Impossible.

“Daddy, why can’t I go with you?” Lin asked, her father was always out travelling trying to sell his silk. Lin only ever saw every day at dinner, after dinner he would just go straight to bed, and by the time Lin woke up he would already be at work. Lin always pretended to be interested in her fathers work, but she actually thought it was boring and dull. The only reason she begged to go with him to work the next day at dinner was because she wanted to spend some time with him, and besides no one would want to be around Lin’s mom when she got mad.

One day when Lin went to bed she was feeling thirsty, so she crept down the stairs and paused at her parents' room. She swore she could hear voices coming from there. She smushed her face against the door so she could see through the key hole. “I don’t know if we can feed and take care of three people at this rate.” Lin heard “What are you saying?” Her father asked, “ it means that I don’t know if we can afford to feed the two of us let alone three of us?” Lin’s mother said turning away from her father. Lin turned away; this was just too much for her to handle. She ran up to her room and just about sobbed her eyeballs out. She thought of talking to her friends about it but then she realised she didn’t even have any friends of course she didn’t have any friends. I mean all the other kids did was Babel about the dragon legend. Wait, that’s it Lin thought the Dragon legend if Lin could just find the dragon eyes IT would be Perfect She packed her bag.

The rain fell hard against Lin’s face as she trudged through the muddy streets of the village, she had no idea where to go. Just go far far away she thought, there was no way the dragon eyes would be anywhere near the village, the other kids would have found it already. As she was leaving the village Lin stared at the river it was so big and so beautiful, the moon reflected onto the water leaving just a glimpse of its presence, the tall trees towered over her head making her feel as small as the tiniest speck of dust, the wind blew through her hair as she ran around the woods, laughing of joy she finally felt like she belonged. As she ran farther away from home she could see a glow in the river. Not giving herself enough time to think she jumped into the water. As soon as her face hit the water her eyes burned and all she could think about was: cold cold cold cold. She forced herself to move swimming towards the glow and when she finally got close enough to see what it was she saw a beautiful orb shining as bright as the moon. She swam up to it and grabbed it, running out of breath. She floated back to the surface and studied the orb.Wait, she thought is that a dragon eye as she looked up at the sky. She realised the moon was shining brighter than ever. This was the moonlight dragon eye. She jumped up with joy, feeling an extra boost of confidence, and continued on her quest.

As she was walking through the forest Lin was practically glowing with pride. She had never done anything important before and finally finding the moonlight dragon eye made her feel as special as ever. she decided that the universe was telling her to take a break so she set up camp and try to get ready for bed. She climbed over the rock and hopped into the tent. The sun was glowing so brightly that when ling went out of her tent, she had to dive back in because the sun was just blinding her eyes. She decided that this was another sign that the universe had gave to her. She decided to follow the ray of sunshine, climbing up the tall mountain. she kept on walking until she came to a bee hive but the bees just flew away, leaving their hive for her to see. As she appeared into the hive, she saw another glowing orb. This must be the sunlight eye she thought two down one

more to go. This was easier than she thought. When she got back to her campsite the sun was already setting, she didn't even realize how tired she was until her head hit her sleeping bag, and she fell into a deep sleep.

When she woke up, Lin wasted no time and immediately started trying to find the starlight dragon eye. Throughout the day, she just kept on walking and walking. She kept her eyes peeled, but she still found nothing until she was about to go to bed when she spotted a glowing one near the fireplace immediately, she knew what this was it was the starlight dragon eye. She was so excited that she wasn't watching where she stepped and accidentally tripped over a rock. When she finally got to the Dragon or she retrieved it and is made of thing, I would definitely gather all of the dragon ice together then she said her words. "I am Lin Ming Hee and I wish for good fortune for my family and those in our village." when suddenly her eyes glowed ...

The Island in the Middle of Nowhere

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Ngai, Scarlett – 10

"Ready?" James asked, seeming to ask this to himself, but I replied.

"As ready as I can be." Butterflies seemed to be having a party in my stomach.

"Olivia?" He turned to my best friend, who was nerve-rackingly mumbling.

"I guess." She faked a grin.

"Remember, this is for our families, for Chang'an!" I reminded my friends.

After following the river for a day, I looked up. Silver storm clouds danced in the grey sky, crying big drops of blue. Lightning weaved through the clouds, sending beams of light occasionally. I shook drops from my brown hair, glanced at my friends, who were drenched in the rain.

"We should stop for the night, we all look like we drowned at this point," I suggested.

James chuckled, "Yeah, we should, at that cave." He pointed at a small cave shielded from sight by trees.

"Yeah." Olivia echoed.

"Let's take turns to keep watch, I'll go first," I volunteered.

"Cassidy, you need the rest." They both muttered, but did nothing to stop me.

I stared at the rain outside the cave, it was fast, like bullets striking armour, with a "Ping!" to it. By going on this journey, we have sacrificed a life of ease and comfort, because we long for adventure and freedom. Trapped in the bustling city of Chang'an, I long for peace from what they expected from me. We will be scarred for life if we survive, with horrors even the strongest warriors covered in fear from. We were going to sell silk across the deserts and mountains, because the people in Chang'an could not afford the high prices we demanded. We can achieve that by reaching our destination, the Western Regions.

I woke up to the smell of burnt toast. On the corner of the cave, Olivia was panickedly trying to fan the toast, which was, unfortunately, smoking abnormally. I started taking out my jug of water and poured water in three cups. I placed the toast in a basket while James smeared them with berry jam, which he prepared by smushing raspberries and blueberries with some honey. I munched on the toast, and I signalled to my friends to join me.

"Let's go across the Gobi Desert first," I pointed out.

"I agree, it's the quickest and most efficient way to get to the lands beyond the desert," Olivia seconded.

"Alright." James agreed.

I swiftly wiped my face with a cloth and stuffed everything in my bag, "You done? Let's go. It's dangerous to stay at one place for more than a day." They agreed and followed me out of the cave.

You couldn't miss the Gobi Desert. It was a treacherous view, with tall sand dunes looming over you, with an occasional tree or two. When you picture deserts, there is usually tons of sand, but that is one of the things Gobi Desert lacks. I stared at the horizon, the sun was already halfway through the sky, we had to move quickly. I motioned to my friends to follow me towards the mountains.

We were about a quarter through the desert, then we ran out of water.

"I wish we had something to drink!" Olivia moaned.

"I feel a bit faint—" before James could finish his sentence, he toppled to the ground.

"James?" The fear in my voice was hard to hide.

"I think he's sick," Olivia frowned.

"He needs water, quick!" I started lifting his body..

"Just keep walking," Olivia added.

The weight of James's body was no longer bothersome, it was like carrying a hippopotamus. Olivia and I took turns lifting his body around, we continued until we reached a small village. Small and dainty, were the exact words to describe it. The houses were actually small, about waist height, with shimmery gems embedded on top. I gently helped Olivia to get James off her shoulders and called out "Hello? Our friend is sick, and he really needs water."

A head peeked out of the largest house, saw us, then screamed "Ahhhhh!"

About a dozen dwarfs ran out holding various items such as a cactus, a stick and some palm tree leaves. They look pretty harmless but the angry expressions on their faces told me that they were not messing around.

"Stop! We just want some water. Our friend is really sick." I repeated.

"Water, you say?" the largest dwarf considered.

"You see, our kind has always been threatened by humans but we will help the sick or the injured. Our village is home to the largest oasis in the Gobi Desert," he continued.

Before I could even speak, an oasis came into view, but the water was not like any water I have ever seen before, it seemed to glow, but a rather ominous glow and multiple waves crashed on the stone, like it was trying to consume us. Two dwarfs carried James and dipped him in the oasis, quickly, the water around him turned gold, gleaming brightly.

"Wait, what?" me and Olivia questioned.

"This oasis is special. Usually it is dark and mysterious. Once in a while, when a pure person bathes in it, it glows. I've never seen such a bright glow before!" The dwarf exclaimed, seeming rather surprised.

"Really?" Olivia grinned.

"James!" I hugged my friend tightly "You're okay!"

"Huh, I don't remember anything." He frowned, his brows so close together, they formed a line.

"We have to go, thank you for your hospitality." I dipped my head.

"Take the camels, they will guide you toward the setting sun." He helped us on the camels, who were quite obedient.

"How do you know where we are going?" I turned around, but we were already too far away, galloping to the sunset.

I closed my eyes and leaned against the camel's neck, dreaming of talking dwarfs and a golden oasis.

When I woke up, I saw the glittery city of the west before me, and I finally allowed myself to smile.

My Travels along the Silk Road: One More Stop

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Shi, Vicky – 10

I Will Find You, Mama

The Journey Begins Today is my first day on the Silk Road. The dust is a fine orange powder that coats everything—my clothes, my teeth, even this journal. I set out from Chang'an with my camel groaning under the weight of gifts for Mama, though most of them were just pieces of art by my siblings and me, as we weren't doing well. I met a boy today who traded me sweet dates for one of my sister's cakes; he told me of giant dunes and stone cities I will see weeks from now. I can almost smell Mama's flowery scent and feel her soft shawl. I hope she is still in Lanzhou so I can take her home quickly.

Flashback: My Story

Last night, I arrived in Lanzhou, but Mama was nowhere to be found. The sunrise reminded me of our life in Italy, in a sparkling mansion where we would huddle with tea. That was before Papa passed and our world fell apart. Mama moved us to Chang'an for a fresh start, but without Papa, we failed financially. Desperate, Mama became a trader. She snuck out one night, leaving a note promising to return by Christmas. Two Christmases have passed. My siblings are barely surviving on my twin's meager earnings from polishing shoes. I must find her at the next stop, Dunhuang. It is a cosmopolitan hub, and Mama always loved different cultures. I imagine her there, waiting with outstretched arms.

The Flickering Candle

Mama has never broken a promise, and the thought that she might have abandoned us makes me feel a cold rage. But I cannot let hope die. If she isn't in Dunhuang, I will venture all the way back to Italy if I must. To find the next leg, I sold a jade trinket Mama left behind. I haggled fiercely with a merchant, thinking of my twin's tired hands. With the coins, I bought a knife and a water sack. I am no longer a grieving child; I am a traveler. I joined a caravan led by a man with a face like worn leather. When he asked why I travel alone, I simply said, "I am meeting family in Kashgar." I've named my grumpy camel "Papa" because he is stubborn and reliable. Lanzhou was the end of my childhood; the road to Kashgar is the beginning of my real life.

Broken and Doubting

I haven't journaled for days. Time is too precious to waste. All I see is sand. The fear of bandits and storms is constant, and I have forgotten the feeling of silky blankets. I am breaking, but I must keep going for my siblings.

Reunion at Last

After months, I reached Kashgar. It was a whirlwind of color and foreign tongues. Then, I saw it: a flash of sapphire blue embroidery on a shawl at a rug stall—Mama's stitching. The merchant pointed me toward a weaver's compound. In a shaded courtyard, a frail woman bent over a loom. "Mama?" She turned, her green eyes clouding with tears. "Mio cuore," she breathed. She smelled of sweat and sandalwood now, not flowers, but she was real. She told me of sandstorms, thieves, and a fever that had kept her prisoner to shame. "I thought you believed I chose to leave," she sobbed. "Never," I whispered. The journey back was long, but we were a team. We reached Chang'an as the first winter snow dusted the gates. When I pushed open the door to our cramped house, my siblings froze, then crashed into us with tears and laughter. That night, we huddled together. We were no longer in an Italian mansion, but we were whole. The Silk Road had taken much, but it gave me a map of my own strength, written not on parchment, but on my heart. We were home.

East meets West

Victoria Shanghai Academy, So, Hailey – 10

Through the bustling streets of the biggest market in Persia, there was a young skinny boy standing at an antique stall, listening to a story from an old man that many called a fraud. His eyes on the staff the old man holding — at the end of the staff carved a goat's head — “this is called Fú Jié from the famous Zhang Qian who is said to have founded our Road to the East. There is a prophecy that says the chosen one will time travel back to his era and save him from the Xiong Nu and also guide him to Yuezhi. But obviously, to try it out, you have to buy it for, hmmm, let's see, ok, let's say 500 gold pieces.” said the greedy old man as Marco Polo handed over the gold pieces without hesitation. After all, Marco could be the chosen one, so why not just try? Behind a marble pillar, Marco gripped the staff and closed his eyes, wishing for adventure and excitement. He expected a tunnel appear out of nowhere, or at least a force pulling him forward. But, much to his dismay, nothing happened. Not even a slightest bit of breeze. Again, Marco touched the goat's head carving, and ran his hands over the smooth handle of the staff. Then, the ground disappeared and he was falling, falling until the world went black.

Deep in the heart of the Xiong Nu lair, skinny, spirit-dying prisoners sat like sitting ducklings waiting for their mama to come. In need of their usual soft and warm animal skins and glowing hearth fires, the prisoners had huddled into the corners of their dungeons, tilting their heads up from time to time in the hope of the last rays of the day's sun trickling down their faces. The only person still energetic enough to even unstick himself from the shadows was an important looking middle-aged man crouched over the cold stone floor of his dungeon, holding a sharp stick and drawing something very significant to him on the floor, oblivious to anything around him. He was Zhang Qian, instructed by the Emperor on a mission to Yuezhi. He raised his head from his big drawing and smiled, happy by his hard work that was finished after a year. A whistle echoed in the room, and Zhang quickly slung a big canvas bag over his shoulder, and sliced through the bars of his window.

THUD! Marco hit the ground, Fú Jié still in his hand, millimetres away from stabbing him. He turned around just to see a dignified, bearded Chinese gentleman wearing ample, flowing robes and a sash at his waist. Then, he remembered. His mission to save Zhang from the guards and bring him safely to Yuezhi to help him finish his mission. It all depended on him. Marco thought, “without me, Zhang Qian may never be able to finish his journey.” So, Marco gathered up all his courage and headed towards the famous Zhang Qian. “Hey, um, I am here to help you get past those guards...” Marco rambled. As Zhang's face was a look of pure confusion, Marco made an action of throwing the sacks of grains, then pointed to the exit and made an action of running. Crash! Sack after sack of grains split open on the floor. Immediately, the guards went to investigate, which bought Zhang and Marco enough time to escape.

Upon arriving and reuniting with Zhang's fellow comrades, Marco explained the prophecy to Zhang and convinced him to let Marco guide his way. Zhang and Marco then saddled on their horses and together, they embarked on their journey to Yuezhi. As they slowly passed Lop Nor, they got lost in the Tarim Basin desert. It was now inky-black and icy-cold. The once grainy and golden sand of the desert was now humid and icy-cold, very unlike the ones burning hot coals of ember that hurt to step on. All the bugs and critters of the desert that were once sunbathing in the hot sun were now hidden in their burrows from the glacial cold of the temperature. The desert that was once magnificent now just seen like a simple, humble sandpit with no sign of life. Feeling hopeless, Zhang nearly suggested to retreat and go back to Chang An. But, Marco said, “Don't give up! Trust me, you are the pioneer of opening the route between East and West.” Marco persuaded Zhang to wait until morning came, then they would continue. Suddenly, they heard hoofbeats as loud as thunder, and a tall, brown and powerful horse galloping towards them. “Quick! Let's get on that horse! The horse is a rare kind and is famous for its magnificent turn of foot. I heard it comes from Dayuan, so maybe it will bring us there!” Zhang cried. They gathered all their belongings and saddled the horse, whipping it until it let them sit on it.

Finally, after two days and two nights, they finally arrived at a rich and bustling city full of expensive textiles and food. “Finally!” Zhang sighed. “Here, Marco, I think you deserve to hold this for a while. This staff is a symbol of authority and always reminded me of this mission of making alliance with Yuezhi.” Zhang handed his staff to Marco, and as Marco gripped the staff and touched the goat’s head carving, thinking about the Persian market. WHOOSH! Suddenly, he was sucked up into the air, farther from Zhang every second. With a final “goodbye” hanging on his lips, Marco Polo disappeared.

A Secret Mission on the Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Tang, Adrian – 9

The Story Begins

Last summer, my parents and I travelled to Monaco for our holiday. One lazy afternoon, we wandered into a boutique coffee shop. The shop was filled with old maps, Venetian antique furniture, and a collection of ancient books. Beside the cashier, a glowing golden tablet with mysterious symbols caught my attention. I could not take my eyes off it, mesmerised.

I heard a deep voice behind me, “that tablet is the Golden Paiza of Kublai Khan, the first emperor of the Yuan dynasty of China.” The voice belonged to Michael, the gentle shop owner, a man in his mid-forties. He introduced himself as a descendant of Marco Polo’s closest companion. What followed was a tale of adventure and mystery that history had never recorded, but one Michael swore it really happened.

The Golden Paiza and the Secret Mission

In 1290, a foreigner stood at the heart of Dadu, the capital of the Yuan dynasty (now Beijing). He was dressed in a traditional Mongolian deel, a pair of baggy trousers and boots made from animal hide. This man was none other than Marco Polo. He held the Golden Paiza engraved with Mongol script. It was not only a VIP travel pass, but also a symbol of Kublai Khan’s trust and authority.

History books tell us that Marco’s final mission for Khan was to escort Princess Kokochin to Persia to get married. But hidden beneath this diplomatic task was a secret mission. The aging ruler, now 75, burdened by the loss of his love, ordered Marco to find the legendary elixir of revival known as Eternal. The elixir, Khan believed, could bring the dead back to life. The Golden Paiza, Khan revealed, had a hidden map to the Eternal’s location. Marco carried not only the valuable Golden Paiza, but also the weight of the emperor’s hope.

Shadows on the Journey

Marco, his father Niccolo, his uncle Maffeo, Princess Kokochin and a small team of imperial guards set off along the Silk Road. The Golden Paiza not only provided them safe passage through checkpoints, but also drew unwanted attention. Whispers of their mission spread like wildfire, attracting rival merchants, thieves, and assassins. Along the way, they met monks who spoke in cryptic riddles about the location of the elixir and treasure hunters who followed them, eager to steal the elixir for themselves. The closer they came to the truth, the greater the danger became.

The Wise Man’s Talk

At one of the most remarkable stops, the Golden Paiza led them to a monastery carved into the cliffs of the Silk Road’s Haxi Corridor. Marco and his companions approached the monastery with a mix of anticipation and caution. Inside, they were greeted by Master Qiu, a serene monk. Marco presented the Golden Paiza and explained their mission with urgency, hoping for guidance. The monk studied the tablet in silence before finally speaking, “it is not about how long we live, but how well we live.” Marco was confused. Before he could ask for clarification, the monk had offered no further explanation and disappeared. That night, Marco’s dreams were haunted by the monk’s words. As the journey continued, the words continued to linger in his mind for the rest of the trip.

The Final Destination

After months of travel, surviving dangerous climbs, freezing weather, and even assassination attempts, Marco and the few who remained finally reached the “Roof of the World,” where the Golden Paiza had led them. Deep in an ancient cave, they found a glowing waterfall. The water flowed into crystal basins, each one filled with a

shimmering liquid like starlight. The scene was breathtaking. Marco and his companion stood in silence, they knew this was what they were looking for – the Eternal. As Marco stared at the elixir of revival, his heart was heavy. His happiness was overshadowed by a sense of anger and grief. Memories of fall companions and hardship for this journey and Master Qiu’s words filled his mind. He found himself second-guessing everything and began to question whether immortality was a gift or a curse.

Marco’s Dilemma and His Decision

That night, while the others slept, Marco made his decision. He poured the elixir onto the frozen ground, watching as the shimmering liquid vanished in a sudden flash. He wrote a letter to Khan about this trip, his lessons he had learnt and his choice. He asked one of the imperial guards to deliver it to Khan. The guard returned to Dadu to deliver the letter to Khan. Khan was upset at the beginning. However, upon reading Marco’s heartfelt words, Khan was deeply moved and commanded that the entire mission and the existence of the elixir be erased from the records of the Yuan dynasty.

The Aftermath and the Unspoken Truth

In 1293, Marco successfully accompanied Princess Kokochin to Persia. But instead of returning to China, he chose to go back to Venice. He was still dressed in Mongolian attire and struggling to speak Venetian, Marco was barely recognized by his fellow Venetians. Kublai Khan died shortly after in 1294, reportedly from gout and obesity. After his return to Venice, Marco, at the age of 45, wrote “The Book of the Marvels of the World” which was about his travels and his experiences he had during his two decades' time abroad.

Some historians speculated the “elixir” he mentioned might be kefir, a fermented milk believed to have health benefits. But to this day, no one knows the truth. Did Marco destroy the elixir, or did he keep some for himself? It remains one of history’s greatest myths.

As Michael finished telling the story, he said, “Marco Polo never revealed what really happened to the elixir. Or maybe”, he continued with a knowing smile, “it’s still there waiting for the right person to find it.” With a playful grin, Michael said, “who knows? Or maybe Marco Polo drank the elixir and became me.”

New Silk Road

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Tian, Kristine – 10

A little girl sat at a window, like always. Anyone would have thought she was absolutely crazy... but little did they know, she wasn't looking at the view. She was dreaming, head in the clouds. Lily was imagining how she would go to the Silk Road, to a magical place like a loooooonnnnggggggggg road of silk, winding around the entire world. She thought it would be a magical place with clouds and marshmallows, but she really didn't know much.

One day, Lily decided that the only way to do exactly what she wanted to do was to run away as soon as possible from the orphanage. The only time she could do anything unsupervised was at night, when everyone was supposed to be sleeping. So, when the room was full of snoring noises, she tiptoed to the door of her shared bedroom and opened the door and closed it. She went to the orphanage caretakers' storage, and took a big backpack and lots of different supplies. Then, she dressed in one of the caretaker's daughter's clothes that nobody had touched in years, or remembered, to disguise herself, because nobody would recognise an orphanage child who wasn't wearing an orphanage uniform. She silently ran to the door, and then she slipped out into the quiet night.

One hour of walking around the park later, Lily saw a ship far away. She climbed a tree and saw that the ship was docking at the last pier. *Oh no*, Lily thought. *Ships that dock at the last pier always leave within 6 hours—and it is so far to the pier that I won't be able to walk there even in a day! What will I do?* She thought about it for what seemed like hours, but no solution came to her...then she saw the bike. The bike was rusty and oily, at the side of the road. Most people wouldn't have bothered to fix it, and the previous owner had obviously thought so too, or it wouldn't have been there, but she had to try. So, Lily began looking in her bag to see what she had to fix it. The only thing she needed was a bit of oil, because the reason why the bike didn't work was that the chain was rusted and stuck. But she didn't have any oil, just an empty oil container. Suddenly, she saw that a nearby bike shop's bin was overflowing with used cans of oil. Those cans had some oil left, apparently, because the store's owners were very rich and careless, and didn't care about wasting what seemed to them to be a bit – but to other people a lot – of oil. Lily had heard this story many times before, but had never encountered the bike shop before. So, she went over to the rubbish bin – and saw that each can contained a handful of oil! Lily smiled at her good luck, but also sighed at the fact that the owners were so reckless.. She filled her oil container up with oil, then took a paintbrush out of her supplies in her bag, and brushed oil all over the bike, testing it until it worked, and could move smoothly, good as new. Lily began to ride on the bicycle lane on the road...

Soon, Lily was at the pier. She was an expert at riding a bike fast, because sometimes the orphanage caretakers would make her go out to the backyard and do something else other than stare out the window. The only thing she could do there was ride the old orphanage bike around and around the yard, so that's what she'd done. She went up to a boy who stood aside, and asked him:

"Hello, could you please bring me to the Silk Road, or perhaps tell me how to get there? I would like to try some marshmallows."

The boy was quite confused by the bit about the marshmallows, but said softly to her:

"Sure, but you will have to sneak on somehow. My name is Tom. The others don't like guests."

And so it started. Lily lived in a cabin on the ship that everyone except Tom thought was haunted and didn't ever go near, but Tom came to that cabin that really wasn't haunted many times each day to give her food and plan with her about what they would do to go to the Silk Road together, because Tom told Lily he also wanted to go the Silk Road after she'd told him what she thought it was. Tom was the captain's son, and was very good at sailing. He could go to the cabin without anyone noticing, because he had gotten assigned to clean the

“haunted” cabin. Their plan was to steal an extra motorboat from the big boat and sail to the Silk Road. Tom found out how to get to the Silk Road by secretly searching it up on his dad’s phone, and so they executed their plan at night. Tom stole his dad’s phone and then went with Lily silently to the motorboat. He had swiftly put earplugs in all the sailors’ ears, so nobody would hear the motor on the motorboat. He had also stolen lots more supplies for them. The plan worked perfectly, and they arrived at their destination quickly.

Lily and Tom weren’t sure what to make of the Silk Road. It was just sea, and there weren’t any marshmallows. After asking a nearby man, they found out that the Silk Road wasn’t what they thought it was – it was just a travel route to go to places for easier trading or something!? After that, they despaired, because they’d just run out of food! But the man gave them enough supplies to go somewhere else, and told them of other places that were truly magical – and so Lily and Tom contentedly set off to travel the world, and to find their own Silk Road – or at least something very similar to it.

The Family of Silk

Victoria Shanghai Academy, To, Alexis – 9

Once upon a time, in a very wealthy family there lived three triplets. The youngest triplet was called Rebecca, the middle one was called James, and the oldest one was called Oscar. Their parents somehow had a lot of silk in their house and they wanted to know why, but whenever they asked their parents they would always answer the same answer, “it is a secret place, we cannot tell you where it is or else it will not be a secret”.

How their family became wealthy was because of the silk that they got, they would sell it in one of the stalls in their town and at the end of the day, they would earn BILLIONS.

One day, when the triplets were having a walk in the busy town when they saw something that they hadn’t seen before, there was a short sign which was about half of a metre long, and when they crouched down to look what the sign said, the sign said SILK ROAD, the triplets did not know what that meant and the paint was faded like it was here for a very long time.

They thought it was pretty suspicious to see a half a metre sign that said silk road pointing to a pathway covered with bushes, trees and other kinds of plants that the triplets did not know the names of so James thought of a plan: they would run to the mansion to get a backpack and put supplies in it like water, a towel for wiping sweat, and some food and medical supplies so they could explore the mysterious so called “SILK ROAD”.

When they went back to where they saw the silk road sign with all their supplies, they pushed aside the leaves and started to EXPLORE.

When they stepped through the leaves, their eyes became wide with shock, they couldn’t believe their eyes. In the silk road there were a lot of people walking around with giant baskets, and inside each basket, it was full of SILK.

When they looked around, they saw all of the world’s most famous silk sellers walking around with an even bigger basket than the others, so now they know where their parents got all the silk from, “wow! I never thought that our old China town would have something so special! Even the famous silk sellers from America is here!” said Oscar in amazement, “so now we know where mom and dad get all the silk from!” cried Rebecca, “but

where do they get all the silk from?"asked James and Oscar in unison they looked around,and realized that the the tiny white things on the bushes that they thought were tiny flowers were actually little strands of silk!

So they walked deeper into the silk road—and they saw their parents picking silk! So they hid behind a silk bush and spied on their parents"it's our parents!"whispered Oscar,"thank you for the information captain obvious"whispered James mischievously,"will you guys stop fighting?"chided Rebecca,even though Rebecca was the youngest,the two boys stopped talking.

Their parents finally left the silk road but Rebecca,James,and Oscar didn't care if their parents were finding them because they told their parents they were gonna have a playdate with their friends until night. So they stood up from their hiding place,and walked deeper into the silk road.

They started exploring starting from the entrance of the silk road and they each bought a medium sized basket in the basket market in the silk road for twenty dollars. They had a lot of money because their parents gave them three-hundred dollars every day to spend because their family had way too much money.

They started by picking tiny strands of silk from the tiny silk bushes and they also realized that the flowers were actually silk, and hanging from the branches of trees were silk! Now the triplets knew why this was called the silk road,because there was so much silk!

Once they got all the silk,it was already getting dark,so Oscar,James,and Rebecca decided to get home from a long day's work. But when they were walking back home,they suddenly heard a deep gravelly voice behind them that said,'give me all your silk'.

Salvation by the Eastern Elixir

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wai, Nathan – 10

My muscles ached, my lungs were screaming, and every inch of my body was scorched under the blazing hot sun as perspiration dripped down my face. I wanted to stop trudging down this hard, brick road with the heavy load of ingredients in my heavy backpack. But I knew I must keep trudging the remaining fifty kilometers, and that my weeks of walking were almost finally over, as I continued trekking down the Silk Road. I looked back at the letter to my clinic at Anhui (hometown of the legendary Hua Tuo physician in China), encouraging myself to get there faster.

‘Please save our village! Our Elder will die in a few weeks time. Please help us!’

I promise I won’t let the village down. A ‘Smash!’ sound came out from behind me. Whipping my head around, I quickly scanned the area, and saw a few shards of glass shattered on the floor with a worried looking young man looking behind me. Turning around, I continued my journey across the Zarafshan–Karakum Corridor of the Silk Road to save the village.

“Oh, Dr.Hao, you’ve finally arrived!” Exclaimed a local villager as I got closer, “please, take a room.”

After I got myself comfortable and opened my bag, thinking I would be greeted by the pink, glowing liquid I had brewed at home, I was surprised to find nothing but an open, wet bag—— My potion had disappeared. Burying my head in my callused hands, I heaved a long sigh as realization hit me —— the shattered glass! I should’ve known! And the fresh astragalus to add in ... by the time it got here, it wasn’t fresh anymore... I needed a substitute. Fast.

Nights passed as the Elder’s health declined. I had tried dozens and dozens of substitutes but while I could make out a potion, nothing worked to replace the astragalus. The tick–tocking of the rickety old alarm clock didn’t help, and I was soon out of ideas. That night, I lay in bed helplessly— I knew I would not get it done in time. Out of the corner of my tired eyes, I saw the gleam of what turned out to be a golden shawl. Standing right in front of me was a beautiful woman. I wanted to scream, but something about her silenced me. I watched as her lips opened, and she began to talk.

“I know what you are looking for. The substitute is in a nearby desert. When the sun is just about poking out of the top of the cacti, the herb shall appear.”

“But—”

What once was the woman, had just disappeared into darkness.

I woke up bright and early, remembering a dream I had that night about a substitute and a woman. Coincidence or not, I had to try it. I must take the risk. Creeping out of my room, I saw a speck of reddish sand on the horizon— the Karakum Desert. I sprinted towards it using the strength I never knew I even had, and soon enough, the sun just about rose above the cacti. Then I saw it. It was a small, green shoot that just barely rose above the floor, but if what the woman said was true, then that tiny plant was enough. I leaped towards it, for fear that it would disappear after the sun rose up, but then it seemed to jump away from me. Suddenly a deep rumbling seemed to shake my bones and a temple rose up in front of me. I turned around but as if the temple wanted to taunt me, the door slammed shut right as I tried to walk out. Swiveling around, I saw the plant

encased inside of a clear, diamond box across a series of moving platforms. I bit my lip. Should I...? I remembered the Elder's ghastly, ashen face, and decided that I had no choice.

Hopping from platform to platform made my legs ache terribly but I remembered the terrible shape in which the Elder was in to keep myself going. I would not let the village down. There were several near misses and once I even found myself dangling on a two-centimeter thick pole! After hours upon hours upon hours of being in the temple, I finally reached my prize—The village's prize—the plant. The glass case slid open and I held my prize up—I had finally done it. As much as I wanted to celebrate, there was no time to dillydally. I quickened my pace and made my way back to my shambly old room. I took my tools out of my pocket and started to brew the solution. Add this... add that... can't forget the plant that I just got... boil... stir... measure... I slowly made progress, bit by bit, and the potion was complete. Excitement, accompanied by worry and anxiety bubbled through me as I strode through the corridor towards the room that held the sickly Elder.

The Elder's face looked deathly pale, his body was tired and frail. He seemed incapable of standing up, and even if he were, he would probably instantly fall back down. His voice was soft and hoarse and hard to hear, but I think he said something like, "bring me the medicine" I took the pinkish potion out of my bag, and poured it down the Elder's throat.

Several days later, I received another letter from the village, enclosing a package:

Thank you for saving our Elder. He is getting better by the hour and it seems like he will soon turn back into his old self in a few days. Please accept this as a gift. Chinese medicine works wonders.
—Thanks, villagers.

I slowly opened the parcel, and there it was: a fine Turkish carpet. The Silk Road is more than a road, it brought about an exchange of kindred spirits across cultures. That, and the remarkable sharing of our unique specialties, will leave a lasting memory.

Sabrina's New Chapter of Life

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wong, Elly – 10

The sun rose like a golden coin, which made Sabrina's warm blue eyes glitter in the sunlight like sapphire jewels. Thinking back, Sabrina felt as if her brother's death had just happened yesterday. It was about 3 years ago when Sabrina's brother, Tyden, tragically got shot with a black poisoned arrow.

At that time, Sabrina was still young, so she couldn't remember much except for the fact that one night Tyden left to go walk the menacing Silk Road with a couple of his friends, promising to be back in a week with bags full of gold followed by many valuable treasures. As a week passed, Sabrina, who expected to see her brother with his usual triumphant face followed by precious gold, instead saw Tyden's friends sobbing uncontrollably, and instead of a handful of gold, it was one black arrow. Sabrina whose black hair bounced off her shoulders as a tear trickled from her eye to chin thought to herself, don't worry Tyden I will soon find the truth for us. Three years had passed since that incident, and finally she had evidence that could help her find out the truth, that's when she set on a mission that was almost impossible, but it was still worth a shot.

Sabrina prepared herself to leave home and set out to the Silk Road looking back at her home possibly for the very last time. She clutched the black arrow in her hands as tight as she could, making sure not to let go. The weather was beginning to get warm as she took a step nearer to the Gobbi desert. the first pathway to the Silk Road. the sun was slowly disappearing over the stunning horizon the darkness was near she needed to get there before nightfall.

After a while Sabrina was exhausted. it was the dead of the night by the time she reached the start of the Silk Road. there she stood in amazement staring at 100 of travelers heading the same direction as her. As a gust of wind blew towards her, sand danced around her feet tickling her toes. Sabrina felt a sense of calm as she closed her eyes I hailing the warm dry air into her lungs. Suddenly, there was a loud CRASH! Sabrina's eyes shot to that direction. There was a cart that had dropped some crates full of multi colored spices spilled out of the cart twisting and twirling in the sand. Behind the cart were two men on a camel shouting they seemed outrageous.

Not wanting to get involved in such commotion, Sabrina jumped on her horse and got on the path heading west. avoiding eye contact with other travelers, she decided it would be best to mind her own business for now, but then something shiny caught her eye, it was a man with a few scars on the side of his face, a rather looking gentleman. held in his hands were gold and jewels glistening in the sunlight. "Want to buy some?" he grunted. Sabrina narrowed her eyes "No thanks" she replied in a sullen tone, as her back was turning about to continue her journey, the young man's voice said hey I didn't catch your name yet it's it's er umm Sabri- Katrina. she smiled awkwardly at him, And without saying anything else she ran off filled with embarrassment.

After what felt like eternity, she found a place where shade existed. Sabrina sat down and began to rethink her life decisions. Did I come here just to get exhausted? Did I really come here to find the truth? Will I ever find out what happened to my brother? Yawning loudly, rubbing her eyes, which stung from. The grains of sand, Sabrina just wanted to sleep, suddenly she jolted out of her daze by the noise of camels and hours that passed by, making an awful racket. without hesitation, Sabrina jumped on her horse and kicked it hard, following behind the clusters of carts. There in front of her was the man whom she had previously spoken to. Sabrina couldn't pass the carts, so she took a peek out all the bottles and items he had stored in the back. Inside was an array of glass perfume bottles with many different colors, there were small sacks maybe full of gold, and in the corner she saw something familiar. It was the black arrow! Narrowing her eyes to get a better look, she was sure it was the same one!

Thoughts raced through her mind as they headed towards the mountain range of the Himalayas, As the weather went from room temperature to frightfully cold the air crisp and fresh, Sabrina thought deeply, He must be the murderer. Or maybe he bought them from the murderer?... There was only one way to find out. But before she could even blink "ACHOO!" Oh no, Sabrina thought to herself, just as she was going to turn back and make a great escape, The owner of the cart grabbed the reins of her horse, their eyes Fixed on each other both in shock.

Unknown to the mysterious man., Sabrina had sneakily taken back the black arrows and placed them in her quiver. seizing the opportunity to seek revenge on this heartless killer. with one fast swipe, she drew the arrow from behind her back, while smiling sweetly at the man. raising it, she drove the arrow right into his through with all her strength. the man started to gurgle, spitting up blood instantly. His eyes were those of terror as he clutched his throat in agonising pain, Sabrina wanted to finish him off quickly, so she drew her bow and arrow then shot straight into his heart, ending him swiftly. The first snowflake fell, and soon the ground was starting to look like a white blanket. Sabrina, satisfied she had avenged her brother, smiled proudly to herself.

Silk And Bandits: A Son's Quest

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Wu, Ariel – 10

"Please, I'm begging you, don't let him take my fall." His words barely escaped his rasping voice, eyes red-rimmed and yellow from sleepless nights. The crowd watched as the chief regarded him with disdain. "Fine, what do you want?" The chief said.

"Thank you," my father's straggly beard brushed limply on the floor as he performed a final kowtow to the chief. "I wish for my son to not be punished after my passing" his eyes were blank, and I watched from the sidelines as he slipped into eternal slumber.

"You heard him!" The chief's voice reverberated across the plaza, and the guards loosened their grips on my wrists. Heart wrenching sobs ran down my face as I bowed.

"Let's go, boy" they said, dragging me onto an old carriage. "Jian, you shall not be punished, but may not be allowed to stay." A guard turned around, staring into my eyes.

"Bu—but where will I go?" I stared at the back of his head in utter disbelief.

"Well, since you act like you want to redeem yourself, and we have some spices we're running low on..."

"No," I whispered, not the Silk Road, anywhere but the Silk Road. Once I enter that treacherous path, I won't step back out. And the worst part was that they knew it. The soldier stopped the carriage and finally turned around to face me.

"This isn't my decision," he shrugged. "But if you successfully trade silk for spices in Uzbekistan, then you can return"

"We're here," the soldier announced

"Goodbye."

"Good luck!" Our paths would only intersect for a fleeting moment, but it was comforting within the chaos. I quietly thanked him and walked off with only my backpack. The roads stretched ahead, abandoned carriages lying across the floor, left there for god knows why. People walked past me in hordes, riding camels and horses, each carrying a pouch full of goods. Night descended, and I zipped open my backpack, pulling out a mat and a tent. A chill swept across the plains and I quickly closed my eyes. Willing myself to go to sleep, to wake up tomorrow with my father. But I knew that wasn't happening, and it broke me to realize it.

"Excuse me?" a voice jolted me awake.

"Yes?" I asked, startled.

"I saw your silk and was wondering if you would like to join our tents?"

"I guess," I replied, praying this decision wouldn't prove disastrous.

"Great, follow me! I'm Ren," I recalled my mother's warnings to not trust strangers. But Ren seemed nice, so I trudged on, ready to encounter whatever was awaiting me.

"We're here!"

"Whoa," The first tent hosted a table displaying a huge map; it was covered in annotations, marking a bloody path through the roads.

"I'm Anila," A girl in tight black clothes appeared, executing a perfect flip.

"Hi, I'm Jian" I said, introducing myself,

"Hello, I'm Li, I own most of the products here."

"I know the Silk Road like the back of my hand," Anila boasted.

"I lead the caravan," Ren said with a wink.

The newly formed crew sat around the table, talking and laughing till the world around them fell in a silent trance.

“Goodnight! See you tomorrow!” Li directed towards the group, Pulling out an old locket that belonged to my mother, I lay down in my tent. My mom passed when I was five, leaving a void where she once was. I thought it was selfish of my mom to leave us when we needed her most. She was a fighter, the one who uplifted our spirits. I wished she was here to prevent the loss of the silk that caused our downfall.

The sun was still sleeping when I woke up to find the silk missing. I frantically searched the mats and collapsed in despair when I found nothing. Panic surged as a loud bang echoed across the caravan.

“Psst, Anila!”

“What?” She said, sitting up.

“Someone broke into the caravan!”

“What!? Stay, I’ll handle it.”

“No, I’m coming with you.”

“Then grab a weapon.” Anila pulled two rifles out of a loose floorboard and tossed one to me.

“Put your hands up in the air, NOW!” Anila roared, her voice shrieking but firm. My heart thumped with shock and excitement. The bandits looked at each other, then raced to the door. But surprisingly, it was locked. Anila smirked, and repeated her order. The bandits reluctantly raised their arms and dropped the loot. “Well, look what we have here” Anila retrieved our items and expelled the bandits into the cold night.

As we assessed the stolen goods, I felt a rush of determination. I had found a crew, I may live past this after all, be allowed to go back home and redeem my family name. My journey was just beginning, and I was determined to honour my family and complete my task.

Months passed, filled with wild animals, rugged terrain, harsh weather, and more bandits. Our group learned to adapt, establishing systems to thwart disasters. We quickly went from complete strangers to the family we all needed. We gathered precious metals and gems, plus high-quality glass products.

But of course, no spices.

After many more weeks of hardship along the Silk Road, I finally traded my silk for spices within a bustling market in Samarkand. The vibrant colours overwhelmed my senses, stalls overflowing with spices, each more fragrant than the last. Occasional melodies floated around the lively community. With a pouch of saffron, cumin, and turmeric slung over my shoulder, I felt a mix of pride and relief.

The journey home was filled with thoughts of my parents, who had sacrificed everything for me. As I approached the village, the warm glow of home welcomed me. Hesitating, I pushed open the door. Almost expecting my dad to pull me into his arms, but instead, the scent of home intertwined with memories of laughter greeted me as I whispered, “I’m home.”

The Boy Who Once Walked

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Yau, Matias – 10

“Mom, why do Dad and Uncle Maffeo have to go away?” asked a boy, this boy was Marco Polo. His mom explained that they left Venice before he was born, but she never said where. Every night, Marco would look out the window, wondering if he'd ever see his father.

When Marco was five, his mother passed away, so he moved in with his aunt and uncle. Life there was good, he went to school, ate three meals a day, so yeah, it was pretty good. The house was full of pictures of his dad and uncle, so if he ever happened to see their faces in the bustling streets of Venice, he would know it's them.

One night, his uncle came home later than usual. “DING DONG!” Marco went to open the door. “Buonasera, Marco,” he greeted, “I have a special guest.” Marco was confused, why would uncle bring guests this late? Marco thought. His uncle stepped aside, showing the “special guest” “Ciao Marco” . The guest said. How does he know my name? Marco thought, but he does look familiar... the picture! “Papa?” Marco asked quietly, His father nodded, “Si! Come to papa, my son! We missed you!” Marco ran to his father, hugging him insanely tight. Uncle Maffeo joined the hug, making this the happiest moment of Marco's life.

The next day, Uncle Maffeo and Marco's father, Niccolo, explained their absence since the day he was born. They told him about meeting Kublai Khan, the Mongol Emperor of Cathay (northern China), and that the technology in Cathay was centuries ahead of the technology in Europe. Then came the question Marco waited to hear: “Do you want to come with us to Cathay?” Without hesitation, Marco exclaimed, “YES! YES! YES!”

The journey was difficult. They battled sandstorms, walked for miles, slept in tents, and went across Asia through Persia and Afghanistan. The toughest part was crossing the Pamir Mountains to reach Cathay. Marco was given a compass and a map of the route, so he could lead the pack.

When they arrived in the Himalayas, Niccolo warned Marco, “Stay close, stay away from the animals. Last time, a pack member was bitten by a wolf, and we also went through a big snowstorm.” Even though he was nervous, Marco knew he would be safe if he stayed with his father.

As they reached the Himalayas, a fierce blizzard awaited them. “Stay close,” Niccolo reminded Marco as they entered the angry blizzard.

The blizzard grew stronger every step Marco took, making it hard to see. A cold wind swept through him, he started losing sight of his father; he rushed forward, staying within Niccolo's personal space, just to feel safe. Instead of any signs of the blizzard going away, it grew even stronger, like it was just the beginning. They dug a hole in the mountain, creating a cave. They sheltered there for days, waiting patiently for the blizzard to stop. And it did after three days.

As they stepped out of the cave, they looked up and admired the clear sky and the brightly shining sun. “I guess we will have a peaceful day,” mumbled Niccolo. The group was all set to continue their journey. They were lucky the blizzard had passed, and the snow had hardened, allowing them to make use of their camels and poles. They walked for twenty kilometers but something else was waiting for them.

Suddenly, everyone began screaming in panic. Only the camels seemed unbothered. “What's wrong!? The blizzard is gone!” Niccolo shouted. “We will be long gone before another disaster comes!” A voice screamed, “Behind you!” the Polos looked back and Marco spotted a huge pile of snow falling towards them, pointing at

the top of the mountain. He asked his dad "Papa, do you think he means that huge pile of snow falling towards us?" Niccolo turned back, "No way, it's an avalanche!" Maffeo yelled.

The group raced to grab the nearest tree, but the avalanche was faster. Marco attempted to escape downhill, but soon found himself lost, with visibility reduced to zero. He couldn't find anyone, he was worrying so much he felt like his heart was beating a thousand times per second. He heard screams of fear, sounds of people falling off the mountain, "What if Papa and Uncle Maffeo were the ones falling? Oh no, I only just got my wish of seeing them, I don't want them to be gone just when I saw them for the first time of my life." Ice chunks started streaming down like a fierce river. Now, he is hearing more screams like they have been hit by the ice and pushed off the mountain. "Oh no!". Marco was lost and alone.

Just then, he spotted a sheep with unusually long, curly horns, looking like he looked fine with the storm. A mysterious urge made him follow it. Even with the sheep, Marco was still very worried, until he heard a familiar call, "Marco!" Desperately, he shouted back, "Pololo!" they kept shouting, getting closer each time until Marco and Niccolo finally reunited in the blinding snow. "Papa!" he cried, hugging each other, "I thought I lost you," cried Marco.

At the end of the mountain, they saw only one person and a few camels remaining. Uncle Maffeo said proudly, "Well, I guess we've got to finish the journey then." They continued the journey to Cathay.

The time at Cathay was amazing, they met Kublai Khan, and after serving him for seventeen years, they went back to Venice.

Although Marco's aunt didn't recognize them, they still reunited just as they always wanted. Marco told the story of their adventure, even told about this weird sheep he met at the Pamir mountains, which the sheep was later named after him. It was amazing. Niccolo and Maffeo died shortly after their return, but they will always remember the amazing time they had together, and to Marco, they are always beside him, right in his heart.

My Journey

Victoria Shanghai Academy, Yip, Wing Yee – 10

I would've never thought my journey could be complete.

Dear diary, today I went to a really exciting trip in Pakistan, and one incident that caught my eye was when I found a rock.

Everything began on the first day of summer, I was laying on the couch watching the boring news until the news lady said something about the "China Silk Road" located in snow capped Tian Shan mountains, from then on I was mesmerised by the places in China silk Road from Pakistan to China. It was really pretty and full of people but it got me thinking. Should I travel somewhere around the "China Silk Road" as a fun kind of trip?

The night I saw the news I had a nightmare about how the China silk Road was lying to us all and it wasn't that perfect it wasn't that beautiful, after this incident I was sure that I was gonna do this travel trip no matter what happened, I HAD to go.

But before this trip happened, I had to make a plan to make an excuse to my parents and boss that I have to leave the city for a WHILE only.

First it was the excuses I had to think of the best excuses just to get out the city so they won't expect a thing.

After a MILLION hours it was between "I have to go to the military training." or "I'm going through a really tough time, so I need a SMALL break."

And it clicked me... how bout I use both? I could say "My parents said I HAD to go to military training" to my boring boss and "I'm going through a really tough time right now, so I need a SMALL break." For my overprotective parents but just until I thought I was done, I remembered one really teeny tiny problem where was I going to go for this week trip and how would I pay the expenses for the WHOLE trip?

Of course I had to use my money! But the thing is... I spent all my money on Comic Books and work supplies, so I needed my family to spare me enough money since I'm going through a really "tough" time.

This plan was going perfectly, I finally laid on my very own bed, and had a deep rest. It was the next day and everyone who fell for my plan has accepted my request, "haha" I laughed, now I only have two more days until the final trip....

Today was the big moment, I can finally make the final step complete I had everything packed up and ready to go! Thank gosh I had time! I rushed to the airport found my airline that I always booked and sat on the seats waited quietly but my heart was pounding like a drum set. "Flight 123 will begin boarding soon, please prepare your passports and tickets thank you" the lady called. My stomach had butterflies but in a good way.

I boarded the plane happily and waited for my dream to arrive. I sat on the most uncomfortable seat with people moving around like a jungle, "we are departing in 10 minutes" the pilot said "oh yes!" I whispered I was finally going to get out of this plane, and starting from tomorrow morning my journey in Pakistan will begin.

It was the next day and I woke up so early that it was still dark outside I imagined me climbing the mountains in Pakistan with loud noises like a party. Maybe this dream can come true today, I have my things packed and ready to go and all I need to do is to contact my parents and after that I get to make my whole dream finally come true. My heart was pounding when I arrived there just like how when you're in a competition with strangers or just like when you meet new people.

I walked hours and hours and found nothing but just some old rocks and dead trees I was not hopeful anymore and just kept walking peacefully until I accidentally tripped on a big pile of rocks just in front of my legs, I looked back knowing it had to be something and what I found out from my "own" research was I have found an old ancient rock carving called petroglyphs which has now lived over one thousand years , my heart was pounding with excitement and fear "could this be one of the most valuable item i have found in my 25 years of living in this whole universe?

After a whole day of searching , I finally decided to go back to my hotel and do some more research of this rock called "Petroglyphs" I was more then ready, and maybe I can even be famous for finding this rock! since this might be the only chance in the whole universe to even find rock like this and maybe I was wrong about how the news was lying to us and it was actually really beautiful! But since I found this rock , maybe I should do another trip to find cooler things!

Until we meet again Diary!

The Frail Bridge of Two Worlds

Wycombe Abbey School, Au Yeung, Lin Yan Lyanne – 9

History does not reveal itself through the loud fanfare of grand achievements; it whispers in the silence that follows. Sometimes, the most surprising thing is the sheer resilience of humanity—the way a single, small detail can bridge the gap between centuries, influencing the way we think, act, and ultimately, change the world.

The Dust of the Past (130 BCE)

Ying hauled herself back onto the hump of her camel, the coarse fur scratching her sun-burned legs. It was 130 BCE, and the afternoon sun hung suspended in the sky like a molten copper plate, mocking the travellers below with its unrelenting glare. They were deep in the heart of the Hexi Corridor. Around them, mountains of sand stretched toward the horizon, undulating like the waves of a frozen, golden ocean.

The caravan was led by seasoned merchants, men whose faces were etched with the deep lines of a thousand miles. They were bound for the distant lands of India, their beasts of burden laden with the finest treasures of the Han Dynasty: shimmering bolts of silk, delicate porcelain that chimed like bells when struck, and lacquered household goods.

After countless days and freezing nights, the desert finally surrendered to the lush greenery of the Indus Valley.

“I shall trade you my finest saffron, uncut emeralds, and polished ivory for three crates of your mulberry silk,” the Indian merchant negotiated, his voice a rhythmic song. While the elders haggled, Ying wandered through the marketplace.

The return journey was a gruelling four-month struggle against the elements. When the familiar gates of Chang’an—modern-day Xi’an—finally appeared, Ying was hollowed out by exhaustion but fuelled by hope. After Ying got her meagre wages for surviving the Silk Road’s wrath, she slipped away from the caravan, seeking solace in the only place that brought her peace.

Ying travelled to the outskirts of the city, to a wooden bridge that spanned a wide, rushing river. It was a place where the water met the sky in a perfect horizon. She called it *Yun Shui Qiao*—the Bridge of Cloud and Water. There, she gazed at the clear reflection of the sun, wondering if the bridge of trade she had just crossed was worth the price of her soul.

The Steel of the Future (2046 CE)

Two thousand years into the future, Ming Xue sat comfortably in the ergonomically designed, climate-controlled cabin of the *AeroSwift*. This high-speed maglev train didn’t just travel; it glided, humming at four hundred miles per hour. She swiped her thumb across the glass of her light-blue tablet, pulling up the coordinates for the “Heaven’s Tide”—the modern incarnation of the *Yun Shui Qiao*.

Ming Xue was a digital historian, traveling to Xi’an to capture the synthesis of ancient architecture and hyper-modern engineering. The Heaven’s Tide was now a world-renowned marvel: a glass-and-carbon-fibre bridge that spanned not just a river, but an inlet of the reclaimed coastal territories. It was famous for its surreal scenic views.

As the *AeroSwift* pulled into the Xi’an terminal, Ming Xue marvelled at the efficiency. She slid her tablet into her satchel and approached the fare gates. With a flick of her wrist, her digital wallet chimed, and she walked through. She boarded an automated shuttle and looked at old sketches of the Silk Road on her screen. She felt a strange pull toward the bridge—not just for her project, but for something deeper.

When she arrived at Heaven's Tide, the sun was beginning to set. The bridge was a stable, shimmering ribbon of white light. Below it, the river expanded into the vast, dark blue of the ocean. At this hour, the rippling water reflected a breathtaking image of a hazy, purple sky, shot through with streams of marigold light peeking through the clouds.

She walked to the centre of the span, leaning against the cool railing. Thousands of tourists walked past her, their chatter a dull roar, but Ming Xue felt a sudden, profound silence.

The Convergence

Just then, she felt a small spark at her fingertips—a static discharge from the railing, perhaps, or something more. It felt weak at first, like a heartbeat from a great distance, but she held onto the sensation. She closed her eyes, letting the spark carry her away.

Suddenly, the smell of salt and ozone was replaced by the smell of dry dust and camel musk. Ming Xue's head felt light, her body felt heavy, and the cold glass under her hands turned into rough, weathered wood.

Across the veil of time, Ying felt the same tremor. She was standing on her wooden bridge in 130 BCE, looking down at the water, when she saw a reflection that shouldn't exist: a girl in strange, colorful clothes, holding a glowing slate of blue light.

For a flickering moment, the two women—the silk-trader and the digital historian—locked eyes through the ripples of the water. The "New Tale" of the Silk Road wasn't about the goods traded or the speed of the trains; it was about the bridge of human experience that never broke.

Ming Xue felt the weight of Ying's exhaustion, the grit of the Gobi Desert in her own throat. And Ying, for the first time since her journey began, felt the breeze of the future—a cool, hopeful wind that promised her path would not be forgotten.

The spark faded. Ming Xue opened her eyes to the neon lights of modern Xi'an. The bridge was still there, firm and immovable. She realized then that the Silk Road was never just a route on a map; it was a living thread. She pulled out her tablet, but instead of taking a photo of the architecture, she began to write. She wrote of the dust, the camels, and the girl who had stood here before the world turned to steel.

The bridge was no longer frail. It was the strongest thing in the world.

Silk Trek

Wycombe Abbey School, Passmore, Archie – 9

The glimmering sun slowly rose to welcome the town to another day. Florence Heterwood sprang out of bed. The Heterwoods lived in a small desert town in the West. Life was tough where the Heterwoods lived; people rarely travelled through the desert so the people in town only traded with a few small settlements nearby. The traders would stand in the scorching hot sun, trading with what they have to get a decent meal. Luckily, the Heterwoods have been glassblowers for generations, so they can put food on their table by selling their beautiful glassware.

Florence met up with her best friend George as usual. Suddenly, the ringing sound of the town bell tore through the air. “Make way!” Florence and George were pushed aside, as a magnificent carriage made of the finest wood rolled down the path. A menacing figure arose from the carriage. He was the King’s Chief Priest. “I have some somber news for you. This morning the King was found... dead,” he boomed. Gasps and murmurs swept through the crowd. “As Chief Priest, I will now take over as your King.”

The Chief Priest had always been feared by all. “What happens now?” Florence whispered worriedly. “Look!” George pointed to the notices being put up. “*On every January 4th, all traders must offer to His Majesty 10 reams of silk.*” “How are we supposed to get our hands on silk when no one is making it here?” The two friends frowned, concerned about what might come next.

January 4th soon came by. The King’s guards rounded up everyone in town, including Florence and George. “Make your offering to the King,” a guard demanded. “I don’t have any silk,” Florence said breathlessly, “my family only trades glassware. Perhaps I can offer His Majesty some of our exquisite glass bottles?” Florence opened her bag of glassware. “Bottles? Why would I want bottles?” The guards parted to make way for the King. “Only the finest silk can be used to make my royal robes.” The King loomed over Florence and George. “If you cannot offer me silk, then you are banished! Off you go with your stupid glass bottles!” And just like that, Florence and George were thrown out of the town gates.

“What do we do now?” Florence and George brushed the dirt off their bodies. “Have you heard of the Silk Road?” George answered. “My dad told me about a merchant, even further west than we are, travelling all the way to the East on this Silk Road. They say a lot of traders go there to trade in everything, including the most luxurious silk.” Florence has long heard of the tales of the Silk Road. “I suppose we will have to travel East on this Silk Road then,” Florence sighed. “At least I still have my bottles.” They look one last look at their hometown and wearily set off towards the East.

They trekked through the fuming hot plains of the desert, guided only by the sun and stars. They travelled for days and nights, every step more exhausting than the last. Just as Florence was about to lose hope, a cloud of dust appeared in front of them. Soon they saw a group of travelling traders ahead, their camels pulling huge caravans full of goods. A trader spotted them. “Care for some spices and tea? We have the sweetest cinnamon and the most exotic teas.” “Yes! We can trade with our handmade glassware!” Florence answered enthusiastically. “Deal!” They shook hands. “We need to get to the Land of Silk. Would you know the way?” George asked. “Why of course! We’re also going there. Why don’t you two ride with us? Hop on!” The trader gestured towards their camels. Grateful, Florence and George joined them. They continued on the long journey eastwards, crossing thousands of miles, until finally the great Land of Silk towered over the delighted group of traders.

The bustling town was nothing like what they had ever seen before, traders selling everything under the sun. Tea, gold, silver, gems, pots and vases, but above all, soft reams of shiny, flowy silk. Florence and George gazed

in awe as the glorious silk caught the sunlight and swayed back and forth in the wind. “Let’s trade!” George nudged Florence. Florence nodded, taking out her precious bottles. The other traders marveled at the Heterwoods’ delicate bottles. “These bottles are truly beautiful,” they exclaimed. Florence and George smiled at each other, holding on to the reams of silk they traded with Florence’s bottles. Now they can go home.

They journeyed back the way they came, until they reached the gates to their hometown. They were nervous. What if the King wouldn’t let them back? They slowly approached the gates. “Halt!” A guard bellowed. “Wait! Look, they are the traders who were banished by the traitor!” Another guard cried. “Traitor?” The friends were bewildered. “Yes, traitor! You see, the Chief Priest had always wanted all the power to himself, so he killed the King and took his throne. But the King’s loyal generals came together to overthrow the evil Chief Priest and restored the Prince, the rightful heir, to the throne. Now we finally have peace again,” the guards explained. “So we can come home?” George breathed a sigh of relief.

The town welcomed Florence and George, eager to hear about their adventure. Everyone listened in fascination to the stories of their travel to the East on the Silk Road. People stroked the reams that Florence and George brought back, amazed by how smooth the soft silk felt under their hands. “Show us the way!” The townspeople begged. They all wanted to trade beyond the desert. And so that was how their humble desert town began to open up its gates to the flow of trade. As generations lived on, so did the tale of how Florence and George were the first people in town who travelled along the Silk Road and traded far beyond.

There Was a Road Called Silk Road

Wycombe Abbey School, Wong, Nathaniel – 9

Once upon a time, there was a road called Silk Road. On that road was a small village, and in the village, there was a tree house. Inside the tree house there were three little monkeys. One was called Peach, the other was called Banana, and the last one was called Apple.

They called themselves their names because there were three trees in the village – one was a peach tree, the other one was a banana tree, and the last tree was an apple tree.

One bright and sunny day, the monkeys were playing find the banana. This is how the game works. Banana hides the banana and the other two find the banana, whoever finds the banana gets to eat it!

This round, after a long and tiring search, Peach found the banana on the Silk Road. She didn't know the name of the road and said – "I found it on the road!"

Banana said, "you found the wrong banana – I hid the banana in a tree!"

Banana was right, Peach had found the wrong banana. But Apple was still searching so Peach went to search again. Unfortunately for Peach, Apple soon came back with the banana and ate it right in front of her. Tired, the monkeys then went to bed.

In the morning Banana found a mysterious letter under his pillow while making his bed. He excitedly brought it to breakfast, and read it aloud:

"Dear Monkeys, tomorrow, the search for the legendary banana begins! If you take a bite out of it you will be immortal. But beware, many evil villains will be searching for it."

The monkeys were incredibly excited and rushed to pack their bags, then left their house and travelled along the Silk Road.

After many exhausting days and nights, they came upon a dark cave opening. Above the opening were the words: "keep clear (no legendary bananas to be found here!)!"

The monkeys were very determined and still decided to venture in.

The cave was filled with traps – Peach narrowly dodged a ball of fire which swept over her head, and Apple had to use a long rope to climb over a pit filled with spikes.

Finally, the monkeys came to a pedestal made of gold. On the pedestal three beautiful, shining weapons were displayed.

One was a sword, one was a scythe and the last one was a bow. They took one each. Under the weapons, there was also a map, with a picture of a golden pedestal on it, across the high snowy mountains.

"This must be the map to the legendary banana", said Banana. "Yes", Peach replied, "why else would the sign at cave entrance say "no legendary bananas here..."".

Agreed, our heroes headed into the cold, snowy mountains.

They came to a freezing mountain pass, when Apple suddenly felt a sharp pain in his arm. He'd been shot by an arrow!

Red monkeys wearing horrible masks poured out from behind rocks and icy trees. But with their legendary weapons, Peach, Apple and Banana were strong. They defeated their enemies after a long fight, and bandaged poor Apple's arm.

A few days after, another bunch of villains, hundreds, attacked. This time, Banana lost his sword after it was grabbed by a huge gorilla, and the friends were forced to flee. They scrambled away, Apple's arm still bleeding and Banana with tears in his eyes.

The sky darkened and the three monkeys started to shiver with cold. Suddenly, Banana's tripped and fell. His friends looked around, worried – Banana was nowhere to be seen.

"Banana, where are you!" called Peach. "Here I am" Banana yelled back – he'd fallen down a trapdoor that was almost invisible in the heavy snow, into a dark room. In front of him, Banana saw a silver altar, with lightning bolts on either side and glowing with power.

Banana thought it looked very beautiful and tried to brush some snow off it to see better. When he did this, a huge spark jumped from the altar to his finger, and his entire body started to feel warm.

The warmth grew, and then there was a blinding flash, as the spark grew into a lightning bolt which flew through Banana.

Banana looked at his hands in amazement – they were glowing gold and silver and he felt as fast and strong as the wind. He pointed his finger and in a flash of lightning, the secret room split in two.

Banana flew out of the cave with his friends. He zoomed into the air, his new power coursing through his body.

Not far away, he saw a tree and on it, a shining banana. He yelled to his friends "The legendary banana – I see it!". But he also saw thousands of terrible monsters heading towards the tree. They were not the only ones who had located the banana... They couldn't let the evil villains take it and become immortal!

With his new skill, Banana zoomed towards the tree, with his friends close by. While Banana zapped left and right, clearing the way, Apple bounded ahead and grabbed the banana.

Banana then created lightning bolts for both his friends which they could ride on, and together they zoomed back home. They'd won!

With the power of lightning, the flight back home didn't take long, and exhausted, the monkeys flew all the way back home and landed.

Banana said "You two eat it first. In order for me to eat it, I need to transform it to a lightning banana. But then you can't eat it after I transform it".

Apple and Peach thanked him. Even with all the power Banana now had, he still thought about his friends first.

So they each took a bite out of it before Banana ate the rest of the banana.

Each of the friends went on to become legendary heroes, and lived through many more adventures, protecting the weak and defeating countless fearsome enemies. But those are stories for another day...

The Journey That Is Yet to Come

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Chan, Lauren – 11

In 1453 A.D., Min—a girl with short, jet-black hair was slowly trudging along the dry Silk Road. She was ten years old, though the desert had a way of making her feel much older. Min stared at the ground, focusing on the soft sound of crunching rocks and shifting sand. At this moment, it was the only thing she could hear.

Min and her family had been traveling for a long time, and they were many miles from home. When her parents first announced they were moving the family business, Min felt as though the very earth beneath her feet had shifted. Suddenly, her father stopped.

“It’s time for lunch,” he said, halting the camel. The beast was heavily laden, carrying not only the family’s cooking pots and blankets but also their precious cargo: rolls of shimmering, heavy silk.

When Min was younger, she and her seven-year-old sister, Xinyi, had named the camel “Pebbles.” They used to dance and play around his long legs all day. But there was something else, an assuring smell of dust and old news, telling tales of before.

Min gathered these memories like fallen leaves as she sat down on a jagged rock next to Xinyi. She pulled her lunch box from her pack and stared into the shimmering heat waves in the sky. Min squinted, and noticed how they looked like gold, shimmering throughout the horizon.

“Anything wrong?” her mother asked, her voice laced with concern. “That’s the third time this month you’ve looked so far away.”

“I don’t know,” Min said quietly, kicking at the dry dirt. “Maybe I’m just homesick again. We’ve been traveling forever. Does the road ever actually end?” Min’s eyes filled with tears, but she quickly wiped them away.

Her mother didn’t answer with words. She simply placed a warm hand on Min’s shoulder and offered a comforting smile. After a few minutes, Min opened her old lunchbox. She slowly ate her portion of rice and cabbage. The simple, familiar saltiness of the food lifted her spirits just enough to keep the tears back.

They continued their way, stopping only for short rests. On the road, the silence was deadly. There was only the dry never-ending sound of sand to keep her company while the memories of Turfan raged in her head. She would get bored—a lot. She spent hours memorizing the shape of every cactus and the curve of every distant dune.

Weeks turned into months. A whole year had somehow flown by in a blur of dust and wind.

One night, as the sisters were preparing their bedrolls under a canopy of brilliant stars, Xinyi let out a tired sigh. “I heard we only need to keep traveling for two more months before we get to Dunhuang!” she said, flopping onto her sleeping bag.

This was massive news. Min had spent every day dreading the arrival, yet longing for the walking to stop. “How do you know?”

“Lily told me,” Xinyi replied, yawning. “She said it’s easy to know things about the Silk Road when you’re one of the last families left traveling on it.”

“Do you mean the Lily who kept talking in class?” Min asked.

“Yeah, that one.”

Min remembered a rumor that Lily had spread back at school. It was as clear as crystal in her mind. Lily had leaned over her desk, whispering words that made Min's blood run cold: *"You cannot feel at home there. It is a place of ghosts and wind."* Min shuddered at the thought of it. Those words echoed in her head now, but Min pushed them away, forcing herself to stay calm.

Turfan had been a small town, but Min had loved it. She knew the place like the back of her hand: Mr. Chen's restaurant with the steam-filled windows, and Ms. Ying's clothes store where the fabric felt like water. It was a peaceful, united place.

"Goodnight, Turfan," Min whispered to the desert.

At six the next morning, her father woke them. "Let's go. We have a long way ahead of us today."

They trudged for miles. The desert looked almost white under the punishing sun. Suddenly, in the distance, a group of travelers appeared—a caravan heading west, away from their destination. They stopped at a shared watering hole to rest their camels.

While her father traded news, Min bumped into a boy leading a pack horse. "Oh! Sorry," he said, catching her arm. "I'm Omar. I've been living near the Dunhuang border for two years."

"We are going there now," Min stuttered. "Is it... is it as bad as they say?"

Omar laughed, and his eyes brightened. "Bad? It is where the world meets! The colors there—they are like rainbows sewed with the shiniest sequins. You should be happy! It is the most beautiful place I have ever seen."

He hurried away to join his caravan, leaving Min standing in the dust.

As her family began the final trek of the day, the smells and colors of the desert didn't seem so dull anymore. Min thought about what Omar had said. She realized she hadn't even given Dunhuang a chance. She had been so busy looking backward at Turfan that she hadn't looked forward at all.

For the first time in a year, Min didn't look at the ground. She looked at the horizon. Her heart beat a little faster, not with fear, but with a new, strange spark. What could be waiting for them?

Guardians of the Silk Road

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Chen, Owen – 11

In the city of Xi'an, where the eastern end of the Silk Road begins, there lived a young boy named Li Yang. Caravans passed through the gates, carrying spices, jade, silk, and stories from distant lands. Li watched them leave every day and dreamed not of trading, but of becoming a warrior strong enough to protect the road they traveled.

Li decided to begin training at the early age of five under the guidance of his father, a first-class general. He showed no mercy. Running, combat training, and surviving deadly animals went on for hours each day. As time passed, pain became familiar. Discipline became instinct. When his father was called to war, Li continued following the routines his father had carved into his bones.

His father disappeared for many years, until one day a messenger arrived.

"Li, I'm sorry to say that your father died in the war while protecting merchants from Shun Er's army. There were simply too many of them. He will be remembered as a heartwarming and courageous man."

Anger, depression, and fear drew Li into an endless spiral of despair. He did not know what to do without his father. To him, his father had been the only man with such inhuman strength and intelligence—the final wall guarding against the darkness.

"Aye, complaining won't help," Li told himself. "Come on, get a grip."

He began training again, but this time with even greater intensity.

By the age of twenty-three, the emperor of Xi'an allowed Li to join the Golden Figures, a legendary order of warriors who stood beyond the physical limits of ordinary humans. He endured many brutal tests before finally earning his place. When Li entered their hall, he was shocked. Every warrior radiated strength; he had never known a human could possess so much chi. And if even they could not stop Shun Er, he wondered who could.

"Attention!" a commander shouted. "Shun Er has once again begun his reign of terror. The Silk Road holds great power, and we must prevent him from claiming it. We cannot allow him to take over our land!"

They headed off into the dunes. Five miles in, they encountered their first enemy—a tribe of small, goo-like creatures. Shun Er's army had already begun its attack. The warriors struck them down easily, flinging them aside like stones from a catapult. For the next fifty miles, the journey continued steadily: mosquitoes, earthquakes, and endless heat.

Then came the Death Merger—a creature with bones protruding from its body, like the Grim Reaper himself. It was vile, vigilant, and incredibly fast. One warrior lunged at it and was instantly thrown aside. Others barely saw what happened. They tried baiting it with their chi, but it failed. Direct attacks failed as well.

Suddenly, Li charged forward without thinking. His teammates shouted for him to stop, but it was too late. The Death Merger lunged toward him. At that moment, Li's arm began to glow. His strike landed, and the creature froze. Its bones cracked, its red eyes faded, and it crumbled into dust.

A stunned silence followed. Li stared at his arm, then at his teammates. Slowly, the glow faded, and they continued onward.

That night, the group set up camp. Li could not sleep. His thoughts returned to the battle.
“It felt like something was pulling me,” he thought. “Encouraging me to fight.”
One by one, the thoughts faded, and he finally drifted off.

“Boom!”

Li awoke to the sound of cannons. Shun Er’s army had attacked before dawn. The Golden Figures fought back with ease, but then a powerful aura descended upon the battlefield.

“I’ve been expecting you, Li,” a voice said.

Li froze. He had not expected Shun Er to be this powerful. The man’s presence alone forced him to his knees. Doubt crept in.

What if I’m not strong enough?

“No,” Li thought. *Not now.*

He charged and was thrown backward like a pebble.

“You are weaker than I expected,” Shun Er sneered. “Your father was far more formidable, fast, strong, intelligent, and agile. But he was foolish enough to protect innocent merchants. I suppose foolishness runs in your family.”

Li’s blood boiled. His chi surged until nothing seemed to matter anymore—not even death.

He attacked again, faster this time. Shun Er tried to block, but Li slashed his stomach. Shun Er countered with his sword, only for the blade to shatter. At last, Shun Er collapsed, his vision blurred and his body unable to move.

“Go on,” he laughed weakly. “Kill me!”

Li raised his sword—then remembered his father’s words:

“A man who can’t forgive will always remain trapped in his past.”

“No,” Li said quietly. “Killing you won’t bring my father back.”

Shun Er’s army was destroyed, and his power was gone. The Silk Road was safe once more, and peace returned to the land.

The Mysterious Journey

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Chin, Elisabeth – 10

The aliens had just entered their UFO to head back to the planet Agoola Bluetooth, after returning from a field trip to Gobi Desert. Thankfully for them, they appreciated the fresh air on Earth that they Were not used to, along with the silk blankets they bought. just as they were about to leave, Cael, however, became distracted by the beautiful scenery as they skimmed over the Crescent Lake.

“TAKE COVER! WE'RE GOING DOWN!” Screamed Elia while covering her head with her hands.

Boom!

The UFO slammed into the dunes. Nearby, horses and camels panicked, scattering with goods bouncing on their backs and leaving the merchants to flee on foot. Silence followed. Then, the trembling aliens, stepped out of the broken aircraft. The radar? Gone. the GPS? Destroyed, the aliens had no way to get back. The sun shone mercilessly at them; the light nearly blinded the poor tiny, green aliens with little antennas. Their hearts were icy cold from traveling in their UFO's cold atmosphere. The quiet breeze brushed their faces; the wind plucked the sand up from the ground into the clear blue sky.

“Hey! What's this?!” Questioned Cael while picking up a folded, slightly faded golden piece of paper; He read it aloud.

Dear Aliens,

Welcome to the Silk Road! You may be wondering how I know you're here, well, I know everything! Anyways, that's not the main point of this letter, you have been invited to dinner in Constantinople. Dinner is in one week! I hope to see you there!

- MZ

“Guys! Does anyone know where we are!?” Questioned Elia

“Hey! What's this?” Said Nico eyeing it closely. Cael gently brushed off the sand; his eyes light up.

“It's a fallen signpost!” Exclaimed Cael.

The sign was made of wood; the wood already rotting, which gave the air around them a foul smell. The signpost looked ancient, the words were fading off.

“Xi'an? XI'AN!” Exclaimed Stella, while shaking Elia's shoulder

“Clip.Clop. Clip.Clop”

“what's that sound?” Asked Elia while cautiously backing up.

Everyone turned toward the weird noise. It was a herd of horses; they looked like trained horses, waiting for the merchants. Each one of them had their own unique saddle, some made of leather; some made of wood.

“Hop on a horse, we'll get there faster!” Exclaimed Nico

The sun was at the peak of the horizon, a bright coin in the sky. The air felt sweet and fresh; shadows grew shorter and the world seemed to lean towards it; the horizon glowed with the light. Time seemed to slow down.

“What is this feeling?!” said Cael, scratching his head, and squinted his eyes.

The aliens had never felt warmth; it was new. The sun began to descend. They camped on the sandy floor until dawn's warmth awoke them. Little did they know it wouldn't be so easy for them; they needed another way to get there. The aliens walked for a while, the sun shining in their eyes, it was a lake! It was also the first time they had seen water, the aliens cautiously dipped their hands in the cold, cooling water; it tingled. Just then, Elia caught a glimpse of a boat at the corner of her eye; she led everyone on to the small but mighty boat.

The wooden boat drifted along the Silk Road coast, its hull slicing through the sun-lit waves, the sky burned blue as the sun poured light turning each ripple into a silver lining, making waves glow and shimmer. All the aliens yawned. Their eyelids slowly got heavier, then darkness hit them. The breeze danced on their faces, the boat gently rocked around. Then the boat suddenly came to a stop, the sound of people chattering awoke them. They stepped ashore from the old wooden boat. The setting was more beautiful than they imagined!

"Constantinople! We're here!" Exclaimed Stella while joyfully jumping up and down.

The aliens turned their heads toward the ballroom full of people. All the aliens grabbed the biggest plate and started digging in. There were so many food options for them to choose from, so they just took one of everything. Grilled fish, Meze, hummus, Ezme salad, too many to name! The aliens sat down at a table with a flowy white tablecloth.

"Ok, nice meeting you all!" Said madam Zuzalina.

"Ok... nice meeting you too?!" Replied Stella, awkwardly.

"How are we supposed to get back?" Asked Nico.

Madam Zuzalina opened a mysterious door that Nico was eying all evening.

"Aliens, enter through this door." Proclaimed Madam Zuzalina.

The aliens were just about to step into the mysterious door, then Madam Zuzalina called the aliens.

"Here is a small souvenir! I hope you can return to the Silk Road one day!" Sniffing, she pulled out a fluffy blanket embroidered with a Silk Road motif.

A bright golden light flashed at them, the aliens cautiously walked through the door, waving their final goodbye. A powerful energy sucked them in, back to the cold, quiet, metallic atmosphere. The aliens didn't want to go back, but they had to, they had to plan one of the biggest missions in alien history. The aliens were sucked back to the planet, Agoola Bluetooth, but little did we know, something bigger was yet to come.

THE END...

OR IS IT? ...

The Last Person on the Silk Road

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Fu, Owen – 10

The Last Traveler

On the endless, golden, dry sand, there was a small shadow of a man on his horse, but who was it? He was the last person traveling on the Silk Road.

The man was called Mike, and he was trying to carry his goods from Guangzhou to sell in the United Kingdom.

The Caravan is Born

At first, he rode a horse, pulling a small wagon behind him that carried his goods. But after a while, he arrived in Wuhan and decided to take a break to sell some goods. He got some money and bought some cloth to cover his goods and prevent the sunlight burning on him. In this way, he invented the caravan.

As years passed, his caravan changed more than he did... he continued his journey to the UK, and again, after a while, he arrived in Luoyang and decided to take a break again. Like last time, he sold some goods, and bought a camel, so he could have more space for his goods, and he could rest in the caravan. "Wow," he said, looking at his map, "there is still a long way to go." Another week passed by... it was already 1925. He continued his journey again.

The Steam-Powered Car

After many months of trading and traveling, he reached Xian. As always, he took a break and sold some of his goods again. But this time was different: he smelled coal, and heard the rattling of pistons, he looked in the direction where the sound came from. A thing which had some sort of smoke coming out. Guess what? It was a steam engine! He sold his camel and horse, bought the steam engine, and connected the two metal tubes sticking out onto the two wheels in the front of the caravan. And he invented the first steam powered "car." He also bought some coal to burn on the way, which almost filled up half of the caravan, and left hardly any space for him to rest.

The First Automobile

5 years later... (Reader's note: You may think this is going to be repeated forever, well there are funny things later if you decide to read the whole story.)

He continued again, arriving at Gansu, selling his goods, and saw another big metal thingy, but this time, it looked more delicate, it was a 4-stroke engine invented by Carl Benz! And he bought some metal bars, and made a rectangular frame, at the bottom of the frame, he added some more metal bars to make a floor, "Very safe," he thought, so he connected the 4-stroke engine to the front of the frame with his wheels connected. Now the frame can move, he had to have fuel pumped in the engine. He made a metal box, carved a small hole in the bottom, and put a pipe connected to the engine, and dumped fuel into the box.

Now he started up the engine and the frame started moving, but soon, he realized, he cannot control the direction of the frame! He cannot even stop the car! "This is gonna be bad," he thought, so, he disconnected the engine from the wheels, and the car stopped. He made two bars, connecting the two wheels in the front, and a circular board (a steering wheel) with a stick connected by gears to a bar, then, he reinforced the stick so it will not come loose easily. He reinvented the first automobile. He sat on the fuel tank, started the engine, and went off.

Modernity Catches Up

A few months later... he finally crossed the border of China, arriving at Uzbekistan's Koland. He saw something different; some people are sitting in a metal thingy like his car with a badge reading Ford. Then, he realized, it was a car too! It was way better than his own car, so, he sold his car bought his new Ford Model T and drove away, he felt that this car was enormously powerful, fast, and smoother. He bought some water, food, and gas, then drove away.

After months of traveling, he finally got to Turkey, by 1930. "It is already 1930! What!" he shouted. But he still got gasoline, food, and water, had some repairs and cleaning for the car, and had a good night sleep...

The "Fire car"

Boom! A great booming sound woke him up at once. A car's fuel tank had caught fire, and it is burning furiously that the cars beside it caught on fire too! "Dangerous!" he thought, thinking of his own car exploding while driving on the Silk Road.

The "Sea Vehicle"

The next day, he got back on his car and drove away. He arrived at the harbor, and noticed a big metal block floating on the sea, it was a ship, then, he realized a big problem: How could he carry the car onto the ship? So, he had to sell his car, put the goods in a huge wagon, and pushed it into the ship.

Months later... He arrived at Genoa, now, he decided to rest for a while. He looked at his map, "Close" he whispered to himself, looking back at his goods. He needed a new vehicle to carry his goods, but he did not want to buy a fuel car anymore, it uses way too much fuel, he wanted something that could save more money and drives faster. Well, after a while, he saw what he wanted, it was a hybrid car.

The Hybrid Car

This car looked more modern than any other ones, probably because it uses electricity and fuel, but it still can only add fuel, not electricity. "Nah, it's not bad," he thought, "at least it can use less fuel!" So, he bought the hybrid car and drove away!

Weeks later... "I did it! I finally arrived at UK!" He shouted. "But wait...I ran out of goods! Ahhhhh!"

The Evil Choir

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Lee, Yuna – 10

Chapter 1: THE LETTER

Taisiia just wanted to be a normal girl, attending human school, and eating food, and doing human things. Unfortunately, she was born into a wizard family. Her magic was the reason she couldn't make any friends. Everyone kept their distance. Once, when she was four, she sneezed and covered the entire playground in weird slime. Children covered in the sticky goo ran home crying, leaving Taisiia all alone. Taisiia was shocked, and decided to avoid magic forever. But that day, she received a letter. This is what it said:

Dear Taisiia Shinuishikina,

We have received your mother's request to be invited to Wizard Academy. We have checked your magical skills and decided to send this invitation to you. Your wagon will arrive at 8:00 am on January 1st which will bring you to Silk Road Avenue where our school is located.

Your principal,

Thistlewick Evermore

"Great," said Taisiia, kicking at the sofa, angrily. "I wanted to be a normal girl!"

"Taisiia Shinuishikina! Stop! Besides, this is a wonderful opportunity," said Taisiia's mom. "I heard only kids that are excellent at magic are picked!"

Taisiia hesitated, then grabbed her trunk and began to go up the stairs.

"Taisiia, wait!" said her mom

Taisiia gave her mom her death-stare.

"I, I wanted to give you THIS," she spoke.

Her mom handed Taisiia a book. On the cover, said these words in shimmery gold foil:

All About the Silk Road

"Thanks," Taisiia muttered.

"I want you to learn something before you go to the school," said her mom, softly.

Taisiia slammed her room door shut. She couldn't take her eyes off the book her mom gave her. She sat on her bed and began to read:

The Silk Road

The Silk Road started at Han Dynasty, it was used as a trading route, people exchanged silk, spices, fruits...

"Boring," she thought.

Taisiia began packing. She slammed her trunk shut and threw herself onto her bed when she was done. She blinked and stared up at the ceiling. Then, she fell asleep...

Chapter 2: THE ACADEMY

The next day...

Taisiia slowly made it out of her bed, thoughts filling her head.

"What if I don't make any friends?" she thought.

She walked along the sidewalk, to the wagon station.

About a few minutes later, a neon green wagon, pulled by 20 or more oxen began rushing toward her. She stepped on to the wagon steps.

But as soon as she stepped on to the wagon, a girl said, "can you be my friend?" she said.

"Uh.. sure," said Taisiia.

A few hours later...

Taisiia's new friend was named Emily, and they walked together to their lunchrooms.

"This one has our names on it!" said Emily

"This must be our lunchroom," said Taisiia

The lunchroom door glowed. It swung open. There were some dishes on the transparent table. There were some chicken legs, candy, pork stew, and a vegetable salad. On the back of the table was glowing salt and pepper in small glass jars.

Taisiia's eyes grew wide. "Amazing," she spoke

"Yeah," said Emily.

Taisiia and Emily sat down on the two couches opposite each other and began to eat.

While they were eating their food and chatting, a letter appeared on the table with a loud, BOOM!

"Ahhhhhhh!" screamed the two of them.

Emily hid under the table, shaking, while Taisiia gained her courage and picked up the letter cautiously. This is what it said:

Dear Taisiia Shiuishikina and Emily Moonweave,

The school is in danger, and I trust you two, our star students, to defeat the Evil Choir. And if you do, we will give you the wish potion, and with it, you two can each grant a wish. Good luck!

Hoping you are well,

Thistlewick Evermore

"Emily, take a look at this!" said Taisiia, thrilled.

Emily cautiously climbed out from underneath the table, still shaking, but a lot less.

Emily read the letter repeatedly.

"Let's do this," she spoke firmly but softly

Chapter 5: THE BATTLE

The next day...

Taisiia and Emily were walking down Silk Road when they heard some cold, painful, voices. This is what it said:

The evil choir! This is our desire. Join our crew!!! Babies, teachers, parents, students too.

Their heads began to hurt. They were being hypnotized!

"Quick! Put on these headphones! You won't hear any noises," said Emily, as she handed Taisiia a set of headphones.

Their heads started to feel better, and they got the courage to cast a spell on the evil choir.

Taisiia took some bottles of glitter from her pocket and put it on some twigs. The twigs began to shake, then turned into a bottle of weird orange paste. It was the pain potion.

"Dip your wand in this potion and cast a spell!" said Taisiia.

Emily dipped her wand into the thick but smooth paste and swung her wand around.

"Aqqum curro!" Emily shouted.

The Evil Choir began to retreat.

"It's working!" said Emily, "the Evil Choir is retreating!"

"Yeah!" said Taisiia, "now, we get to grant a wish!"

Chapter 5: THE END?

Just then, they heard the quiet voices again.

The evil choir! This is our desire! Join our crew! Babies, teachers, parents, students too.

"Huh!?" said Taisiia "what is happening?"

"I thought we defeated them!!!" said Emily

The Evil Choir started toward them. They snatched away headphones.

"Ahhh! Aqqum curro! Aqqum Curro!" shouted Emily

But it was too late.

The choir snatched away their earmuffs

They sang there song.

This was day. The day two students went to save the world, and the day the students failed to save the world. Now, they are at the middle of the Silk Road, with the Evil Choir, heading for their school. They didn't remember who they were, nor they remembered why they were here. They just knew that they had to keep singing.

Now, the school knew, that their happy days were over.

The End...

Or is it? ...

Zhang Qian's Voyage

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Liu, Aaron – 10

Splash! The creaking wooden 10 person boat split the calm of the Indian Ocean, a silver line of moonlight brushing the water. A monk groaned, rubbing salt from his eyes. “We’ve been sailing for years!” he muttered. “There’s a little island in the distance; we can rest there for this night,” said the leader, Zhang Qian, his voice steady as the bull. A cool breeze slipped over them, carrying the scent of salt, and the moon painted a silver path on the waves.

The temperature went colder. Wind feels like huge snow storms blowing jtowards them. The air grew sharp and cold, and the boat creaked louder as it battled the gusts. The island grew larger as they approached. The shore came into view, palms dancing against the night sky, and the island looked almost like a friendly face inviting them closer.

The boat bumped softly onto the shore with the creaking sound. The monks stepped onto the sand, laying out thin mats and lighting a small spark of fire in a shallow bowl. The air smelled like blossoms; and the stars above looked down kindly, as if they were listening. The sand felt cool under their feet, and tiny crabs scuttled along the edge of the glow from the fire.

The island seemed almost too quiet, like a story waiting to be told. The monks curled up on their mats, eyes closing slowly as the waves whispered. But suddenly, as they are about to go asleep, a soft sound came from the coconut trees. Tap–tap–tap, the coconuts hitting on the trees felt like someone knocking on a door that isn’t there.

The leader, Zhang Qian, sits up and squints into the dark. The firelight flickers, making shadows dance like friendly ghosts. From the edge of the island, the moon’s light glides across the sand and melts into the lagoon’s edge. A small figure steps out from the water—a tiny sea turtle with a shell that shines like a piece of diamond glowing. Its eyes are calm, and its movements are slow and sure, as if it has a quiet message to share.

“Who... who are you?” one monk whispers, blinking hard.

The turtle moves closer and stops at a short distance away. It tilts its head as if it’s warning of something. “It’s just a little turtle, everybody, keep on sleeping.”said their leader, Zhang Qian. The turtle’s shell catches the glow of the fire, and for a moment the beach holds its breath, listening to the night.

When dawn finally comes, the island breathes in softly and the square of the sun climbed above the horizon. The sky turned red, and then yellow, and then turned blue. The birds might have sung somewhere, and the air felt warmer, as if the island itself had opened its doors to a new day. The monks waked up to a new feeling—not of tiredness, but a feeling they’ve never feeled before. They gathered their things, and got ready to sail away from this island.

Suddenly, a bunch of robots appeared. “Quick! Hide yourselves!” whispered Zhang Qian. The metal figures glinted in the sunlight, their joints whirring softly as they scanned the shore with blinking eyes and beeps that sounded eerie.

The monks quickly gathered behind the wooden boat. One of the monks peeked out trying to find out what the robots are doing. The robots slowly stomped towards the boat. The crackle of their metallic feet made the “Shhhhhh” sound.

“No, no, no! The robots are coming!”

The monks held their breaths, like waiting for something to happen. “Scanning for precious silk~”beeped the robots. “The robots are scanning for silk! We have to sail away, now! Everyone, come with me!”muttered Zhang Qian. The monks shifted quickly on the wooden boat. They pulled the boat away, but everything was late. The robots stepped on it. But fortunately, they stoped moving, just like they were friends with the monks.

The water surface was splashing against the wood, like at any second, it might break.

Suddenly, one of the robots threw a bag of silk in the water! Then one more, two, three! “Oh-no!”screamed one of the monks. “Our silk! In the water!” “The robots are going crazy!” shouted Zhang Qian. Zhang Qian tried to stop them by pushing the robots, but it didn’t work. They were too heavy.

Suddenly, “Splash ! Splash ! Splash !” The monks jumped down into the water, like swords swooshing into the water. The monks got the silk! “We got it! We got it! Thank god this heavy silk didn’t sink!” Just in a few minutes, the silk were all back on tye boat. “What a save! This trip can’t be without you monks!”exclaimed Zhang Qian.

Betrayal on the Silk Road

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Pavao, Arlo – 11

I stood alone in shimmering moonlight. Darkness had fallen but the fragrant scent of nutmeg still tingled in my nostrils. The night was silent, only the wind was whispering. I am Rhyven, a great warrior waiting to meet with the chieftain of our tribe, our people: Amir Valihrim. The silence lifted and he spoke in a hushed voice, "Rhyven, we must steal the Aftabir diamond from the Saffari people, with haste."

"But Chief Amir, they have lots of scimitars, knives, and advanced fighting skills, which could result in huge casualties." I was shocked that our wise chief wanted to attack the strongest tribe on the Silk Road. "You don't understand how much we could profit from this kind of heist; we could be the kings of the Silk Road in only a few months. Imagine being able to provide for your family and still have money left over!" The last sentence made me change my mind and before I could stop myself, I said "Yes, Amir. Yes, I will brief the warriors on this plan." "Good, I will come with you and help, Rhyven" he said cheerfully and then walked out and closed the door with the slightest squeak. For a moment I wondered whether I should have let him attack the Saffari people but then I told myself it was for our people. Then I walked out the door and got ready for the briefing.

"We are going to attack the Saffari people. We must prepare and be ready to set off by morning. "Fayd gear up the men and get the weapons. The rest of us need to prepare; it's going to be a long few months." The rest of the men scattered around and then left. I thought Amir was delusional but now I was thinking that he may have a point. If we succeeded in this quest, then we would be kings of the desert we would live to be old and would prosper.

We set off on the Silk Road to the Saffari's hideout in the middle of the sand dunes. The journey was long and perilous. Sweat poured down our backs everyday. The sun was relentless and some days we could not keep up. The heat made us fight over everything. The only time the heat stopped was when the sun went down and night came. It was the heat and the food that drove us mad. We fought about who got more food and water and we even stole from each other. My good friend Fayd, one of the nicest men I had ever met and someone I had trusted since I was young, stole my food rations. I was heartbroken but I pushed on because I knew that once this was all over then I could rest and live the rest of my days out peacefully.

Days passed, or maybe weeks by this point, I did not know. We could have been going for weeks or months watching the dunes go by. Fayd had started to see mirages of his wife and children. I felt sorry for him, but I could not do anything. We were getting closer. I could feel it in my bones.

As the days went on, the sun still beat down on us mercilessly. But we would be there soon. I knew it. I had been watching Fayd, and though he had been showing a façade of bravery, I could see right through it. If you looked closely, you could see that he was homesick, he did not want to be on this dangerous quest. Many of did not, for we were all happy with our lives back home. But Amir, our ruler, wanted it done and we could not do anything about that as anyone who questioned his authority would be put to death.

More days passed and Fayd's condition only worsened. I felt miserable watching my friend of many years suffer. His mental health was deteriorating and fast. Another member of the crew called Abdul tried to help the poor man. But no one could help.

A few days later we stopped at a small village to rest and eat we were all weary from the journey. A kind woman, Samira let us stay at her house for the night. We were all delighted that we could take a proper rest. Later Samira invited us to dinner. The wine loosened our lips, so we told her how we planned to steal the Aftabir diamond I shared a room with Fayd and Abdul. We slept like babies, until in the middle of the night I was awoken from my slumber by a strange bashing noise coming from outside. I saw that Abdul and Fayd were also awake, so I told them "Let's go check what's happening outside." So, we crept outside to have a look at what was happening. As soon as I crept outside, BANG my head throbbed, and then all I saw was black...

I woke up in a dark room with only one dim light in the centre. The only thing I could see was the body of Fayd tied up next to me, but I couldn't see Abdul. Then a figure walked over I couldn't see them until the light shone on their face. It was Samira it didn't make sense why was she here.

The Tale of the Maps

Yew Chung International School of Shanghai, Qian, Vincy – 11

Mei, a curious teenage girl with long black hair and hazel–brown eyes, lives in the Tang Dynasty. Her dad is a famous merchant, An Lushan. At that time, myths were told that maps never tell the truth; people who follow them always get lost.

“Maps change the route; your Uncle Wang got lost and never came back,” said Mei’s mother once.

“But I remember he told me that there is an answer to the mystery of the maps,” said Mei.

“Your uncle and his jokes,” chuckled Mei’s mother.

But one day, when Mei was cleaning the floor, she found that there was a map under the floorboards. It had weird markings of camels and mountains on its sides.

At night, she asked her mom, “Mom, is there a map hidden in this family that has camels and mountains as a pattern?”

“Yes! That is the map that Emperor Qing gave one of our ancestors as a gift for helping him in a time of need,” replied her mom. “How did you know?”

“Oh, I read it in a book,” said Mei as she rushed off.

At night, Mei took out the map and started to study it. It was a drawing of a castle. Suddenly, there was a big puff of red smoke, and a tiny hologram of a man.

“Hi, I am Burg.”

“What are you doing in this map?”

“Not the main question, but I was trapped here by the dark wizard Zahhak to find a chosen one for a mission. Now the main question is, who are you, and how did YOU find this map?” said Burg.

Mei told him about how she accidentally found the map.

“It isn’t an accident; it is something fate made at the last second. I was in the grave of your ancestor who got this map. The next second, I was in here.”

“But I don’t get it. What should I do?” asked Mei in her curious voice.

“Well, you are supposed to transport this magical silk robe to the king of Persia within the next three months, since you are the chosen one of the dark wizard Zahhak,” said Burg in a calm voice as he magically pulled a robe from the edge of the map and handed it to Mei, she hesitated but then continued.

“Three months!!! How would I do that? You at least need six months!” exclaimed Mei.

“Well, don’t expect me to give you no help. You will get help from me and a lot of help along the way,” explained Burg. “Now get some sleep. So, I can modify your family’s memories.”

The next day, Mei woke up early and packed all the food she would need, a sword, and water. Then she packed five strings of coins, which was 5,000 coins. After that, she took the fastest–running mustang from the family stable and the map with the robe, and she was off.

Their first stop was Dunhuang. They rode over mountains, rocky roads, and grasslands, all of which were stunningly beautiful but more dangerous. After one month of long traveling, they finally arrived at Dunhuang. They restocked the food and got a lot of water in preparation for the desert.

“Now I have to find a camel rental place to get a camel, and I will sell the horse to get more money,” said Mei to Burg.

“Okay, but you will only need the camel for about one week, because Lord Zahhak prepared a flying ship for you at Hami,” replied Burg.

They traveled for a few more days, but on the fourth day, when Mei was taking out some dried crackers and they were resting to get more energy for the road ahead, suddenly a guy in a black mask appeared. A kidnapper was there to steal all their food, water, and supplies.

Mei quickly pulled out her sword while Burg summoned a long piece of silk. The silk wrapped around the kidnapper, and Mei stabbed the sword beside his head.

“Do not ever come near here, you hear me?” scolded Mei at the kidnapper.

“Yes... I will go...” But as he left, he dropped a scroll on the sand.

Burg started to scan the scroll with a blue light. “What is that, Burg? It looks so futuristic.”

“Well, this is artificial intelligence. You would not know this; it is from the 20th century,” explained Burg. “Oh no, this is one of the servants of the other wizard of Persia, Azhdakar. Even though Zahhak is a wizard who is feared around Persia, Azhdakar is a wizard who tries to erase people from this world. He turns cities into sand, and he erases memories from merchants and travelers. He tends to mess with maps.”

In the next few days, their pace was faster than ever, and they reached the castle in only two months. Of course, Mei had a lot of help from Burg and Zahhak.

The door opened, and the castle was so beautiful that you would be flabbergasted by the scene: golden chandeliers, stairs, and more. Just then, a man wearing a long black robe appeared. “Where is the cloak?”

Mei quickly gave the robe to Zahhak, and he then took it and gave it to a man next to him. “You know what to do. Give this robe to Azhdakar and say it is a present from the king. When he drapes it around him, put the hood on his head immediately and then ring this bell when he has evaporated.” He said as he handed a silver bell to the man.

“Well, Mei, you have a whole new life ahead of you. Do you want to stay here as my apprentice, or do you want to go back to China?”

Mei hesitated then nodded her head as she looked around the unfamiliar yet fascinating world in front of her.

“Then there’s a whole new life ahead of you...” said Zahhak.

A Journey on the Silk Road

Ying Wa Primary School, Chan, Chi Shing – 10

The Silk Road was a vast network of trade routes connecting the East and West, spanning thousands of miles across Asia, Europe, and Africa from ancient times into the Middle Ages. It was named for the highly valued Chinese silk that was a key commodity traded along it, but it facilitated the exchange of many other goods, including spices, precious metals, and ceramics. Beyond commerce, the Silk Road was crucial for the spread of ideas, technology, and religions, fostering cultural diffusion and intermingling between different civilizations. It was established by China's Han Dynasty through territorial expansion. The Silk Road derives its name from the lucrative trade in silk, first developed in China, and was a major reason for the connection of trade routes into an extensive transcontinental network. It was first popularized in 1877 by Ferdinand von Richthofen, who made seven expeditions to China from 1868 to 1872. However, the term itself had been in use in decades prior to that. The alternative translation "Silk Route" is also used occasionally. Although the term was coined in the 19th century, it did not gain widespread acceptance in academia or popularity among the public until the 20th century. The first book entitled *The Silk Road* was by Swedish geographer Sven Hedin in 1938.

Five years ago, the wind whipped along the Silk Road as I guided my camel caravan across the sun-scorched desert, a familiar dance that I had practiced for years. My journey, however, was not solely for profit. It was a quest to fulfill a dying promise: to bring a rare medicinal herb, guarded by a hidden mountain monastery, to the city of Antioch. The road was fraught with the constant threat of bandits and the treacherous whispers of the desert, but I was not alone. Alongside me was a navigator with a map as ancient as the stars, a stoic Buddhist monk, and a runaway slave who had been freed months ago and now shadowed me like a loyal fox.

Our journey began in the vibrant bazaars of Istanbul, where the stoic Buddhist monk's father, his face etched with the weariness of age, had clasped his hand and whispered, "The Silk Road is more than just a trade route. It is a river of stories, cultures, and hope, and you must carry yours with courage." He had given me a jade pendant, its cool surface a reminder of his love, and pressed into my hand a small book with his meticulous notes on the road ahead, a legacy to guide me. The journey had been arduous since then, a test of endurance through towering mountain passes, treacherous rivers, and endless stretches of desert.

The next afternoon, while crossing the Taklamakan Desert, we were ambushed. Our caravan fought back valiantly, but it was outnumbered. As the bandits closed in, a sudden sandstorm erupted, engulfing us all in a blinding, swirling mass of dust. We huddled in the darkness, the sandstorm howling outside, a celestial fury that seemed to punish those who dared to disturb the desert's slumber.

The storm passed, and we emerged to find the bandits gone, but the caravan's precious cargo of silks was missing. Despair washed over us; we had lost everything. But the old navigator, his eyes fixed on the stars, pointed a trembling finger toward the horizon. "The Silk Road," he said, "is not just about the silks we carry, but the stories we weave into its fabric. The greatest treasures are not always those that glitter, but those that are found in the hearts of men."

Our journey continued, our spirits bruised but our resolve unbroken. In the quiet of the march, a dull grief for the lost silks settled in my chest, but it was slowly displaced by a stubborn, unfamiliar hope. We reached the hidden monastery in the Pamir Mountains, its golden domes glinting in the sun. The monk, who had been our guide through the past, now revealed himself to be a guardian of the sacred monastery. He had been leading us

here for a reason, and he guided us through the sacred halls, sharing ancient tales of the Silk Road's first travelers. He bestowed upon us a small bundle of herbs, its scent fragrant and potent.

We were no longer a merchant caravan, but a group of weary yet hopeful travelers, our burden of silks replaced by a heavier one of stories, knowledge, and shared purpose. We encountered a lone merchant, his camel loaded with spices, who had been robbed by the same bandits. Armed with the knowledge of the Silk Road's true meaning, I traded my only remaining possession, the jade pendant, for the spices, a gesture of kindness that made our journey easier.

As we neared Bursa, the scent of plague hung heavy in the air, a metallic dread that made my heart clench. But hope bloomed as our caravan arrived, a fragile, fluttering feeling in my throat. The herbs, once a symbol of loss, now represented a glimmer of hope for the city. We had lost our silks, but we had found something more valuable: a story woven into the fabric of our being, a story of the Silk Road. And it was in sharing this story with other travelers that I began to heal.

Expedition Encounter

Ying Wa Primary School, Fong, Koon Chung – 11

Sweating on the sand, struggling to breathe.

Hard a time it was, the journey to China.

Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant and explorer, was traveling and surviving through the harsh Taklamakan Desert on China's Silk Road.

And there I was, with my son, Marco, and my brother, Maffeo, struggling on the way to China. I felt a headache. Then it got more severe. Then, I sort of...

Fainted.

I opened my eyes gently. It all seemed like a dream. I studied the place. There was delicate gold scattered all over the place. And amidst it, an object shined the most.

A throne. And there, a VIP sat. He wore clothes made of a very precious material that I had never seen.

The VIP spoke up, "Well, you finally woke up, dear Niccoló Polo, Marco's father. I'm the emperor of China, Kublai. Your son has been really brave, traveling from Europe to China. Very brave."

I tried not to be too proud.

The emperor spoke again, ignoring his usual commanding style, "He is really excellent. May you grant my wish to send you three on a royal mission?"

"Delighted, Your Majesty. Most grateful." It started to get hard not to be too proud.

The emperor pointed to who seemed to be his minister.

The minister handed Marco a scroll, made of cattle skin.

"Tomorrow, go on the journey along the Silk Road. Take your time. But do start your journey back before the end of Apricot Month," said the minister.

And that was the last sentence I heard on that day.

Dawn came. My brother nodded at the edge of the city wall. So did my son.

"Here we go," said Marco seriously, with his businesslike and adventurous mind.

The scene was there again. Sweating on the sand, struggling to breathe.

With three heavy backpacks and camels.

On the Silk Road. In the desert. The harsh desert.

It was a very long journey that never seemed to end.

Endless deserts.

Stretching for months and months.

A strand of bustling noise went into our ears. Then, what sounded like trumpets echoed. The bustling noise grew bigger. That was an important trading point on the Silk Road: India. The markets were really busy, with a variety of booths.

The guards let us in. It felt so good to accomplish the tiring journey. Marco led my brother and me to settle our backpacks, filled with goods. My son waved to the Indian merchants. It seemed that every single Indian knew that we were ambassadors sent by the emperor of China, the great origin of all the wonderful silk and other goods they had.

My son took a peek at the scroll given by the minister as if it were top secret. Then he used a small stand and laid the goods on top, very skillfully. Well, after all, I taught him. Maffeo and I stood aside and let Marco do his thing.

Very soon, Indian merchants from everywhere rushed toward Marco's booth, enthusiastically trading for the valuable goods. And then Indian merchants from all over the market started to set off on camels and trade the goods in other countries along the Silk Road.

Continuing for weeks.

But we were still waiting for that important moment in the royal mission. Especially Marco.

There was silence.

All except the bustling noise of the market.

Definitely, time had passed, and Apricot Month was coming to an end.

We knew that we must go back.

My son stared at the scroll, trying to stay firm. And I knew what he was thinking. The mission mustn't end without success. But we had to go as told by the minister.

My brother led us to leave the market and get onto our camels.

But it felt like they had exhausted themselves.

A chill went down my spine. The camel lay down on the sand, motionless. We looked at each other.

But soon, a sweet voice reached my ears. It stood out among all the other voices.

"Glass! Great glassware!" the voice was soft and gentle.

It was undoubtedly a female merchant, somewhat young. Her voice had fully shown her kindness.

Our eyes sparkled.

My son looked at the scroll once more. And he got into the market again, striding with all his muscles, looking for that gentle voice in the distance.

There she was, in sight.

Marco greeted the kind woman.

"Good evening! Fancy some glassware?" she said.

"Glassware?"

"Yes. It's very high quality. Would you like—"

"Hang on a minute there. You mean you're from Italy?"

"Yes. The best glassware comes from there. Would—"

"You're from Venice?"

"Yes, that's right."

We couldn't believe our ears.

Marco was too excited, but he calmed himself down. He was a strong man. He said, "I'm Marco Polo."

The female merchant's eyes widened in astonishment. "The famous merchant in our city!"

“Nice to be meeting you,” said Marco, trying to use a firm voice while in fact he was really excited. “May you kindly come with me to China for a mission?”

“That would simply be honourable!”

Marco looked at the scroll with the royal mission written there: “Find a nice woman for the emperor’s dearest minister to marry,” satisfied from the bottom of his heart.

The woman lent us strong camels, and we started the journey back to China.

There the Chinese palace was again, with gold scattered everywhere.

The emperor spoke, “Oh, my dear Marco Polo. Oh! Is that the woman you found? She’s so kind! Everyone of my advisors, prepare for the marriage!”

At that moment, I was so touched. The Silk Road absolutely did connect the East and the West in an amazing way—just like the woman in our city and the Chinese minister. Thank you so much, Zhang Qian, for opening up this route, which will definitely continue for centuries to come!

The New Tales of China's Silk Road

Ying Wa Primary School, Jiang, Ho Yeung Theo – 11

'Help!' a boy asked. He was under an enormous pile of books.

Then a girl came to help him. She put the books away, and soon the boy was free. The boy was named Zhao, and the girl was his cousin Hua, and they both loved Chinese history.

'Are you fine?' Hua asked. 'Oh, and why were you under that pile of books?'

'Well, I was finding this!' Zhao raised a book called *The Tales of China's Silk Road*. 'This book has a lot of information about the Silk Road. Do you want to read it?'

'Of course!' Hua smiled.

And they read for a long, long time. Suddenly, the book started to tremble and open, and Hua and Zhao were sucked inside!

'Arghhhh!' they cried.

As they disappeared, the book stopped trembling and sat on the floor silently.

When they opened their eyes, they were in a desert! There they saw a man lying down in the sand, moaning hoarsely. Zhao and Hua quickly ran over to help him.

'Hello, who are you? Is there something we can help you with?' asked Hua.

'Thank... thank you, children. I am Zhang Qian, and I was sent by Emperor Wu Di to find allies and trade. However, I drank all of my water! Now I don't know how I can get enough strength to continue to travel,' the man replied.

'Oh wow! You are Zhang Qian? I saw you in the book we read!' exclaimed Zhao.

Zhang Qian looked puzzled. Before he could ask why he was in a book, Zhao took his silk and tea leaves and said, 'Zhang Qian, don't worry! We can help you trade this stuff! After that, we'll come back and give the things we get from trading back to you!'

They found a village for Zhang Qian to rest, and the kids started to travel, with two new camels along their side. But just when they started, a sandstorm kicked up, and the kids were forced to stop and take cover behind some rocks.

'Oh no! How will we travel now?' cried Hua, worried.

'Don't worry!' Zhao said. 'The sandstorm will end soon, and we can continue then!'

After a few minutes, it stopped, and the kids were able to continue with their journey. But Zhao and Hua were nearly out of the desert when some greedy thieves ambushed them!

‘Hand over that silk, children!’ growled the leader of the thieves.

They didn’t want to give up the valuables, but they were surrounded by thieves. Suddenly, Hua thought of an idea. She took out something from her pocket and told Zhao to close his eyes. After a blinding flash of light, the children were running away with the silk while the thieves’ eyes hurt!

‘What was that?’ asked an amazed Zhao.

‘Oh, that was my miniature torch I got from the carnival last year. It broke down when I dropped it last time, and it’s been shining extremely bright ever since!’ replied Hua with a smile.

And they travelled a long distance to another country.

As they looked around, Zhao said, ‘Hmm... this place looks weird. Many people eat curry, and most women wear headwraps! Where is this place?’

‘I know! This place is India! I read some stuff about it in a book. Most women wear headwraps for religious reasons, and the king lives in the royal palace. Let’s find a map and go to trade with the king!’ said Hua.

Zhao nodded. They quickly found a map in a shop, bought it, and went to the royal palace.

When they arrived at the palace, some soldiers blocked their way to the door and said something, but Hua and Zhao couldn’t understand.

‘They must be speaking Hindi, the main language in India, so we can’t understand!’ Hua whispered.

‘Then I’ll try talking to them in English!’ Zhao said. ‘Hello, soldiers! We are Hua and Zhao, and we have come from China to trade with your king using this silk and other valuables! We mean no harm, so please let us in!’

Surprisingly, the soldiers understood, and one of them replied, ‘All right then, merchants, please wait here while I inform His Majesty.’

‘Wow! He understands!’ exclaimed Zhao.

‘Oh! Now I remember! The second language of India is English, so most people here understand it too,’ said Hua.

A few minutes later, the two kids were escorted into the palace to see the king. They traded some of their silk, handicrafts, tea leaves, and other valuables for jewels, ivory, fabrics, and spices.

Soon they started to travel again and traded with other places such as Samarkand and Kashgar.

After a few years, they finally finished trading with all the places on the Silk Road and returned the valuables they received from trading to Zhang Qian.

‘Thank you for helping me! This mission has been very hard for you children to do, but you have completed it! This is a token of gratitude from me,’ said Zhang Qian, pulling a small orb from his pocket. ‘This is a magical orb that can grant you one wish each.’

Zhao and Hua, who had already grown into teenagers on this journey, thanked Zhang Qian and took the orb while Zhang Qian left with the valuables.

'I wish to return my cousin's age and mine to what they were before we came here!' shouted Hua.

Suddenly, a puff of smoke appeared, and the teenagers became two children.

'I wish to go back to our home in our time with my cousin!' cried Zhao.

With another puff of smoke, the children disappeared, leaving the orb behind.

The children opened their eyes and found themselves back in their house safely.

'What a magical journey!' they both exclaimed.

The two kids became more interested in the Silk Road and read more books and learnt more facts about it, and every day they kept thinking about their adventure on the Silk Road.

The History of The Silk Road

Ying Wa Primary School, Lee, Ching Yeung – 11

I stepped into the time machine. Excitement welled up inside me. I was the first ever human to time-travel. I was full of confidence. I pressed a few buttons on the control panel, and the screen showed “TANG DYNASTY”. Zoom! I took off. I was traveling at bullet speed, flying back to the past when it was the most prosperous period in the history of the Silk Road.

I opened my eyes again and realized everything around me had changed: no computers, no one using phones, no light bulbs. I wandered around to locate myself. I realised everybody was wearing costumes in bright colors and their clothing was made of silk. I felt awkward as I couldn’t blend in. Suddenly, a bunch of people riding on horses came speeding straight past me. I instantly woke up realising I was sitting in the middle of the road. One of the men cantered back and gently asked me, “Are you okay? What are you doing here?”

I nodded, and swiftly thought of an excuse, “I’m going to buy tea! What about you?”

“I am Zhang, and he is Li. We’re going to the Byzantine Empire to trade goods,” he replied, pointing at the man next to him. Then, he got back on his horse to continue his journey.

I thought about what he said and realised that this was the Silk Road! I wanted to know more, so I followed behind him to see where they were going. He turned back and saw what I was doing so he asked, “Would you like to come with us?” He signalled me to get onto his horse. I hesitated, but soon, I hopped onto the back of his horse. I was thrilled with excitement as we embarked on our journey.

Soon, it turned dark. Suddenly, grass shattered as if there was a creature roaming around for food. We trembled, panicked, fearing hostile animals that could take our lives. In the blink of an eye, we saw the glitter of a bunch of metal blades. Panicked, I sprinted into the bushes to take cover while Zhang hopped onto his horse to ride away as fast as he could.

Soon after, we reunited as the metal blades held by thieves had already lost track of us. Unfortunately, Zhang had hurt his leg as he fell off his horse while escaping. However, we managed to continue our trip to the west.

It was a difficult challenge for us, as we had to cross the Tianshan Mountains, which were about a thousand meters high. We climbed the mountains hard. Each day, we went up with goods, then, during nightfall, we would build temporary tents for the night. I thought it was very tiring as I was a person who came from the future. I could have just decided to give up and take the time machine back to the present, but I decided to persist in exploring the Silk Road.

One week had passed, and we have already passed the highest point of the mountains and began to go downhill. As we were going downhill, Zhang suddenly lost his footing and fell off a cliff that was full of grass and rocks below. I panicked as if there were butterflies in my stomach. I rushed down with Zhang’s team, being hopeful that he would be fine.

We landed in the bushes, and we then split up into two groups to look for Zhang, as Li instructed. Soon, the sun went down, and we had to stop because there could be creatures that were hostile at night. We all headed back to base camp empty-handed disappointed as we thought Zhang must be saved by us within three days to stand any real chance of surviving.

As the night passed, we began searching again. My teammate, Li, and I discovered a cave inside the mountain. We found a person lying inside it. "Could it be Zhang?" I thought. I walked near it. Indeed, he looked like Zhang. We were a bit relieved as we finally found him, but the problem was we weren't sure if he was fine.

I stayed in the cave while Li went to tell others we had found Zhang. Soon, everyone gathered in the cave, inspecting Zhang's injuries. Then, one of them pulled his box of treatments out and cleaned Zhang's wounds and bruises. Then, he did first aid for Zhang to help him regain consciousness.

It didn't take long till Zhang opened his eyes again. "Where am I?" he asked. Everyone told him what had happened. He was confused and shocked. We then gave him some fruit to eat. He evidently looked better; all of us were relieved.

We persevered and soon made it to the deserted land. We kept walking day and night until we saw a large wall with a few soldiers there. The soldiers said, "This is the Byzantine Empire. State your purpose!" Zhang explained everything to them, and they let us through the gates.

As we went in, everything felt different. There were churches everywhere, and everybody there was speaking something that sounded Greek. We then found our way to the palace of the Byzantine Empire. It looked astonishing. Guards greeted us, then they let us in. I then witnessed Zhang and Li exchanging tea and silk for jewellery and gold. All these goods looked amazing! Zhang then suggested we walk around the city before leaving. But I was exhausted, and I had stayed in the past for too long already, so I decided to return back to the time machine and head back to the present.

This journey to the past taught me a lesson, "Where there's a will, there's a way", a lesson first coined by Liu Xiu, a Chinese emperor. It encourages us to stay determined and focused on our goals, as determination can lead to success, like when I decided to persevere in completing the journey of the Silk Road.

The Silk Road

Ying Wa Primary School, Mok, Fei Wan Aaron – 11

“Help! Help! Come out now, Phoenix!” In a state of panic, Jimmy the dragon begged for help. In the Han Dynasty, there was a great road called the Silk Road. But since Zhang Qian’s return from the road thirty years ago, thieves seemed to be everywhere, creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Not just thieves posed a threat; the road was also laden with deadly traps, making each step a perilous gamble. However, Emperor Wu Di still needed people to step on the road and trade valuables. Everyone in the Kingdom was gripped by fear; they exchanged worried glances, each face mirroring the anxiety in their hearts, creating a shared bond of dread.

In all of those scared faces, Jimmy the dragon, Carla the golden cow, and Kris the eagle volunteered to go on the adventure and risk their lives. On the 6th of July, three of those mighty warriors set off on their journey. Right before leaving the kingdom, Wu Di borrowed Zhang Qian’s pet phoenix to help them. However, they could only use the phoenix three times. Immediately, they got on their camels that had rolls of cloth made of silk on them.

As Jimmy, Carla, and Kris started in Chang’an, they were pretty safe, but the road had no food nearby. “I feel extremely hungry. Let me eat the camel, so that I could fill up my endless pit,” Carla shouted at Jimmy, begging for some food. “Carla, we are all starving; you have to be patient,” Jimmy answered. “Let me fly higher and find some food,” Kris added and used all her might to fly up. “I found a noodle shop!” Kris exclaimed excitedly. “Finally doing something useful,” Carla said to Kris.

The place of the noodle shop is Lanzhou, which is a place known for its hand-pulled Lamian noodles. These noodles use stewed beef and contain no soy sauce but are flavoured by salt and herbs or some traditional Chinese spices, resulting in a lighter taste. Jimmy traded some spices with a bit of cloth. After the tasty meal, they decided to head to a small village near the Great Wall of China that is called JiuQuan.

In the middle of their way to JiuQuan, a swarm of thieves burst out of nowhere, catching all three of them. In the middle of the mysterious darkness, Jimmy called the phoenix for help while he was panicking; the phoenix immediately came out and set them free. Under the fading sunlight, the three of them finally arrived in JiuQuan by dawn. In the welcoming embrace of JiuQuan, they chose to stay for the night, grateful for the shelter given.

In the morning of the next day, they made their way to Anxi, excited to take another step into the unknown. As they arrived, a few scammers who were dressed like PE teachers asked Jimmy, Carla, and Kris to follow them. All three of them followed without knowing that they were scammers. Suddenly, all three of them fell into a deep, dark hole. Jimmy and Kris were very anxious and didn’t know what to do. Without thinking twice, they called for the phoenix and quickly left Anxi.

All three of them kept travelling to the west and brought back valuable spices like pepper from Delhi; glassware came from Egypt and Rome. Most of all, ideas, religions, and technologies were spread to the west and brought back as well. As the three of them finished collecting goods, their items were packed like leaves on trees, each representing a culture.

On the way back to the Kingdom of the Han Dynasty, they had to walk past the Takla Makan Desert, and they really needed water. Jimmy went to get water from cactuses. As both of them kneeled down to open up the cactus, Carla took two knives and stabbed both of them from behind. “Ha! Ha! Ha! Now I’ll say both of you died and only I survived, and everyone will only remember me!” Carla exclaimed in the middle of the desert.

Jimmy and Kris were gravely injured, their bodies resembling a storm-tossed ship, battered and bruised from relentless upheaval. Like wary soldiers returning from a massive battle, pain etched on their faces. In that bleak moment, Jimmy and Kris thought these were their last seconds of their lives, still not knowing how to react to

Carla's betrayal. Suddenly, people from many different countries appeared out of nowhere and saved Jimmy and Kris. The Silk Road isn't just for trading treasures, but for trading dreams and spirit.

The Bridge of Trust, Kindness and Friendship

Ying Wa Primary School, Wong, Ho Chun – 11

Zhang Qian was on a mission to trade and learn about other cities as instructed by Emperor Wu Di. As the sand glistened in the afternoon sun, he couldn't help but feel lonely in such an empty desert, unable to share the imagery before him with anyone else. However, little did he know, he was about to embark on a journey filled with knowledge, goods, and cultures.

Zhang Qian soon arrived in the Taklamakan Desert and encountered a few merchants along the route, who carried silk, glass, pottery, and spices in their caravans. Camels visibly groaned under the heavy bundles of silk and pottery they bore. From afar, Zhang Qian saw the merchants and was intrigued. "I see you are carrying pottery. Do you mind telling me more about the history of pottery?" he asked. One of the merchants smiled gently and lifted a pottery vessel from his pack. "Pottery is as old as our civilization, dating back to the Xianrendong Cave. Back then, we used it to create tableware and cooking pots, and it was also used as a building material. Some pieces were carved with patterns to speak of our gods and daily lives." Surprised by these uses, Zhang Qian shared in return that pottery in China was mainly used for storage and religious rituals. He couldn't help but feel inspired as he listened to the merchants speak with such passion and animation. The pottery no longer seemed like mere clay, but rather an exchange of wisdom from people in different parts of the world.

After bidding the merchants farewell, Zhang Qian moved on and soon found himself in a village surrounded by a small group of villagers whose faces were tense, brows furrowed with worry. One older villager stepped forward, his voice urgent and steady. "A sandstorm is coming very soon. The wind is not steady—it has been twisting all over the place. This is no ordinary wind. It means trouble." His eyes narrowed as he scanned the horizon. "Right. The sky is brown and hazy. Even the animals know something's off. Look at the camels—they are restless. And the dogs will not stop barking." "Good sir, you should stay with us tonight. We will protect you from the sandstorm," one of the villagers said kindly. "I have crossed rivers and mountains. I am not scared of silly little village myths," Zhang Qian replied with a shrug. He gathered his belongings onto his camel and set off once again.

Not long after, a strong gust of wind rose, howling like a wild beast. Alarmed, Zhang Qian looked around, but it was too late. The sandstorm had begun. Within moments, sand whipped into his eyes, stinging and blinding him; the moon vanished behind the wall of sand, while the desert seemed to close in from all sides. The villagers' warnings flashed through his mind, the restless animals, the shifting sky, everything he had dismissed earlier now pressed against him with crushing regret. As despair overwhelmed him and the storm roared louder, flickers of light pierced through the swirling sand. Figures wrapped in cloaks and scarves emerged, their shouts cutting through the howl, "This way, follow me!" Rough but warm hands seized Zhang Qian, ropes pulled tightly around his waist, and he felt himself being dragged toward safety and light. Regret instantly gave way to relief. He was immensely grateful for the villagers' kindness and courage in helping him during the sandstorm.

When the storm finally passed, dawn broke over the desert, signaling that it was time for Zhang Qian to say goodbye to the villagers. With tears welling in his eyes, he embraced them tightly, knowing he might not have survived without their help. He was forever grateful and indebted to their kindness, but he had to continue his journey, carrying this bittersweet memory safely in his heart.

The sands glistened once more in the afternoon sun. Zhang Qian had come to realize that the Silk Road was not merely a trading path, but a bridge of trust, kindness, and friendship between different cultures. As he walked on, he carried not only the goods of the journey, but also the spirit of kindness and the willingness to learn.

Origin

Ying Wa Primary School, Wong, Tsz Hin Dave – 11

“Where are you from?” A soldier raised a spear to his neck, ready to behead him.

“Stop,” the man said calmly. “I’m an envoy from the Han. I want to see the Emperor.”

Murmurs arose within the soldiers. Some sprinted inside the palace.

“Soldiers! What do you want?” The emperor’s voice rocked the inside of the palace like thunder.

“A missionary from the Han has come, Emperor Sōsōs. He requested to see you.”

“Let him in. We’ll see what he’s up to.”

The soldiers put down their spears and ushered him in.

“Envoy of the Han. What brings you to Dayuan, our great country?”

The man confidently answered, “I’m here to plead an alliance with the Han against the Xiongnu, since I heard you hated them. Would you graciously accept an offer of allegiance?”

The emperor froze. The entire hall went silent until he finally spoke up.

“So,” he said slowly in a quiet voice, “we do hate the Xiongnu. They kicked us out from the Hexi Corridor and destroyed our borderlands. I have a feeling they are trying to invade us anytime.”

The man got confused. “What do you mean by ‘us’?”

“Dayuan and the other states in the Ferghana. We are failing against the Xiongnu, and we need aid, but I don’t want them to know about any alliance we have; otherwise, there will be a chance of war. I’ll think about it.”

The soldiers escorted him out of the palace, and soon enough the doors closed behind him.

He looked at his stomach as it rumbled violently. Looking for something to eat, he turned to a city.

A bustling city appeared in front of his eyes. There was an unfathomable amount of stalls and people, and they covered every grid. He had to squeeze his way inside.

“Let me mark this down. Guishan—twelve thousand, five hundred and...”

He stopped to give a thought about this. How far was he?

He zoned back in.

“Fifty Li.”

He looked around, seeing the civilised town. From afar, so far that he could barely see the brown bricks, he made out that all four sides were walls, protecting the city in a cradle from attackers. Inside this wall were many, many, many fixed abodes made from wood.

Apart from above, no light shined on him, except for the gaps between the heads of the people. Not even a pinprick could fit through them.

Out of nowhere, a loud shout shocked the crowd.

“T–T–Try my grape wine—”

“He must have drunk too much,” a citizen murmured.

Seeing the vendor dozing out, he helped himself to a glass. He took a whiff of it before he took a sip.

“A bitter aroma.”

As he took a sip, he hesitated about the drink.

“What is a grape anyway?”

At that same moment, a rush of citizens pushed him aside, colliding him with the store. His head was smashed into a barrel, and his small eyes were presented to numerous shiny, purple spheres. After pulling the barrel off his head, he checked to see if the vendor was still dozing. Sure enough, he was. With hesitation, he gently lifted one of those spheres out and threw it in his mouth. As he chewed on it, his tongue was brought to paradise. Juices and sugar poured out of the purplish skin, as if a bomb had just gone off inside. The meat was soft, which reminded him of the lychee back in the Han. What didn’t remind him of lychee were the seeds, which were tiny and edible.

After he was done with his “feast”, he went to the counter and saw a counter full of coins. He picked up one to observe the details.

“Robber!” a citizen yelled, seeing him pick up the coin.

He looked up for a second with wide eyes and captured a glimpse of the citizen. He had deep-set eyes and profuse beards.

“It’s just a cent!”

“I don’t care!”

He was chased down the road, bumping through many civilians until he took a right turn, where there was farmland. He hid under the tall blades. He looked at the vines next to it, where he met the grapes again, but had another foreign plant growing in a nearby grid.

“Argh, they haggle over a fraction of a cent.”

“What is this?”

A farmer stumbled upon him. The farmer didn't mind that he was just sitting there; he just told him about the plant.

"It's called alfalfa. The horses' favourite. The citizens like their wine and the horses like their alfalfa!" He giggled loudly after.

Believing the coast was clear, he returned to the road, only to be greeted by a soldier on a horse. It was tall, had strong hooves, and was fast.

"Zhang! The emperor has made his decision!"

He got to the palace, ready to listen.

"So, I have decided. We are not making a military alliance with the Han. But since you are here anyway, I want to gift you three things. One: our heavenly horses, the strongest and speediest horses in Asia! Two: our wine, dried fruit, and textiles, luxury goods in Dayuan. Three: trade with the Han. We want to start trade with the Han to see what you have. But, envoy, you have to do it for me. Understand?"

"Yes," he quickly responded. "But since an alliance with you failed, I am going to other states to pursue alliances. I will come back one day, I promise."

"Very well."

The soldiers escorted him out of the palace again. Ready for new voyages further west, he bade Dayuan goodbye, marking one of the "checkpoints" of the origin of the Silk Road.

Tastes of the Maritime Silk Road: Grandmother's Tales of Xiamen

YK Pao School Shanghai, Chen, Ada – 10

As a gentle sea wave rolls by, carrying the scent of Xiamen's tea and the sizzle of oyster omelet in a pan... these are the fragrances and scenes that hold up the culture of Xiamen. The pulse of it was the Maritime Silk Road, along which Xiamen flourished as a thriving port town.

My grandma, a native of Xiamen, told me stories that brought the ancient Maritime Silk Road to life. Over a thousand years ago, hundreds of ships left this harbor carrying tea from China to the world. In Fujian, tea is called "te", so when tea was transported from Fujian to Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and many other parts of the world, it was called "tea" or "te". That small linguistic trace was part of the greater history of how Chinese culture journeyed across oceans.

Tea, back then, was wrapped in rough hemp paper, fresh and clean. When it reached Southeast Asia, people turned it into something delightful—boiling it with sweet coconut milk and pandan leaves, creating what we know today as milk tea. In the old tea shops on Kulangsu, you can find numerous sweets made from sugarcane, a crop Southeast Asian countries once traded with China for tea. One bite, and it's delightfully sweet. Grandma smiles, "That is the sweetness of the Maritime Silk Road."

But my favorite dish of Xiamen is always the oyster omelet. As oysters and egg sizzle together, the salt of the sea blends with the fragrance of fresh eggs. Watching the cook crack golden brown eggs into the pan and add a scoop of pale-orange starch, I keep wondering—how could the oyster omelet taste so special?

I've tried making oyster omelet myself many times, but it never tastes quite right. When I asked Grandma why, she smiled, "It's all in the sweet potato starch." That unveils another story of the Maritime Silk Road. During the Ming Dynasty, sweet potatoes arrived in Xiamen on ships departing from Luzon in the Philippines, where the plants took root in the coastal red soil. Later, Dutch merchant sailors came and taught the Xiamen locals how to bake oysters. The locals then adapted the method into a pan-fried omelet—and that light-orange starch is what gives it its tender yet crispy texture.

Fishermen in the old days would always fry a large pan of oyster omelet to welcome sailors from Southeast Asia, Grandma told me. To me, it's more than a local delicacy—it's the oysters from Xiamen's waters meeting starch from a foreign country. Without trade, this taste wouldn't exist.

Every time I return to Xiamen, my cousins would take me to their favorite satay noodle shop. The owner, an overseas Chinese back from Malaysia, ladles rich satay sauce into the broth, blending it with coconut milk and peanut paste—a recipe from Southeast Asia. In the evenings, Grandma would take us to open-air barbecue stalls. As the smell of cumin drifts up from the grill, she would tell us about cumin, a spice originally from Arabia, traveling over a thousand years along the Silk Road to find its way into Xiamen's taste.

In Grandma's fruit basket at home, there are always guavas and wax apples. They have a prefix "fan" (foreign) in their Chinese names, marking them as "guests from abroad". It's not just fruits—foods whose names include "hu" or "yang" (also meaning foreign), like carrots and onions, also sailed here along the Silk Road.

Whenever I walk on Xiamen's streets and alleys, breathing the sea breeze, watching chefs making oyster omelet, and tasting flavors that blend Chinese and foreign origins, I think of Grandma's tales. I realize that the Silk Road isn't just distant history—it's hidden in our daily lives. May it flow on, in what we eat and what we remember. That, is the true meaning of the Silk Road.

Silk Road Serenade

YK Pao School Shanghai, Cheng 程雨芊, Audrey – 10

The morning sunshine shone brightly into the wagon, shining on me, shining on my owner...

I am a guzheng. I am made from red wood and decorated with golden paint and luminous pearls which shine in the dark, spun into a carving of a lark. Before my journey on the Silk Road, my owner had played me in the palace for the King and his court. The King loved the performance and thought that my owner should take me to Dayuezhi in the Western Regions to share the culture of Han. For a normal person who had lived only in the country and never left, this trip would be amazing, but hazardous.

The King arranged a caravan with three wagons. Our wagon was not very luxurious, but for me and my owner, it was the best we had ever seen and it was ours.

In our first month on the road, someone felt something... uncomfortable. The dry desert heat stung our eyes in the daytime with the wind freezing us at night. When the sandstorms came, the sand and dust were everywhere, even in the wagons. Even worse, the horses were sick because of the sand storms, so our speed was slow. Different kinds of deadly animals could appear anywhere at any time. Scorpions and snakes were the things the horses hated most, with one sting or bite by them equal to death. But the most important thing was water. They could not find water anywhere, all the water they drank was given by the aborigines. One of the drivers started to vomit and had diarrhea. But the journey had to continue. At first, the driver was the only person who felt sick. But slowly everyone did. The driver even died. With everyone falling ill, we had no alternative, but to stop. They stayed at a little city to wait, but they didn't know what they were waiting for. Someone tried to find a doctor to cure the disease, but they failed.

One day, one of the travelers went out to search for hope and to everyone's surprise, he found a doctor who could cure them.

The doctor told them that the reason they caught the illness was because their body was not accustomed to the climate.

The doctor gave them a local cure to fight the illness and told them that they had to take the medicine every day of their journey. And this is what they did.

Day after day, they were closer and closer to their destination. My owner and I stayed in our own little wagon watching the outside. People here were different-looking: they had bronzed faces and curly whiskers on their chins and even had wavy hair. This was the first time I had seen these kinds of people. My owner took me out of my case and started to practice. Graceful music appeared in her hands. The people outside looked like they also enjoyed the music I made. I was proud of myself and my owner, the performance must be perfect.

The wagon suddenly stopped. I thought we were already at Dayuezhi. But no, we were still only halfway. I heard someone shouting and yelling in a crazy voice. And then my owner left the wagon, leaving me alone. I heard the sound of a man's voice and fighting. My owner ran back to the wagon and she quickly tried to put me back in my case, but there was no time, so she had to cover me with a blanket. I heard more shouting but I couldn't see anything except the bright colors of the blanket. Everyone on the street was quiet, I heard a crash, the crack of wood and screaming before my owner's voice, more chaos and the angry roar of the wind.

"Sandstorm! Run! Run!" Another sand storm, but this time, the sand storm did not hurt or kill them; it saved them.

Yes, we survived. The nature we hated helped us. My owner must have thought this too. After food and rest, we started our journey again, because the driver said that the deadline to get to Dayuezhi was close. But we, for many reasons were slow. We needed to be faster.

For the next few days, the driver didn't even stop for rest. Day and night, the horses never stopped until finally, we were out of the desert. "Ah, it is so great to breathe air without sand." My owner said, with a happy voice. The next day, we entered the capital city of Dayuezhi.

People there were very interested in us, pale, strangely dressed people in two poor wagons with a strange long wooden instrument.

We went straight into the palace, and everything was so 'smooth,' with the walls and floors shimmering under the afternoon sunlight.

That night, the palace was filled with a hundred candles all shining on me and my gold paint and pearls. We were in the middle of the palace and there were two rows of people on either side. They were the most important people in the country!

Yes. After all our incredible experiences on the Silk Road, it was time to perform.

The same song as months before but a different place. The same musician and her guzheng, but a different audience. Our music resounded all around the massive palace. Everyone enjoyed the music and from their faces I could tell that they were impressed! My body was vibrating, it was the same feeling. But now I am here to perform for Han, to show others our country's culture.

Now, I am more than just a guzheng. I am a traveler, a bridge, a story of connection and adventure. The Silk Road has not only carried me from East to West but also transformed me from silence to song. As the melody lingers, I know my adventure has only just begun. I think everyone will remember us, like millions of others who also traveled the new Silk Road.

Diary of Koshhal in the Silk Road

YK Pao School Shanghai, Lin, Lingo – 10

Hey! It's me, Koshhal, here to tell you about that time I was journeying through the Silk Road! Before I begin, let me tell you a bit about myself: Koshhal means "happy" in Persian. I was born in 314 BC, and my parents are Persian. My father, Ardeshir, is a merchant and often travels along the Silk Road. My mother, Shirin, is a farmer and stays at home with my baby brother, Mehdi. We live in a small stone house located on a little hill. Oh, Persia is great! We have large amounts of food, water, and fashion! Richer people even have towering mansions and tons of nature surrounding it. It's also the greatest empire in all of Europe and Asia! I've never been to war, but I heard that Persian armies are very strong and capable of defending Persia and also expanding the empire by attacking other countries such as Greece and Egypt. We also have a large number of animals, such as Persian leopards. We have all the real animals of the Chinese zodiac (we may not have dragons, but we do have crocodiles). Anyways, let's get started!

Diary one: Getting started

Remember how I said that my father is a merchant? Well, he is a very busy man and today, he actually agreed to let me go with him on his trip, because he has a lot of things to trade and sell. He said that we had to bring clothes, food, supplies, and cool jewelry to Mesopotamia and then Greece. I grabbed a few big boxes, and Dad told me that he had to take humongous pieces of wood to make the stall when we arrive. We were sweating by the time we finished packing everything. A few minutes later, a guy named Pavlova (to the best of my knowledge) came to haul all the stuff onto some camelback and then we set off to Mesopotamia. Dad told me stories of how the Silk Road was found all those years ago, how Sima Qian the historian explored the desert and how people in other countries, including Persia, traded supplies and its namesake, silk. I asked Dad when we would arrive, and he told me the whole journey could take up to a year! I just managed not to scream and jump off the camel I was riding on. I realized that this may not be as a short trip as I thought. If going out takes a year, I might as well be a teenager by the time we return home (right now, I'm about ten years old)!

Diary 2: Cool Camels and my shopping list

For days, all I could do was stare at the endless desert and sky. There was not much to look at except golden hills of sand and clouds forming recognizable shapes in the shining, hot sun. Dad said that we would soon approach a small region that had a large clan of rivers. It was all I could do to stay on the bumpy back of my camel, Shotor de 13th (everyone's camel is called Shotor, so we gave them numbers). I did a sigh of relief when we finally got to those rivers. Shotor de 13th (let's just call him S13) bent down and took large sips of water with joyous grunting noises. I filled my pot with river water, like my dad, and also took a sip. We continued on, and, after another month, arrived at Chengdu. Men greeted us with happy faces and waving hands. Dad set up a stall in a marketplace, and I organized the stuff on it. "I understand that you cannot run a stall alone, nor can you do it with me, for you would be bored. So, I give you the important job of buying some important items, some to keep and use, some to sell in another country or city," Dad declared in his wonderfully serious tone, giving me a scroll and some gold, "Here, take this list of things we need." My eyes widened in joy, as I once again climbed on S13, buying food and clothing and jewelry... also some silk. Dad had been specific about him wanting a lot of silk. By the end of the day, Dad had a sack with the gold he'd earned, while S13's back was practically overflowing with supplies.

Diary 3: Birthday Gift: Going Home after a year or more

After about three weeks in China, I was almost losing patience and was getting more and more homesick. I overheard Dad talking to one of our travel companions about having to go even further to Europe (Greece, Rome, Italy, etc) and how he can't possibly think of a way to get me to go too. I spent the night staring at world maps, hatching an idea. This morning, I suggested that we go to Europe the land route instead of the sea route, which would mean we would pass Persia, where he can drop me off. He thought it was an interesting idea and decided to try it. The path home took way longer than the path from home, since there was a lot more weight on the camels and we even faced off a little sandstorm. We got to Persia eventually in 8 months, coincidentally

on my birthday. Mom was so happy (and slightly startled) that we were home; she prepared a huge breakfast, and, after dinner, we all waved goodbye to Dad as he carried on his journey across the great Silk Road.

Afterword

After a year and a half, Dad returned home with lots of money and supplies, including tons of silk he had kept instead of selling. I was surprised that he actually brought home a Fergana horse and a baby ostrich. I named the horse Abrisham, meaning “silk”, and I named the ostrich Jadeh, meaning “road” so I could remember this incredible journey and its incredible rewards. I know, from an instinct, that one day I will take after my father and become a merchant, traveling around the globe on the Silk Road.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

YK Pao School Shanghai, Lu, Emma – 10

In a huge fancy castle, three young man and woman stood in this astounding place this is the China's Silk Road's start the Xi an's ' Weiyang Palace'. Three young teenager: Jennie, Jaden and Jerry they are all Chinese but they only had seen this stunning place on the TV. Look at those fancy decoration and the old buildings they are all the representative of China's grand. After that interesting visit they formally started this travel. They first went to see those mysterious and spectacular Terra Cotta Warriors and the Big Wild Goose Pagoda in the same city it was the place where Xuanzang once translated scriptures here. Then they drove the car through riversides and after half day the sun became to climb down they arrived at a loess plateau landscape it was quite famous for the camels and the landscape to make it into a beautiful drawing. They thought it was nor early so they quickly ate the dinner and went to sleep in the car. The next day morning Jennie was the first to wake she felt dulled and faintly saw a man with a sword at the window she screamed and woke up the other two boys. They open a little gap of the car window and tried to talk with the man: 'Hello, who are you, are you making a dress up of Tang Dynasty people?' The man spoke in a old way and answered: ' What do you mean dress up I am a Tang Dynasty people, and what is this thing you sit in?' They explained that car and went out they understand that the man is called Songlangxing he is a people to trade in the Silk Road. They picked up there bag and went with Songlangxing. He took them to the place where merchants are one friendly ask them about things on there bag it was a watch. The merchant knows that it could look at time so he brought it with the coins in Tang Dynasty. They did lots of trading with the merchants they brought many pots and silk. As they go back to the car they found it missing a stealer drove it in a strange way down the road at that case Songlangxing rode his camel and as a flash he became at the car's front, he took out his sword and sanction the stealer. The stealer told them that he is from Indian but he had lost his money on the way they were very sympathy of him so Songlangxing went to travel with him. Jaden saw it was no more early so they went to sleep, the next morning they found they where back. But the traveling time that they told there parents was almost finished . So, Jennie, Jerry and Jaden went back. They told there child all about this story, they are so proud of China.

Creative Writing Fiction

Group 2



New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Au, Kwan Pui Oswald – 12

Chapter One: The Monk and the Moving Map

Every great journey, you see, begins not with a single step, but with a piece of parchment that refuses to behave.

It was centuries ago—or perhaps it was yesterday, for maps of this sort have a very loose relationship with the calendar—and Master Tang sat in a quiet corner of Chang'an. Now, you must understand that Chang'an was not just a city; it was a place where "stunning art" and "creative ideas" were traded as commonly as cabbages.

Master Tang was quite bald, dressed in vibrant red and white clothes, and wore a strikingly long hat that seemed to point toward the heavens. Every day, he immersed himself in the Buddhist scriptures, which he found to be quite the most interesting thing in the entire world. Having finished his morning studies, he would venture into the heart of town to spread these scriptures to everyone he saw; it was a task he also considered to be very interesting indeed.

On the table before him lay The Map. It had been gifted to him by a mysterious monk from the Temple. At first glance, it showed the trekking route westwards that the "first people" had taken to sell silk to new customers. But as Tang watched closely, he discovered that the other side of the map showed where he needed to go in order to get the "treasure". The treasure map revealed that the prize was a trillion thousand bucks and two trillion thousand Buddhist scriptures. After he saw all of that, he was so excited that he immediately packed his bag and declared he was ready to go.

Chapter Two: The Bazaar of Bewilderment

The Gobi Desert is a place where the earth seems to hold its breath, waiting for something to happen. Into this vast silence stepped Master Tang, his long hat bobbing like a buoy in a sea of sand. His red and white clothes were a cheerful defiance against the beige dunes, and his bald head caught the sun with a gleam of pure optimism.

The heat was so absolute that one might imagine the sun itself was complaining about the temperature. Though Master Tang felt as if he were dying—which he most certainly was not—he refused to give up, pressing forward one steady step at a time. To combat the crushing loneliness of the waste, he entertained himself by reciting a steady stream of jokes. These ranged from the ribald "potty humor" of the marketplace to the wisdom of Buddhist philosophy, ensuring that even in the middle of a desert, he remained his own most interesting audience.

Chapter Three: The House of the Luminous Star

As the sun began to dip behind the dunes, casting long shadows that looked like ink spills on a golden page, Master Tang arrived at a peculiar stone structure. It was an oasis outpost where "east and west exchanged wonderful foods" and, more importantly, "remarkable inventions" of the soul.

Tang noticed a traveler sitting by a fire. The man wore a heavy woolen robe and held a book bound in strange leather. "He is reading," Tang whispered. "I suspect it is something very interesting."

The traveler was a Nestorian priest from the far west, one of the travellers who had spent "months trekking westwards"—or in his case, eastwards—to find new souls to speak with. Master Tang sat beside him and, without a word of the other's language, opened his own scripture. He pointed to a passage and beamed. "I find this very interesting," he said in Chinese. "It speaks of the path to peace."

The Nestorian priest smiled and opened his own book, pointing to a cross depicted in "stunning art" that looked like a blooming lotus. He spoke of a "Light from the West." Master Tang leaned in. "Oh! A different scripture! How very interesting!"

He immediately began to spread his scriptures, gesturing enthusiastically toward the heavens. The priest, in turn, shared a piece of "wonderful food"—a dry, crusty bread—while explaining his own "creative ideas" about the divine.

Final Chapter: A Never Ending dialogue

The final "X" on the Map did not lead to a dark cave or a dragon's hoard, as one might expect in a common adventure. Instead, as the sun rose over the westernmost peaks—looking very much like a giant, glowing orange—Master Tang found himself standing before a Great Mirror of Water.

Suddenly, a fish flew up from the magical water! It was a very strange fish because it was holding a wet sticky note that said: 'POKE ME'.

Master Tang was a monk who followed instructions, so he reached out a trembling finger and boop—he poked the fish.

WHOOSH!

A few minutes later, a wind picked up, and suddenly, a trillion bucks flew right into Master Tang's bag! It was so heavy he almost fell over. But that wasn't all.

CLANG!

"Ouch!" Master Tang cried. A shiny metal trolley, piled high with two trillion thousand scriptures, had zoomed out of nowhere and bumped right into his leg.

Master Tang looked at the overflowing bag of money and the mountain of books. He hopped up and down, his long hat wobbling wildly. "Yay! I am rich!" he shouted to the empty mountains. "Yay! I am rich in spirit!"

But as he picked up one of the scriptures, he noticed something amazing. It wasn't just in Chinese. It was in English, Arabic, Italian, and languages he hadn't even heard yet. The Map suddenly flashed a picture of the future. It showed 150 countries all connected by these books and stories.

Master Tang realized that the Silk Road wasn't just a dusty path from the past. It was a "never-ending dialogue" between people who wanted to share their "creative ideas" and "wonderful foods." With a happy smile, he turned his trolley around, ready to tell the world about the fish, the funds, and the fun of making new friends.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Chan, Hei Long – 11

My name is Lonnie. I would like to share with you the new tale of China's Silk Road. It was my own first-hand experience three years ago.

Three years ago, that was 175 BC during the Western Han Dynasty. Being the eldest son in the family, I took up and followed the family business, that had been running for generations, for selling silk in Chang'an of China. The silk we sold was of excellent quality, value for money and delicate, which was very popular with the general public. That was why our business had been getting bigger and bigger.

However, the good times were not often. An unknown epidemic, later known as COVID-99, had led to the dead silence in Chang'an and nearby areas. Our business volume was plummeted. Worst still, even a single piece of silk had not been sold for a month. In order to make a living, we had no choice but to "go out" and try to sell silk to new customers in other places, hoping to break into a new sky.

After a serious family discussion, we decided to go to the west. We did not have a fixed destination. We just wanted to sell all the silk in hand. The trio, the two younger brothers and I, were responsible for the silk trip. We carefully selected dozens pieces of high-quality silk, bought several horses, and set off to the west with a compass, a map, food, drinking water, clothes and some daily necessities.

In the first few weeks, everything seemed to be quite alright. However, the places along the way were affected by the epidemic. We could hardly see any passers-by. Unintentionally, I had walked for about three months and entered the Xinjiang region. The appearance and the clothes of the people there were very different from our Chang'an people. They were from ethnic minorities, not Han Chinese. But most of them were very friendly. They were simple and lived by farming. There was no commercial activity, which was obviously not our "destination".

After another two months, we entered the desert area. The sandland there was endless and the wind was so strong. There was not a single tree, only a few cacti. In addition, it was very hot during the day and very cold at night, which was extremely uncomfortable. In the face of such a harsh and tough environment, one of my younger brothers could not help asking me doubtfully, "Big brother, shall we go on?" I said to him with firm eyes, "As long as we are determined, everything can come true." After saying that, the trio cheered up, straightened the chests and continued on the journey.

Nevertheless, something unfortunate happened. The horses we brought could not stand such a severe environment. They were all sick one after another and could not move forward. At the time when we were close to despair, we met a group of people in the desert. They were Turkish people. One of them named David came over and said to us, "My friend, can we help you?" I replied, "We are merchants from China who sell silk. We hope to sell the silk we bring to the West. Unfortunately, our horses are sick and cannot walk anymore." Then, I showed him a piece of silk. He inspected our silk carefully and felt its texture with his hands. Then he looked surprised and happy. He said, "It turns out that this fabric is called silk. Although I have never seen it before, its texture is excellent. If it is used for making clothes, it must be very comfortable to wear. All right! My hometown is Istanbul which is a big city in Turkey. The people there are relatively rich. There is also a large fabric trading market where wholesalers for trading fabric can be found everywhere. I will take you there. I strongly believe that your silk can be sold well there!" Having listened to David's words, we cried with joy and could not believe our ears. It was definitely a light at the end of the tunnel for us. David put our silk and things on their camel backs and went west. On the way, we exchanged words with each other joyfully. We told them everything about China while they told us everything about Turkey. Since then, we all had become good friends.

David and his partners were very familiar with the route to Turkey, and the paths they chosen were relatively smooth and direct. In this way, we chatted happily on the journey. Even though the weather along the way was getting colder, it was still full of warm and happy atmosphere.

Months later, we finally arrived in Istanbul. The people there lived a wealthy life, and there were traffic everywhere, showing a prosperous scene. When we arrived at the fabric trading market, as expected, the silk we brought was very popular with and well-received by the local people. In less than a day, all the silk had been sold out. What's more, the selling price was quite good. Because the demand greatly exceeded the supply, we promised to deliver more silk from China to Turkey for selling it to the buyers after returning home. Finally, we also brought home a lot of Turkish stuff, such as coffee and olive oil.

After all, such an arduous but lucky silk journey had lasted for more or less a year. It not only increased the sales volume of my silk, but also opened up commercial exchanges between China and the West. Since then, commodities like porcelain and tea from China, as well as spices and grapes from the West, all passed through this "Silk Road". I could not help but think of what the trio said on the Silk Road: As long as we are determined, everything will come true.

The Chinese Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Chung, Hysan – 10

Once upon a time, there was a boy called Hysan. At the time the Chinese Silk Road was believed as a legend only the smartest people can get inside.

One day when he was going to his neighbour's house. He fell into a pit, the pit turned into a slide. It brought him to the Chinese Silk Road. The place was a miracle people gifted superpowers for presents. He bought a key (that could teleport people to anywhere they wanted to go) from a shop so that he could go back to the Chinese silk Road. When he got home, he told his best friend Reginald about the Chinese silk Road. Reginald immediately accepted to go together to to the Chinese silk Road to buy stuff. So Hysan used the key to make a portal to the Chinese Silk Road and they went through. Turns out the Chinese silk road was actually in another dimension and a day there equals to one second in the real world. They bought a key that can open any door, and two chocolate bars that when eaten people gain superpowers. The two each ate a bar of chocolate they found that if you stayed in the dimension for a day, you'll never become old and die because you're too old. After a day they went home and told their dad and mom about it so the next day they packed up all their things and got ready to move into the dimension.

The next day when they were in their house in the dimension, suddenly a soldier came over. The soldier told the two children that they had to live with Queen Anna, as she had a special project for them, Hysan and Reginald. Then they went on the horses the soldier had. Soon they arrived at the queen's castle. They were ordered to go down to the basement where a wizard named Griffith lived. In the basement, they found out their powers didn't come from the chocolate bars, but from dragons. They each had their own dragon, Griffith gave them each a dragon stone which they could use to communicate with their own dragons. They named their dragons a fire dragon, and a water dragon Fiery and Frost. Griffith told them that they were called dragon mages at the moment. And that the dragons were legendary dragons of history and their powers would improve as their forms change. Their powers will grow more powerful. This is the beginning of the adventures of the Dragon mages.

Alishia's Silk Road Adventure

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Ho, Hailey – 9

A long time ago, there was a kind and inquisitive girl named Alishia. Her family lived in a small village near Chang'an, the starting point of China's Silk Road. Her parents were very strict. They didn't even let her peek out of their house, let alone explore the world beyond their small village. So she spent all her time at home, sitting by the fireplace, making delicate silk clothes with soft blue and pink threads, weaving tiny flower patterns from the stories she'd heard.

One day, after stitching a cherry blossom silk scarf, Alishia couldn't stand the boredom anymore. She folded the scarf, tucked it into her pocket, and sneaked out of her house while her parents prepared dinner. She wanted an adventure but had no money or plan. Just as she felt lost, she spotted a camel caravan carrying silk, spices, and pottery. The kind-bearded leader took pity on her and said they needed someone to mend fabrics and track supplies. Alishia agreed happily. But her adventure had just begun...

After days of bumpy travel under the fierce sun, they crossed a vast golden desert, where sand dunes stretched far and wide. They drank from water bags and rested under rare palm trees, and along the way, they met Persian merchants with colourful turbans. Alishia watched as the caravan leader unfolded a bolt of glossy silk, and the merchants' eyes lit up—they exchanged a thick, patterned carpet woven with silver threads, their smiles warm with mutual delight. "The Silk Road connects hearts as well as goods," the merchants said. They soon reached Italy, a fascinating country filled with the aroma of fresh bread and sweet, ripe fruits. The bustling markets had crispy pizza and steaming spaghetti, and Alishia watched the caravan trading wine for rare spices. She and two helpers decided to explore the city before sunset.

Then they walked past a couple of cobblestone streets and a beautiful wishing fountain. "Look! It's famous for granting wishes!" one helper said. Alishia threw a copper coin and wished for courage to chase her dreams. As they wandered further, she spotted a glowing cave behind the olive trees. Her curiosity pulled her in. She told the helpers that she'd be right back and stepped carefully inside. Suddenly, a strong wind swept her through a starlit passage, landing her in an imaginary land with floating castles and silver rivers.

The land was full of wonderful creatures. Once, Alishia found grass that meowed like a kitten when touched! But as the sunset painted the sky purple, she realized she was lost. She missed her parents terribly and regretted sneaking out. She cried until her throat was sore, sitting alone in the cool night.

Suddenly, a gentle girl with curly red hair and a flower dress tapped on her shoulder. "What's wrong? Are you okay? My name is Emily, how can I help you?" They talked for a while and found out that Emily had come to the cave to learn if it was created by Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, war, and crafts. Her parents, myth scholars, had told her about the legend of Athena's cave filled with imagination's wonders. Then they decided to find the exit together.

They asked every single creature they met, from a talking squirrel with a backpack to a color-changing butterfly. The squirrel chattered and pointed to a distant mountain, repeating "wise one"; the butterfly drew a cat shape in the air before flying off. But they couldn't understand! Emily squeezed Alishia's hand gently: "We'll find it—curiosity brought us here, and it'll guide us out." Just as they lost hope, a white cat smiled and spoke, perfect Italian and beautiful Mandarin! They wondered if Athena had sent this wise cat to guide them. It told them the exit was behind a singing waterfall and offered to lead the way. The next day, after walking through the fluffy mushroom forest and crossing a lily pad river. After a while they found the exit! exhausted but relieved. Emily invited Alishia to her home, and there she tasted the most delicious pizza, fresh basil and olive oil made it extra crispy and taste remarkably cheesy.

Two days later, Alishia heard a familiar voice calling her name helplessly. It was her parents! They stood in front of Emily's house gate. Alishia's parents climbed up the gate heroically. They hugged her tightly, tears of joy in

their eyes. To thank Emily's family, Alishia gave them a handmade silk blanket with camel and olive tree patterns, plus name-embroidered pillowcases, stitched with love and gratitude.

From then on, Alishia's parents were less strict, letting her explore the village and sell her silk clothes. She always cherished her Silk Road adventure—it was a memory that sparkled like stars, teaching her far more than just courage and curiosity. She realized the Silk Road was a bridge connecting hearts and cultures, not just a trade path. And true adventure wasn't about sneaking out—it was about opening up to new friends, embracing the unknown, and growing through it all. Those lessons, woven into her silk crafts and memories, stayed with her forever.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Ho, Wing Sin – 11

'Boom!' Claret Sainz has successfully broken the seal between China and America which was created by his father's father's

That was in the 30th century, while the world was split into 2 halves: countries that support America, and the ones that support China, before Superhuman – Claret Sainz – destroyed that split magic. To understand why, we first have to go back to the 21st century.

In the late 21st century, the world had no peace at all, the cause was the Russo–Ukrainian war, the Gaza war and the Chinese–American war. Andrew Sainz (Claret's ancestor) was very sad of the world becoming a battlefield and many were injured and dead. To prevent this from aggravating, Andrew used his magic and superpower to split the warring countries apart, and created a 'roadblock' in the middle to prevent them from battling again.

After centuries, Andrew's descendant, Claret, who was the foreign minister of China, was curious and excited to discover the other side of the world, but he knew that the magic was strong and he didn't have any magic power. But when he was 40, he suddenly levitated a pencil in the air. As he developed his magic skills feeling excited and hyped, he learnt to transport himself from one place to another without the help of a teleporter. After a few decades, he tried to break the magic created by his ancestor. Although he used all his energy and magic power to force the spell to break, the 'Roadblock' didn't break. But with the help of his teacher, it finally collapsed and the spell was broken.

Claret immediately rushed to the American side as he was living in China. He was utterly stunned by the view he saw, it looked like it didn't even develop after decades. The air was extremely polluted, the people were shouting and arguing everywhere.

He felt sympathy for them, he thought that the conditions were too treacherous for them to live. So, he brought an 'air refresher' for the whole world to America. In one day, the air in America was fresh again, the first time in centuries.

The American president noticed the change and found out that it was Claret's work. So, he called Claret to see him. Claret used his translator in his phone to understand what the president was talking about. He was very curious to understand the mechanism behind the 'air refresher' and wanted to go to China to discover other interesting things. Claret asked for the Chinese president's permission to let the Americans visit China.

About a few weeks later, Claret led the exchange group to the Chinese Technology Museum, which showcases different technologies that the Chinese had developed over the years. For example, flying cars, the Chinese had mass produced this product and it was popularised. In addition, a machine that could make the world cooler was invented.

While in America, they brought some samples of their artificial fossil fuels, which are crucial energy for everyday items. The problem of fossil fuels in the past was that they were limited, but artificial fossil fuels were renewable and can be used for centuries.

The two presidents had a meeting and they discussed how they could exchange their technology. One proposal was that they build a train rail that spans two 'worlds', and they choose that one.

As Claret guided the Americans back to their world. He found out the path was blocked by magic again. Suddenly, Andrew appeared in front of their eyes. He said, "Why did you break my magic and travel to the other side of the world? It is so dangerous! America and China, Ukraine and Russia..... will fight again!" After Claret found out that Andrew was his ancestor, he asked him why he said that they will fight again. Andrew was shocked that Claret didn't know about the history that happened before, so he decided to share the history story.

After listening to that story, Claret finally understood Andrew's concern. Still, he and the American president really wanted to develop the cultural or technological exchange between the two worlds. At last, the presidents met again and signed a no-war contract. The two presidents went to beg Andrew to undo the magic he did and let them trade different goods. After half an hour of thinking, Andrew finally undid the magic himself.

Both worlds celebrated this opening of their connecting path. Some companies responded quickly and helped to produce the goods that the other world needed. In the meantime, construction workers quickly built train tracks between both countries to accelerate the project. The project was named "The Silk Road III" as Andrew suggested to memorialise the silk roads before.

After just 1 year of hard work by the construction workers, The Silk Road III finally finished and trains were running 24/7 on the rails. Besides the cargo line, there was also a line that served the public who wanted to travel to the other world. Many goods like drones, chips and cars were delivered every day.

Other than delivering goods, the officials also met several times a year to discuss solutions to difficult problems. For example, finding a new planet in the outer space that will be suitable for humans to live. Moreover, their space departments also united to detect asteroids which are likely to hit earth and try to prevent them.

After a few decades of development, the world has become more futuristic than ever. Both worlds are full of flying cars, air refreshers, teleporters Because of Claret's curiosity, the world became very prosperous. To mark his achievement, both America and China built a stone figure for him.

In the future, the world will just develop and grow better and better.

The Treasure of the Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Tong, Ka Cham – 12

Tom was a boy who had immigrated to China with his parents. He loved exploring new places, as he was curious and brave. However, he was also reckless.

On the first day they arrived in China, Xi'an, he immediately wanted to explore. However, his parents insisted that he help them move their belongings into their new house. Tom was very upset and decided to sneak out of the house. Although Tom knew it wasn't right, his curiosity got the better of him. While his parents were moving in the furniture, he snuck out of the house.

Upon stepping out of the house, Tom was instantly caught in a sea of pedestrians. When he found his way out of the crowd, he was on a different street that he hadn't seen before. Tom realized that he was lost, a fact made even worse as he was starving but didn't have any money.

Tom knew that it was going to be very hard to find his way home, so he focused on his other problem: finding food. He wandered through the city until he was so tired that he fell asleep. When Tom woke up, he found himself in a desert, and although he didn't know it, he was standing on the famous Silk Road.

Tom surveyed the area and found a large hole in the ground not too far away from him. Being the curious boy he was, Tom rushed over to inspect it. The hole was actually the entrance to a lush cave. Tom climbed down without thinking. As he descended, he found out that the cave seemed to be someone's home. There was a table and chair and a perfectly circle shaped pond. Water and furniture in an underground cave in the middle of a desert was extremely unlikely. This cave was obviously someone's home. But whose? Tom wanted to find out. He walked around the vast cave, inspecting every wall and corner. He was about to give up on searching when he tripped and fell. Tom stood up and inspected the place he had fallen on and he found a small button that was camouflaged in gray color.

Tom pressed the button and a door opened. It led to a long hallway that was just large enough for a person to squeeze through. He went down the hallway and saw a strange little animal on the other side. It had a round head, a small, round, body and no neck. Tom approached the creature slowly, watching in awe as the creature opened a screen out of the air. 'Amazing,' Tom muttered to himself a little too loudly, as the creature turned around and stared at him. It said in a robotic voice, 'Who are you and how did you get here?' Tom explained his story.

The creature said, 'You're a brave kid. That's just what I needed. Would you like to help me?' Tom eagerly nodded. 'All right. I will tell you what I need your help for, but promise to keep it a secret.' 'I promise,' said Tom. 'My name is Niko. What I need your help for is to get back my treasure chest. Years ago, when I left my planet, I brought my treasure chest with me. However, it was stolen by some space pirates, and I followed them here, but I couldn't take it back. But now with your bravery and my intelligence, we will surely succeed.' 'So what is going to be my mission?' asked Tom. 'You just have to find the location of the treasure chest. I have pinpointed several locations where the treasure might be. And here is an earpiece that allows us to communicate.'

Soon, Tom was heading off to the spots that Niko had pinpointed. But he found no clue of the treasure's 'hiding place' until he reached the very last spot. As Tom climbed up a desert hill, he got a good look at the view below and spotted a large military camp. There were lots of burly human like creatures, just like Niko had described. There were many small tents and a large tent in the center. There were also many strategically placed observation posts around the camp. Suddenly, Tom heard Niko's voice through his earpiece, 'Good job. My analysis shows that the treasure is most likely in the middle tent.' Upon hearing that, Tom immediately rushed down the hill towards the camp. 'Wait! Tom! Don't go! It's not safe!' Niko yelled. Despite Niko's warning, Tom still recklessly charged down the hill, aiming straight for the middle camp.

However, as soon as Tom reached the foot of the hill, he was spotted by a pirate. The pirate immediately alerted everyone else. Soon, Tom was in a jail cell made out of wood. He was left alone with a pirate checking on him only once a few hours, so Tom began to plan his escape. Just as he was thinking, Niko told him, 'Tom, I think you should try and dig down below the sand.' With no better option, Tom followed Niko's instructions and snuck out of his cell. Now he had two choices: run away or to get the treasure. Being the brave and reckless boy Tom was, he chose the latter. Tom once again dug under the sand, but this time with a shovel he had stolen.

In no time, Tom was in the middle tent. He searched the whole tent, but couldn't find the treasure. He searched all the other tents too, but the treasure chest was nowhere to be seen. In the end, Tom returned to Niko empty-handed. Tom was even more disappointed than Niko, but Niko consoled him by saying, 'After all, the most valuable treasure is the experiences and the lessons that you learned along the way'. As they stared into

the sunset, Niko's words resonated throughout his body, 'The most valuable treasure is the experiences and the lessons that you learned along the way.....'

Arin's Journey

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Ke, Ching Wai – 11

After a long and grueling journey, I finally understood that trade is more than commerce—it is connection. It is how cultures meet, ideas spark, and humanity grows stronger through diversity. My name is Arin, and this is my story. As a child, my heart burned with questions. I asked my father about everything—why people breathe, why day turns to night. He often said I was like his younger self, restless with thought.

One afternoon, while eating lunch I heard commotion outside. The clatter of hooves and the groan of animals filled the air. Looking out, I saw creatures I had never seen before—camels, their long necks swaying, their eyes calm yet watchful. My father explained that merchants rode them across deserts to sell goods.

Drawn by wonder, I rushed outside. A merchant carried blue stones in a bag strapped to his camel. When I touched them, they were cool and smooth, like drops of frozen sky. My father told me they were lapis lazuli, prized since antiquity and said to shield against negative energy. I bought one, but in truth, I bought something greater—fate. I wanted to be a merchant. My father warned me of dangers—bandits, deserts, mountains—but curiosity was the final push. There was no turning back.

The caravan departed, camels swaying under loads of jade and precious materials, preparing to go on a perilous journey through the Silk Road. The Taklamakan Desert stretched endlessly, sandstorms howling like beasts. My first storm blinded me with grit and fear, but when it passed, I clutched my lapis lazuli, certain it had protected us. Days later, we reached an oasis, a shimmering pool surrounded by palms. Merchants from distant lands had gathered there, their tents bright with colors. I listened to voices that spoke of Rome's marble streets and India's perfumed gardens. I traded jade for saffron, its fragrance clinging to my hands. Camels knelt in the shade, their bells chiming softly, while children darted between tents with laughter that echoed like music. That night, under the stars, I imagined marble cities and endless paths beyond the horizon.

The Pamir Mountains rose before us like walls of stone, their jagged peaks piercing the sky. The air grew thin, and every breath felt like a struggle. The path was narrow, carved into cliffs above dizzying abysses.

One evening, shadows stirred—bandits. Weapons gleamed in fading light, and my heart pounded. Before conflict erupted, a storm rolled down the mountainside, hail and sleet scattering them into darkness. Relief washed over me, though my hands still trembled. I realized survival was not only about courage but about trust—in companions, in fate, and in unseen forces guiding us.

In Samarkand's bazaar, I met a scholar whose eyes shone brighter than jewels. He saw my lapis lazuli and spoke of hidden wisdom.

He gave me a parchment filled with Greek symbols, fragments of philosophy about harmony between heaven and earth. He told me that ideas traveled like goods, reshaping cultures as surely as silk or spices. He spoke of scholars in Alexandria, physicians in India, poets in Persia. Each story was a thread, weaving together a tapestry of human thought.

Before he left, the scholar pressed the parchment into my hands. "Keep this," he said. "Knowledge is the greatest treasure a merchant can carry." That night, as lanterns flickered, I studied the parchment by firelight. Though I could not understand the symbols, I felt their weight. My lapis lazuli glowed beside it, as if stone and scroll belonged together—matter and mind, earth and idea.

The Oxus River stretched before us like a living serpent, its waters wide and restless. The caravan prepared rafts from timber and skins, camels groaning nervously as they were led aboard.

The crossing began at dawn. The river surged against us, pulling at the rafts. Men shouted commands, oars dug into the water, ropes strained under the weight of beasts and cargo. Halfway across, one raft broke apart, spilling carpets and scrolls into the current. Panic rippled, but merchants reached out with poles and ropes, pulling men and animals to safety.

When at last we reached the far bank, the caravan collapsed onto the sand, exhausted but alive. The Oxus had taken its toll, yet it had also given us something greater: unity. That night, as fires flickered along the shore, I studied the lapis lazuli once more. Its blue reminded me of the river's depths, of danger and salvation entwined. I realized that every obstacle was not only a test of endurance but a passage into renewal.

Finally, we reached Chang' an, a city alive with music, markets, and wisdom. The clang of bells, the laughter of children, and the rhythm of drums filled the streets. The scent of roasted meats mingled with incense, and lanterns painted the night in rivers of gold.

Markets overflowed with jade carved into dragons, silk dyed in hues richer than any sunset, and scrolls filled with poetry that sang of love and loss. I saw cultures converging—Rome's glassware, India's spices, Persia's poetry. Scholars debated astronomy and medicine, their voices rising and falling like waves. I realized that Chang' an was not only a place of trade—it was a crucible of ideas.

That evening, I held my lapis lazuli, realizing it had carried me from a boy's curiosity to a merchant standing at the heart of the world. Trade was not only fortune—it was the lifeblood of humanity. I whispered: I am not only a merchant. I am a bridge.

My journey across deserts, mountains, and rivers taught me that trade is more than commerce. It is connection, survival, and wisdom. It is the weaving of humanity into one fabric. And as long as merchants walk the roads, carrying goods and stories, the world will continue to grow stronger through diversity.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Lam, Alexa – 10

One day, a man set off on an important journey, accompanied by a hundred men. His name was Zhang Qian. As a boy, he had often dreamed of exploring uncharted lands, of venturing where no Han Chinese had ever stepped foot. Years later, his chance arrived. When Emperor Wu of the Han sought a volunteer to explore the outside world and establish trade with distant lands, Zhang stepped forward without hesitation.

Years passed, Zhang and his men found themselves in a bustling trading town. They laid out their porcelain, silk, salt, jade and other goods to trade, drawing a crowd of curious locals who pressed around them, pointing and chattering. "What are these treasures?" they asked. One of Zhang's men fell into a heated discussion with a bald merchant over a bolt of silk, their words lost in a language barrier.

Zhang asked, "Sir, can I help you?" The merchant threw up his hands. "Your man won't listen! I offered a jar of my finest honey for ten pieces of silk, but he refuses!" Zhang smiled and replied, "Silk is very valuable, sir—one jar of honey is not enough." The merchant insisted, "Taste it, and you'll see its worth!" Zhang dipped a finger into the honey jar and tasted it. "It's delicious, indeed. What if we trade ten pieces of silk for four jars of your honey?" The merchant's eyes lit up. "A deal!" They exchanged their goods and the trade was a success. After bartering for more local goods, the group left the town.

A few days later, Zhang and his men wandered into a forest. The morning sun glinted through the leaves and dew drops glistened on the grass, but the beauty of the scene was overshadowed by a harsh reality! They were lost! No matter how hard they searched, they could not find the path out. "We will camp here for the night," Zhang decided. "We will build a fire, set up tents, and rest. We can't travel in the dark!" His men hurried to follow his orders, but their work was cut short by a thunderous roar.

They came face-to-face with a gigantic black bear. Its fur was as dark as coal. Its fierce eyes were blazing. Its long claws were glinting. It roared with baring razor-sharp teeth and the men trembled in fear. In an instant, Zhang threw his arms up and shouted at the top of his lungs, waving his hands to scare the beast away. "Help Zhang! He is trying to scare the bear away! Come on! Let's go help him!" one of the men cried. They waved their arms in the air and shouted as loud as they could. The bear was startled by the commotion and scampered off into the trees. The men cheered, feeling overjoyed. Zhang smiled and felt relieved. "Now, let us rest. We will leave as soon as we can tomorrow," Zhang said.

The next day, as they searched for the way out of the forest, they encountered a nomadic tribe from the Western Regions. Zhang gestured to their jade and porcelain. The tribesmen were delighted. They had never seen such translucent jade, clear as a spring with a soft, milky glow that let sunlight filter through like silk. Eager to trade, the tribesmen offered rare spices and fine steeds for the Chinese goods and they gladly led Zhang's group out of the forest as a gesture of friendship.

When Zhang and his men reached the next Western city, they were amazed by the foreign customs: the local calendar and musical instruments were nothing like those in the Han Empire. "Learn their melodies and I will teach them our farming skills," said Zhang. Zhang taught the local people skills like plowing, raking, harrowing, terracing, modern mechanization and many more using sign language and body movements. Just as he was about to go back and join his men, the local people said, "Wait! We have some presents for you, as a thank you gift for teaching us new skills." They presented Zhang with furs, carpets and glass. Zhang took them with gratitude.

After years of travel, Zhang and his men finally returned to China's Changan with the goods and insights from the Western regions. He presented his travel notes to Emperor Wu of Han, telling him about forests, deserts, mountainous regions and coastal areas. As he spoke, he traced a line on the map from China to the West. Emperor Wu of Han was filled with admiration and showered Zhang with countless gold, silver and jewels. "This route shall be called China's Silk Road," Emperor Wu declared.

Since then, Emperor Wu ordered his people to follow "The Silk Road" to continue trading goods and gain knowledge from the Western lands. From then on, profound connections were forged between the East and West. These bonds encompassed the exchange of goods and cultural interactions, drawing the two worlds closer and

enabling them to lend each other a helping hand. It was Zhang's courage and adventurous spirit that forged "China's Silk Road".

A heartfelt thank you to Zhang Qian!

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Lai, Chin Kwan – 11

During the time when Emperor Wu of Han ruled, the Han Empire stretched from the Yellow River to the western frontiers. Among all the young officers at court there was an exceptional one, named Zhang Qian, who was born in Hanzhong and later moved to Chang'an. His sharp mind and his strong courage soon caught the attention of the imperial court.

One lively morning, he was summoned to the grand hall of Chang'an. There under all the blinding lights, he saw the emperor, he was covered in gold and had a solemn face. The emperor spoke gravely to Zhang Qian about the Xiongnu tribes who were currently raiding the northern borders and blocked China's route to the west. The emperor commanded Zhang Qian to lead a hundred men on a journey to seek new allies among distant kingdoms and break the Xiongnu's grip. Zhang Qian understood that for the years ahead, he was about to go far beyond home and the walls of the Han Empire into the unknown and dangerous lands.

The trip was really tough. Not long after Zhang Qian and his men set out they were caught by the Xiongnu nomads. These people were fighters who traveled around the northern plains. They held Zhang Qian as a prisoner for a long time, keeping a close eye on everything he did. Zhang Qian never gave up on what he wanted to do. One night he saw a chance to get away when the people watching him were not paying attention. So Zhang Qian quietly left with a few of the men who were with him. They kept going west. Zhang Qian and his men were still on a mission and he was determined to reach his destination.

Zhang Qian walked through hot deserts. The air was so hot that it looked like it was moving. He also walked through fields of grass that were blowing in the strong wind. He climbed big mountains with snow on top that seemed to go up to the sky. Every day was very hard for Zhang Qian, he had to deal with being hungry, thirsty and very tired. Zhang Qian's desire to keep going helped him to move on.

At last he reached the kingdom of Dayuan. The people of Dayuan were very curious about him. They were really amazed by his stories of China's silk and the way people lived in China, he told them a lot about China. On top of that, Zhang Qian was a diplomat. He made friends with the people of Dayuan. Zhang Qian learned about the lands and the people who lived there. He found out about plants and animals that did not exist in China. He also discovered goods that people in China did not know about. Zhang Qian learned a lot about Dayuan and the people who lived there.

Though the return journey was again perilous, Zhang Qian eventually made it back to the Han court. He was celebrated as a hero. His travels opened China's eyes to the wider world and inspired the trade routes that would later be called the Silk Road—a bridge between East and West that shared goods, knowledge, and cultures for centuries to come.

My Dream on the New Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Lau, Cheuk Wing – 10

One evening, I lay in my bed reading a big book about the ancient Silk Road. It told stories of camels carrying silk, tea, and spices across deserts and mountains. The pictures were so pretty. Suddenly, my eyelids grew heavier and heavier, and soon I fell fast asleep. Gradually, I was carried into a wonderful dream.

In my dream, I was standing on a shiny platform. A super-fast train moved swiftly, faster than anything I had ever seen. I hopped on the super-fast train. It passed through green fields, tall mountains and golden deserts. “Wow...! This is the new Silk Road!” I shouted.

The train stopped at a huge port by the sea. Giant ships were loaded with boxes full of toys, phones, clothes, and yummy snacks from China. A girl named Elif from Turkey waved at me. “Hi! We send fresh fruits and flowers to your country!” she said with a big smile. We became friends right away and shared snacks.

Then, my dream took me flying to Europe on a magic plane. There, a boy named Luca showed me his school where kids learn Chinese languages and cultures. We exchanged small gifts for our first meeting. I gave him a pretty silk bookmark, and he gave me a dark chocolate bar.

After that, we looked at a big map showing the new Silk Road with trains, ships, and planes connecting everyone. I saw a picture showing children from many countries holding hands and laughing together. The new Silk Road brings friends closer and helps everyone share things faster than the old camels ever could.

Suddenly, I heard my mum’s voice, “Time to wake up.” I opened my eyes and sat up in bed. The book was still on my pillow. This fantastic dream made me feel very pleased. I smiled and I know the new Silk Road is real, and one day I want to travel on it and meet friends like Elif and Luca.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Liu, Sze Yuen – 11

It was the year 1271, and I, a 17-year-old boy, left Venice with my father Niccolo and uncle Maffeo to head east along the ancient Silk Road trade routes. I didn't think much about it at that time and didn't think that this journey would take long, but little did I know, this journey would take 24 years.

First, we decided take a ship to sail across the mediterranean sea to get to Acre. We settled everything onto the ship and we were ready to set sail. Not long after we set off, the first challenge occurred, there was a very terrifying storm in front of us. When the experienced sailors first noticed the wind, they immediately got to work. First, they started reefing the sails. They said that reefing the sails would help steering and maneuvering through the storm. Also, it could prevent being knocked over, which is also very important. Finally, after the hard work of the experienced sailors and us bailing water (as we were just mere passengers), we finally got through the storm. After around 2 months, we finally arrived at Acre.

We quickly realized that the journey from Acre to Shangdu would take a long time and our second challenge during this journey would be going to Persia by travelling through the Armenian Highlands. The Armenian Highlands was a cold and remote place, it would be very hard to cross the Armenian Highlands. Even though we knew that it would be a hard journey, but we all thought about the same thing, 'It would be a waste if we don't try to cross the highlands and would be a disgrace to the family of Polos! We must try our best to face this challenge and make it to Persia!' So, we geared up and started travelling across the highlands. It was a tough task, but after two grueling months of constant travelling on a caravan and facing different difficulties like avalanches and the conditions of travelling at a high altitude, we finally made it to Persia.

After reaching Persia and taking a break, we decided to travel to Kashgar. First, we had to cross the Pamir Mountains. It was a mountain with altitudes over 4500 meters. The air was very thin and cold and even more dangerous than the Armenian Highlands. This plateau was so high and cold that no bird flew here, and because of the cold, the fire was not bright nor of the same colour as elsewhere, and food never cooked well during our journey across the Pamir Mountains. After the grueling journey, we had to cross the Taklamakan Desert, sandstorms in the Taklamakan Desert could bury trails and entire caravans. There would be little water source and without much water the heat would be unbearable. It was a difficult journey but eventually, we arrived at Kashgar.

We didn't rest for long after arriving at Kashgar, we had to go to our final two destinations. Firstly, we had to travel the Gobi desert, it was so vast that some described it as the Ocean of Sand. It was a tough journey full of phantom voices and extreme heat, but after our efforts and more than one month to cross the Gobi desert, we finally arrived at the last destination before arriving at the court of Kublai Kan—Dunhuang. It was a pretty straightforward journey without much challenges. After traversing through the Hexi Corridor, we finally arrived at the Mongol Court. It took four years but it was worth it and was a big achievement. Now, we could finally have a break and reward ourselves before presenting ourselves to Kublai Khan.

The Journey of Wind and Sand

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Lau, Wang Hei – 10

The wind tasted of red dust when Jun stood at the edge of Dunhuang. In front of him stretched the desert—so wide he couldn't see its end. Under the blue sky, the sand moved like golden waves. Jun was fourteen, but his dream was big: to follow the old Silk Road and find the Valley of Wind Chimes. His father, a mapmaker, had once told him about it—where wind and stone made music together.

When Jun was ten, his father died, leaving behind a few unfinished maps covered in strange curved lines and symbols. On the morning Jun left home, he packed one of these maps, a small compass, a wooden flute, and some food. His mother gave him a scarf and said softly, "The road will not give you answers quickly, but it will help you know who you are."

Soon Dunhuang disappeared into the distance. The days burned like fire, and the air shimmered over the dunes. At night, the desert froze. Jun wrapped himself in the scarf and watched the stars. One night, a gust of wind whispered through the dunes—it almost sounded like a voice saying, "Keep going east."

After a week, Jun reached a caravan camp filled with traders from distant lands—Persians with blue eyes, Kazakh horsemen, and Chinese merchants with silk and spices. He asked to join them, offering to care for camels. The caravan leader, Zahra, eyed him skeptically.

"You are too small to handle camels," she said.

"I can read maps," Jun replied.

"Then tomorrow, map boy, find us water."

At dawn, Jun studied his father's map and the dunes. Climbing a rocky hill, he spotted a patch of green in the distance—reeds around a small pool. Zahra nodded in approval. "You can stay with us."

Travelling with the caravan changed Jun. He learned to listen—to the bells around the camels' necks, the movement of stars, and the low hum of the desert at night. Around the fire, traders told stories of faraway cities—Samarkand's blue domes, Kashgar's markets, and snowy mountains shining in the sun. These tales filled Jun with wonder.

One evening, Zahra sat beside him. "You carry something important, don't you?"

Jun showed her the map. "My father drew this. He said it leads to the Valley of Wind Chimes."

Zahra's eyes softened. "I've heard of that place. They say the wind sings there through tall stone pillars like bells. Only those who truly listen can find it."

Weeks passed. The caravan battled sandstorms and crossed narrow mountain trails, passing ruins half-buried in dust. When they reached Turpan, Jun decided to go on alone. Zahra gave him a small bag of dates. "Trust," she said.

From Turpan, Jun entered Tuyugou Valley, where red cliffs rose high with caves carved into their sides. Inside were ancient Buddhist paintings—the faces of Buddhas glowing faintly in the dim light. They seemed to watch him as he walked past. Villagers told him the Valley of Wind Chimes was only a legend, but Jun would not give up.

As the air turned cold and snow began to fall, Jun grew weak. One freezing night, he took shelter in an old watchtower and lit a small fire. To stay awake, he played his father's favorite tune on the flute—a slow, wistful melody like wind between stones.

Then he heard it: ding... ding... ding...

At first it seemed an echo—but the notes came from outside. Heart pounding, Jun followed the sound through a narrow path between cliffs. Suddenly the passage opened into a hidden valley. Under the moonlight stood tall stone pillars, thin and smooth. When the wind blew, they rang like wind chimes, their tones weaving together in a haunting, beautiful song.

Jun opened his father's map. Now he understood. The strange symbols showed the pillars' positions and how their shadows fell. His father hadn't sought gold or glory—he had been mapping the music of the desert.

Jun sat among the chimes until dawn, the wind singing around him. He felt as if his father was beside him, listening too. "I found it, Father," he whispered.

Months later, Jun returned to Dunhuang—taller, leaner, and weathered by wind and sun. His mother recognized him instantly. She listened as he spoke of Zahra, the caravan, and the valley of singing stones. She cried softly, smiling through her tears.

"Your father always said maps are more than lines," she told him. "They are journeys waiting for the brave."

When Jun grew up, he became a mapmaker like his father. But his maps were not ordinary—they showed more than rivers and mountains. He also marked the places where he had heard special sounds, met kind people, and learned important truths. People said his maps felt alive. Some swore that if you touched them, you could hear a faint humming—like wind moving over distant sand.

On quiet nights, when the wind rose from the desert, Jun took out his flute and played the song of the valley.

The notes drifted through Dunhuang's streets, mingling with the whisper of sand. Together they became a single melody—one that travelled forever along the old Silk Road, carrying the story of a boy, a mapmaker, and the voice of the wind.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: A Tale of New Connections with Open Hearts

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Leung, Hei Yi Pari – 11

It was a dusty early morning. A caravan gathered around a flickering campfire, their faces showing calm determination. A brave leader called Zhang stood in a busy city square. His voice was clear above the noisy crowd. "We will travel beyond those hills to build friendly ties with faraway lands," he announced, shaking hands with his companions. Then they got on their strong horses and set off. Their simple but powerful motto was: "Open your mind and be kind—this will light up our journey."

Zhang's team included traders, craftsmen, and a few interpreters—people who helped translate different languages. They carried silk, porcelain, and spices, hoping to trade them for new treasures. The first challenge came when they reached a nomad camp. At first, they couldn't understand each other—the nomads' rough dialect was totally new to Zhang's group. But they didn't run away. Instead, the traders laid out shiny silk rolls and lovely ceramic bowls. An interpreter moved his hands slowly, pointing at the goods and then at the nomads' horses and bags of dried fruit. The nomads' wariness turned into smiles. Body languages—nods, hand gestures, and happy grins—filled the gap that words couldn't bridge. A shepherd gave Zhang a bag of fresh goat milk and said something. The interpreter translated: "Have a safe trip. Kindness is a language everyone can understand."

A few weeks later, some riders in dark clothes came out of the hills. They looked suspicious. But Zhang didn't run away and the interpreters stepped forward, speaking slowly. At the same time, Zhang's traders showed off their best goods. When a young warrior stared at a colourful silk banner with interest, Zhang gestured for him to take it. This small kind act melted the tension. The riders invited the caravan to their campfire. With the interpreters' help, hand signals, and shared meals of roasted mutton, they became friends. They talked about their home lands: the warriors told stories of snow-covered mountains, while Zhang's group spoke of the silk weavers back home. When a little child in the camp held up a clay doll, Zhang's craftsmen gave the kid a tiny porcelain figure. The whole camp cheered loudly—gifts don't need any translation!

Once, a small chaos broke out because of a misunderstanding during a trade talk. Words clashed, and even the interpreters struggled to explain clearly. But Zhang didn't get angry. He signaled everyone to calm down, then offered a roll of his finest silk as a peace offering. The nomad leader nodded in agreement. They solved the problem with gestures and exchanging goods, not arguments. When the caravan was ready to leave, the nomads gave them bags of rare herbs as a gift for the journey. The interpreters translated their words: "Come back again, and we will trade with you happily."

On their way, the caravan went through misty mountains, freezing winds, and scary sandstorms, but they never gave up. In a sunny valley, they met villagers who spoke a language no interpreter knew. Again, goods became their bridge. The caravan traded silk for sweet fruits and grain. The villagers used gestures to show them how to find fresh water with local plants. By a clear river, some wise old people welcomed them. They didn't talk much, but they shared tea and sweet cakes. The elders drew maps in the dirt to show safe paths. In return, Zhang's traders left a beautiful porcelain vase to say thank you.

Later, the caravan reached a busy city. Merchants in bright, fancy robes crowded around them. Here, the interpreters did a great job, translating between Zhang's group and the city traders. Silk and porcelain were swapped for exotic spices, shiny jewels, and new weaving skills. A merchant patted Zhang on the shoulder, and the interpreter said: "Your goods are valuable, but your willingness to come to us is even more precious." Even some grumpy nomads became friendly after a fun archery contest—everyone cheered loudly for the winners, and no words were needed to share the joy.

When they finally returned to their own city, tired but proud, Zhang went to see the emperor at once. He held up the spices and jewels and told stories of faraway lands. "We didn't just trade goods," he said. "We traded kindness and built a road that will connect us with other lands forever."

That road became the famous Silk Road—a path where language barriers disappeared because of interpreters, gestures, and shared gifts. Gardens grew with seeds from distant places, markets were full of traders speaking different languages, and monks shared precious scrolls across borders. Zhang’s caravan proved that open-minded exploration and kindness are the greatest treasures. No journey is too long, no barrier is too high, if you are willing to listen, give, and learn from others. The Silk Road was never just about silk—it was about turning strangers into friends, one kind act and one traded gift at a time.

The AI Caravan

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Ng, Tsz Kiu – 11

My name is Sam, and my best friend is a boy named Riyad who lives 5,268 kilometers away. We've never met, but we built a magic caravan together. It all started for my school's "New Silk Road" project. Ms. Li said the old Silk Road was about sharing things like silk and spices between China and the world. The new one is about sharing ideas and building the future together. I thought that meant making a poster about trains and ships. I was wrong.

My partner was Riyad, from Almaty in Kazakhstan. Our first video call was... awkward. We smiled a lot and said "Hello!" but then didn't know what to say. A translation app helped, but its voice was robotic. It said my sentence, "I like robots," came out in Kazakh as "I enjoy metal servants." Riyad laughed so hard he snorted, and that broke the ice. We complained about the dumb app. "What if we made a better one?" Riyad said. He's good at languages. I'm good at coding. That was our idea: our own "Silk Road" project.

We decided to build a simple AI translator, but not for normal sentences. We wanted it for stories. The old Silk Road traders must have shared amazing tales around campfires. We called our app "Caravan Chat." Our plan was to teach it not just words, but feelings and culture. Every evening after homework, we'd meet online. I'd work on the code framework. Riyad and his little sister, Aya, would feed it Kazakh folktales, poems, and even jokes. I'd add my grandma's ancient Chinese fables and my own favorite modern comic book dialogues. We taught it that a Chinese dragon is a wise, watery spirit of good luck, not a fiery monster. We taught it that a line from a Kazakh poem about a lonely eagle might sound sad, but it's really about strength.

The big test came during the Mid-Autumn Festival. I was explaining to Riyad about mooncakes and the legend of Chang'e, the moon goddess. The old translation app would have just given him dictionary words: "moon," "cake," "goddess." But Caravan Chat did something magical. As I told the story, text appeared on our shared screen: "In Kazakhstan, we have a legend about the moon too, about a boy named Kozy Korpesh. His love, Bayan Sulu, waited for him under a special tree. Their story is also about longing and loyalty, like your Chang'e." Riyad's eyes went wide. "I know that story! My grandma tells it!" He hadn't typed that. Our AI, trained on our shared library, had made a connection. It didn't just translate; it built a bridge between our myths.

That's when we realized our project wasn't just an app. It was our own New Silk Road. The ancient road moved silk and spices. The modern one moves trains and data. Ours moves understanding. We presented "Caravan Chat" to our classes. We showed how it could take a Chinese idiom like "drawing a snake and adding feet" and explain it by linking it to a Kazakh proverb about "gilding a sunflower". The teachers were amazed. The other students got it, too. It was cool tech, but more than that, it was a key to a secret world of shared stories.

Last week, Riyad sent me a file. It was a song his grandfather used to sing, about the wind on the steppe. I fed it into Caravan Chat. The AI analyzed the melody and the words. Then, on its own, it suggested a similar rhythmic pattern from an old Chinese folk song about the wind in the bamboo forests. It composed a short, simple piece of music that blended the two. I played it on my digital piano and sent it back. Riyad wrote: "It sounds like home, and also like your home. This is our music now."

We never built a physical road, a train, or a port. But we built a path. It's made of code and stories, running on the fiber-optic cables of the Digital Silk Road that now crisscrosses the continents. Our AI caravan doesn't have camels; it has servers. Its treasures aren't in chests, but in the connections it finds between a Kazakh lullaby and a Chinese poem, between Riyad's laugh and my bad robot jokes. The New Tales of the Silk Road aren't just about countries building things together. They are about two kids, sitting in bedrooms halfway across the world, using the tools of the future to discover that our hearts, our histories, and our imaginations have been neighbors all along. And sometimes, all you need to find that out is a little bit of curiosity, a clumsy translation app, and a friend you haven't met yet to help you build a better one.

The Silk and the Glazed Tile

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Wong, Hoi Yan Michelle – 10

Last week was a bright and sunny day, and I joined my class’s school trip to the Hong Kong History Museum. As we walked through the China History Hall, a small patterned vase caught my eye. I read the description beside it and stared at the vase again. Suddenly, everything felt strange: I was no longer in the museum, but standing in a vast desert, wearing odd clothes and carrying a wooden box. I peeked inside—there was silk and porcelain inside! I thought to myself, We must be near a trading city; maybe we’re here to trade Chinese goods with other countries!

As we wandered into the city, a little girl ran up to me and asked, “Hi! Can I swap this for some silk?” I looked down and saw she was holding a sparkling, precious gemstone. I nodded and gave her three pieces of silk in return. I traded many more things with the townsfolk after that.

All of a sudden, a huge sandstorm swept over us. Everyone screamed and fled. But I had an idea! “We can use camel fur to make clothes that protect us from sandstorms!” I shouted. Everyone agreed with me. Later, I taught a local family to speak Cantonese, and they picked it up much faster than I expected. In return, they taught me some Uyghur, which sounded a little odd to my ears. When the little girl had to leave, she gave me a colorful glazed tile as a gift. The moment I touched it, I was whisked back to the museum!

I looked around and spotted a painting on the wall—it was of me and the little girl! That’s when I realized: I’d been daydreaming the whole time.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Wu, Sum Yu Leah – 11

My name is Yu, and I was a record keeper during the Han Dynasty. I served under Zhang Qian, a trusted envoy of Emperor Wu of Han. When I was chosen to join his journey, I felt both honoured and nervous. Our mission was to travel westwards beyond the borders of China to learn about unfamiliar lands and cultures. Emperor Wu hoped that through this journey, we could build friendships with distant kingdoms and share the treasures of China with the wider world. At the same time, he wished to gather knowledge that could strengthen and protect our empire.

We prepared carefully for the long journey. Our caravan carried the trade goods that best represented the wealth and skill of China—silk, porcelain, jade, luxury crafts, dried tea leaves, and medicinal herbs. These goods were rare, valuable, lightweight, and uniquely Chinese, making them ideal for long-distance trades. As a record keeper, I carried bamboo slips and brushes to document everything we discovered. I knew that my records would one day be read by the Emperor and later travellers, so I would write them with great care. I had never left China before. The thought of traveling into the unknown both frightened and excited me.

The journey finally started. However, it was not as easy as what we expected. Traveling the Silk Road was dangerous, slow, and extremely difficult. We had to go across deserts where there was extreme heat during the day and freezing cold at night. Sometimes, sandstorms and high wind blocked our way. We then tied ourselves together so no one would get lost. The extreme weather was unpredictable. To stay safe, we often had to change our route or take longer paths to avoid danger. Due to the lack of food and water supply, many travellers and animals died by dehydration and illness. Food was limited, and we shared every grain. Still, we moved on and continued our journey.

Moreover, bandit attacks were common in remote areas. Traders who carried valuable goods like silk and jade were in threats. Another major problem was the misunderstanding caused by languages and communication. Other kingdoms did not know Chinese and they thought we were the thieves! Luckily, the local guides helped us with translations so our team survived. The Silk Road was difficult because of extreme weather, lack of resources, long distances, crime and political challenges. Only well-prepared and determined traders could survive the journey.

The journey was so tough, at the same time, we gained many valuable experiences. Countries like Central Asia and India loved and appreciated the culture and arts from China. We promoted our silk which was smooth, lightweight and elegant, while Central Asia traded their wool, linen and carpets which were warm and suitable for the colder climate. We shared Chinese tea which was treasured for its medicinal and cultural values. People in Central Asia were so interested in our Chinese tea they asked us to brew tea for them on the spot. Our porcelain attracted great attention for its unmatched quality. In return, we learned about spices and precious stones from India. Each exchange taught us the ways people lived differently but shared similar hopes and needs. The experience was a real eye-opener and played an important role in shaping our history.

After the long distance of traveling, our horses became weak and overloaded. When we were exhausted, we discovered the horses in Dayuan were tall, fast and strong. People in Dayuan explained to us they usually fed the horses with a green plant called alfalfa. Zhang Qian knew this plant could help China raise better horses and help protect our empire. I carefully wrote down everything about their farming methods and feeding practices. We believed it would be a great change for China in the future.

The day I longed for finally came. We reached Chang-An with only a few of us remained. We were tired, thinner and older, but full of knowledges and experiences. Zhang Qian told the Emperor about new lands, strong horses, busy markets, and long trade roads. We were richly rewarded by the Emperor.

Looking back, the hardships of the journey taught us the value of teamwork and patience. I understand the Silk Road was far more than a trade route. It enabled cultural exchanges and travel connections across many countries. I really hope that the later travellers were able to plan safer routes and build places of rest, making travel across the Silk Road easier and more fruitful.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Yan, Avery – 12

On a balmy, calm and summery day, I was strolling around our city's most famous mall. The environment was clamorous as people were trying to bargain with the sellers to get some everyday accessories for an adequate discount.

Out of the blue, I thought of putting an end to the conflicts between China's Han Dynasty and nomadic Xiongnu tribes. "If we want to forge powerful alliances and become powerful nations in terms of economic and political, people need to cultivate a mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural differences amongst the allies in the first place. Why not just construct a golden highway for people to just walk straight without so many mountains and terrain that blocks us from trading?" I thought. Then, I gathered all my ideas and wrote in on my grimy and grubby notebook, which has accompanied me throughout the years. Then, after I had finished refining my primitive ideas to practical proposal, I handed my notebook to the leader of my kingdom, who was Emperor Wu, in the hope of mitigating the threat on the northern border through strengthening our alliances through a comprehensive trading route.

Emperor Wu was impressed after he glanced at my idea. He thought of my idea and informed me by saying, "Your idea of building up allies by economic and political collaboration is astounding and awe-inspiring! Rather than engaging in devastating wars with Xiongnu, this approach promotes peace and enhances trade for a stable environment for our people. What a great idea!! I offer you one thousand acres for having this bewildering and staggering plan! Thank you!" He gazed at my notebook with such joy and jubilation that he promptly ordered high ranked government officials to negotiate with potential allies and begin constructing the road.

After a considerable period of hard work, the sumptuous and imposing road finally came to fruition. Emperor Wu was eager to see the commencement of trading of all varieties of goods, food and all kinds of other materials that Europeans desperately need. Among them, silk happened to be the most admired goods because of its sought-after quality. The recipe for making silk was our Kingdom's top agricultural secret. At that time no Europeans knew how silk was made of. After silk was transported and traded with countries that are adjacent to our Kingdom, the road was named after the most popular goods on the road, and thus dubbed "Silk Road". Our allies became stronger gradually and imposed pressure to the Xiongnu without wars or demolition of our infrastructures.

Silk was highly favoured by the royal families and aristocracies as the "luxurious" fabric to make fancy clothes. So much money was made by the silk traders. The Europeans were keen to know how silk was made. They sent agricultural scientists who impersonated traders to come to our farms to snatch a few silkworms and smuggle them back to Europe. The fake monks then transferred our silk recipe to other countries. Luckily, although the Europeans were able to produce silk, they never achieved the standards of craftsmanship as our Kingdom did.

After I constructed the Silk Road, it has helped people to trade goods and exchange wonderful traditional cultures and traditions. More importantly, it fostered a politically and economically stable society, shielding us from Xiongnu invasion. Our Kingdom's reputation has flourished across the world, establishing as a pivotal player in the world.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School, Kowloon Tong, Yang, Yu Fei – 10

In a small hut around China's Chang'an, there were two people named Mabel and Hazel. They were sisters, and Mabel was the older one. They had this little hut to live in, only because their mother had left for something she never told them about. She gave them money, and told them to take care of themselves while she was away. It was harsh for a twelve-year-old to care of a nine-year-old as their father and brother were both dead fighting in a battle, but they still managed to push through all the challenges.

Now, it was already five years since their mother had left, but they had the urge to find her. Their neighbors thought they were crazy, as their mother could be anywhere, but they just ignored them. One morning, a scroll had been stuck onto a wall, and Mabel pushed through the large crowd to read it. Turns out a new road had been opened and officially able to be used by citizens. It could go all the way from Chang'an to Europe! Seeing this, Mabel was so excited. She quickly ran back to her hut to tell Hazel the news. Hazel was also very excited to find out what was on the other end, and perhaps even find their mother! They quickly packed their bags full of food and other essentials, and set off to the Silk Road. Never would they know, the road they luckily crossed now, would be famous in future, and give them the secret they have been longing to know.

"When are we getting there sis? It's been so long!" Hazel exclaimed, after a few months. They had been on a camel this whole time, only stopping at night for rest and resupplying.

"I've asked some people, and they said it would take one to two years, but hopefully we can get there fast," Mabel replied, looking a bit worried.

"Why couldn't we use a horse?" Hazel asked, looking jealously at a group of people laughing while on some horses.

"Because they're not as efficient, and they're so much more expensive! You know we can't afford that. We have to save our money for Europe," Mabel replied, now counting the money in the rucksack. Hazel glared, but didn't argue, because she knew Mabel was right—a person fell off a horse due to the cracks in the road as they were speaking—safety was important, as were the amount of money they spent.

After another year, they finally arrived at Antioch. They had also already spent half of their money, so they would have to be careful with the amount of money they'd use there.

"I'm pooped! Where are we going next?" Hazel asked, yawning and almost slipped off her camel.

"The Cave Church of Saint Peter. Mother's bound to have visited sometime if she ever came here. It could save us loads of time if she hasn't been or isn't here," said Mabel, who shot her a nasty look when she slipped.

So they set off, Hazel grumbling all the way and Mabel comforting her. When they arrived at the church, they asked for the name scroll, praying their mother's name would be on there.

"Ahhh...yes! It's right here! Natalie Claire!" The secretary said, pointing at a name. Mabel and Hazel frowned at each other.

"Thank you!" They replied, then hurried back to where they put their camels.

"You saw the date too, didn't you? May seventh! Today's November seventh, which means it's been half a year since she last came! I don't think she'd go so long without coming back, though!" Hazel exclaimed.

"Yeah! I did! It doesn't make sense...what if...no, it can't be! The most that could be possible is that Mother went to somewhere else. We should keep looking for possible spots, then we can fix it together like puzzle pieces, and figure out the puzzle!" Mabel said, scratching her head in frustration.

"I guess," Hazel sighed.

"Let's try our luck in the ancient city of Antioch, then, shall we?" Mabel asked, looking at a map she had bought and locating the location of it.

"Yeah, I mean, we haven't got much chance of finding her in an old place only tourists usually go than anywhere else, have we?" Hazel asked sarcastically, annoyed and rolling her eyes.

"You can stay here while I go find her, then! We'll half split the money, and you can stay here enjoying a nice whole month while I find her, then! And I'll come back with her just like you hope for, and you two can have a nice little get together while pretending I'm not even here!" Mabel snapped, her eyebrows high and face full of anger. Hazel also glared at her, with her hands on her hips, not saying anything. Then, she let out a snort and swung back onto her camel.

The process was undoubtedly slow, but they finally got there. But just as they were about to enter, they saw a group of people surrounding a woman who looked scared.

“Mum!” Mabel shouted, and Hazel also turned around. The men sneered at them, and one of them spoke.

“If you want your little necks, girls, then you’ll know not to cross old Ben,” he said pointing at the tallest and most evil-looking of the men. Suddenly, there was a shout and a loud ‘bang’ and a cry of pain. Mabel and Hazel looked around, and saw Ben lying on the ground with a fresh, bloody wound on his chest. The other men looked frightened, and ran away as fast as they could.

“Mum!” Hazel cried, rushing over and hugged her tightly. Mabel also flung herself onto them, and all three of them started crying.

Though none of them explained anything, but they all knew what had happened, and the sadness disappeared in the tears, far away from them.

New Tale of China's Silk Road

Alliance Primary School Kowloon Tong, Yang, Michelle – 11

A long time ago, there was a Chinese envoy named Liu. He was tasked to spread China's goods and valuables, when suddenly he saw a man. But this man was different. He wore different clothes, and had a different appearance.

Liu yelled to him, "Halt! You stand on a path from the Son of Heaven's domain. State your purpose." The man simply replied, "I'm Arshad, from the powerful Kushan Empire, and I seek precious items for my leader. What business brings you onto this mountain's spine?" Liu pulls out a small and lacquered box from his pocket. He said, "Not business. A thread and a question. The path you are currently walking on, is a road of silk and jade. My ancestors have walked along this very road, exchanging goods, art and technology. And here I am, doing the very same."

Arshad said, "The deserts drink men. The mountains freeze time. Why make a road of such pain?" He lays down his treasures: A few pieces of lapis lazuli, an Indian ivory statuette, and a single Persian coin, and a few baskets of wool. "What can you give that we cannot already get?" He asked. Liu pulls out a jade disc and says, "Without you, this," he touches the glass, "is just sand. It is worthless when only the Chinese sees its beauty. This is my question, we bring you items of the East. You choose what travels back. A fair trade, take it or leave it?"

Arshad stares at the jade disc. "That is something my ruler would cherish with his life. Your plan is a wonderful thought. But this path carries stone and thirst. Your plan would mean nothing if no one could cross it without dying of thirst or hunger."

Liu said, "No merchant would give up when the only obstacles are essentials that can be prepared with precision. My emperor always says that a road is not made by one set of footsteps, but by the return journey. The winnings of this trade will always be more plentiful than the suffering of the process. My valuables, the finest silk made in China and the precious jades, will meet the wool and rare gemstones from your kind. We are two masters of different domains, this is a shared opportunity that we cannot miss! Don't you realise the benefits of this trade? The profits and technology it can bring to your country?"

Arshad sighed. It does seem like a impressive and unforgettable plan. He thought of all the infinite possibilities this trade could bring. His country rewarding him for his discovery and breakthrough. His country having better development with the help of China. His country making more profit. No, he cannot pass this opportunity.

Finally, after minutes of thought, he said, "Very well. Your plan is thoughtful and excellent. I'm impressed, very impressed. I shall take some of your valuables, then show it to my ruler." Liu started to hesitate. "And in return, you may have my valuables too. Show it to your emperor, tell them our plan, and we shall execute it perfectly." He added.

Liu breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad you agreed in the end. My ancestors would be proud. You may have one my most cherished silk, dyed red with yellow linings. Red represents joy, prosperity, happiness, and of course success, while yellow means royalty and power. The jade is for you as well. May your ruler be impressed. You have my deepest thanks."

Arshad in return gave him an extremely shiny lapis lazuli gemstone and the fluffiest wool Liu has ever seen. "The shiniest lapis lazuli I have. It was polished so many times I have lost count already. May the wool keep your country warm in the future as well."

And just like that, the two men bowed deeply and left for their destinations, hearts filled to the brim with hope and faith not only for their plan, but for their nations as well.

The Golden Path to Kung Fu

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Chan, Tsz Yu Eunice – 11

“Bye everyone!” I shouted as I, the popular kid, was walking back home.

Well, I said that about a month ago, but little did I know something out of this world was going to happen to me.

I was walking back from school, which was as boring as watching paint dry. The day ended with me losing the annual kung fu school competition, and everyone got a medal except for me, so that explains why I felt a bit lonely and depressed. Anyway, I was just walking back home, my head filled with fog. Then, randomly, I saw an ad for a kung fu camp in America. It could teach me flips, defensive moves, and tons more. It looked so tempting. My eyes practically had stars in them. I ripped the poster off and ran back home to my mum. I begged her to let me go. I mean, I know I was just 11 years old, but I had gone on a study tour before, and I could take care of myself perfectly well. After hours and hours of doing chores, I finally convinced my mum to let me go.

Fast forward two days later, I was on a private jet flying all the way to America. Two hours in, we were experiencing terrible turbulence. Everyone was just minding their own business as if nothing was happening, while shivers ran down my spine. After a while, the turbulence didn't let up; it intensified into a violent, relentless shaking that rattled my teeth. The cold, pale expressions of the other passengers finally cracked into panic. Then everything went black.

The next thing I knew, we were all dropping from 600,000 feet in the air toward the ground. Suddenly, I saw a magical portal in the middle of the sky. I screamed at the top of my lungs, “Pilot! Turn left! There's a portal there; it might save everyone's life.” The pilot turned drastically. The jet was swallowed whole by the portal, tumbling through a dizzy spiral of time and space.

“Ow...” I screamed in pain as I landed hard on the sand. When I looked up, the landscape was familiar yet utterly changed. “Wait a minute... isn't this the Silk Road? We learned about this in history class, right? At least that's what I remember,” I thought to myself. That's when I realised I was actually at the Silk Road, but just in the past. Then I found shadows cornering me. I realised that the shadow surrounding me was made up of villagers. They seemed like a curious yet confused group. I guess they had never seen anyone like me before—a fashionable human from their future. It took a while to explain how I got here, and with no common language, I resorted to demonstrating the only universal language I knew—the movements of kung fu that I had been training in for quite a while. They were mesmerised, clapping once I was done, treating my moves as a sacred performance. Soon their anger turned into awe. They all looked at each other, nodded their heads, and decided that I would be their goddess.

From that day on, every single villager treated me like I was the ruler of the world. Every morning, they would wake me up with the best breakfast, pick the most luxurious outfit with real gold on it for me, and even provided a donkey cart for me to sit in, bowing at me every time they saw me. I mean, it wasn't what I was used to, but I still enjoyed the princess treatment. However, my divine status came with an unexpected duty. News arrived on a donkey about a pending attack from another place that wanted to take over the Silk Road. These raids were a constant threat to the villagers. Seeing the terrified looks on their faces, I couldn't just leave them in standby. From that day on, I dedicated myself to teaching the villagers basic self-defence moves, turning our peaceful oasis into a fortified camp.

Thankfully, the villagers were fast learners; their lives depended on it. We trained rigorously, using the local terrain to our advantage. The rival group seemed impossible to defeat, but before the rivals materialised, the villagers, grateful for my guidance and fearing for my safety, pulled together all their precious resources—enough gold to secure my passage back home. We waited day after day until we saw what seemed like a military helicopter flying down on the Silk Road. We waved dramatically. The moment the military saw me, they knew I was in trouble. I explained the entire story and even gave them the gold the villagers had provided to bring me back home. I said my last goodbye to all the villagers, hoping I would see them again in another life. There I sat, flying back to Hong Kong safely. I wasn't injured or anything; I was just glad.

Lastly, of course, I didn't tell my mum about everything that happened, worried that she would get scared and not let me go on trips alone. Anyway, I felt immense gratitude. What began as a broken-down plane had become an experience far better than any planned camp. The accidental trip became one of the most unforgettable experiences ever. Crucially, actually going to the real Silk Road helped significantly with my academics, providing firsthand knowledge that boosted my falling history grades.

The Silk Road and the Cat

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Chung, Yi Nok – 9

Today, I went to the Silk Road with my cat for a trip.

First, we went to the pet shop to buy some food for my cat and some toys. Secondly, I booked a hotel; it cost me 2000 Yuan, but it was very nice, and we went to the pool. My cat is scared of the water, so she could only watch me.

When I was done swimming, I returned to the land, and my cat had disappeared! I tried to look for her, but there was no sign of her! I whispered to myself, “What am I supposed to do? My cat was my best friend! She means so much to me!” I found a note, and it said, “Your cat is at my house. If you want her back, give me 100,000 Yuan. The address is Spooky House.”

I immediately went to the bank and took out 100,000 Yuan to bring my cat home. The thief suddenly said, “I have given your cat food and water, so you have to trade 2000 Yuan. I will give you two days, so be quick.” But I didn’t have any money. I called many friends, but not a single one could help me.

However, I remembered an ex-friend from primary school. I asked her, and she gave me 20,000 Yuan. I was shocked. I said, “If you give me one more zero,” but she didn’t say anything. I immediately gave the money to the thief, who finally agreed, and I took my cat home.

Hunting for the Silk Worms

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Ho, Yan Kiu Yannis – 11

“Remember, we are here to get the worms that they stole from us without getting caught,” I told Nathan in a serious tone.

“I forgot why they stole them from us anyway?” asked Nathan.

I answered with disappointment, “Big bro, remember a seller came to our village to sell silk, and we asked the seller if we could buy the worms? He said yes, so we used all our money to buy those six worms. But the king soon found out. He ordered the guards to beat the seller and take the worms. When they came, they took the worms and didn’t even refund our money. The worms were our only source of income, but now we don’t have them, and Mum is sick. So we decided to come here and take what is rightfully ours.”

“Oh, now I remember, thanks sis,” responded my brother. We were just outside the royal palace of China when we talked and caught attention. We immediately hid and then got to work.

Nathan looked around the gates, trying to find an alternative way to get inside the palace. The moment he found a small gate that let us in, I threw a few small firecrackers to distract the guard, and then we quickly snuck into the palace.

Once we got in, we snooped around, trying to find the silkworms. We were in a garden when a guard spotted us and yelled, “Hey! Why are you two in the garden? It is only for the royals! Shouldn’t you be on duty?” My brother hurriedly punched the guard out and put on his uniform to disguise himself. I dragged the guard away and threw him out of the palace. I continued to search for the worms while Nathan pretended to be on duty. Then I accidentally ran into a room filled with gold... and then I saw it.

I ran back to Nathan and stated, “Nathan! I found it! The... the... the worms! They are in a room of gold! It—” My brother hastily covered my mouth as the princess walked by, and we both instantly went into hiding. After she passed, Nathan took off the uniform and followed me to the room with the silkworms.

The first thing I did when we got to the room was to take out a tiny box and place the six worms inside. The second we rushed out of the room, a piercing sound echoed throughout the palace. When I looked at my feet, I found that there was a tripwire meant to alert the guards when the silkworms were taken. I froze in shock, and my brother immediately took me to a corner to hide.

In just a minute, all the guards gathered there. They found the unconscious guard, and one of the generals questioned him, “What did they look like? Do you think it is the same people who infiltrated the room?” Another shouted, “We have to find them, capture them, and throw them in prison.” I was so startled that I began to shake. I thought we could leave the palace as soon as we got the worms; I never expected it would turn into a full-on search! As the guards searched, we kept moving to avoid them until we were spotted.

“They are there! The thieves! I can see them! Catch them!” a young-looking guard screamed. “We are spotted! What should we do, brother?” I told Nathan. He took out a bomb-like object from his pouch and threw it on the ground. Suddenly, a big flash emerged behind us as Nathan took my hand and pulled me towards the gate. I was shocked when the guards following us stopped. “The bomb is a stun grenade used to temporarily disorient the guards’ senses. Now run!”

We came close to the exit, and I sighed in relief, but I celebrated too soon as another army of guards crossed our path. I was trembling in fear when another wave of guards came, and one of the generals started to bargain, “You give us back the worms, and we’ll let you go. Is that a deal?” I shouted, “Never! You stole it from us, and it is rightfully ours.”

Then they started to attack us from every corner. At the same time, Nathan began taking them down one by one with his punches and kicks. I ran up a random tower, took my bow out, and started to shoot down a rain of arrows from above. We fought till night, not stopping until every single one of them was defeated.

I felt so relieved as we walked toward the gate to exit the palace. We then got on our horses, boarded a ship, and finally made our way back home to sell silk to our villagers to earn money for our mum, as she was very sick. At last, we got enough money to help her, and we lived happily ever after.

The Trade

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Hui, Chun Ching – 12

“Rio! Rio! Wake up! The trade business is booming again!” I rose from my bed to see Leo, smiling next to a horse. Today was the day we set out on our journey along the Silk Road to trade our goods, including silk and gemstones. We prepared sufficient food, water, and enough resources to survive. Leo had recently picked up a fine new horse for our travels. I dressed quickly, and we set off on the journey along the Silk Road from Chang’an.

As we hopped onto our horse, it let out a loud neigh and started walking toward Turkey, the place where we were going to trade. “This journey is going to take a long time. If our resources aren’t enough, we’ll have to resort to fishing in India,” Leo said, holding a map. The land was a lifeless desert, with nothing but tumbleweeds rolling around the area. The silence was quite uncomfortable. Fortunately, our little buddy here calmed us down with his cheerful neighs.

Halfway through, the horse grew tired and suddenly stopped to catch its breath. Leo and I both agreed that we should take a break to restore our energy. We set up our tents and gobbled up some food, but then a masked man suddenly approached us and shouted, “Hey! You there! Give us your money!” We shrieked and jumped back in fear; they were bandits!

We were sweating profusely when the bandits pointed their cutlasses at our faces. “Quit whining like a baby and pay up!” one of the bandits said. Shivers ran down my spine; we had to find a way to escape. “Okay, we will give you the money; just don’t kill us!” Leo said. While they were smiling and waiting for us to hand over our money and goods, I grabbed Leo’s hand and sprinted for our horse. The bandits took a while to figure out my plan and soon chased after us.

Once we were on our horse, it zoomed past the bandits, who were yelling at us. “Screw you, scallywags! You’ll owe us triple when I lock you up in the den!” one bandit shouted, raising his cutlass in the air. “No robbing us today, greedy boys!” I shouted, waving at them with a cheeky grin. But then a sudden bullet flew through the sky and struck the horse. It was severely wounded and couldn’t move anymore. Leo shook the horse, tears running down his face, while I saw the bandits rushing at us on their own horses. We were forced to surrender and were locked up in the bandit camp. However, I managed to hide our goods before we got in, as I had another plan.

After we arrived at the bandit camp, the bandit leader congratulated the bandits who captured us with some wine. They then walked away, and we saw our chance. We spotted some cutlasses, flintlocks, and gunpowder in a cabinet, took some, and bolted away with one of their horses. When they found out that we were running away, they immediately chased after us. “Ouch,” Leo moaned. I noted that Leo’s arm had been hit by an arrow, and I quickly ran up to help him. “You are being captured! Don’t try to escape again!” said the bandit leader, who was sitting on a horse with a bowstring in his hand.

We were then kept inside a cave at the hideout of the bandits. Inside the cave, we found other merchants who were also being kept there. None of the merchants in the cave would speak to each other since we did not share the same language, and the bandits would beat us to death if we made any noise. All the merchants kept in the cave were desperate, as they knew they would never reach their destination. Among the merchants was a skilled Persian musician, Akram, who suddenly took out a pipa and started to strum it. The music wove its way into the hideout, and the bandits, curious, crept closer to the source of the sound. Transfixed by the music, the leader of the bandits stood in silence, captivated by the emotion it stirred in the cave. The bandit leader started to dance to the music, and his fellows followed. At the same time, some of the merchants sang to the music in their own languages, telling stories of their adventures. The silken notes of the pipa seemed to remind everyone of love and dreams.

As the final notes of the melody lingered in the air, I stepped forward. “You don’t have to live this way! Join together with us! Let us show you a better path.” Many bandits hesitated at first, but the rhythm of the pipa wrapped around them like an embrace.

Finally, the bandit leader stepped forward, still skeptical but entranced by the music. “What do you propose?” he asked, his voice softer now.

“Trade can bring wealth without bloodshed,” I replied. “We can share resources, knowledge, and create a thriving community. Let us show you the way.”

The music swelled, and the merchants nodded, eager to help. The merchants offered to teach them how to trade rather than rob, sharing their own experiences and the knowledge that came from thriving through cooperation.

One by one, the bandits agreed to give it a try. They gathered around, captivated by the merchants' tales.

In the days that followed, the bandits transformed their camp into a bustling marketplace. With the merchants' guidance, they learned the art of trade and negotiation, swapping stories and goods rather than resorting to violence.

As laughter and music replaced the cries of battle, Leo and I watched from a distance, knowing we had not only escaped but had also helped unite a group of bandits into entrepreneurs. We then set off for our next stop along the Silk Road again!

Silk Road Mystery

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Ko, Cheuk Kiu Stephanie – 9

Today, I read the newspapers, and it said that there was another unsolved mystery that occurred on the Silk Road! I thought, “Again? This is the second time! But at least it wasn’t more horrifying than the first mystery that happened years ago!”

On 15th August 1923, a man called Richard was making handmade crafts to sell at his store. Suddenly, he heard someone knocking on his door. He slightly opened the door and was so shocked that he jumped onto the table; a dark, eerie figure was behind the door. He tried to jump out of the window and run to the police station, but when he opened the door to check one more time, the figure had disappeared! He told his story to the police, and they hired two groups of officers, three groups of military personnel, and one large boat just to look for the figure, but there was no sign of it.

Ten years later, Richard’s business wasn’t doing well, and he was in debt, so he decided to close his store and become a police officer. His first mission was a murder! A woman was found dead in the middle of the Silk Road, stabbed in the stomach. Richard questioned five people, and all of them swore that they had seen the same dark, eerie figure that Richard was talking about! As time passed, more and more people were found dead ever since that woman was killed. Scientists dug deeply into the story, but no clues were found—not even one!

As a result, many people in China began to beware of this terrifying monster. Everyone had different rumours; some thought that the dark, eerie figure was just a young teenager dressed in black, while others believed it was a special skinwalker that no one had ever seen before. The dark figure became one of the myths that remained unsolved forever!

The Adventures of Bertie and His Friends

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Lam, Bertie – 10

One day, a group of travelling camels and traders were journeying along the Silk Road. Suddenly, thieves and bandits kidnapped them, stealing all their valuable gold, taking their camels, and leaving them in the middle of the desert.

They were too terrified to move at first, but they soon realised they had to get going as night was approaching, and they needed to find a place to set up camp. After walking for a while, they found a little pond where they could set up camp. There were four traders in total, and they still had some wool, paper, and spices. After using the wool to make beds and the spices to enhance the fish they caught from the pond, they had a great dinner and fell asleep. While they were sleeping, they discussed how they had been randomly kidnapped. The four traders were named Peter, Jasper, Lucas, and Bertie.

After a good night's sleep, they decided that they should try to find a temple, as it would provide good shelter and not be as hot as sleeping on the sand. Although they had enough resources, they were still worried that they might starve. After making an axe, they decided to chop down some trees, which they could sell in the trading city. The trading city was located in the middle of the Silk Road, making them quite close to it after being dropped in the desert.

Two hours later, they were ready to walk to the city. After walking for nearly an hour, they reached the city and traded their resources for money to buy food and other necessities. Bertie bought some bread, and Lucas purchased some matches to light up the dark. They decided they could prepare to move on to the fourth city, which was the last one on the Silk Road. The city they were in mainly focused on trading, which is why it was large and also had residents. The first and second cities served merely as checkpoints, but they skipped them because they had been dropped in the middle of the desert. Now they had the money and food, and they were ready to go.

After deciding to continue, they left the city and walked into the desert. They were having a great time walking and talking, especially since they had cold water that some kind person had given them. After three hours of walking and talking, they found an excellent place to rest and set up camp there. After resting, it was already night-time, but Bertie wanted to go hunting, so he left the group and ventured off alone. His footsteps led him closer to a shining light, and suddenly Bertie found a temple. He decided to go inside without telling anyone. Inside the temple, he thought that he could rest with his friends there. But then, suddenly, the door closed behind him, trapping him inside. He was clueless and scared, but he had no choice but to venture deeper into the temple. There, he saw the shining light again, seemingly guiding him closer. Inside, he found two chests, and there was a sign that read, "Choose one or die." He chose one, and inside was a gold bar with the words "You won" engraved on it.

Bertie decided not to return to his group and betrayed them, becoming rich all on his own.

In the end, the group perished while waiting for Bertie, and he, now wealthy, bought a mansion and escaped the Silk Road, living happily ever after.

The Story of Zaria

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Lam, Yin Suet – 9

Once upon a time, dragons, elves, and humans lived together happily in a land called Zaria. Dragons traded loot and goods in exchange for food, often visiting the Silk Road, where all the goods were stored. Everyone lived happily until Zaylynn, the human queen, wanted more power. She started a war. The dragons and elves teamed up to fight against Queen Zaylynn. In the end, Queen Zaylynn lost her kingdom and her life.

The humans went to the Silk Road to gather food and treasures. The dragons had all the gold, silver, emeralds, topaz, and jade. Any gemstone could only be found in a dragon's lair, and each dragon possessed a different gem. Sophie, the former dragon queen, had the rarest gem in all of Zaria: the Treasured Blue Opal. It was so rare that it could only be found in a dragon queen or king's secret lair. After Queen Sophie died, a rumor spread when her daughter, Maple, took her place. A human became jealous of her wealth and began giving out free food for the homeless at the Silk Road. Many homeless dragons and people loved this mysterious human. Word spread, and almost everyone liked this mysterious human more than Queen Maple herself. "She's brought peace to the world!" a dragon would say. "She's an angel sent from heaven!" another would say. Maple felt devastated; she tried everything to care for Zaria. As miserable as she was, she had to keep going. Eventually, she couldn't take it anymore and secretly left Zaria.

After a year of Queen Maple's disappearance, the human became queen. This human had everything she could ever want—a palace to live in, a dragon to ride, many maids, and even a husband. Despite having it all, she was a terrible queen. Ever since she became queen, her whole attitude changed. She became spoiled and rotten, only wanting the Opal for herself. All she did was complain about the maids and set nonsensical laws. Whenever someone complained, she would say, "OFF WITH YOUR HEAD!" Everyone was afraid of her.

Soon, the king vanished. "FIND HIM! IF YOU DON'T FIND HIM, DON'T COME BACK!" the queen commanded. The dragons and the guards bowed, saying, "Yes, your highness." They flew off to find the king but couldn't locate him. In the end, terrified, the guards fled. They flew day and night, worried the queen would find them and kill them all. After many days, they arrived at a tall mountain and landed at its peak. Setting up tents, they slept through the night.

The next day, Crown Guard Elijah sent some guards out to find food while he went to explore. While walking around, he heard a huffing sound. Grabbing his sword, he prepared for a fight and swung it around. Luckily, he missed; the person behind him was Queen Maple. "Oh! Queen Maple! I've missed you so much! Where have you been?" Elijah asked. "I'm doing fine. I have a family and am living happily in this mountain," Queen Maple replied. "When I left Zaria, I was lonely and miserable. Then, I went to the Silk Road for help. Luckily, no one recognized me. A handsome drake came and took me to his home, and we fell in love."

"Oh! How wonderful, my queen! The new queen is terrible to us. We've run away from her because we are scared that she will kill us all! Please come back, Queen Maple; we need you!" Elijah said. After a while, Queen Maple agreed to return on one condition: she wanted to bring her family. Elijah quickly shook his head. Then, Queen Maple, her husband, and daughter, Theodore and Opal, set off for home. On their way back, Elijah asked why she named her daughter Opal. "I promised my mother I would name my daughter Opal, as it meant so much to her. When I was born, I had a twin sister, but she didn't survive, so I promised my mother I would name my daughter Opal. This name also means a lot to me. Opal, just like the Treasured Blue Opal, is so rare that there's only one in the whole world. When I look at Opal, I know she is one of a kind," Queen Maple replied.

After flying for five hours, they arrived. "CHARGE!" the current queen commanded, forgetting her troops had fled. Silence echoed through the kingdom—there were no more guards. The queen stood there, mouth open. Before Elijah and Maple could attack, the queen ran away. "Oh no, you don't!" Maple shouted as she zapped the queen with lightning. The queen fell to her knees. "I'll take that, thank you," Maple said, taking the Treasured Blue Opal, now a necklace. Elijah drew his sword just in time to stab the queen before she could escape again.

Everyone celebrated her defeat. They were finally free. "All we are missing is a Queen, King, and Princess," said Elijah, looking at Maple's family. They exchanged glances. The next day, Elijah addressed the citizens of Zaria from the castle balcony. "Citizens of Zaria, I know that having no queen is tough, but I have good news! We will have a new Queen, King, and Princess! Please welcome QUEEN MAPLE, KING THEODORE, AND PRINCESS OPAL!"

“I am so grateful to be Queen again after having let Zaria down so many times. Zaria shall no longer be the name of this place. The new name shall wipe all the darkness away, and this land shall be called Aurelynx, where everyone is kind to each other,” Maple declared. The crowd cheered. After their speeches, they enjoyed dinner together, ready for new adventures in Aurelynx, hoping they would never have to leave again.

Ventures into the Silk Road

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Lau, Chung Yeung Ayden – 12

Tom and Sue were enjoying a quiet afternoon walk through their tree-lined neighbourhood when Sue spotted an old, leather-bound book near the curb. "Look at this," she exclaimed, picking it up. The cover was blank, save for a single, beautifully embossed golden camel. Intrigued, they sat on a nearby bench and opened it.

As Tom turned the first page, the world around them dissolved. The sounds of a modern street were replaced by the braying of donkeys and the murmur of unknown languages. They found themselves on a dusty path.

Before them stretched an ancient trade route: the Silk Road. A kind-faced merchant approached them. "Welcome, travellers," he said. "You seek knowledge of this great artery of the world, yes? This road is more than just silk; it is the pulse of empires."

He led them through a sprawling bazaar. "Goods flowed both ways," the merchant explained. "From China, we received silk, as well as spices. From the West came glass, gold, and grapes." He pointed to a caravan loading camels. "But just as important as the goods were the ideas."

He showed them scholars from different lands huddled over scrolls, debating philosophy and religion. "Buddhism travelled this route from India to China," the merchant noted. "So did the stories and scientific discoveries of the Persians and the Arabs."

As they walked, the landscape changed from a bustling city to an arid desert. The merchant described the hardships: the harsh sun, the lack of water, and bandits. "Caravans travelled in groups for safety," he explained. "They stopped at fortified inns called caravanserais, where they could rest, trade stories, and prepare for the next leg of the journey." Tom was fascinated by the scale. "It wasn't a single road, was it?" he asked.

"No, a vast web of trails and sea lanes," the merchant confirmed. "It connected the Han Dynasty in the East with the Roman Empire in the West, fostering a world of interconnectedness unseen before its time."

They reached a section of the Great Wall of China. The merchant's voice grew wistful. "Empires rose and fell, wars disrupted the path, and eventually, sea routes became safer and faster. But the legacy of the Silk Road lives on, a testament to humanity's enduring desire to explore, trade, and connect."

The merchant handed the weathered book back to Tom. "Guard this knowledge well."

As Tom accepted the book, the desert scene blurred. They found themselves back on the bench, the sun warm, the quiet street noises returning. The book felt heavy and real in Tom's hands, its pages now filled with vibrant illustrations and detailed accounts of their journey.

Sue looked at Tom, her eyes wide with wonder. "That was incredible."

Tom simply nodded, holding the book close. They had stumbled upon more than just a discarded item; they had inherited a traveller's tale, a living testament to an ancient world that shaped the one they now lived in. They knew they'd read every word of that extraordinary book.

Jasper's Silk Road Adventure

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Lau, Pok Him – 10

A long time ago, in the city of Chang'an in China, a boy named Jasper dreamed of travelling the Silk Road. His father made silk, and traders often visited their shop, sharing stories of faraway lands with golden palaces and spicy foods. When Jasper turned thirteen, his father gave him a red silk scarf for luck. Jasper joined a caravan of camels and traders heading west. Their journey took them through deserts, mountains, and busy cities.

The Taklamakan Desert was hot and dry. Sandstorms blew fiercely, and they had no shelter. Jasper used his scarf to protect his face. After many days, they reached an oasis with cool water and shade. He learned that the Silk Road was full of challenges—but also rewards.

In Samarkand, Jasper saw buildings with blue tiles and golden domes. In Persia, he tasted sweet dates and saw colourful carpets. He met people from many cultures, each with their own language and stories. Jasper traded silk for spices and gems, but the best thing he gained was knowledge.

In India, Jasper saw elephants and monkeys. He met a man writing poems on palm leaves. “Words are treasures too,” the man said. Inspired, Jasper wrote his first poem about stars and deserts.

After many months, Jasper returned to Chang'an. His parents were proud. He shared his treasures, but more importantly, he shared his stories. Children gathered to hear about deserts, palaces, and poems. Jasper had become a storyteller, and his tales travelled even farther than he had.

Sam's Watch

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Leung, Cheuk Hang – 10

Once upon a time, a trader called Sam went on the Silk Road because his watch was broken, and he needed a new one. He had heard someone mention that Merv's watches were elegant and affordable. He travelled from China to Merv with a group of friends, as they had also wanted to buy watches for a long time. They took their gold and furniture to trade with others.

They began to put various items, such as silver, rubies, chairs, and pillows, into boxes and bags suitable for carrying.

They started their journey along the Silk Road with ecstatic feelings. Initially, everything was going remarkably well. They traded rubies for gold, chairs for food, and engaged with many traders, all of whom were admirable and joyful. However, they then encountered a cruel trader. Sam asked him, "Hello, do you want to trade with us? We have gold, silver, and coins..." "No, thank you," the mean trader shouted loudly. Sam and his friends continued their journey, unaware that this mean trader was actually a bandit. He instructed his bandits to follow them, and unfortunately, Sam did not know they were being followed.

After walking for a while, they stopped at a huge rock far from the village, where the bandits began their attack! First, they used some long cloths to cover their eyes completely. Then, they took some rope from Sam and used it to tie him and his friends up on the edge of the large rock, rendering them unable to move. At last, the bandits covered their mouths with duct tape, ensuring they could not call for help.

Once the bandits had taken everything, Sam produced a tiny knife from his pocket, cut the ropes, and freed his friends. He noticed a trail of gold. "There is a hole in the bag! Look! There is Merv! Let's follow it to Merv!" he shouted. They began to chase after the bandits. During the pursuit, they encountered a lion. At first, the lion pretended to be friendly, but then it became aggressive, almost attacking one of Sam's friends! Fortunately, Sam used a bat to hit it, causing the lion to flee in fear. They were all relieved.

Finally, they reached Merv and discovered the location of the loot; it was in another hideout. They crawled into the hideout and hid, finding some swords. They took them out and prepared to attack. The bandits quickly ran away, frightened by their presence. They retrieved their loot, discovering it scattered everywhere, but there were no watches. They believed those must have been rumours.

They returned home sadly, unaware that the watches were right in front of the exit. How unfortunate for them to leave them behind!

Silk Road

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Leung, Chung Hang – 10

One day, when I returned home after school, my grandpa, Kenny, was telling me the story of my great-great-grandfather. He explained that my great-great-grandfather had been very mean, but after a particular incident, he became friendly and kind.

Once upon a time on the Silk Road, there was a famous seller named Ken. He was a cruel and awful person who never listened to anyone. Riding a camel along the Silk Road, he intended to buy a famous painting called "Nola Liza." After walking for hours, someone ran towards Ken and warned him, "Be careful! They say that camels are disappearing, so turn back home." However, he ignored the advice and continued walking with his camel. Suddenly, he heard a deafening bang behind him. His camel had disappeared! Shivers ran down his spine; he was petrified. A large shadow loomed over the Silk Road, and then a giant sand monster appeared. It possessed great sand powers, capable of creating large sand statues that could shoot sand to blind or burn and even make clones of itself to mimic human actions.

Ken was terrified. He quickly grabbed a bucket of water and threw it in the face of the sand monster, but nothing happened, leaving him hopeless. Fortunately, he found a shield and used it to deflect the monster's attack. Then, he took out a canister of burning fuel from his bag and threw it at the monster, and to his amazement, it worked! The monster slowly transformed into a huge window, melting from fire to sand.

However, the monster had the power to regenerate. Just then, his fiancé appeared, and Ken remembered his own life story. He had once been a young man named Morichino, a Japanese citizen who had moved to the Silk Road when he had become the sand monster. When he was born, he had lived in a small village full of girls. Because of his rare eye pattern, they had kept him.

From the moment he was born, he had been kept in a cage, and the voices of his mother and sister were soft yet suffocating. They fed him meals every day, far too many to eat. Each night, something crawled around his cage, making a noise like waves of sand passing by.

When he was five years old, they brought him to a lavish hall. There, he saw a half-human, half-sand monster with an extra-wide mouth, which he recognised as the source of the nightly sounds. "Darling, you should look like me, so chop chop!" she commanded. Her minions, his aunts and all the other girls, grabbed knives and stabbed his mouth to widen it like hers, collecting his blood in a plate for the monster to drink.

Now, at 19, all he wanted was to escape. He only trusted a snake-like sand creature that came into his cage every day. One day, he managed to escape, but the monster chased after him. Just then, a girl with a katana arrived and killed the monster. It was Mitsiy, the famous monster slayer. He fell in love with her, but she was ill, so her father asked him to take good care of her.

As their love blossomed, Mitsiy recovered, and they went to watch a fantastic fireworks show, promising to be together forever. However, one day, while he was out buying medicine for Mitsiy—whom they were planning to marry in a couple of weeks—Rander, Mitsiy's ex-boyfriend, placed a gallon of poison in the well at her house.

When he returned, he found police surrounding the house, with Mitsiy and her father's bodies on the ground. He was blamed for Rander's actions and arrested, sentenced to life in prison. However, a water monster, known as Super Mon 2, approached and asked if he could join its team, and he agreed.

After becoming a monster, he fell into another world, filled with houses and a massive castle. The water monster led him inside, where a terrifying figure awaited. "This is the Monster King, Cuticat Monster," the water monster explained. "She controls all animals, especially cute ones. You must respect her; if you don't, you will regret it." He was quickly sent to a random place because of a monster with a Nintendo Switch, which teleported him automatically.

In the blink of an eye, he was back on the Silk Road. Now he heard his fiancé's voice: "Come to me; we can be together." Listening to his imaginary fiancé, he said, "Thank you, my dear friend." Ken didn't want Morichino to die, so he urged him to be good again, but Morichino refused. In a fit of despair, he punched himself repeatedly, ultimately dying in the centre of the Silk Road.

People were overjoyed that the monster was gone and that they were safe, but only Ken understood the truth behind the sand monster. He cried all the way home, tears streaming down his face.

Suddenly, someone yelled, “Ken is the one who saved us; he is our god!” Ken became a public figure and was invited to every celebration, including one for the Sand Monster’s demise. They brought a giant statue shaped like the sand monster but crafted from solid gold.

The Dream

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Lui, Ching – 11

“Goodnight, my sweetheart!” exclaimed my mother as I drifted off to sleep. I shuddered as I recalled a particularly long and strange dream I had experienced the previous night. It was terrible and embarrassing.

One day, Rexy and I were surfing the internet when a video popped up on my computer. Just as I was about to click on it, Rexy stopped me. “My grandfather once tried playing this game when he was young, and he got sucked inside it. He never came back out again!” he exclaimed. Just then, our kitten, Cathy, jumped onto the table and pressed the Start button. I froze. The colour drained from my face as I began to float in the air. Shivers ran down Rexy’s spine as he was pulled closer to the computer monitor. We screamed at the top of our lungs as the room spun around us. Then, we both lay unconscious.

When I woke up, I found myself in a cosy and pleasant small room. I shook Rexy to wake him, but he did not respond. I explored the room, but there were no doors or windows. Just then, Rexy awoke and shouted, “Where are we? Are we in the past?” I shook his shoulders to bring him to full consciousness and told him we were in the game. I looked up to see a bar of hearts and oxygen tanks above us. As we complained, I heard a “beep.” Our water droplets started to decrease. We were going to die of dehydration! Not really, though, because it was just a game. We could respawn in this tiny room.

As we wandered around, Rexy discovered a key! “Maybe it’s for the lock on the door.” I inserted the key, and it made a “clang.” Then, the door opened wide.

A warm breeze greeted us. The sun was shining brightly in the sky. As we wandered, we realised we were on the Silk Road, a famous route through the desert. We then saw a signpost that read “The Golden Village” pointing to the right and “The Temple of Madness” to the left. We discussed our options when suddenly a map flew across the sky and landed in front of us. We studied it and discovered that the Temple of Madness was a golden desert temple made of marble. “Let’s go to the Temple!” “Okay!”

On our way there, we had to dodge many obstacles and engage in fights. First, we navigated through a herd of camels rushing across the scorching desert. Then we fought a swarm of sand snakes rising from the ground. Finally, we reached the Temple, tired and exhausted as we hobbled up the stairs to admire it.

A cold gust of air from the air-conditioning swept past us as we entered the Temple. A red carpet was rolled out along the side, and abstract paintings adorned the walls. It was a beautiful sight until two guards approached us, declaring, “Are you two here to cause trouble, or are you here to see the King?” “Um, we are here to see the King, sir,” I replied. “Very well, follow us,” said the guards as they led us towards a huge door made of gold and silver.

“All hail the King of Madness!” shouted the guard, his voice echoing through the hall. “The King looks like my grandfather,” whispered Rexy. Suddenly, the guard accidentally struck us with his sword, depleting our health bar, and we fell to the floor with a ‘thump.’

“Wake up, Kasie! Wake up! It’s time to go to school!” I awoke to find myself in my bed, hearing my grandfather call me for breakfast. Relief washed over me as I climbed out of bed and got dressed. I told my grandfather about my dream. He bent down, clutching his stomach with laughter, saying that what I had dreamt was true. My eyes nearly popped out!

“Ring!” I was late for school! I rushed out the door frantically, hoping to make it on time.

Because of that dream, I began to realise that the events took place on the Silk Road. As a curious learner, I couldn’t wait to learn more about it. I wondered what history and animals existed there.

Buckle up, Sophie

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Tse, Yan Nga – 11

“Remember to bring your jacket; it’s cold in Los Angeles! Vacation time!”

That was me, Sophie, about 12 hours ago, feeling as excited as Christmas morning. Now, sitting next to my bestie like a melted popsicle in the car, we were in Los Angeles, alright, but the promised sun was nowhere to be seen; the sky was as dark as a dirty ashtray.

“At least it’s not pouring cats and dogs, plus we’re in the car. Just be grateful!” Eunice said.

So that is exactly what I did—being as grateful as I had ever been. Well, at least that lasted for a few minutes because our car sputtered and died on a quiet street. The radio announced, “All roads are closed. LA is shutting down due to a bizarre situation.”

After 10 minutes in the car, basically praying for the best, Eunice ordered, “Sophie, turn this car around right now!” She pointed at the car window. Then I realised the streets of Los Angeles were empty. Our rental car wouldn’t work. The radio only made noise and provided emergency news.

Then Eunice finally had an idea. “We must go back to the airport,” she said. She picked up her phone, but it had no signal. “We need to fly somewhere else. Somewhere warm. A place without this white stuff!”

“We cannot,” I replied, pointing outside at the messy streets. “The roads are closed. The whole city has stopped.”

“We can walk back to the airport,” she said, sounding very sure. “We will stick to the plan.”

Against my better judgment, we started walking back to the Los Angeles airport. It was awful. The snowstorm got worse. We were shaking from the cold, wet, and almost froze to death by the time we reached the airport doors. Inside the airport, it was a mess. Flights were stopped, people were yelling, and everyone felt panicked. But Eunice stayed calm. So we headed to customer service and found a really nice woman. In a small miracle, this worker put us on the last emergency flight leaving for a "safer place." A wave of relief washed over me. I genuinely couldn’t thank her enough.

"See?" Eunice said. She buckled her seatbelt on the small plane. "This is why you should always trust me, Sophie."

We flew up into the dark sky, leaving the snowstorm below. I relaxed in my seat. I felt safe. That feeling of safety lasted for only forty-five minutes.

Suddenly, the plane shook violently. The lights flashed and then went out. A loud emergency alarm sounded. The plane felt like it was falling and spinning. Yellow oxygen masks fell down. Eunice screamed and grabbed my hand.

"This is not like a movie! This is bad!" she yelled over the loud noise.

BOOM.

Then, the world turned white. There was no pain and no yelling. When I opened my eyes, I was lying on warm sand. My clothes were torn yet stylish. Thank goodness neither of us was bleeding or hurt.

"You know, Sophie, I told you to trust me. I promised you a 'safer place' and a 'warm place,'" Eunice said. That was literally the worst thing to say at that moment. Then we saw a strange-looking guy a few feet away. He said, "Welcome to the Silk Road." But we looked all around, and guess what? Yep, he disappeared. He was lucky it was because we were about to ask him a thousand questions in our heads.

For the next month, we lived as people from ancient times. Eunice, always the boss, took control of our lives in this utterly strange world, the Silk Road. She made a map, found a water well, and started listing everything we owned that we could trade. The kind local people gave us simple long shirts to wear.

Our days were hard. We learned that silk was more than just cloth; it was money, it was culture, and it showed how important it was. We traded some of our shoes for food, water, and a lot more.

The month was long, difficult, and changed us completely. Eunice became very good at arguing for prices in the busy market—not to mention, she was a very quiet girl before this.

On the 30th, for some reason, the world seemed to blur. “Wait a minute... are we back in the airport?” Eunice shouted in excitement. “We were back in a modern airport terminal!” I shouted. Our clothes were clean, modern, and perfect. The sounds were loud: people rolling suitcases, voices announcing flights.

She looked up at the large screen that showed flight times. A flight to Hong Kong was letting people onto the plane. We had lived through a snowstorm in LA. We were going home to Hong Kong.

Eunice looked over at me and smiled. I smiled back, finally feeling warm. I might not trust her travel plans ever again, but I knew that no matter where we ended up, we would be okay. We were going home, not as the same girls who left but as survivors.

Tevayat Time Defenders

Baptist (Sha Tin Wai) Lui Ming Choi Primary School, Wong, Wan Ki – 12

“As you can see, the finest vision of China is on the road to Rome. The King of Rome wants China to send someone special as it's almost Christmas,” said Yanhua, chef of the Liyue time-defending team. “Tignari has sensed that the Abyssal Messenger will come soon; you have around an hour to prepare before you go!” Lumie and Clorinde, who were going to protect the vision, raced to the mission information room. As she stepped inside, a book floated into her hand. She opened it, and it read, “The Silk Road is an extremely important trade route from the Han Dynasty. It is said that the King of Han wanted to defend against the Huns, so he sent Chang Qian, a palace official. His original job was to ask other countries to work together and defend against the Huns, but they were pleased with their current lives, so they rejected him. Instead, Chang Qian created a road that connected east and west. He also brought many goods from the western countries.” After that, they went to the clothing room, where Chori gave each of them sets of regular clothing and desert clothes.

After an hour, the girls arrived at the portal. The wind was blowing hard, and everything was flapping and flying. Citali was sitting in the control room, while Lanyan gave them special watches that helped them connect with HQ. “Good to go!” shouted Lanyan. They stepped into the portal and were whisked off to ancient China.

After a while, they landed with a flop on the palace grounds, wearing official costumes. They strode into the palace when suddenly a guard with a strange-looking face yelled, “Palace intruders! Kill!” The rest of the guards rushed to grab the girls. Clorinde reacted quickly; she took out her gun and started firing bullets at the guards, while Lumie threw out her sword and slashed at them. The two of them were so synchronised that their moves were almost the same; at last, they fired the lasso, which sealed the guards shut. “Oh no!” shouted Lumie, “the emperor’s feast is about to start, and Chang Qian is there! Faster!” They managed to rush into the feast hall, but more guards were following them. Clorinde threw a smoke bomb, and the guards were sealed shut. At last, the duo arrived at the hall. The emperor was chatting with Chang Qian, and Lumie and Clorinde sat at a table to enjoy the feast held by the king. They watched the dances and the music played by the dancers and the elegant palace ladies. That night, the emperor declared that Chang Qian would leave the next day. While Lumie and Clorinde were in their rooms resting, Clorinde turned on the special watch and called headquarters, “Hi, this is Clorinde speaking. Is Citali online?” “Yes,” a crackly voice emitted from the watch. “Tomorrow morning, Chang Qian and his troops will leave the palace, so you must bring everything. You are advised to take the hydro-pill before you leave for the desert. Off now, bye!” The call ended, and the girls took a brush-teeth pill before sleeping.

That night, the watch rang. “Clorinde! Clorinde! Get up! Lumie, something bad has happened!” The two of them sprang from their beds and answered the call. Citali said that the emperor had moved the departure time to now. They had to change into their clothes, drink the juice, and start their journey.

Chang Qian took the lead horse while the girls followed at the back. Lumie almost fell asleep when Clorinde shook her head and offered her some coffee. The two of them then heard a strange grumbling sound, followed by blades. They turned around and found that the china was in the hands of an Abyss Mage! They sprang into action: Clorinde fired bullets at the mage as fast as lightning strikes, while Lumie tried her best to defend Chang Qian, but she got captured. As Clorinde dashed towards her, the mage breathed a mysterious air around her. Lumie fell into still darkness when a young girl approached her with a huge robot behind her. “Hello,” she said with a sly smile, “my name is Aquetica, also known as the Antique Lady. Give me the china.” She ordered. “Never!” Lumie roared. “History belongs to all of us! The future is created by the past!” Immediately, she dashed towards the mage, grabbed the china, and executed a plunge attack, which sent the mage into unconsciousness.

“Lumie, get up!” A voice woke her up. She blinked and found three heads bobbing around her. She shot up and saw Clorinde and the troops looking at her. “Where’s the china?” The troops replied, “Clorinde defended it, and now you are awake.” They helped Lumie get up from the sand when they saw a piece of crinkled paper floating towards her. It read: “Time Defenders, I’ll be back!” Then, it turned to ashes and drifted off with the wind. The girls and Chang Qian walked up to the palace, unaware that the young girl was one of the Abyss Mages and was about to launch a fiercer attack...

The Story of the Chinese Silk Road

Beanstalk International Bilingual School (BIBS), Xu, Alice – 9

Long, long ago, there were Chinese people, who were very rich in culture, especially in silk. Sadly, they were short in provisions. They decided to trade their delicately sewn silk for food. There was a brave warrior called Jenna. She heard about this, and gathered an army. She knew that the road ahead will be filled with danger, but she had a spirit swift as a deer and a mind brave as a lion. So the journey began. They were first walking in bright sunlight, but it got darker and darker.

They realized that they were walking in a misty forest, and weird mushrooms were everywhere. One is blue with orange spots, while another one is green with yellow spots. The soldiers picked the mushrooms, but Jenna didn't trust the mushrooms. The spots seem to be needles trying to prick their fingers. The soldiers fell to the ground at once, poisoned.

Jenna went to help them, when the shadow of a monster appeared. Jenna quickly stood up, and fetched her sword, ready for a battle. The monster bared its teeth, with saliva dripping from its mouth. The monster about to enjoy a feast. But Jenna is not about to let the monster enjoy a feast. She raised her sword at the monster, and brought it down as hard as she could. She heard a deep roar.

The monster flapped its gigantic wings and flew away. As it flew away, the spell on the forest lifted, and the mist faded away. It seemed like that the monster had cast a spell on the forest. The soldiers awoke, coughing up the bits of mushroom that were still in their throats. They continued the journey, and for a shorter time, they boarded a little boat they could use to travel to India, which will be the place they will be trading the silk. The sea captain announced that the journey to their destination will take two days. The soldiers got tired and went to bed, but Jenna stayed awake, watching the current.

Suddenly, a vast sea creature approached the boat, using its horns to smash the boat into bits. Jenna saw it happen, because she was watching the current, and grabbed onto a wooden plank from the wreckage, pulling the soldiers and herself on it. They floated on the board for the rest of the journey on the plank.

They arrived, wet and cold. The soldiers mourned for the loss for their silk, for that now, they can't trade. Only Jenna remained smiling. She pulled out the silk, stained with water from her cloak pocket. Everyone gasped, and joyously traded the silk for food.

After that, they traveled back to China, and shared the food.

From that day on, when people devour their food, like corn and rice, they all think of the brave warrior Jenna. They all remembered that even the smallest thing can make the biggest difference.

The Adventure of Life

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chan, Shing Wa Waldron – 8

In the city of Chang'an during Tang Dynasty, there lived an energetic and adventurous teenager named Shing. At a young age, Shing followed in the footsteps of his ancestors and sold crafts and artefacts which were imported from the West in the market. As Shing did business with caravan merchants, the latter often told tales of the wondrously beautiful but mysterious Silk Road, particularly the "Devil's City" in the Taklamakan Desert. Sitting at the heart of Silk Road trade routes, the city terrified countless caravans with stories of a man-eating three-eyed giant and a banshee shriek. Shing was captivated by these stories and yearned to see the wonders in person.

One day, Shing learned that Temuulen, an experienced Mongolian caravan merchant, was hiring men to join his caravan to the West. Without hesitation, he approached Temuulen immediately and volunteered to help transporting silk and delicate fabrics. At first, Temuulen declined his request because he thought Shing was clueless about the possible challenges of the journey. However, Shing repeatedly made the same earnest requests. His courage and determination eventually made Temuulen give in and allow him to be a member of the expedition. "Woo-hoo!" exclaimed Shing.

As Shing immersed himself in the joy of exploring the Silk Road, he was warned by Temuulen about the challenges of the journey. Temuulen said, "Remember, Shing. Stay vigilant and do not think this is an easy journey." "Yeah, yeah," replied Shing impatiently. He seemed not to take Temuulen's warning seriously.

Weeks later, the caravan reached the "Devil's City" in the Taklamakan Desert. Contrary to his expectation, Shing did not encounter any scary mythical creatures or strange phenomena. He saw kilometres of nothing but sand. Shing had to withstand the extreme desert weather. He burnt during the day and froze at night. One night, Shing thought he saw an intimidating three-eyed giant and heard its loud, creepy roar. However, it turned to be the serene shadows of the wind-eroded rock pillars and the sound of howling wind.

When Temuulen saw Shing's furrowed brows, he tried to comfort and explain, "When I was at your age, I was also mesmerized by the mysteries of Silk Road and longed for epic adventures. But in reality, the journey to the Silk Road is filled with vast landscapes. It can also be extremely painful due to intense heat. Throughout these years I've seen many young people quit in the middle of the expedition. They tried to go home by themselves but eventually got lost in the desert. But to introduce and protect China's invaluable products and goods—we must overcome the limitations in ourselves and brave the challenges that the desert brings. Do not give up easily." Shing remained silent and then went back to his tent. However, he tossed and turned during sleep as he could not make up his mind.

The next day, as the caravan advanced further, Temuulen noticed a strong wind lifting a lot of dust and moving violently towards them. He shouted, "Dust storm! Find cover now." Instantly, the caravan erupted into chaos as everyone scrambled for shelter. As the dust storm moved closer, it created a massive wall of thick dust and debris which plunged the whole desert into darkness. It looked like a giant monster and could not wait to swallow the sun and everything in its way. The wind howled.

As terrifying as the dust storm was, Temuulen and his men were not consumed by fear. They made the frightened camels kneel together to form a fortress to protect themselves. Temuulen shouted to his men, "Hold on! It'll be over soon." In the midst of a dust storm, the caravan covered their heads with heavy wool blankets and struggled to breathe. Although the dust storm lasted for a few minutes, it felt like an eternity for Shing and other travellers. At last, the sky regained its blue and sunlight once again bathed the desert. Everyone could finally breathe in fresh air as if fish revive in water.

When everyone was celebrating their survival, Shing suddenly spotted a large shining city standing in front of them. The city was alive with people, markets and traffic. It turned out that Shing and his peers arrived at the first stop of their business trip. As Shing stared open-eyed at the city, Temuulen patted his shoulder and asked, "Do you still want to go home now?" Shing shook his head and replied confidently, "Not anymore, because

now I understand that life is full of ups and downs. I want to introduce our country's culture and irreplaceable smooth silk because I love my country. I should also develop an iron will and embrace the challenges in my own life to contribute back to my country."

My Silk Road Trip

Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Chan, Wan Yi Ally – 8

My name is Anna. Come and join my Silk Road trip, it's very interesting!

One day, when I was doing my homework about the Silk Road, I heard a funny sound. I looked up and saw a portal. It could teleport you to another place. I felt amazed! I jumped inside it and I went into the ancient Silk Road. It was Chang'an in the second century BCE, the starting point of the Silk Road. I saw lots of people walking along the Road, so I followed them. I remembered from class that it started in China, snaked through India, then curved through Persia and ended in Arabia. I also saw people riding on camels and using them to transport woven silk from China, spices from India, silver from Persia and more! It was a bizarre sight and I didn't realise it was so different from the 2020s! As I walked, I began to starve and was tired. I tried to buy some food at the busy market and I found out how Chinese food spread to other countries in the world.

Along the road, I saw a man riding on his camel and he looked kind. I approached him and we started talking. His name was Ban Chao and he only spoke in Chinese. We didn't understand each other because I spoke in English, so I took my phone out and used a translator for us to communicate. He was shocked and asked, 'What is that?' I said it was a phone. He was dazzled and thought that the phone was a magical box. As we chatted, we both wondered why we were wearing such 'unusual' clothes – he wore his traditional Chinese clothing and I wore my T-shirt and jeans. I said this was what he was going to wear in the future. As we observed how different we were, not only did I realise the effect of the Silk Road on the 2020s, but Ban Chao got to know about the future too! We were pleased to have the Silk Road.

Ban Chao let me sit on the camel. While it was walking, it suddenly fell down. There were some enemies shooting it because they wanted to steal the woven silk. Luckily, I didn't get hurt. Ban Chao asked me whether I could help the camel. I said, "Let me try." I looked inside my backpack and I took out my toy gun and it looked real. The enemies were terrified and they all ran away. "Thank you so much! We would definitely get hurt if I weren't for you!"

Suddenly, it started to rain with lightning and thunder. The portal reappeared and I heard a booming voice: "If you don't jump in now then you will never get back home!" I hugged and said goodbye to Ban Chao. Finally, I woke up and found out that it was just a dream. I now knew the power of the Silk Road.

Threads of Hope

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, Bedadam, Vihaan – 12

Everyone thought their journey would end here and now, but the very faithful Ming said not. But before we continue, we must understand how this had come to be. It started in the Qing Dynasty (1644 C.E), in the very poor province of China, Gansu. It was just when Ming had been born in the local hospital. When he grew up, he had noticed that his mom was very passionate about selling silk. At a time where people had only thought that silk could only be used as normal clothing, Ming could have not ever understood why his mom would do the meticulous work of extracting silk out of silkworms just so that his mom could sell silk at the same price as other clothing materials which required less labor. His dad had left before he was born for a reason his mom would never tell. So, his mom struggle financially but still gave a good education to her son. Everything was going fine until one day when his mom went to pick up vegetables, she was crossing the road when a speeding driver crashed into his mom. When Ming had arrived to the local hospital, she had already been confirmed to be dead. Over the next few days, the reality had hit him hard. He was only 13, didn't have father or mother anymore, and he lived in poverty with the only assets that were left for him were his mom's silkworms and house. Just as he thought his life was just a pure joke, on string of hope had come. On the news, people in Europe had discovered that using silk instead of other materials, we could get a smoother type of clothing which could make silk a high-priced clothing material. Ming had realized that instead of selling silk in his hometown he could make a bigger profit by making the long trip to Europe he could sell his silk at a higher price. He had decided to ask his trusted friend to be his accompany to Europe.

Under the Silk Sky

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, Chan, Chun Kiu Gordon – 11

There was a very famous road in ancient China called the Silk Road. In fact, it was not only one single road but many routes passing across deserts, mountains, and rivers. This was a road that connected China with faraway countries such as India, Persia, and even as far as Rome, in Europe. People used to take this road to go for trading of goods, sharing ideas, and making friends.

Li Wei loved hearing the stories of travelers who spoke of tall mountains and big blue seas, of faraway cities full of gold and music. One day, a friendly merchant from the west, dressed in a bright blue robe and carrying fine, sparkling glass bottles under the sun, arrived in Li Wei's father's shop and wanted to trade his glass for silk. His father agreed, and they became friends.

Years went by, and Li Wei grew up. He wanted to see the world outside his city. One morning, he told his parents, "I want to travel the Silk Road and see where our silk goes." His father was worried. "The journey is long and full of dangers," he said. But his mother smiled softly. "Go, my son. Learn from the world and bring your stories home."

So Li Wei joined a caravan of traders with their camels and horses. They started on their travel across the wide Gobi Desert. The sand was hot in the daytime and cold at night. They walked for days under the bright sun and then rested under the stars. Sometimes they met other travelers who came from faraway places like India or Arabia. They shared food, songs, and stories around the fire.

Li Wei saw many amazing things. In one city, he saw carpets with colorful patterns. In another, he tasted sweet dates and spicy food. He traded silk for gold, glass, and jewels. He also saw new ideas—strange scripts, different music, and people praying in new ways. Everywhere he went, people were kind and curious about China.

Many months later, Li Wei finally returned to his home in Chang'an. His parents welcomed him, and they were so glad that he was home safely. Li Wei recounted for them the people he met and the things he saw. "The Silk Road is not just for trading things," he said. "It helps people learn from each other and become friends." And so, the story of the Silk Road lived on. It became a symbol of friendship and sharing between countries. Thanks to the Silk Road, the world became more connected, just like threads in a piece of silk—strong, bright, and beautiful.

The Three Coins of Passage

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, De Leon, Jaster Dayne – 12

More than twenty centuries after the old Silk Road first connected China to faraway lands, a brave merchant named Jiang Den is traveling its dusty roads for what he thought would be his last journey. They are closing the Silk Road, the path that he has been travelling on for many years. The year was 1437, and even his camel, Mooncake, looks so bored he might fall asleep walking. One evening, while looking for firewood near an old, ruined house, Jiang kicked a small red box buried in the sand. Inside were three coins, bronze, silver, and gold covered in strange symbols.

The bronze coin has a tiny camel walking across mountains and swirling clouds. The silver coin shows a lantern floating high in the sky with twinkling stars. The gold coin glows softly, carved with a bridge stretching over oceans, connecting cities with little smiling people. A note beneath them read: “For the merchant who bridges the world. Bronze opens the Past. Silver opens the Present. Gold opens the Future, with a small carved word...Hong Kong.” Jiang laughed and Mooncake sneezed so loudly it nearly knocked him over.

Curious, Jiang picked up the silver coin. Suddenly, the air twisted, the wind howled, and the ground spun beneath them. In the next moment, he found himself in modern Hong Kong. His jaw dropped. Towering glass buildings reached the sky, neon lights flashed like fireworks, and cars zoomed by without camels or horses! Huge metal birds roared overhead. “The sky is alive!” Jiang yelled, and Mooncake hid behind him.

A young woman ran toward him. “Are you okay? Are you filming a movie? Your clothes are amazing!” she asked. Her name is Mei Chan, and she is a trader. Jiang explained about the coins and the whirlwind. He also explained that they were travelling by the Silk Road and he is now worried that it has completely closed. Mooncake even snorted at a passing taxi, making everyone laugh, indicating that he agrees to what Jiang is saying. Mei introduced him to Adil, an online trader from Turkey, and Jonas, a German businessman. They explained that the old Silk Road had returned as the New Silk Road in 2013, connecting countries across Asia, Europe, and beyond. It is now called Belt and Road Initiative. It is now used by land and by the sea. We are in year 2026 now. Jiang couldn’t believe it. “The Silk Road... is still alive? And now it’s bigger than ever?”

They showed Jiang, modern life. He stared at a vending machine that poured drinks at the push of a button. “It makes tea by itself?!” he gasped. Mooncake sniffed suspiciously at a soda can. At a milk tea shop, Jiang poked at a straw like it was a tiny snake. “Do I drink it or eat it?” he asked, making everyone laugh. Mei even showed him how she just clicks on the phone to do online shopping, and Jiang nearly fainted when a box of snacks and clothes arrived the same day.

The three asked Jiang, you are so amazed by what we have now, how do you it in your time? Jiang told that trade in his time is about honesty. We meet the other merchants face-to-face and even share tea. It is also about patience, as we travel in long dusty roads and trust that what we traded for is fair and useful.” Mei, Adil, and Jonas explained how the New Silk Road could help people share ideas, inventions, and goods faster. Jiang realized, so the New Silk Road

wasn't just for goods then, it is a way to learn, help each other and form friendship just like yours, no matter how far apart people live.

Finally, at Hong Kong's glowing Victoria Harbor, Jiang held the gold coin. Together, they placed their hands on it, and it burst into golden light. He saw camel caravans beside high-speed trains, ancient stalls beside glowing screens, and Hong Kong shining in the center, linking past, present, and future.

When the light faded, Jiang whispered, "It's time to go home." With the bronze coin, he returned to 1437. Back home, he told the merchants to still continue trading, because they already saw how good its future is. Meanwhile, Mei, Adil, and Jonas formed "The Three Coins Guild", blending old wisdom that Jiang shared with modern ideas of today. At night, Mei could almost hear camel bells or Mooncake's grumbles, reminding her that they are just somewhere out there.

In Hong Kong, where past and present meet, the future is like the Old and New Silk Road, it will not disappear, but it just needs time to grow and achieve wonders as the world changes.

Saviours of the Silk Thread

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, Jagadeesan, Siddharth – 12

When the first spool of silk left Chang 'an, it didn't just shimmer—it *hummed*. Traders called it luck and emperors called it glory, but the Road knew better: silk was never only fabric. Silk was a *map*, stitched with invisible routes, promises, and half-understood dreams. For centuries it carried more than goods—foods, inventions, art, and ideas travelled its dust like sparks looking for new fires.

In 2013, when the New Silk Road was announced, the hum returned—louder, deeper, like the world's oldest instrument being played again. Cargo ships groaned. Satellites blinked off for one heartbeat. Beneath a forgotten desert caravanserai, an ancient loom began weaving by itself, pulling threads that didn't belong together: silk and steel, paper and pixel, camel-bells and train-whistles. Doctor Strange felt the tug in the Sanctum as a golden strand slid from a cracked scroll and coiled around his wrist, yanking him west. Wonder Woman felt an itch under her bracers. Batman's screens filled with a desert sky where stars braided into a line. Superman heard footsteps in the air—millions of them—walking at once.

Then the tear opened, and *he* arrived: a figure crowned with broken compasses, cloaked in torn maps and expired passports, eyes spinning like coins. "I am the Tangle," he whispered, smelling of dust and old ink. "Trade. Travel. Ideas. I feed on the *between*." His plan was cruelly elegant: knot the New Silk Road into a snare so tight every city would be sewn shut—no change, no movement, no imagination. In Xi'an—once Chang 'an—a high-speed train passed an ancient gate and became a caravan. Passengers blinked into wooden carts behind camels, while their phones showed only one new app: **THE ROAD**.

Superman saw the shimmering street with super vision and X-ray vision, so he flew into the shimmering street, then slowed in confusion—his vision couldn't pierce the haze because it wasn't smoke. It was *history*. "We're not trapped by walls," Batman said over comms. "We're trapped by time." A portal snapped open and Doctor Strange stepped out, cloak snapping like a flag, with Spider-Man trailing behind because the universe can tug a thread all it wants—Spiderman is a 15-year-old kid called Peter Parker. And Peter will *always* yank it back. Wonder Woman arrived like a storm kept inside a calm face. Spider-Man stared at the camels and said, "Okay, so... do we get charged extra baggage fees for the camel?" Batman didn't smile, but his silence came close.

Strange raised the golden strand. "This is the original Silk Thread—linked to every exchange ever made along the Road: goods, songs, inventions, stories. The Tangle is corrupting it." Wonder Woman pressed her palm to the air, feeling the vibration. "Then we don't cut it," she said. "We *reweave* it." The Road tested them as they followed the hum west: dunes that shifted like turning pages, markets that sold impossible bargains. In Samarkand, a bazaar offered Spider-Man a vial labelled **THE DAY UNCLE BEN LIVED**. His hand shook. Wonder Woman gently closed his fingers. "The Road gives," she said, "but it also asks what you're willing to become." Batman paid instead with a coin of pure honesty, and for one heartbeat the mirrors showed the Tangle's true face—an emptiness with teeth.

They reached the Loom Between Worlds, hidden in a canyon where the wind sounded like applause. Threads ran through it: silk, wool, copper wire, Fiber optic, and something like starlight braided with song. The Tangle danced at the loom, tying knots fast enough to make ships stall, flights ground, and city lights flicker like scared fireflies. Wonder Woman's Lasso of Truth snapped out and caught a strand midair. "What lies are you weaving?" she demanded, and the Road answered with memories: a Chinese merchant sharing tea with a Persian astronomer; a healer trading herbs for glass beads; a child learning a new song and humming it forever. Superman gripped a thick cable—thread—modern steel braided with ancient silk—and held it steady with strength measured in suns. Batman shattered the loom's locking pegs—click, click, click—shifting the tension. Spider-Man webbed strands together, bridging old caravan routes to new rails, story to story, person to person. Strange spoke a spell not from any book but from the Road's own rhythm, and the threads flared into every colour of every place they'd passed. The knots loosened. The world exhaled.

As the Tangle shrank back into the loom's shadow, his voice thinned into a final hiss: "Sharing makes you weak." Wonder Woman tightened the Lasso and replied, "Sharing makes you *free*." The silk's hum softened—not a warning now, but an invitation. Somewhere, a child picked up a scarf in a market and felt it vibrate with a tiny, brave song, as if it whispered: *Keep walking. Keep learning. Keep weaving.*

The Last Dragon Runner

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, Opada, Arianne Mel – 11

The year is 1450. The great Silk Road is dying... But for Jian, the last "Dragon Runner" (a revered term for a silk courier), the road was his bloodline. He was the one to lead the final and most important mission— 'a secret map to a new source of rare pigments, which is the gift to a master painter in Venice. This was neither commerce nor art—material, it was a way of sustaining art itself!

His journey was indeed a mad dash against time and the coming disorder... In the Taklamakan Desert, he avoided a collapsing warlord's patrol effortlessly! In Persia, he was able to escape from a sandstorm that threatened to suffocate him. The money was not the reason for the excitement; it was the very act of survival and the strong will to unite the worlds that were drifting apart...

On the road, he also met those who were on the same path that was going to end— a Syrian pharmacist who was willing to give up the ancient medical scrolls for Chinese paper, and a Byzantine scholar carrying volatile, revolutionary philosophical texts. They not only bumped into each other; they interacted. Jian showed them how to survive; they taught him things that would reshuffle Europe forever.

Close to the coast, an enemy merchant ambushed them, intending to seize control of the last overland routes... Using the skill of years of desert travel, Jian darted from side to side and with the Persian ally's tactical knowledge. He out-manuevered them in a flash, desperate, thrilling and skirmish amid ancient ruins.

He came to Venice worn-out, his silk package torn, but the map that was inside was surprisingly safe! The artist was moved to tears by the gesture. The trade route might have physically disappeared very soon after, but the exchange that Jian facilitated, the pigments, the medicine, the philosophy and the sheer will to connect, fanned a flame that would be heard for ages, thus, the "Silk Road spirit" was more than just business, it was a lasting and exciting human adventure!

Journey Through the Silk Road

Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong, Perido, Denise Margarete – 12

During G.S. class, my teacher, Miss Chan, was teaching us about the Silk Road, which led from Chang'an in China to an ancient city called Antioch, which she said was now located in Turkey. My friends and I were listening carefully and jotting down notes with every word she said, because it would be in our exam finals.

She then stated that the Silk Road remained popular for over 1,500 years, finally disappearing in the mid-1400s. However, in 2013, it was revived and renamed the Belt and Road Initiative, with involvement from 150 countries. I whispered to my best friend Yana, 'That's a lot of people.' She smiled for a bit, then stopped.

Miss Chan then explained that for our finals, we had to either give a 10-minute presentation or act out a scene related to the Silk Road. I looked at my friends in frustration, knowing that going both ways would be super boring. We decided to do the presentation because our overall acting skills weren't good enough. After school, I asked them whether we should go to the library or stay up all night at my house.

My friend Matt suggested that we do both, because the more, the better. We all agreed and set off for the library. Inside, we found numerous books about the Silk Road, including its history, the countries it traversed, and other related topics. We borrowed everything we could, then headed back to my house with heavy bags. When we arrived, Mum surprised us with some pizza and juice, saying that we needed it for our all-nighter.

The five of us ran upstairs to my room and fell into the bean bag chairs, laughing. After we took a short break, we instantly headed to studying and making slides for our presentation. We worked for hours, researching and creating backgrounds for our presentation, and we slowly started to fall asleep.

When I woke up, I felt sand everywhere, and I stood up immediately. I saw Yana, Matt, Karina, and Chris sleeping in front of me, lying on the sand. I shook them awake, and they were all confused. Where were we, and why? Matt shouted, 'Hello? Is anyone here?' Karina then pointed at a moving object. 'Look! It's a person, I then squinted closer, to realise that he was waving at us. 'Hello!' he shouted. He seemed to be wearing old Chinese clothing. Yana said 'No way, are we actually in Ancient China..?'

The person got closer to us, and when they arrived next to us, they asked us, 'Who are you, where are you from, and what are you wearing..?' I looked down at my clothes to realise we were still in our school uniforms. 'Uh...nothing you need to worry about..?' Chris said hesitantly. 'We're Chris, Yana, Matt, Karina, and Haley.' I said, introducing us. 'We're primary school students in P.6...who are you?'

The man answered, 'Oh, who cares about my name?' Just know that we're travelling to the West to find more customers. 'Oh,' we all said in unison. 'Can we come with you..?' Karina asked, hoping that he would let us come along. He hesitated for a bit, then sighed and agreed to let us go with him. 'Thank you, sir!' I said happily. 'Oh, would you like some silk?' he asked hopefully. Yana and Chris both said: 'Uhm...we don't have any money...' The man laughed and said: 'Oh, you guys can have it for free if you help me with this journey!' I shouted out: 'Wait, really?!

He sighed and repeated what he said. 'Whoa, this is real..' I'd whisper to Yana, then Karina, then Haley. Then, we headed on for our journey. After an hour, we seemed to get slower and slower... I felt like my legs would have given up by now, and Yana was trying not to complain. Chris and Matt, being the lazy guys they are, started complaining over and over again. 'I'm tired...' 'I'm hungry...' 'I'm thirsty...' one of them would say every five minutes.

'Can you boys stop complaining?!' Karina shouted at them angrily. 'You guys are even slower than turtles!' Hearing this, Chris said, 'I'm not a turtle!' I scoffed. 'Really? Then prove it.' Chris and Matt ran faster than they thought they could, then stopped in their tracks, shouting: 'Hey guys, there's a city there! We should check it out!'

We all ran towards the city, breathing heavily after we arrived. 'You kids really can run!' the man said after reaching us. We thanked him, then ventured into the city.

There were numerous people and shopkeepers, buying and selling an enormous amount of goods. Some people would yell: 'Get your ginger here!' or 'Buy some amazing jewellery here!' The shops would go as far as I could see. The man said to a tall woman: 'Hey, miss, would you be interested in some silk?' She hesitated for a bit, then agreed. Back then, silk was costly. It still does, according to Miss Chan and my parents.

I'd start to feel dizzy and grab Yana. She asked: 'Haley, are you alright..?' I'd answer but lie to her anyway. 'Yeah, I'm fine, don't worry about me!' She gave me a look, then sighed and went on with the others. I'd sigh, then walk on to see the man gifting the others some silk. I caught up to them, and he smiled. 'Ah, you're here! I was just about to give this one away!' I'd look at the silk. It was a beautiful shade of blue that resembled the colour of the sky.

'You kids should go home, wherever P.6 is.' We'd start laughing, and for some reason, we all collapse into one giant heap of kids. The next thing I know, I'm being squished by four kids, but not in the city. The floor feels soft, and we realise we are home. We'd jump up and head back to our presentation, still confused about the journey we'd just done...

The New Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Cheung, Ching Luen Faula – 11

In the bustling city of Xi'an, the ancient starting point of the Silk Road, Amy had always been fascinated by the tales of the old Silk Road. The faded maps and weathered artifacts in the museum were like portals to a bygone era of trade, cultural exchange and adventure.

One day, Amy received an invitation from an international research team. They were planning a modern-day journey along the new Silk Road, and they wanted Amy to join them. The team was a diverse group, with members from China, Italy, Kazakhstan and the United States. Each brought their own unique perspective and set of skills to the expedition.

The journey began in Xi'an, just as the ancient caravans had. As they travelled westward, they passed through the deserts of Gansu and Xinjiang. The vast expanse of sand dunes and the remnants of ancient oases were a stark reminder of the challenges faced by the original Silk road travelers.

In Kazakhstan, they met local artisans who were reviving traditional handicrafts. Amy and the Italian tourist, Marco, were amazed at the beautiful felt rugs and intricate metalwork. They spent days learning about the techniques passed down through generations. Marco shared stories of Venetian glass-makers in return. The Kazakh artisans were eager to learn about modern design concepts.

As they reached the Middle East, the team was struck by the rich Islamic architecture and the vibrant bazaars. The United States member of the team, Aisha was particularly interested in the spices and textiles. She saw similarities between the trading cultures of the Silk Road and the ancient Swahili trading routes in east Africa.

One evening, around a campfire in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan, the team members shared their hopes for the new Silk Road. Amy envisioned joint research projects on environmental conservation and sustainable development. Marco thought it would boost tourism and cultural understanding, allowing people from different countries to experience each other's way of life. Aisha hoped that it would create economic opportunities for small-scale producers in Africa, connecting global markets.

As the world changed, the new silk Road had the potential to be more than just a trade route. It could be a platform for solving global problems. For instance, in a world facing climate change, the countries along the route could work together on renewable energy products.

Finally, the journey ended in Venice, the old terminus of the Silk Road. Standing in St. Mark's square, Amy looked around at her international friends. They had come from different corners of the world, united by this modern-day Silk Road adventure. The memories of the journey, the friendships forged, and the ideas shared would stay with them forever. And as they looked toward the future, they knew that the new Silk Road would continue to shape the world, bringing people closer together and creating a prosperous global community.

My Dream Trip on the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Chow, Chi Yin Jacob – 11

One day, I found a magic map in my grandfather's book. It was very old and yellow. When I touched it, the map started to glow. A bright light came out and covered me. I closed my eyes. When I opened them, I was in a desert. It was very hot. I saw a big camel next to me. It had two humps. I was scared, but also excited. I decided to ride the camel and I wanted to know where I was.

The camel walked slowly on the sand. We walked for a long time, and then I saw many people with camels. They were merchants. They carried many things on their camels. A nice man called Sam came over to me and gave me some water.

He said, "We are going to China to buy silk." I was happy because I wanted to see China, so I joined them.

At the start of the trip, we saw a lot of monsters. Sam tried to hit them, but it didn't work.

So, I said, "Try to use the camel spit to defeat the monsters!"

"It didn't work!" shouted Sam.

Then, I thought of an idea. I said, "Use the water to splash on the monsters!"

"It's working!" said Sam. One by one, the monsters were disappearing.

In the middle of our trip, we saw some cowboys. They were holding two guns each and were about to shoot us. Luckily, they missed their shot.

I said, "Use the swords to defeat them!" but it didn't work. They were too fast to catch.

Sam said, "God, please help us!" and suddenly a shadow caught the cowboys' guns and gave them to us. The cowboys were scared, so they ran away.

Finally, we reached a big city. It was Chang'an in China. The city was very busy. There were many people in the market, I saw beautiful silk, strong paper and fine tea. People were talking in different languages, but they smiled and used their hands to communicate. I tasted a new fruit called a peach. It was sweet and juicy.

I also saw people sharing more things. A man from the West was playing a new instrument. A Chinese man was writing with a brush. They learned from each other. I thought it was wonderful. The silk road was not just for buying and selling things. It was ideas, music and art too. It helped everybody become friends.

Suddenly, I heard my mother's voice.

"Wake up!" she shouted.

I opened my eyes and I was in my bed. It was a dream, but it felt so real! I ran to tell my mother about my amazing dream. I learned that the world is big and full of nice people. We should share and be friends with everyone.

A Journey of the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Ho, Tsun Yiu Cathena – 10

Nowadays, when you go inside a supermarket, you can easily find different kinds of food from different countries. For example, our favourite mango ice-cream from Thailand, our favourite French fries from the USA, our favourite cup noodles from Japan, etc. In addition to the supermarket, we can even order our food using the Internet. We can easily buy anything we want if we have money.

Once upon a time, there were no aeroplanes, trains or internet. How did the people in ancient China share their goods in faraway lands like Europe? The Silk Road helped them a lot.

One day, I woke up in the morning as usual, but suddenly I found that I was in ancient times. All my friends became ancient people who all were wearing animal clothes.

One of my friends talked to me and said, “Hey! Come on! We need to explore the Silk Road today! Let’s trade something together.” I was very shocked, but felt very excited to travel the Silk Road.

Before we went inside the Silk Road, some old people reminded us that, “When you go in, you may not come out ! Be careful!”

However, we insisted to go inside the Silk Road as we wanted to be the bravest explorers. In the ancient time, we didn’t have a car, a train, a map or a phone. We had to walk and ride a horse or a camel. Also we had to cross a big desert which was a huge and scary place with rolling sand dunes that could bury us.

The sun was hot during the day, and the night was freezing cold. We had to climb over snowy mountains. The wind was so strong there it felt as if it could have blown us away. At that moment, we really understood the meaning of ‘When you go in, you may not come out.’ Luckily, we successfully overcame all these hurdles.

In this dangerous journey, we brought our famous silk, which was soft, strong and beautiful. People in other countries loved it and were willing to pay well for it. But silk was not the only thing we carried. We also traded fine porcelain plates, spicy ginger, and valuable tea. In return, we received many wonderful things we didn’t have in China. We received glassware from Europe, which was a rare and pretty material. We even brought back new foods like grapes, walnuts, sesame seeds, etc.

The Silk Road was amazing because it wasn’t just about trading goods. It was like a bridge that let different cultures share food, ideas and goods. We could also make friends with different people in other countries. The Silk Road was very curious. Only brave people could explore this dangerous journey to make the whole world a more interesting and friendly place.

Three Qiangs on the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Kwok, Ho Yin Arielle – 11

When it was the Tang Dynasty on the Silk Road, the Silk Road was very long. There were a lot of robbers who stole from people because the robbers were poor and could not afford anything. They were lazy and greedy and wanted to steal all of it.

A long time ago, there was a king of the Tang Dynasty. He saw a drawing of some people eating strawberries. The king thought that it was a red, shiny, edible ruby. He called for his three servants, Yi Qiang, Eer Qiang and San Qiang.

“I have a mission for you guys,” he said. “You need to walk along the Silk Road to Europe to find and buy me these red, shiny and precious edible rubies. I want you guys there because there might be a lot of robbers, thieves, tricks and even traps. You need to be careful. If you fail and come back alive I will lock you guys in a cage.”

The three Qiangs were very different. The oldest one, known as Yi Qiang, was very kind. She was very thin, not very tall and had big black eyes. She was smart and always took care of the other two Qiangs when they needed help. The middle one, known as Eer Qiang, was very tall and moved quickly. He was very impulsive, and bit dumb and ungrateful. He was always mean to the youngest Qiang. At last, there was the youngest Qiang known as San Qiang. He was short, had a small nose and short black hair. He was helpful and energetic. He was cute and could think of many ways to figure out problems.

The three Qiangs brought a lot of food and some clothes, vases, paper and silk for trading. When they were all prepared, they were finally ready to start their journey.

The next day, they started the journey from Xi'an to Turkey to find the red, eatable rubies. It was hard to walk all the way to Turkey. They walked across a lot of deserts, over rivers and even up and down steep cliffs.

When they arrived in Mashhad in Iran, they got trapped! This is how it happened. One night they were in a night market where there was a lot of delicious food. Eer Qiang was very foolish and he kept asking people who passed by where he could buy a red ruby. But he forgot to mention that it was edible. So, when one thief overheard him, he thought the three Qiangs were very rich. He told his five girl assistants to prepare a distracting show for the trap.

When the five girls saw the three Qiangs, they came out dress in colourful, beautiful clothes. They were very pretty too. Eer Qiang and some other people were attracted to the show. When everyone was watching the show, the girls suddenly started screaming and jumping. All the audience was terrified by them and started to run away, and in that moment, the thief poisoned the three Qiangs and they fell asleep.

When the three Qiangs woke up, they were already in a dark house. They saw they were tied up by the thief.

“What are we going to do? We can't get out of these tight ropes!” San Qiang said, feeling afraid.

Yi Qiang said, “There must be a way to break these ropes and escape!”

She started to look around to find something useful to break or cut the ropes. Suddenly, she saw something sharp that looked like a knife and started to rub it against her rope. After some time, the rope finally broke open. Then, she used the sharp object to set the other two Qiangs free.

They quietly went out of the room and saw a lot of other thieves walking around.

San Qiang said, “There sure a lot of thieves. We need to think of a plan to distract them and escape!”

“But how?” asked Eer Qiang.

After a moment, Yi Qiang said, “I know now! First we need Eer Qiang to distract the thieves and San Qiang to find the exits. I am going to look for the boss and defeat him so we can safely escape.”

They started to execute their plan. First, when Eer Qiang was running so fast that it made the thieves bump into each other and start arguing. While San Qiang was looking for the exit, he was suddenly spotted by a thief. He suddenly turned his cute face into a cute crying baby face and said, "I'm new here. Can you take me to the exit? I got a little bit lost." The thief agreed and took him to the exit. Finally, Yi Qiang found the boss and beat him. She took back their belongings and escaped.

In the end, they arrived in Turkey and bought the red, edible rubies. They found out the rubies were called strawberries. They also bought a lot of other things like grapes and pepper in Turkey.

When they arrived back in China, the king was so happy he rewarded them with gold. The three Qiangs were very happy and lived happy and long lives.

A Man Went to China's Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Lam, Sum Yee Sammy – 11

Once upon a time, a man bought some silk and a history book. The history book said China had a 'Silk Road', so he took the high-speed rail to Xi'an. Then, he brought his silk and took an airplane to Anatolia.

After arriving in Anatolia, the man met an Anatolian. The man gave some silk to the Anatolian, so they became friends. The Anatolian invited the man to go to his house to have a meal. The Anatolian liked the silk, so he gave some money to the man. After having a meal together, the man left and went to the Levant.

After arriving in the Levant, the man saw a food shop. He was very hungry, so he went into the food shop. The man saw his friend in the food shop, but he didn't know it was his friend until his friend said. "Hello! We haven't seen each other for a long time. Do you remember me?"

The man said, "Yes, I do!" He gave his friend some silk.

His friend asked, "Is silk expensive?"

The man said, "Yes. Why do you ask that?"

His friend answered, "I can't take the silk. It's too expensive." But the man insisted and his friend finally took the silk and went to his house. The friend also invited the man to visit his house, but the man had to reject his friend because he had to go to Xi'an by air.

After arriving in Xi'an, the man decided he wanted to go some places to play now, so that's what he did. The next day, when the man wanted to go home by high-speed rail, he remembered he didn't buy a ticket, so he wanted to stay in Xi'an one more day. The man ate some delicious food. On the third day, the man went home by high-speed rail. He also bought some souvenirs from Xi'an.

When the man arrived home, he couldn't wait to share his feelings. He also shared his souvenirs with his family. He wanted to go to China's silk road again.

After that, the man attracted a lot of foreigners, so he decided to go abroad to do business. The man told his family he wanted to go abroad to do business and his family agreed with him happily. The next day after packing, he couldn't wait to go abroad. He wanted to go to Afghanistan. After eating lunch, he went to Afghanistan by air. Business in Afghanistan was very good, so he wanted to do two more years, but his family disagreed with him. The man was really upset. Finally, the man's family let him do one more year. He was so happy when he heard that.

The man's friend heard that he went to Afghanistan, so his friend went to Afghanistan immediately. His friend brought a lot of things to support the man. The man was very grateful to his friend and gave him some silk. His friend was very surprised about that.

A year went by very quickly and the man need to go back to his home. Business was good throughout that year and the silk was very popular because the Afghans liked the silk a lot. He was reluctant to go home.

After returning home, the man couldn't wait to share his knowledge and feelings. He also shared his money with his family. They were very happy about it, so he decided to embark on another adventure along the Silk Road.

The day before he went on his adventure, he bought a tent, some drinks, a lot of water, some coats and a lot of food. He also bought some fans. He was very excited.

The day the man went to the Silk Road to begin his adventure, he brought his supplies. When he went to Xi'an, he slept in his small tent. He ate some food and then went to sleep.

The next day, he bought a ticket to go to the desert. When he arrived at the desert, he suddenly wanted to go home, so he bought a ticket and went back to his house. When he got home, he shared the stories of his adventure with his family. He was very happy.

Macy's Journey on the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Lok, Chi Wing Jasmine – 10

Long ago, there was a girl named Macy who lived in a quiet village. She was quiet and brave and she loved going to the mountains with her father, the village herbalist, to collect herbs.

One day, Macy's father suddenly fell seriously ill. He was pale and bedridden all day. None of the village medicines could cure him. Her mother cried, "Only the legendary starlight grass can save your father! That grass is only found at the far side of the Silk Road."

Macy immediately decided to find the starlight grass herself. She packed her small backpack with some dry food and water and set out on her journey along the Silk Road.

The Silk Road was long, and Mary travelled through deserts, valleys and bustling markets. She met many people, some of whom gave her directions and others who offered her food. She was not afraid of the hard work, but only wanted to find the starlight grass as quickly as possible to help her father.

Finally, in an ancient cave, Macy discovered the starlight grass. It was a small, shimmering, silver flower as beautiful as the stars in the night sky. She carefully placed it in her cloth bag and happily prepared to return home.

However, while she was resting at the inn, a stranger snuck into her room and stole the starlight grass. When Macy woke up, she found her bag empty and was nearly in tears.

She ran into the streets to ask people if they could help, and someone reported seeing a man walking south with the glittering flower. Macy immediately gave chase. After running for several days, she finally found the man in a market.

"Please give me back the starlight grass!" Macy cried out. "I need it to save my father!"

The man lowered his head and said, "I'm sorry, my sister is sick too, and I didn't know you came to save your father."

Macy felt sad, but she also understood the man's difficulties. After some thought, she said, "We can share the starlight grass: half for your sister and half for my father."

The man nodded, feeling touched, and together they divided the starlight grass in half. Macy took her half and returned home.

Back in the village, Macy brewed the starlight grass into a medicinal tea and gave it to her father. After a few days, her father's complexion gradually improved, and he was finally able to sit up and smile.

"You're so brave, Macy! Thank you for saving me," her father said.

Macy smiled and said, "I promised to save you and I did!"

From that day, Macy's story spread throughout the village. Everyone said she was the bravest and kindest girl. She continued to study herbal medicine, hoping that one day she could help more people like her father had.

A Trip to the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Or, Yu Ching Catrina – 10

One day, my dad wanted to discuss with me about the trip for the coming summer. Then I asked, "Dad, can we go somewhere special this time?"

Dad thought for a while, then he said, "How about we go to China's Silk Road this time?"

“Dad, where is it?” I asked excitedly. “And how special is it? Can you tell me more? If It’s interesting, I may consider going!”

So, Dad started to search for some information about China’s Silk Road for me and I tried to know more about it. I found out it was from twenty—two centuries ago when some intrepid Chinese people trekked westwards to see if they could sell silk to new customers. They spent months travelling and they finally succeeded. It was initially a trade route to connect China with central Asia and the west. People used the Silk Road to buy and sell things like silk, spices, tea and precious stones.

But the Silk Road was not just for trading goods. It also helped people share ideas, culture and religions. Different people met and learned from each other. This made the world more connected and interesting.

The Silk Road was important for a very long time, but it became less used when sea trade routes were found. Ships could carry more goods faster by sea. But the Silk Road left a big mark on history.

Today, people still talk about the Silk Road because it was very important for history. It showed how sharing and cooperation can bring many countries together. Today China has a new plan called the ‘Belt and Road’ to build roads, railways and ports like the old Silk Road. This helps countries work together to grow their economies.

In conclusion, the Silk Road was more than a road for trading goods. It was a road for making friends, sharing knowledge and connecting cultures form East to West.

After studying this information about the Silk Road, I told Dad I was really interested to see more about the Silk Road in person. Hopefully we could arrange a trip there in the coming summer, and Dad confirmed he would arrange it.

Dad also said that the Silk road teaches us that meeting new people and sharing ideas can make the world better. It helped people learn that even if we come from different places, we can still be connected like friends.

I believe that trip will be very special and meaningful to me.

The Wonder of the Silk Road

Farm Road Government Primary School, Tang, Chit Huen Luzia – 11

The Silk Road was a vast network of trade routes connecting East and West, active from the 2nd century BCE to the mid-15th century CE. It facilitated the exchange of goods like silk, spices and gold, as well as the spread of ideas and religions such as Buddhism and Christianity, technologies and even diseases. The routes included land and sea passages and were crucial for cultural and economic interaction between civilizations across Eurasia and North Africa.

The Silk Road was a network of caravan and sea routes that connected China to the Mediterranean and Europe, spanning over 6400 km at its peak. Not a single road, but a complex system of paths with branches that shifted over time based on geopolitical contexts. It earned its name from Chinese silk, a highly valued commodity transported along the routes.

From East to West, it exchanged silk, tea, spices, porcelain, paper and gunpowder. From West to East, it exchanged horses, glassware, gold, silver, wool and agricultural products. The routers were vital for spreading religions like Buddhism and Christianity, as well as technologies, artistic styles and innovations. There were some negative exchanges. For example, diseases such as the bubonic plague were also transmitted along the routes.

It played a central role in linking diverse cultures, which led to the growth of multicultural cities along the way. This helped to contribute significantly to the development of trade, cultural understanding and technological advancements for over 1500 years. The network was eventually surpassed by sea routes after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and trade was boycotted with China in 1453.

It was a vast network of trade routes connecting East Asia with the Mediterranean, popular from approximately 130 BCE to 1453 CE. It was a major conduit for cultural diffusion. Different cultures interacted, sharing art, music, dance and various religious beliefs.

The term 'Silk Road' refers to a complex system of interconnected paths – not a single physical road. These routes crossed challenging terrain like the Gobi Desert and the Pamir Mountains. The term was coined in 1877 by German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen to describe the trade network, named for silk which was a highly valued commodity that flowed from China to the west along these routes.

While silk was a key product, it wasn't the only item traded. Spices, precious metals, animals and ideas also travelled along these ancient paths. However, silk was a luxurious and highly sought-after product, especially in ancient Rome, making a major driver of trade between East and West. The name was not used during the time of the trade itself. It reflected the most famous commodity, but many other goods were traded, including ivory, tea, spices, textiles and horses, as well as ideas and technology.

It was not a single road, but a vast network of land and sea routes that connected Eurasia and North Africa for centuries. The routes led to the rise of prosperous trading cities and ports and influenced the development of commercial practices like formal partnerships and trade guilds.

While the term is often associated with a specific period, the trade route operated for over 1500 years, beginning around 130 BCE and declining around 1453.

Chris and the Robbers

Farm Road Government Primary School, Tsang, Hoi Yin Yenni – 10

Once upon a time, there was a man called Chris that wanted food and water, so he made a deal to trade his mattress in exchange for enough bread and water to last two years. But there was a problem. The person who agreed to trade with Chris was in Aisa in China and Chris was in Europe, so they had to talk through letters and it took a long time to know if they could trust each other.

After they finally agreed to meet in Aisa's town square, Chris began his journey to Aisa. Chris didn't hire any middlemen because he was scared he would get scammed by one of them, so he had to bring his mattress by himself. He walked day and night and sometimes had to go into nearby villages to rest because he was exhausted.

"This is going to take forever!" he said to himself, just before he passed out in a village. Luckily, someone saw him pass out and she quickly rushed him to a nearby hospital. Luckily, it was just a heatstroke, but if left untreated it could have been fatal.

The woman who found him asked, "Are you OK, sir? You were knocked out for hours."

"Yes, I am fine," he answered. "Thanks for saving me! I'm really grateful someone saved me and didn't leave me to die. But I have something to ask. Can you pay my hospital bill? I'm really poor and promise to help you in the future."

"Fine, but remember to repay me," she replied.

Chris got back up and left, but as he left he saw two men in black following him. Was it in his imagination? No, it wasn't! They were robbers trying to rob him!

"What are you doing?" Chris shouted.

The robbers answered, "We are trying to rob you! Isn't it already clear by now? You are so stupid!"

Then, the robbers grabbed their weapons. Both of them were holding knives, but little did they know that Chris learned boxing by himself, so one by one they dropped like flies.

Finally, Chris arrived at his destination and he met the one who promised they'd give him food and water. Chris did the trade and started going back to his home village.

On the way back, he saw the same robbers, but they still looked damaged. But looking closer, Chris saw there were two more robbers hiding behind the first two. When Chris saw them, he tried to run but the robbers saw him and charged at him, but luckily a policeman saw them and used a spear to fight the robbers. They were once again on the floor.

Chris said, "Thank you, kind police officer!"

The policeman said, "No problem!"

After that, Chris could safely return to his village to drop off the food and water the dealer gave him. But after he dropped off the food and water, he went to another village. Was he going insane! Of course not! He was going to repay the one who saved him. He gave her fifteen dollars.

She said cheerfully, "Thank you for repaying me!"

"No problem, my savior!" replied Chris. Then, he went back to his village and lived happily ever after.

The Adventure of the Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Cheang, Wan Ki Angelina – 10

Haoran was a fifteen-year-old boy, the son of a seller. He was a fast and strong teenager, excelling in Chinese Kung Fu. One day, his dad asked him to make some trades along the Silk Road. Being a curious teenager, Haoran agreed right away. He packed his belongings, loaded everything onto a carriage his father prepared, and set off on his journey along the Silk Road, eager for a successful trade.

On his way to the Silk Road, heavy rain fell, prompting Haoran to seek shelter. He spotted a cave and ran inside. However, it seemed like heaven was playing a joke on him; the cave was the robbers' nest, and everyone knew that escaping such a place was nearly impossible. Fatigued and scared, Haoran felt hopeless and feared he might never return. Suddenly, he heard noise and saw robbers brandishing knives as they exited the cave. In a panic, he quickly slipped into a hole and peered out.

"Who are you?" a voice came from behind him. He froze and turned around to find a group of handsome men with swords.

"I am Haoran, and I'm escaping the robbers," he replied.

One man stood up and said, "I am Tianyu. We are trying to get our belongings back from the robbers. Will you help us?"

"Sure! My things are on the carriage, and I think they will take it to their cave," Haoran responded.

"We could split into two teams," suggested a man in a red cloak. "One team could distract the robbers while the other retrieves our things."

"But if the robbers split into teams too, we will encounter them, and they have more weapons and people," Haoran countered.

"Wait! Everything in their cave is metal and coins. What if we set their cave on fire? The robbers would either be caught or killed, making it easier for us to retrieve our belongings," Tianyu proposed.

Everyone agreed, and it worked! Haoran thanked the men and left with a gold cart stolen from the cave, along with some companions as they headed for the Silk Road.

They finally arrived at the Silk Road, but it was already night. So, they decided to camp in a hole that Haoran had dug. The next day, they were greeted by the bustling scene of the Silk Road, with many people exchanging goods. Haoran and his men quickly looked for a good trade. Suddenly, someone tapped Haoran on the shoulder. He turned around to see a short man wearing blue clothes and dirty old shoes standing behind him.

"I am Xiaoming. I saw that you have enough goods to buy this amazing money maker," the short man said.

"Show me how it works," Haoran replied. Xiaoming rolled the money maker, and a three-dollar bill came out! Haoran was amazed. He quickly traded the money maker for two gold bars. However, when he rolled it himself, nothing came out. Realizing it was just a magic money maker, he became angry and chased Xiaoming down the street, eventually cornering him against a wall.

Suddenly, Xiaoming drew a sword. Haoran was shocked but quickly kicked Xiaoming's hand, causing the sword to drop. He picked it up and struck Xiaoming's clothing. Xiaoming raised his hands in surrender, returned Haoran's money, and offered to be his bodyguard. Haoran took him back to the Silk Road, where they calculated their deals and traded for a strong red horse, some sturdy defensive shields (as the village where Haoran lived did not know how to make shields), and found six more bodyguards to protect him on the way home. They also traded the ordinary gold cart for a war chariot that could move automatically! Everyone was pleased with the trade.

As they headed back to the village, a tall man in a black shirt and white gloves, who looked very well-educated, said, "Give me ten gold coins, rich man, or I will rob you myself."

Haoran replied, "Show me your skills."

The man and Haoran engaged in a tough fight. They both were skilled and grew tired. Suddenly, Haoran leaped high, performed a backflip, and kicked the man in the back, securing his victory.

Sitting up in pain, the man said, "My name is Jiahao. Will you be my teacher and let me follow you?"

Haoran agreed, and in peace, they returned to Haoran's village.

From that day on, Haoran became a Kung Fu teacher. He worked hard and eventually became a master, known for his incredible skills. Everyone wanted him to teach! He became famous and rich. The teenager had transformed into a powerful master, and everyone in the village cheered for him. He lived happily ever after.

An Unexpected Encounter

Kowloon Rhenish School, Chong, Ho Shun Johnson – 12

In a small village in Tibet, there lived a young boy named Minghao. His parents work all throughout the year on the Silk Road to provide for their family, so his grandparents take care of him and his younger brother. When his parents come back, they bring him books about the Silk Road. When he reads those books, he finds it very interesting and wonders about how this road could bring different people's cultures together.

One day, while Minghao was working on the farm, he heard a lot of noise. It turns out, a tourist had arrived in their small town. Their village rarely has new visitors so he decided to go and take a look. Billy is a tourist from India and wanted to visit China, so he decided to travel on the Silk Road. While Billy was travelling, he accidentally got off at the wrong station and became lost.

When Minghao got to the village centre, he saw a guy asking for directions. Billy was Indian and he didn't know how to communicate with the locals. So Billy got out his map and pointed to the place he wanted to go to Minghao. Luckily, Minghao understood what Billy was trying to say so he tried to explain it in the little English that he knew. He told Billy there is a train station 20 minutes away from the village, but this train only comes every 4 hours. He led Billy the way out of his village and then brought him to the train station. As they approached the station, they saw the train pulling away from the stop. Minghao and Billy were both speechless. Billy was starting to get hungry, so they decided to head back to the village to pass the time.

As they headed back to the village, Billy and Minghao tried to communicate with each other, but they could barely understand each other. Billy then pulled out a small Chinese dictionary he carried with him on this trip as he was trying to learn the language. Minghao heard Billy's stomach grumbling and realized he was hungry, so he told Billy to follow him back home. Minghao asked Billy if he had ever tried Tibetan food and Billy shook his head, so Minghao decided to cook him some local food in his house. Along the way back home, Minghao stopped by a few shops and bought some ingredients, which included some fresh vegetables as well as some sheep milk and meat. When they got back home, Minghao told Billy to sit down and offered him some sheep milk to drink. Then, Minghao got to work and started cooking some Tibetan specialties. While the food was cooking, Billy could smell the aroma all the way from the living room. Minghao then came out holding a few dishes, everyone sprinted to the dining table and ate the food like they haven't eaten for years. The food tasted like heaven, Billy had never eaten anything as scrumptious as this. After he finished eating, he thanked Minghao for cooking him the most delicious food in the world.

After eating, both of them felt very full so Minghao decided to give Billy a tour of the entire village. He took Billy to see the schools, the townhall, the local shops as well as the farm where he worked. As Billy was walking, he noticed many people dressed in the same way. So he asked Minghao about the clothing they were wearing, and Minghao explained that it was their traditional clothing they wear to represent their own culture. Billy was so fascinated by it he asked Minghao if he could also try them on. So Minghao took Billy to a clothing shop where they found one where it suited him a lot. Minghao then took Billy to a nearby scenic location so Billy could take a lot of pictures. Billy was amazed by the view as he had never seen such a spectacular scenery in his entire life. Minghao and Billy took pictures of each other and they were having the best time of their life. They also teach each other a few words in their own language like thank you and good morning.

Time was passing by so quickly that Billy and Minghao could not believe there were only 30 minutes left before the train arrived. They decided to head back to the train station. While they passed by the village entrance, Minghao told Billy to wait for him and he sprinted back home to grab a Dzi bracelet his parents had gifted to him for his birthday a while ago. As he headed back to meet Billy, he also passed by a store selling handwoven bracelets, he bought two and then went back to the village entrance. He then gave Billy the Dzi bracelet as well as one of the handwoven bracelets he just bought and told him they were powerful talismans for good fortune, health, and protection. Billy knew how valuable the Dzi bracelet was, so he rejected it and told Minghao he would only keep the handwoven one. Minghao then showed him the handwoven bracelet he was wearing on his wrist and told Billy he bought two to symbolize their friendship. Billy promised Minghao that he will never forget him. Since Minghao gave Billy a gift, Billy also wanted to return the gesture. Billy looked through his backpack and found a small wood carving he had made before and gifted it to Minghao. Then they took one final picture together at the entrance of the village and walked to the train station. When they arrived at the station, Minghao and Billy promised each other to write postcards to keep in contact with each other. The train pulled into the station, and they hugged each other and Billy boarded the train. Whilst the train departed, they both burst into tears. This was a very unforgettable memory for both Minghao and Billy.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Hui, Joy Sum – 11

In the ancient of China, there was a man named Yu Lu. He was very poor.

One day, his friend Bo Wen asked Yu Lu, "Let's make bet Yu Lu! Let's race to Europe. If you lose, I will give all my money to you! If you lose, you need to give me all your money!". Yu Lu replied. "That's not fair! You have more money than me! You can take the ship! I can only walk. But..... I will try my best. "

Bo Wen and Yu Lu packed all their belongings and started their journey. Bo Wen hopped on a ship. Meanwhile, Yu Lu started his trip on the silk road.

Yu Lu walked for six days and nights, He was super tired and wanted to give up. Suddenly, a angel pooped out form nowhere and said, " Yu Lu, I know you wanted to give up. Please don't. I will give you a pair of wings. "After that, the angle disappeared. Yu Lu was amazed.

Yu Lu stated to fly and saw Europe! He flew and flew. He is finally at Europe! He as faster than Bo Wen.

When Bo Wen arrived. He saw Yu Lu and he kept his promise. He give him all his money and Yu Lu became rich.

My Silk Road Exploration

Kowloon Rhenish School, Law, Chi Yin – 12

If I told you that an ancient "highway" changed the world, would you believe it? The Silk Road is a road that connects China with other countries, and it is also an ancient trade and cultural exchange network that began in the Han Dynasty. This road has existed for over two thousand years. It is known as the earliest cultural Internet in the world. Let's embark on a journey and explore its miracles. What is the Silk Road?

The name of the Silk Road was named by the German geographer Lichhofen. Moreover, silk is the most representative product of China. Silk was, and still is, extremely precious. The sericulture industry and silk production skills originated in ancient China. After silkworms spin their cocoons, the cocoons are boiled and pulled out the silk, twisted it into a uniform silk thread and dyed it with beautiful colors; then put the silk thread on the loom to weave it, and you can weave a smooth and soft silk fabric. It is one of the important inventions that affect the development of material civilization in the world.

My mother also told me a story: in the Han Dynasty, there was a little boy who followed the caravan to sell silk in the Western Regions. Before leaving, he looked at the silk and asked curiously, "Isn't it just a few silks? Why is it more expensive than gold?" The days on the road are very hard. They have to cross the Gobi Desert, climb the cold snowy mountains, and guard against fierce robbers. After walking for half a year, he arrived at the market in the Western Regions. People in the market have never seen such a beautiful cloth—it is soft to the touch, shining in the sunlight, and still shining with a faint light. A nobleman in the Western Regions exchanged five good horses for the silk. He finally understood that silk was precious, not only because it took the weaver a long time to weave it, but also because it took thousands of miles and hardships to come from the east to the west. The golden Silk Road is a great road that shines with the light of civilization.

The Silk Road is known as the world's earliest cultural internet. Its land routes passed through Chang'an, the Hexi Corridor, the Western Regions, Central Asia, Persia, and the Mediterranean. The sea routes stretched from Guangzhou and Quanzhou to Southeast Asia, India, the Arab world, and East Africa. This ancient road crossed deserts and climbed over mountains. Camels carried amazing goods on their backs—beautiful silk, fragrant tea, and fine porcelain were sent out from China, while fresh fruits, spices, and strong horses were brought from distant lands. But the Silk Road did not only transport goods. It also spread ideas, music, and art, and it carried friendship along the way. Throughout history, merchants and travellers overcame great difficulties, showing the perseverance of human exploration.

In the long river of history, Zhang Qian and Marco Polo stand out as two shining stars of exploration. One journeyed westward from ancient China, while the other traveled eastward from distant Europe. They were brave pioneers who built the first bridges between the East and the West. With great courage, they opened new roads across unknown lands. Their legendary adventures did more than connect countries; they planted the seeds of friendship and exchange, allowing two great civilizations to meet, share, and learn from each other forever.

If you were asked to go to a completely unknown place without a map with an important task, would you dare to set off? In 138 BC, an envoy of the Han Dynasty named Zhang Qian made such a choice. Although his trip was difficult and dangerous, for thirteen years he was captured, escaped and faced setbacks, but never abandoned his mission. He was imprisoned in the Xiongnu territory for ten years. During this time, he even married a Xiongnu woman and later managed to escape, eventually reaching the land of the Yuezhi. Zhang spent a year there recording their culture, lifestyle, and economy. The information about the Western Regions brought back by Zhang Qian became an important starting point for the Han Dynasty to open up the "Silk Road" and strengthen exchanges with the West, which is of key historical significance.

Can you imagine leaving home as a teenager and traveling to a distant country? He is the legendary traveler from Italy, Marco Polo. 700 years ago, he was born into a merchant family. He embarked on an incredible journey to China with his father and uncle. It took them four years to come to China, and he stayed in China for 17 years to witness the prosperity of the Yuan Dynasty. He traveled all over China to record cities, systems and products. The book "The Travels of Marco Polo" is like a magical window, which once made Europeans yearn for the East, and even indirectly promoted the Great Geographical Discovery, making him an iconic figure of cultural exchange between East and West.

Their contribution was extraordinary. They did more than just travel; they built a bridge of understanding that lasted for centuries. Zhang Qian's journeys helped spread silk, tea, and culture. Marco Polo's book inspired countless others to explore. Thanks to them, people learned about different ways of life. They proved that curiosity and courage can change the world, bringing nations closer together. We remember them not just as explorers, but as forever connectors of our shared world.

The Silk Road was a bridge between different peoples. People learned from each other. They shared stories and became friends. The Silk Road made our world richer. Today, the spirit of the Silk Road is still alive. It teaches us about sharing and connection. It reminds us that we can build a better world together, hand in hand. Through my exploration of the Silk Road, I know that great communication begins with a brave start.

The Silk Road was like an ancient internet, connecting China with the world. Today, Hong Kong also acts as a bridge between East and West. Did you know that the sesame cakes we eat, the pipa music we listen to, and even the numbers we use in maths might all have links to the Silk Road? Present-day Hong Kong is just like the ancient Silk Road – it brings East and West together. Look around Victoria Harbour: cargo ships from all over the world come and go every day. Hong Kong's airport has flights to countless countries, and people from different places live and exchange ideas here. Isn't this like a modern-day "Silk Road"?

As a famous saying goes, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." This ancient road still connects us, and communication enriches the world.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Lee, Kit Tung – 10

Gradually, the sun rose above the desert, and the lengthy sand was a sea of gold. Li Wei was sixteen and was slipping the hoof of his satchel, and giving a parting look around him at Chang'an, the great city he was now going to leave. The high walls, the swarming in the markets, and the constant buzz of voices were forgotten, and he made the Silk Road entry. Categories of camels kept rolling in, carrying with them silk, spice, metalwork, and dreams to foreign lands. Li Wei was neither an army man nor a businessman, but a small messenger, who had the duty of carrying letters, documents, and ideas on the ancient road. His legs were shaking with excitement, yet his heart was burning with curiosity about the foreign world. The career of Li Wei started with silk. His mother was in a workshop where fine threads were stained to a vivid red, dark blue, and warm gold. When he was going, in the morning, she padded a little piece of silk into his palm. Her hands touched it lightly, smoothly, and warmly. "There is more than goods on this road", she said meekly. "It brings along tales, aspirations, and friendships. Be a watcher, a much-deep-listener, a learner of all you come across." Li Wei made a deeply respectful bow and vowed to take her words to heart as he took the silk in his satchel.

Weeks became days as Li Wei trudged over desiccated deserts, mountain valleys, and ascending mountain trails. He trained to walk with camels and keep pace with their slow pace, and to look after each drop of water in long trips. He slept at night under star-lit skies, and he was seated by a fire with the representatives of many nations. He heard other languages, tried new food, and laughed without the necessity of having an interpreter. Each day, he was getting to know more about the world, and it was much larger, richer, and more surprising than he had supposed it could be. But one night Li Wei encountered one of his age, a boy, Farid, who had come to trade with his uncle in Persia at a trading-post where Li Wei was trading. Farid had black eyes and was too curious, and as excited as Li Wei was. They did not speak the same language, but they were able to communicate by smiling, gestures, and being patient. Presently, they were all breaking the loaf, stale fruit, and hot tea by the fire. This was during that exchange that Li Wei understood that friendship might even grow in the places where there were not many words spoken.

Farid was proud to present Li Wei with glass bottles that were produced by his people. They reflected the moonlight and were like ice-water. Li Wei had never taken so clear and well-shaped glass. He, in turn, gave Farid the silk belonging to his mother. Farid touched it with amazement at its softness and strength. That evening when the wind was whispering in the tents, boys understood that the Silk Road was not a trade way only, but it was more a linking place among other civilizations, which were separated by distances. They were on their way to the west, and they were in danger. One afternoon, a dark cloud suddenly accumulated, and a terrible sandstorm spread over the land. The sky disappeared, and the wind was like a furious spirit screaming. The sand pierced the face of Li Wei, the camels bellowed, and merchants screamed in fright. He felt his heart jumping wildly, but Farid put his hand on his and drew him behind a great rock. They concealed their faces and waited till the storm had blown over.

At the moment of silence, the land seemed to be torn and strange. A number of merchants were absent, and an aged merchant was lying wounded. Li Wei and Farid went to his rescue. Li Wei recalled some teaching at home about the medicinal nature of herbs, and cautiously compounded what was available to her, and Farid cut a bandage out of one of his cloaks. They both washed the injuries of the man and gave him water to drink. The thankful broker praised them in the presence of the eyes of tears and reminded them that courtesy went quicker than any caravan. Further into the trip, Li Wei came across cities of music, art, and new ideas. Weird instruments were used to play melodies that echoed in large streets. Artists could portray the images of other countries, and narrators told the myths, which were passed down through generations. The movement of stars and inventions, and maps were the subject of scholarly debate. Li Wei knew he was writing profoundly in his journal and that the ideas and knowledge were treasures as valuable as the silk or spices.

One evening, Li Wei got news that he had almost fulfilled his mission. He would soon go back to Chang'an, and Farid would be on his way west in the company of his family. Li Wei was sadly thinking of parting quietly. The last night they spent together, they sat by the fire and watched sparks that were flying into the dark sky. Farid took a little glass bottle, which was glowing in the firelight, and gave it to Li Wei. "So you can remember me, eh?" He said to himself. Li Wei smiled and handed Farid the silk square that his mother had brought to him. "Thou shalt remember China," he said. They vowed they would live on as long as they never saw each other again, but the road that bound them would ensure that their friendship would continue. Li Wei had a new perception of the Silk Road on his way back. Each step reminded him of courage, friendship, and understanding. On his eventual reappearance in Chang'an, he brought forward his messages, but more importantly, he told his stories. Years later, Li Wei was a teacher; he picked up the glass bottle and taught his pupils that the most valuable things about the Silk Road were respect, mutual knowledge, hope for the future, with being connected.

My Two Lives Tales

Kowloon Rhenish School, Lee, Yi Ting Leann – 11

This is Leann Lee. I am a girl who has memories of two lives. I am a merchant from Hong Kong who sell doggy toys and let me tell you about my selling adventures in both lives.

Last life, in 119 BC, more than one thousand years ago, I sold doggy toys by walking to different countries along Silk Road. I seldom walk bare feet, which is exhausting that I always stretch and yawn, but I always rode animals like camels, donkeys, horses or even some more animals to trade toys. It was not just riding an animal from point to point but also talking with other people to ask them if they wanted to buy things. It was super tiring and my eyelids always got heavy as stones. I remember the only one who bought my doggy toy was an Indian boy, which he paid me gold and silver in exchange for the toy.

This life, in 2025, I sell doggy toys by just laying at home comfortably or maybe the most tiring part is walking for five minutes to the post office only! I just need to do three to four steps, then I already can sell doggy toys to people all over the world. Firstly, I need to take a photo of the toys and then upload them on the internet to show people. If someone wants that toy then they will message me which is our nowadays communication way. Secondly, I will go to the post office to check how much do I need to pay for the delivery. Lastly, I will send the person who wants to buy that toy the tracking number for reference. When they get the toys, they will settle the payment in Alipay or other payment apps. Once I get the money, I will notice it accordingly. After all, the trade will be completed.

In these two lives, I think that technology is really accelerating international trade in a more convenient and efficient way. Technology is saving more time for people who want to buy anything all over the world faster to get the thing they want. However, I think both lives have different advantages.

In my last life, trade was simpler and we could get paid for the most precious nowadays thing, e.g. gold and silver. We could also go to different countries for travelling and sightseeing while I was earning money. Besides, communication with people face to face can feel hospitality and warmth. It was a very valuable experience I enjoyed it so much.

In this life, it is more convenient, we can save more time and money because the delivery cost is lower than before. Apart from above, we can do the trading for fresh meat and food, but in the last life we could do that. However, people nowadays are more complicated, and they use technology to create a lot of cyber fraud, people may lose a lot of money because of online trading. Therefore, we should be more careful and find a reliable online shop for trading.

I love both trading ways with different opportunities and adventures.

Adventure of Jason's Medical Cure in Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Chan, Ka Hei – 11

Jason was a merchant in the Song dynasty. He was discovered to have a lung disease. His friends Peter and Ron decided to help Jason to find the special medicine in China's Silk Road.

Peter and Ron packed their belongings for the journey. They started their journey in XiAn. They firstly arrived in Xinjiang. They decided to try different foods such as Kebab, Naan and polo. It is an unforgettable experience for them. On their way to search for medicine, they also visited Kalajun Grassland and Sayram Lake where very attractive.

Continuing with their journey, they felt exhausted and didn't have enough energy left. Therefore, local people offer houses to them for transport. They went on to the next distinction, along their way, they passed by Da Yuan and Kucha, these places were gorgeous and phenomenal. When they arrived in Urumqi, the sun was setting. They enjoyed the sunset while searching for a place to sleep. A local family invited them to stay for a night. They served us with food and clothes.

During the trip to Kucha, they stumbled upon Jasmine, a very adventurous girl who wanted to join their journey. Jasmine is a local villager in Kucha, she had been hoping for the opportunity to travel around the world since she was young. She told us that Kucha is one of the major Buddhist kingdoms in China. On the way, they visited Kizil Thousand Buddha Caves where artifacts were done on steep caves. They were shocked by the outrageous site.

They passed through Aksu and Kashgar, and soon arrived in Samarkand with joy. They arrived at Registan Square. That place was crowded and very noisy. Peter noticed that their map was gone and got lost from their way. Suddenly, a group of robbers dressed in black swords towards them. They were frightened. The robbers demanded money. However, they were broke after a long journey. So the robbers took Peter away and placed him in jail. Jasmine and Ron were shocked and didn't know what to do. They decided to keep going on their journey because Jason's condition was worsening. Without the map, Jasmine and Ron could not find their way and decided to spend a night in a random forest. Fortunately, they found an unwanted map in the forest, marked the location of the special medicine. Jasmine and Ron were emotionally happy and cried with joy. At the same moment, Peter had a genius plan: he found a sewer in the jail and escaped from it. He was starving and tired. Luckily, a villager named Scott brought Peter to his home for rest.

Surprisingly, Scott knew about the secret medicine and told Peter that it was located in Patna. While Scott was bringing Peter to Patna, he met his friends and hugged each other tightly.

On their last journey, they had to pass through a river with many crocodiles. A villager told them that the only way to pass through the river was riding a boat together under determination and team spirit. They held hand together and pass through the river. They kept their way to Patna and finally met a merchant who sells the medicine. They finally completed the mission after long long journey. They cried and smiled brightly, proving the hard work was worthy.

Silk Showdown

Kowloon Rhenish School, Hui, Lok Ching – 11

At night, in the middle of a desert in China, it was windy and cold. There stood a small hut, inside lived Yu and Chi. They sold silk – a delicate fabric – together for a living. Outside the hut, the wind was really beating down, but it didn't even make a crack in the wall. The hut stood there steadily, just as Yu and Chi's rivals didn't stand a chance against them.

Yu and Chi's rivals also sold silk, and they would compete to see who earned more money at the end of the year. Yu and Chi would always take the win, but this year, their rivals had taken the early lead! How was that possible? They had no clue, so they decided to investigate tomorrow. That night, they tossed and turned in their bed.

The next day, Yu and Chi packed their gear and first went to meet Bo, a rival merchant who had secretly reached out to share information with them. They had to travel to the next oasis to get to their current base. But the trip wasn't easy. The sand was very hot, and their shoes didn't offer much protection. The wind was blowing sand in their eyes, but thankfully they had brought goggles. They couldn't stand the weather, and their feet were burning, so they rode camels they borrowed from a strange masked man.

Yu and Chi were having second thoughts about the camel man. Even the camel was disrespectful to them; it stank as if it hadn't taken a shower for 100 days! It didn't take long for Chi to figure out that there was not even a single drop of water in the desert. The camel also spat at Yu, but he dodged it by one millisecond.

The journey was rough, but they made it to Bo's tent. It was full of treasures from the Silk Road: Turkish mosaic lamps, coloured glass from Rome and spicy scents from India. Bo explained, "I didn't like the boss and tried to plot to overthrow him. I am a traitor now, and I am no longer in this game."

Chi picked up a ripped piece of silk, carefully examined it, and saw some weird powder. He collected it for evidence, as he knew their rivals were up to no good. Bo told them their rivals had heavy security, and they needed to be careful. The rivals' warehouse was in an abandoned place that only their team could navigate. When Bo left the team, he had secretly marked a trail for Yu and Chi to follow. It might come in handy.

Following Bo's directions, Yu and Chi sneaked to the warehouse after dark. They slipped through a back door and found the key left carelessly by sleeping guards. Quietly, they unlocked the main storage room.

They found that their rivals had been making fake silk because real silk was expensive and took time to produce. So, the rivals used old rags and secret dyes to disguise them as silk. Yu took the incriminating evidence, and Chi collected some silk—if it matches the silk they collected earlier at Bo's tent, it means their rivals had counterfeited.

Chi recalled that Bo explained why he didn't like his own team: they always lied to each other, and they broke one of the most valuable items he had collected in his life. No wonder Bo was so against his boss and went ballistic every time Yu and Chi mentioned his team's name.

After they gathered up the proof they needed, they hurried and left. However, the guards heard them and chased them out of there. Thankfully, Yu and Chi got out in the nick of time. Yu and Chi reported all the evidence to their customers. At first, the customers were sceptical, but when they saw the rivals' ledger and how Yu examined it, they realized the truth. The rivals planned to sell fake silk from the Silk Road and even tried to pressure customers to pay before the end of the week. Because of their rude behaviour and counterfeiting, the customers cancelled their deals with the rivals and switched back to Yu and Chi.

From that day on, Yu and Chi's reputation soared. They became some of the most trusted and successful merchants on the Silk Road, known for their honesty and bravery.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Kowloon Rhenish School, Lam, Yuet Ching – 10

On Christmas Eve, mum and dad were bored with western food for Christmas celebration so we went to an Indian restaurant in Causeway Bay. I didn't really like the idea because I had never tried Indian food before. However, after I tried the first bite of naan, which is an Indian bread commonly eaten in the continent, I liked it very much. Then, I asked if I can visit the kitchen and see how the chef made it. Mum and I were overjoyed to peek the secret of naans in Indian food culture.

The next month, my family and I went on a trip to India to explore the scenery and culture of this country. The first spot we visited was their spice market. There were a lot of types of spices like different curry powder, mustard seeds, chili powder and so on... We were amazed at what we can see in the market. There were thousands bags of colorful spices around us! It was such a nice picture. Fragrance of spices rushed into our nostrils. This made us really confused! We could also hear people chanting what they were selling. I was curious about if I can stand the most chili one so I asked the shopkeeper if I could try a bit of the bloody red powder. Wah! My throat was burning and I drank a barrel of water to put out the fire.

When I was looking for water, I suddenly saw a girl practicing wrestling at the back of a spice stall. I asked a man what the girl was doing, he said that he was her dad and his daughter was a female Indian wrestler. He said, 'my daughter, Geeta, is very determined to be a wrestler like me. However, it is very hard to become a female wrestler in a traditional country. People think girls should only stay home to do household chores.'

I was impressed by what the father and the daughters were trying to do. When I went back to Hong Kong, I found a movie about the father and the daughters. My mum told me the movie was adapted from a real story and made into a Bollywood movie. Silk Road was a web of routes of exchanging silk, spice, tea, pottery among China and other countries in the past but now with the advanced technology, the Internet has become a good help of interchanging ideas and currencies.

The Silk Road Dream

Kowloon Rhenish School, Li, Chung Hin – 10

Long ago, the Silk Road was a complicated path full of adventures. It started in Xi'an in China, and ended in Europe, which I think is amazing. Traders rode camels and brought lots of stuff like silk and treasures.

One day, I read a book about the silk road, including lots of different adventures and stories along the way, I fell asleep unconsciously.

I dreamed I was a silk trader on the Silk Road. My first stop is Turpan — an ancient town in Xinjiang. After a few weeks of traveling, I finally came to Turpan! When I gave them silk, the people there gave me Turpan grapes. They loved it and said they would go to Xi'an for more silk!

After that, I went to Central Asia. In Central Asia there are Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. When I arrived, I noticed that they were wearing tunics, tall boots, and long robes which were comfortable. I sold the traders silk, wine, and clothes; they liked them and we became friends. They took me to eat lamb, dairy, and my personal favorite, horse meat! In return, they gave me rugs, metalwork, and lapis lazuli. At first, I didn't know what lapis lazuli was, but the traders showed me that it was a beautiful blue gem. And I also learnt that many of them believed in Buddhism.

I heard from other traders that there were many sources of gems in Afghanistan, so I followed other Chinese traders to get there. The traders in Afghanistan wore some loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and wide trousers, and they gave me a few donkeys and a lot of emeralds and rubies! I was so excited because those gems were valuable! I noticed some kids were playing with some sheep-shaped crafted bones, so I asked them, "What are those kids playing?" Then they answered, "These are knucklebones." It was used for tossing and catching. Then they led me to a mud-brick house, and they gave me bread, dried curd, roasted camel meat, pomegranates, apricots, grapes, and rice! This was the most plentiful meal I had eaten since I left China!

Next, I traveled to Persia. A lot of buildings were in ruins. I asked traders, "What happened here?" They said that Persia had invaded Greece and started a war about 300 years ago, and this place was still in ruins. So, I exchanged him some jade and silk and he gave me gold, spices, and carpets. Then I went to an inn, and they served me bread, roasted lamb, porridge, and apricots. I felt so happy because the trader gave me gold! I hope I can come to Iran again!

After that, I went to Iraq. This place is full of rivers, mountains, and wetlands. It is a beautiful place. I saw a village with a lot of reed huts and brick houses. When I gave the villagers some camels, they supplied me with some textiles, oil, and pottery, and offered me some fringed shawls, tunics, and cloaks. They also told me how they invented writing and made civilization, mathematics, astronomy, plumbing, and my personal favorite, art! This place is so interesting and cool!

Later I was in Syria. I was escaping from soldiers because a war had broken out. I hid in a wrecked mud-brick house, and I met a lot of villagers. They gave me olive oil, grape vines, figs, purple dye, glassware, bronze tools, ivory, porridges, peas, and goat milk! They even told me one of the cities here was one of the oldest inhabited cities. And they also invented soap, Damascus steel and the lute. They even taught me advanced shipbuilding and even built a ship for me! Now I don't need to ride camels. I can just sail on my ship!

Suddenly, I woke up from the dream. I felt confused because I mixed up the dream and the reality. I seem to have been traveling in a long holiday as a different person. I thought "The peoples in the Silk Road shared some similarities, like clothes, food and cultures, but unique in history and religion. The Silk Road is connecting different cultures together by goods exchange and trading. With good relationship, China will have more friends in peace, not in pieces."

Father of the Silk Road

Lei Muk Shue Catholic Primary School, Chan, Shun Hei Isaac – 11

Sixty seven hundred centuries ago, which is in the 67 AD, a Chinese butler named Zhang Qian who lost the Han dynasty in a tragic fight heard someone was tasked with securing an alliance with the Yuezhi people. Since he was adventurous, he tried to accomplish the mission himself but got caught by a soldier and was put in jail for 67 days. Just when he was freed, he was captured by another soldier who said he was supposed to be in jail for his whole life, but he escaped and reached home without being caught for the third time. When he got back to the palace, the king was already waiting for him. When the king saw him, he yelled at him so loud that he had a sore throat when he said the fifth word and immediately fired him on the spot.

After he got fired, his family became as poor as a church mouse, so he decided to go to the Wusun and other kingdoms and make some good trade with some silk for food. When he got there, a lot of people wanted the silk so badly that they traded knowledge and items that are not available in his own kingdom for it and even gave him enough food that could last for years. When he came back home, he sold the items he traded and taught others lessons about what he had learned, and made a profit which is a lot more than the silk is worth. Thinking it would be worth it to try again, so this time, he took a cart full of silk to trade and traveled from Chang An, then went west across Central Asia for rare treasures, through Persia and the Middle East for food, finally ending at Mediterranean ports for a lot of butlers. By the time he got back home, he was 81 years old and a lot of people were carrying all his belongings while also driving him back home on a fancy carriage.

Soon, the whole kingdom knew about his story and started copying him intentionally trying to be as rich as him. Later, Zhang Qian called the road "The silk road". When the king saw that Zhang Qian had more money and butlers than him and he got that in forty years, he rage quits and calls Zhang Qian to be king. Therefore, Zhang Qian revived the Han dynasty and claimed the name "Father of the Silk Road". The road lasted long, and everyone traded all their silk for items until the mid-1400s because the other cities had enough silk that they didn't need more while China didn't need any more treasures. Luckily, the Silk Road wasn't forgotten because in 2013, the Silk Road was revived but it is not selling silk. It is selling industrial goods. Also, it has grown bigger, which includes 150 countries. Maybe in the future, the silk road will connect all the countries in the world and Zhang Qian will be famous.

The Future of the New China's Silk Road

Lei Muk Shue Catholic Primary School, Lee, Nok Yin – 11

I am an AI tour guide of Digital Dunhuang Museum. My name is Monkey King. Every day, I talk to the travelers about the China Silk Road. Until midnight, the Monk Xuanzang's Journey to the West 's Monkey in the data warehouse blinked it's eye.

"Little guy, " Monkey King 's voice came from the speaker, do you want to see the real Silk Road?" He bumped out from the picture. The golden cudgel swiped a golden light. Follow old sun! " We followed the light and headed west. At Samarkand, Monkey King saw an automatic farm's drone was watering the plants. He said, "This is even more powerful than my tiny hair clones. "In Istanbul, he said he floated above the Bosphorus Strait, watching cargo ships loaded with Chinese new energy vehicles pass through the Marmara Tunnel—the strait he could have crossed in a single somersault back then, now connected from the seabed by the "infrastructure maniacs."

What made him stop most was Athens, where local students were learning Chinese on an interactive platform. The idiom "golden eyes and fiery gaze" popped up on the screen, and the Greek children used AR glasses to scan the ruins. A Chinese narration then began to play—it was the voice of Wukong.

On this new path, Wukong gazed at the gradually brightening eastern sky. There was no need for the eighty-one tribulations; every data packet was a past event, and every connection was a matter of fate.

He transformed back into the painting, and said in the end, "Tell people—Old Sun's Vajra Cudgel is long gone, and your world is much bigger and better than it was back then."

Outside the window, the sounds of the China–Europe freight trains are piercing through the millennia–old sands, awakening a new dawn.

New Tales of China's Silk Road: A Dream Through Time

Li Sing Tai Hang School, Muhammad-Rizqi-Akbar, Riani – 11

I suddenly woke up in a barrel, the wooden walls pressing close in the dim, musty air. I was horrified. The crew were loudly muttering and talking, their voices echoing like distant thunder. I peeped outside and found out that I was on a ship — a massive wooden vessel rocking gently on choppy waves. I checked my watch — “1804.” My watch had mysteriously changed, its hands frozen in an impossible era.

I looked for an opening to escape, heart pounding, and just as I was sprinting back out into the salty breeze, “Hey!” someone yelled behind me, sharp as a whipcrack.

“Who are you?!” I stood awkwardly as he examined me, his eyes narrowing under a tricorn hat.

“I—I’m John, from this shipwreck. W—where am I?” I stuttered, my voice trembling like a leaf.

“Okay, we’re at France! We are supplying Napoleon Bonaparte for his ‘Great Election!’”

I finally looked around — really looked around. There were fruits and foods EVERYWHERE — crates overflowing with ripe oranges, loaves of crusty bread, wheels of cheese stacked like treasures under the sun. “We are supplying the Notre Dame Cathedral, where he will be crowned KING!”

We then marched slowly toward the cathedral, the cobblestone streets alive with the clamor of hooves and voices. There were hundreds upon thousands of people outside — I could barely even see the cathedral, its spires lost in a sea of waving flags and cheering faces! From higher up, I could clearly see Napoleon standing in front of his throne, his uniform gleaming gold against the ancient stone.

“SILENCE!” Napoleon screeched, his voice slicing through the air like a blade.

“I... Napoleon Bonaparte... declare myself... Emperor!!”

Everyone applauded loudly — some people were crying tears of joy, others screaming in wild ecstasy. I smiled, knowing this was one of the most important events in French history, a moment etched forever in time. As everyone was feasting — children playing tag, adults eating heartily and just having a good time — I suddenly wondered what was happening far away, in other great cities of the world. Were there other roads, other journeys, that connected people the way this moment seemed to connect France? That thought echoed in my mind as the colors and sounds blurred, and I finally blacked out.

Soon, I woke up in another place, the air thick with the scent of spices and dust. In front of me, there was a little house of weathered clay. I looked around and saw a bustling market stretching as far as I could see — merchants haggling over bolts of silk, camels laden with goods snorting in the heat. I knocked on the house’s door, and an old man came out to open it, his face lined like ancient scrolls. He looked at me and smiled warmly.

“Hello there, what brings you to my humble home?”

I stumbled back, thinking of what I should reply, my mind racing. But before I could say anything, he continued kindly, “That doesn’t matter, come in to have some tea.”

Once inside, I realized there was no modern stuff — no TVs flickering, no refrigerators humming, no electric lights glowing. The old man told me to sit down on a rug on the floor, soft and woven with intricate patterns. His wife poured us both tea, steaming and fragrant with jasmine. I was still wondering why there was such a huge market that looked like it belonged to a big city near this house that seemed never to have been modernized, frozen in time.

To try to connect the dots, I asked, “Where am I?”

“You’re in Chang’an, China — the capital of China right now,” he replied with a nod.

“And one of the main cities of the Silk Road,” his wife added, her eyes twinkling.

I had so many questions swirling in my head:

1. I thought Beijing was the capital of China. What is this city, Chang’an?
2. Why was this house so old-fashioned?
3. What is the Silk Road supposed to be?

However, I thought so hard about these questions that I accidentally said them out loud. The old man laughed heartily.

“Haha, you look well-educated, but in reality, you do the opposite of what your clothes suggest.”

Still, he answered patiently. “Well, for starters, I don’t know what Beijing is — it must be a small town because I know all the big cities. Second, what do you mean old-fashioned? These are the latest trends. Third, the Silk Road is a trade route for merchants to take and trade.”

His wife leaned forward, studying my strange clothes. “You must be from very far away,” she said softly. “Along this road, people come from many lands — Persia, India, even from places beyond the deserts. They bring glass, spices, stories and music. They learn our ways, and we learn theirs.”

I realised that, just like in France, people here were also part of something much bigger than themselves — a web of journeys and roads tying countries together. I told them about my own time, about huge ships, flying machines in the sky, and cities of glass and steel. Their eyes widened as I spoke. The old man chuckled.

“So your world still travels and trades,” he said. “Then the spirit of the Silk Road is still alive. People are still learning about each other.”

I tried to connect the dots and asked him what date it was. He replied thoughtfully, “Well, the year is 725, the month is July, and the date is the 26th.”

I quickly understood that this was ancient China, and I wanted to ask him more questions — I mean, it’s not every day you get teleported to a new place you’ve never been before! But before I could ask any, I heard, “John! Time to wake up for school!”

I quickly sprang out of my dream. Well, it might have been a dream — but it was fun! And as I got ready for school, I couldn’t stop thinking about how roads, from Paris to Chang’an, could carry not just goods and crowns, but stories, ideas, and people learning about each other.

New Tales of China’s Silk Road

Lei Muk Shue Catholic Primary School, Shao, Ching Hin – 11

The Silk Road was one of the most important trade routes in history. Starting from China, it spread across deserts, mountains, and seas, linking Asia, Europe, and Africa. We carried silk, tea, and spices, while travellers brought back gold, glass, and new stuffs.

The Silk Road was more than trade, it was a path of cultural exchange.

I learned new languages, religions, music, and art along the journey. These things helped our people grow and connect with the whole world;

On my journey, I saw an animal with two small mountains on its back. People use this animal to carry goods. I was curious and asked a businessman what it was. He told me the animal is called a camel, and the two mountains are called humps.

I also saw many spices, like cloves and cinnamon. I brought these spices back to China. People can use them in cooking, baking, or even in drinks.

Today, people talk about the "New Silk Road." Modern trains, highways, and ships connect countries even faster. China's Belt and Road projects continue this spirit of exchange, showing how cooperation can build stronger ties between nations.

The Silk Road now connects to the whole world, and as Chinese, I feel happy and proud!

My Story on the Silk Road

Lei Muk Shue Catholic Primary School, Tang, Kai Yu – 12

In ancient times, there existed a mysterious and magnificent Silk Road, a route not only for caravans but also a confluence of cultures and stories.

I am Li Ming, a young merchant from Chang'an. My family has been merchants for generations, specializing in the production and trade of silk. When I was sixteen, my father gave me a bolt of bright red silk, telling me it was preparation for my first independent journey.

"This silk represents the glory of our family. You must take good care of it, use it to plan, and achieve your business dreams," my father earnestly instructed me.

I embarked on the Silk Road. My first stop was Isfahan, a city in the Western Regions, an important stop on the silk trade. The market here was bustling, with a dazzling array of goods, from spices to jewels. I carefully unfolded the red silk, attracting the attention of many buyers. Ultimately, I sold my silk for an astonishing price and used the profits to buy local spices and gems to continue my journey.

As time passed, I arrived at a city called Samarkand, a place of magnificent architecture and diverse culture. Here I met a Persian businesswoman named Amina. Amina's knowledge of silk amazed me, and we hit it off immediately, discussing trade and future plans. I told her my dream was to have Chinese silk in every city along the Silk Road, while Amina hoped to take her spices to even more distant places.

We decided to cooperate, forming a powerful business alliance. Within months, our goods were being transported to various cities, and our reputation spread far and wide. However, the Silk Road was not smooth sailing; we encountered attacks from bandits along the way. Once, Amina and I were ambushed at night, and the bandits stole all our belongings.

I felt despair, but Amina encouraged me: "We can't give up. We must pick ourselves up; this is just a test."

So we decided to return to where we started and begin again. We used our eloquence and courage to persuade the local people, making them aware of the value of our products and rebuilding trust and cooperation.

After a period of hard work, our business took off again, and a commercial network developed. Ultimately, Amina and I enabled every city along the Silk Road to experience each other's cultures, weaving a vibrant tapestry of commerce.

Our names also resonated along the Silk Road, becoming symbols of courage, cooperation, and cultural exchange. Many years later, in my old age, I will still sit by the campfire and tell my descendants about my adventures on the Silk Road, and the path that connected me with different cultures.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

LKWFSL Wong Yiu Nam Primary School, Dong, Ye – 10

Hello! My name is Herman, and I'm ten years old. Most kids my age go to school or play soccer, but last month, I did something extraordinary—I became the very first explorer and businessman to travel alone on the New Silk Road! My mission was to visit three amazing places in China: Xinjiang, Gansu, and Qinghai. I wanted to trade special products and learn about the world. My parents thought it was a big school project, but for me, it was a real adventure. I packed my small blue backpack with a notebook, a water bottle, some snacks, and my two most important trade items: a small bag of safe gunpowder (the kind used for science experiments and fireworks) and a shiny compass. The journey was over one thousand kilometers, so of course, I took an airplane. As the plane flew over mountains and rivers, I felt my heart beating with excitement. I knew I was the first person my age to arrive on this special trip.

When I stepped off the plane in Xinjiang, the air felt hot and dry. Before me lay a sight straight out of my storybooks: a vast, golden desert that sparkled under the sun. In the distance, I saw a line of camels moving slowly like sleepy giants, their shadows long on the sand. Strange, prickly cactus plants stood guard here and there. I took a deep breath and said to myself, "This is it, Tim. You're a real businessman now!"

My first stop was a colorful Sunday market at the edge of the desert. The sounds and smells hit me all at once—people chatting in different languages, the sizzle of food being cooked, and the sweet scent of fruits and spices. Stalls were overflowing with treasures: beautifully woven carpets, ancient-looking antiques like cups and plates, sparkling jewelry made of silver and turquoise, and even some gold ornaments. My eyes couldn't look at everything fast enough!

I found a small empty spot and laid out my trading items. Soon, a crowd gathered. A tall man with a kind face, named Mr. Aili, was very interested in my compass. "This little device is wonderful!" he exclaimed. "My family are shepherds. Sometimes, the desert paths look all the same. This could help us find our way home safely." We decided to trade. He gave me a beautiful, hand-painted porcelain vase—an antique from his grandmother—for my compass. I carefully wrapped it in my clothes and placed it in my backpack. My first trade was a success!

Next, a lady named Ms. Lin, wearing a beautiful embroidered dress from Gansu, came to see my gunpowder sample. I explained it could be used to make bright, colorful fireworks for festivals. Her eyes lit up. "We love celebrations here! This could make our Night Market festival even more spectacular," she said. She traded me a stunning piece of jewelry—a silver bracelet with sky-blue stones that she said were from Qinghai Lake. I put it on my wrist right away; it felt cool and special.

Trading was fun, but the best part was talking to everyone. More businessmen and women came over. We sat together in the shade, sharing stories. They told me about the New Silk Road, how fast trains and new roads now connect their towns to faraway countries like Kazakhstan and Iran. They talked about the challenges, too, like making sure everyone gets a fair deal. I ate with them, trying delicious food I'd never seen before: round bread called *naan*, sweet dried fruits, and warm milk tea. I felt so excited and happy. I wasn't just trading goods; I was making many new friends. It felt like I had a big, welcoming family all across the desert.

Then, something incredible happened. I heard a familiar laugh. I turned around, and my jaw dropped. It was my friend Leo! We played on the same soccer team last summer. "Leo! What are you doing here?" I shouted, running over. He was just as surprised. "My dad has business here! I can't believe it's you, Tim!" We jumped around, laughing. It was the most wonderful surprise. Out of all the huge markets in China, I found my old friend here!

Suddenly, the happy noises of the market changed. The wind, which had been a gentle breeze, started to whip fiercely. The bright sun disappeared, turning the sky a scary, murky yellow. Sand began to fly through the air, stinging our skin. "A sandstorm!" Mr. Aili yelled. "Everyone, secure your goods and find shelter!" The calm market turned into a scene of urgent movement. The wind howled like a wild animal. Leo grabbed my hand. "We need to escape—now!" his dad shouted. Through the blowing sand, we saw a large, sturdy tent used for storing carpets. We all ran towards it, holding onto our hats and bags. We rushed inside, and Mr. Aili quickly tied the tent flaps closed. The world outside became a roaring, brown blur.

Inside the dark tent, it was quiet but tense. We could hear the storm raging. Leo, his dad, Mr. Aili, Ms. Lin, and I all huddled together. We shared water and some dates from Ms. Lin's bag. Even though I was a little scared, being with my new friends and Leo made me feel safe. We told stories to pass the time. I realized that on this New Silk Road, people help each other, especially when trouble comes. It wasn't just about business; it was about teamwork and kindness.

After what felt like a long time, the roaring faded to a whisper, then stopped. We cautiously stepped outside. The desert was transformed—everything was covered in a smooth layer of fine sand, like a golden blanket. The air was clear and fresh again. Everyone started laughing, brushing sand off each other's hair and clothes. We worked together to dig out some of the market stalls. My friends said I was very brave for a young businessman. I felt proud and grown-up.

When it was finally time to say goodbye, my backpack was heavier, filled with my traded treasures: the antique vase, the silver bracelet, and a small, shiny gold coin that another trader gave me for being so brave. But my heart felt even fuller—full of friendship, amazing stories, and the unforgettable memory of surviving a sandstorm together.

I flew home, looking out at the clouds. I was the first kid to travel this new road of friendship and trade. My adventure showed me that the New Silk Road is more than trains and maps. It's about people connecting, sharing, and helping each other, no matter where they are from. I can't wait to go back. Maybe next time, I'll bring my whole class with me!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

LKWFSL Wong Yiu Nam Primary School, Liu, Ching Yi – 9

Hi! My name is Sammi, and I'm a ten-year-old kid with a big dream—to be an explorer. Today, my dream came true in the most incredible way. I became the very first person to travel alone on the New Silk Road! It all started when my teacher told our class about the ancient Silk Road and the new Belt and Road Initiative. I was so fascinated that I decided to go on my own adventure. With a small backpack, a map, and a heart full of courage, I set off for Xian very early in the morning.

The airplane ride was exciting! I sat by the window and watched as the world below changed from busy cities to green fields and then to tall brown mountains. The flight was 1439 kilometers long and took about three hours. I wasn't just a passenger; I felt like a pioneer, the first to see this journey through my own curious eyes. When the pilot announced we were landing, my heartbeat fast with anticipation. I was not the last person to arrive there—I was the very first one on my special mission!

My first stop was the famous Daming Palace ruins. As soon as I stepped into the huge park, I was speechless. Broken walls, wide stone platforms, and lonely pillars stood under the blue sky. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine the Tang Dynasty at its peak. Suddenly, a warm breeze blew, and I heard faint music and laughter. When I opened my eyes, the world had transformed! The ruins were gone, replaced by magnificent palaces with golden roofs and red pillars. People in flowing silk robes walked by, chatting in an old language. A kind man with a long beard and a friendly smile approached me. He wore a robe covered in symbols. "Greetings, young traveler from the future," he said. "I am Master Lin, a merchant of the Tang Dynasty. You are the first visitor from your time to walk our Silk Road." My mouth fell open in amazement. He showed me around the bustling palace—musicians played, artists painted, and traders displayed shiny silk and fragrant spices. Master Lin explained how the Silk Road connected East and West. "It is not just a road for goods," he said wisely, "but a bridge for hearts and minds." Just as he placed a small, smooth jade stone in my hand, the scene faded, and I was back among the silent ruins. The jade stone was still in my palm, warm and real. This magical experience made me feel deeply connected to history.

Feeling brave and happy, I ventured out to meet local people. Near the ruins, I saw a group of kids playing a hopping game. I waved shyly, and a girl named Li ran over. "Hello! Are you lost?" she asked with a bright smile. I told her about my adventure, and her eyes grew wide with wonder. "Come with me!" she said, pulling me toward a lively street market. The air was filled with delicious smells—roasting nuts, spicy noodles, and sweet candies. Stalls were packed with colorful items, but the most beautiful were the porcelain works. Li took me to her aunt's stall, which was full of delicate cups, bowls, and figurines, all glazed in beautiful blues and whites. "Porcelain is special to our city," Li explained proudly. "It's very strong, doesn't absorb water, and each piece is a piece of art." Her aunt, Ms. Chen, let me hold a small vase. It felt cool and smooth. Inspired by the ancient traders, I decided to make a trade. I took out my most precious travel item—a small, solar-powered toy robot that could light up and walk. Ms. Chen and Li were fascinated. We agreed to trade: my robot for a lovely porcelain horse figurine. "This horse is for good luck on your journey," Ms. Chen said, smiling. I was so happy. Trading wasn't just about exchanging objects; it was about sharing stories and making friends. Li and I promised to write to each other.

Later that afternoon, I had an important meeting. Through my teacher's help, I was able to meet some local entrepreneurs and businessmen in a quiet teahouse. Mr. Zhang, a friendly man who exports tea, and Ms. Wang, who runs a tech company, welcomed me. Over cups of fragrant tea, they explained the Belt and Road Initiative to me like I was a young colleague. "It's like building a new, friendly version of the ancient Silk Road," Ms. Wang said, showing me maps on her tablet. Trains, ships, and digital networks now connect China with countries far away in Europe, Africa, and beyond. Mr. Zhang talked about the opportunities: "We can sell our tea and silk to new markets, and we can also buy wonderful things from other countries, like flowers from the Netherlands or chocolate from Belgium." But they also shared their challenges honestly. "Building trust takes time," Mr. Zhang said. "And we must learn about different laws, languages, and customs." Ms. Wang added, "Sometimes, projects are big and complicated, like building a railway across mountains." I listened carefully, drawing pictures in my notebook. Their stories weren't just about business; they were about perseverance,

learning, and building bridges of cooperation. I was deeply moved and felt very happy to hear their passion. It made the New Silk Road feel alive and important for the future.

As the sun began to set, painting the sky orange and pink, I felt a warm contentment but also a new wish. I learned about history, trade, and modern business. Now, I hoped someone could join me to experience one more beautiful thing: the religious culture along the Silk Road. I had read about the peaceful temples, grand mosques, and ancient churches that dotted the route, where people of different faiths shared ideas and lived in harmony. I wished my friend Li could come with me next time to visit a beautiful Buddhist temple or a historic mosque, to light a candle for peace and learn about the spiritual journeys that have traveled this road for centuries.

Sitting on my flight home, clutching my jade stone and porcelain horse, I knew this was just the beginning. The New Silk Road, I realized, is a living story. It's made of ancient stones and modern trains, of porcelain and digital codes, of handshakes between merchants and smiles between kids like Li and me. Being the first person on my own journey taught me that adventure is about curiosity and openness. I can't wait to share my story with my class and to keep exploring. Maybe one day, all of us—kids from China, Kazakhstan, Italy, and everywhere—will build a future together, just like the Silk Road traders of old, but with our own dreams and our own map of friendship. The road is long, and my adventure has only just begun.

The Amazing Talk and Buzzpower

Marymount Primary School, Ng, Sze Nok – 9

Introduction

Do you have any great ideas to share with the countries involved in the new Silk Road?

I am Sophia, a girl from bustling Hong Kong, a city with many skyscrapers sparkling on both sides of Victoria Harbour. I have a cousin named Yasmina who lives far away in Samarkand, Uzbekistan — an ancient city along the old Silk Road. Yasmina came to Hong Kong last month to visit me because some of her ancestors migrated to China centuries ago to trade spices and silk along that famous route. Now, her father represents Samarkand to seek ideas, trade, economic exchange, and cooperation with different countries under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

One sunny afternoon, I took Yasmina to a traditional Chinese restaurant to enjoy a dim sum lunch, and we had an amazing talk! We shared stories about the food and culture of our countries. During lunch, Yasmina told me about the problems she faces in her living environment in Samarkand, such as sandstorms, droughts, and heatwaves, which are very different from Hong Kong. Yasmina mentioned that frequent sandstorms bury their streets in dust, hurting people's eyes and lungs, and leading to severely polluted air where respiratory sickness is quite common. The polluted air also affects the environment at school and at home. Coincidentally, I had just learned about climate change in my primary school and had discussed with my teacher the idea of inventing a robotic machine to help tackle climate change and environmental issues. Yasmina was so excited about the idea and eager to hear more details about the robot — this new machine is named Buzzpower.

What is Buzzpower?

Buzzpower is a smart and powerful machine designed to improve air quality and temperature control in indoor spaces. It looks like a light bulb on the top with a strong fan at the bottom. There are eyes on the light bulb, and these eyes can spin around using AI technology, allowing the machine to guide itself to different areas based on where it is needed most. On its face, it has a solar panel.

When it starts to run out of energy, it will fly to outdoor places with plenty of sunlight to recharge itself. It is self-sufficient! The solar panel on its face absorbs the power of the sun, making it independent from the usual electricity sources that harm the environment. Additionally, Buzzpower has built-in air quality sensors that monitor pollutants and dust. If the air quality drops, Buzzpower increases its fan speed to expel stale air and bring in fresh air quickly.

Buzzpower is great, isn't it? For Yasmina's country, I suggested installing Buzzpowers in school classrooms and some indoor areas. Do not worry about Buzzpowers swarming like buzzing bees flying around everywhere, because they make no sound and will not disturb us at all. They are super quiet!

How can Buzzpowers help the environment?

Not only in Samarkand but also in many countries around the world today, people are facing severe challenges due to climate change. Some indoor areas use fans or air conditioners every day, which consume a lot of electricity and cause carbon emissions, contributing to pollution and worsening climate change. This creates a harmful cycle where cooling the air results in more environmental damage.

By spinning its fan to give us fresh air instead of heavy, polluted air, Buzzpower helps reduce the need for traditional fans or air conditioners in indoor areas. This reduces overall energy consumption and cuts down carbon emissions, helping to slow climate change. Furthermore, Buzzpower can sense the room temperature and adjust its fan speed according to the weather to keep a comfortable and steady climate throughout the day. Buzzpower can also raise awareness about climate change and encourage sustainable practices in everyday places, such as schools, offices, hospitals, shopping malls, and outdoor events.

Conclusion

The new machine, Buzzpower, is not just an invention — it is a hopeful solution to many of the climate challenges we face today. By providing fresh air, stable temperatures, and using clean solar energy, Buzzpower can make indoor environments healthier and more comfortable. I hope that one day a real Buzzpower can be manufactured to help our environment and make a positive impact on our Earth. Yasmina is eager to share the idea of Buzzpower with her father. Yasmina and I believe that learning from each other and working together to meet future needs is a fantastic experience. Adults may run businesses, but at the same time it can be a great brainstorming opportunity for the new generation like us, even if we are not directly part of the BRI project. So, dare to create, dream, and share to brighten our future, without limits on boundaries or age!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Marymount Primary School, Tse, Chun Lam Kimberley – 10

A long time ago, about 2,200 years ago, some intrepid Chinese merchants went on an unbelievable journey. They traveled for months travelling to the west to sell their silk. However, by the mid-1400s the Silk Road began to disappear. Thankfully, in 2013, it was revived and instantly became international for countries to trade with one another.

Let's imagine being in 223 BCE. Back then, buying and selling were way more difficult and different than now. The first merchants who discovered this route were courageous and determined. They hiked and climbed over mountains, relying only on their strength and perseverance. There were no vehicles or time to stop for snacks. Their journey was simple but indeed hard. Their daily routine would only be: walk, eat, and sleep. They had only basic survival tools and their precious silk to with them along the way.

During that time, there were not many medicines available like today. What would happen if someone got sick during the journey? The traders had to endure harsh weather and challenging terrain while also staying healthy. Even in our modern world, illness can strike us unexpectedly, which makes it even more tougher for our ancestors. Imagine traveling back to 223 BCE and joining these merchants on their journey. You probably won't have much food or supplies. Suddenly, one of your companions becomes very ill, and there aren't enough medicines to help. You would feel heartbroken, knowing your friend might not survive, and you might have to leave them behind to continue your journey. It would be a kind of selfish decision, but sometimes people must make tough choices in order to pursue their dreams.

After many days and nights of hiking, these merchants finally reached Europe. When they arrived, they found eager customers who wanted to buy their silk. This was wonderful news! They had worked so hard, and now they could achieve their dream of selling their products and make a profit.

However, we don't know what happened to these merchants afterward. We can only hope they earned enough money to live well. What motivated them to take such a risky journey? It wasn't just luck; it was their determination and hope that kept them going. Their story demonstrates the strength of the human spirit and the powerful ambition. The Silk Road wasn't just a normal trade route; it was a pathway for different cultures to meet and share ideas. Reflecting on their journey helps us understand the challenges they faced. It reminds us that achieving our goals can be hard and may require sacrifices. As we connect with people around the world, we remember that we can be strong and hopeful, just like those early traders. Their spirit encourages us to embark on our own adventures.

In conclusion, the tale of the Silk Road and its merchants is not just a story about trade; it is about people striving to achieve their dreams and never giving up. As we navigate our own paths, let's remember their bravery and be ready to face our own challenges.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Camoes Tan Siu Lin Primary School, Chan, Hei Yu Aaliyah – 12

“Good morning, class. I’m Ms Evans. Your history teacher is absent, so I’ll be your history teacher for the day,” the mysterious teacher declared as she stepped into the classroom. She wore black from head to toe. Her cold tone sent shivers down Ron’s spine. Then she asked, “Have any of you heard about the Silk Road?” The class nerd, Eugene, raised his hand. “Yes, the boy with the black glasses?” asked Ms Evans. Eugene confidently answered, “The Silk Road connects the east and the west. Marco Polo was one of the most important traders at that time.” “Excellent,” Ms Evans said, “Today, you all will be preparing for a presentation about the Silk Road. It is due tomorrow. Any questions?” Ron was puzzled. He raised his hand and asked, “How can a presentation of something we do not know about be due tomorrow?” Ms Evans just smiled and said, “You’ll see. Class dismissed!” then walked out of the classroom. The class was shocked. It had only been a minute or so! What was this sketchy teacher planning?

After Ron got home, he couldn’t stop thinking about the mysterious teacher. Suddenly, in the blink of an eye, a black, dark hole appeared under his feet. Out of curiosity, he stepped into the hole. Immediately, he was knocked unconscious.

When Ron woke up, he realised he was in an unknown place. “Where am I?” he asked, confused. A piece of paper that was written “Ron” suddenly appeared from nowhere. Curiously, he picked it up. Written on the paper was, “You are in the Han Dynasty right now, the time when the Silk Road flourished. You are now Li Shao-ren, a man from China. To return to your world, you must find a gold-threaded jade suit. Good luck!” Ron thought, “If I can’t find a gold-threaded jade suit, I’ll be trapped in here forever!”

He asked a nearby trader, “Do you know how to find a gold-threaded jade suit?” The trader exclaimed, “Are you out of your mind? Only a deceased emperor can wear it!” Ron was disappointed. Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a jade artisan. A great idea popped into his head.

Ron asked the jade artisan to teach him jade carving. Turns out the artisan was a kind old man named Chen, and he agreed to teach Ron. Ron was a great student. He was hardworking and continued to sharpen his jade carving skills by practising day and night, first on clay, then on real jade. He surely had a flair for jade carving. However, jade carving was not an easy skill to master, and it required extreme patience, precision, and skill.

Fortunately, Ron’s master, Chen, was patient and calm. With his guidance, Ron slowly began to master jade carving. Soon, his jade carving skills were almost as good as his master’s. One day, his master gifted him a camel and told him, “My apprentice, you have finally mastered the skill of jade carving. Tomorrow, you shall use this camel to travel to another place and trade your jade carvings for money. My friend Wang can help you.” “But...” Ron stammered. However, he didn’t want to let his master down, therefore, he set off the next day.

Ron decided to travel to Mongolia. Wang led the way while he followed. It was a lot harder than he thought. Extreme weather and temperatures kept slowing them down. Nonetheless, when he got to Mongolia, he realised it was all worth it. People were very interested in his carvings. He made a fortune. Yet, after a month, he missed his master and headed back to China.

When Ron returned home, he was surprised to see an official calling his name. “The emperor wants to see you,” the official said. Ron followed him all the way to the palace. In the palace, the emperor had been waiting for him. “Li Shar-ren,” he began, “I have heard about your amazing jade carving skills and your success in Mongolia. I now invite you to work on my nearly finished gold-threaded jade suit.” Ron’s eyes lit up. “My pleasure, Emperor,” he replied swiftly. “Alright,” the emperor declared. “Your work starts tomorrow. There will be a room for you soon.”

The next day, Ron ecstatically headed over to the palace. The guards showed him a workshop outside the palace. As he stepped into the workshop, he was stunned. A nearly done dazzling gold-threaded jade suit was lying there. Without thinking, the others welcomed him and taught him how to cut the jade, shape it and sew it on. A few days later, the suit only had one piece of jade left to complete. Ron was invited to do the honours and stitch the final piece of jade on. As soon as it was done, Ron started to feel dizzy. Then he became unconscious. When he woke up again, he was delighted to see that he was back in his bedroom. He looked at his clock. Although it felt like months, no time had passed. Nonetheless, he was full of ideas for his presentation.

The next day at school, Ron’s history teacher, Ms Smith, was back while Ms Evans was nowhere to be seen. “Class, yesterday I was sick. Your substitute teacher, Ms Evans assigned you a presentation about the Silk Road, which is due today. Does anyone want to go first?” The whole class raised their hands. “Ron, you go first,” Mrs Smith said. Ron’s presentation was about jade carving and trading. It was detailed and awesome. The whole class’s presentations were equally amazing. At the end of the lesson, Mrs Smith asked the whole class, “How did you students learn so much in just a day?” Eugene spoke up. “Ms Evans brought us to China.” “Haha, very funny, Eugene.” Mrs Smith replied, not amused. However, the whole class just smirked at each other — they knew it was not a joke.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Fung, Yau Shun Mathis – 9

The morning on Flower Fruit Mountain felt like a clean page. Under the vast blue, Wukong the Monkey King lay comfortably on a rock, counting drifting clouds. Suddenly, a glowing letter descended onto his nose.

“Another trip?” Wukong grumbled, scratching his hairy ear. “I just did one not long ago,” he thought to himself.

“All right, Buddha, I’m clocking in,” he said, twirled his staff, hopped on a cloud, and shot toward Xi’an — the eastern gate of the old Silk Road.

Outside the city stood a small pine-scented temple. At a tiny desk, a monk named ShunYau traced a bright map while a glowing tablet rested beside him. Wukong dropped from the rafters like a cat and peeked at the screen. “Nice magic mirror, little guy!” he exclaimed. “Does it tell jokes?”

ShunYau jumped in shock, then stared and shrieked. “You’re... Wukong!”

“The one and only,” Wukong said proudly, puffing his chest. “How do you know my name?”

“I read about you — Journey to the West!” ShunYau said. “A writer named Wu Cheng’en made your story famous. You’re famous — your strength, your magic staff, your cloud jump...”

Before Wukong could answer, questions tumbled out from the curious monk — Flaming Mountain, Gaochang, the princess who liked Master Tang...

“Slow down! I have a thousand-year-old Monkey brain.” Wukong laughed. “I don’t know these new names, but I remember the shapes from the sky. Flaming Mountain is here — hotter than a dragon’s armpit. Gaochang is a little south. And the princess was real; I never knew she liked Master Tang.”

Wukong noticed a long red line labelled “the Silk Road” snaking across the paper, running past deserts toward India and the Mediterranean. “What is this red serpent? Why call it the Silk Road?” He was intrigued.

“Ah? Right! The name came long after your journey,” ShunYau said. He explained how the Silk Road carried not just silk, but ideas — religion, science, and inventions like paper and gunpowder. “President Xi Jinping recently revived the road by linking up countries along it with modern rails so goods, ideas, and people could flow freely like never before.”

“Phreeeeeeet! Iron dragons!” Wukong said, nodding. “Let’s ride one!”

“I want to walk,” ShunYau answered. “I want to stop where trains blur past: forgotten crossroads, poor towns. I want to share the Buddha’s kindness and practical knowledge like travelers once did.”

For a moment, Wukong gazed at ShunYau with admiration and respect.

“So that is why the Buddha sent me.” He snapped his fingers. “Very well. I’ll be your escort. Do you want a horse? I know a good candidate. Once a dragon, briefly a horse, still proud of both.”

“I’ll test my feet first if you don’t mind,” ShunYau replied.

“Sure thing!” Wukong grinned. He spun his golden staff. “Let the New Tales of China’s Silk Road begin!”

For months they walked — dusty roads, cold passes, warm bowls of noodles under lanterns — until they reached the Taklamakan, where dunes rolled like golden waves and the Flaming Mountain glowed in the distance.

Wukong lifted his chin. “Here is where I roasted the Bull Demon King,” he said, puffing a little. “Back then this place crawled with monsters. But no longer! Not after —”

He didn’t finish. Suddenly, a yellow swirl rose from the sand and rushed at them. A hand shot out of the sand, grabbed ShunYau’s robe, and both vanished with a scream.

“Hey!” Wukong leapt, staff ready. The dust devil moved faster than him. Wukong lost sight of ShunYau in just a few blinks of an eye.

Wukong searched deep into the desert for days, finding nothing but heat and humming wind. Worry finally pushed past his pride. He prayed to Guanyin for help.

“Calm down, Wukong,” whispered a soft voice. “If a problem can be solved, worry is useless. If it cannot be solved, worry is also useless. Look near the problem for its answer.”

“That’s it?” Wukong muttered and started thinking. The dust devil’s sound had cut out quickly. Maybe he didn’t take ShunYau far. Maybe he had gone under, not away.

Wukong went back to where the dust devil had struck and searched again. At last, a trail of footprints led him to a nearby oasis, where a muddy figure crouched by the water. Wukong’s heart jumped. “ShunYau! Is that you?”

The figure turned and waved. Wukong flew the last stretch. ShunYau stood there, filthy but smiling, surrounded by goats, sheep, and rabbits, while a boy in a red robe kept them from overgrazing one spot.

Wukong dropped between the boy and ShunYau, staff out. “Back up! One more step and I’ll stir-fry you!”

ShunYau hurried forward. “It’s okay. He didn’t mean harm.”

The boy pressed his forehead to the sand.

“I’m Lichar,” the boy said. “I was once a demon in Red Boy’s horde, but when the army broke, I stayed here to farm. The desert kept creeping in and ruined my fields. I got hungry and desperate, so I grabbed the monk. I’m sorry.”

“China’s Great Green Wall shows deserts can be pushed back with hardy plants and animals that loosen and fertilize the soil,” ShunYau explained. “People aren’t born evil. They just need guidance. Lichar has been working hard in the past few days.”

“Can your magic help?” ShunYau then asked.

“Of course!” Wukong said. “I can start a fertile patch and ask Guanyin for help.”

Soon, the oasis began to spread, swelling with fresh water, rich soil, lush plants, and grazing creatures that quickly brought new life to the land.

“Thank you, Master ShunYau. Thank you, Great Sage. I’ll fight the desert and never harm people again.”

Wukong and ShunYau then waved goodbye to Lichar to continue their journey.

“New tales continue!” Wukong cheered.

“We keep walking,” ShunYau answered. “We listen. We help. We learn.”

They set off again, knowing the Silk Road was more than a track for hooves and wheels — it was a road of ideas and cultures, where travellers traded courage, curiosity, and kindness.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Kong, Tsz Ching Chloe – 10

The crimson dawn sun shone brightly on the sand dunes. We were all prepared. My sturdy horse, Cinnamon, was ready too. We charged...

I have been a bandit all my life. I am a 14-year-old girl, the daughter of a bandit infamous for leading an incredibly powerful tribe. It is not a question of whether my actions are right or not. Instead, it is a question about survival: about feeding my younger siblings and my mother, and about holding the family together. It is not my choice; it is just the only way of life I know.

Sweat drizzled across my face. We were looking for some Chinese foreigners to steal some of their precious silk, sell it, and make some money. We saw the perfect target: a Chinese family looking exhausted, travelling along the Silk Road while trying their best to calm their squealing baby. They were using camels to transport their heavy load. They were strong, sturdy animals, but like the family, even they looked weighed down by their burden of goods. The leader of the group was hunched, and every movement looked painful.

We counted down. Three! Two! One! It was time. I held firmly onto my horse Cinnamon's mane; my life depended on it. Would a failed grab be the last ever action I took in my short life? On the other hand, would I be wealthy after this robbery? Surely, this was the most silk I had ever seen foreign traders travel with on the long and dusty road.

Our horses dashed off speedily like the wind in a cloud of sand rising into the morning desert sky. We nearly managed to hold the traders up and load our horses up with the stolen goods when, out of the blue, Cinnamon collapsed! I couldn't believe it! He was surely overworked, since I had ridden 600 miles across the Gobi Desert the days before. My jaw dropped open as I fell on the sand that felt like rocks. Every bone in my body felt broken. At the same time, my eyes were blindfolded. I was bundled into what felt like a horse and cart; it must have been part of the caravan we had tried to rob. "This is the end! I have been captured!"

When we arrived at the caravanserai, the Chinese family took off my blindfold. Next, they took off my muslin headscarf and face coverings one by one, like peeling an onion; it was only then they realised that I was just a teenager. First, their faces were shocked, but their expressions quickly changed from surprise and softened as they murmured to each other when they saw how young I was. There was no sign of my own nomadic tribe; the robbery had failed, and they must have escaped in the mayhem.

When dusk was falling and the fading sun disappeared over the mountainous sand dunes, I could smell the wood burning of the travellers' fires warming the freezing desert air. They fed me strange foods such as spicy cucumbers, chicken feet, and snake soup. Although I pretended to eat the food to show respect, I didn't like it one bit and missed my family's tribal tent horribly. At that moment, a man from the Gobi Desert told me that my father was evil and that the Chinese were just trying to protect me. I highly doubted that fact; my father was the real hero. I was too physically drained to even think, and I drifted off to sleep on an old corn sack, only to be woken up by chaos. I opened my ears to the sound of animal screeches and felt a knife pointing straight at my neck while someone from the Chinese tribe had me in an armlock. When I turned my head forward, expecting more chaos, I looked straight into my loving father's eyes. He had returned and ambushed the Chinese with more of our tribe. The man holding me dropped to the floor as an arrow pierced his skull from behind. I was free to go.

I sat behind my father on his colossal horse, Zoro, speeding across my land, the desert, back to our tribal tent. My father was furious that we had not been able to steal their precious silks; his reputation was at stake. He wanted to attack the caravan again. I pleaded with him not to, worrying about his safety.

When I woke the next morning, my father was nowhere to be seen. I waited and waited for his return, then in the far distance, I could see a man slumped over what looked like Zoro, his jet-black horse. His body was like a rag doll, lifeless. As he came closer, his muslin headdress was drenched in dark red blood.

I was the next in line as the tribal leader as it was passed down through generations. The thought petrified me: was I now the leader? Was my father dead? I felt the weight of the unknown bear heavily on my shoulders like the camels I had seen all my life crossing the desert with their heavy loads. All was unknown...

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Lau, Yu Sum Shanice – 10

Long, long ago, in the Korean palace, the legendary Korean king ordered the palace's chefs to cook up a new, unique dish. 'Cook me something savoury and spicy; if not, off with your heads!' the glorious king bellowed. 'Yes, my king!' the chefs said in sync. They hurried to the kitchen, cooking up a delicious five-course meal in a matter of minutes. They knew the king was impatient; a second too long in the kitchen would mean getting beheaded. Swiftly, they took the prestigious dishes out to the king. As the king observed the food, he was very judgmental. He complained fussily, then sighed. He lifted his chopsticks and put the meat into his mouth. As he chewed on the dish, the chefs couldn't help but feel nervous about how he would react. Suddenly, without warning, the king spat out the meat and slammed his hand on the table. 'This is disgusting! It doesn't have enough salt! Guards, bring them to the dungeon. I'll figure out what to do with them later!' the king demanded. 'No, my king, please don't put us in the dungeon! Please give us another chance! We'll do anything!' one of the chefs pleaded desperately. Instead of remaining unconvinced, the king smirked at his words. 'Anything?' he asked. 'Yes, please!' all the chefs said, finally thinking there was still hope. 'If you would do anything, find a new dish recipe from the Silk Road and cook it for me! Remember, it has to be savoury and spicy! If the dish doesn't meet my standards, you'll stay in my dungeons for life! You must return to my palace in a month, or there will be consequences!' The chefs couldn't believe their ears. The king had given them a chance to redeem themselves! 'Thank you, my king!' the chefs said. 'We won't disappoint you!' With that, the chefs ran off into the unknown lands of Korea, destined to find the Silk Road.

They hurried through the bustling city, and even though the lack of food was a huge challenge, they kept going. 'Now, as far as I know, one of the Silk Road passages is in Gyeongju, so I believe we should travel to Gyeongju, get onto the Silk Road, and try our luck travelling to different countries to see if they have unique dishes,' Sam, one of the chefs, said. So, that was exactly what they did. After walking for a day, their legs sore and tired, they eventually reached Gyeongju. They all sighed; they were unbelievably hungry, but then again, they would rather be hungry than be locked up in the dungeon. After walking for countless hours, they saw the Silk Road. They were all over the moon. 'Come on, guys,' one of the chefs reminded the rest, who were still celebrating. 'No time to celebrate. We have to enter the Silk Road now.'

After they entered the Silk Road, Sam, who was leading the others, asked them, 'Okay. Which country do we attempt first?' All the other chefs had lots of opinions; hence, it was difficult to keep track. 'Let's try Egypt!' 'No, Russia!' 'We should try China, the home of savoury and spicy foods!' one of the chefs, Conner, insisted. The chefs thought about it for a while. 'I suppose that's the best option,' Sam said. 'Okay, let's walk to China, Chang'an!' At first, the chefs were determined to reach Chang'an before the third day of their journey, but their progress was slow. They walked slowly, their legs feeling like lead, about to snap. After holding the pain for a few more hours, they couldn't hold it anymore. 'That's it!' one of the chefs screamed in agony. 'I cannot walk anymore!' Even though the chefs secretly agreed with him, they believed they should persist. 'I deeply apologise, but we must reach Chang'an before the next day, or else we will fail our mission. Try holding the pain in for a while?' Sam asked sympathetically. Sam's words almost brought the tired chef to tears, but he didn't argue with him. They needed to persist. As they walked on and on, every second slowly felt like hours. Finally, before they felt like passing out, they arrived at Chang'an. There, they saw merchants discussing business trades, trading all kinds of items like silk, prestigious diamonds, and other goods. 'I think this is it, but these merchants are selling items, yet we want special dishes! Let's keep looking; there might be some people trading food.' As they searched for more merchants, they saw a restaurant near where they were. 'Perfect timing!' Conner said. They darted into the restaurant and ordered a piece of seaweed, as they had forgotten to bring any food to exchange. Afterwards, they quickly returned to the Silk Road and started finding merchants trading food. Faster than ever, they spotted a Chinese merchant wandering around, holding a plate full of food, so they rushed to him. 'May we please taste your dish before trading with you?' The man generously agreed and handed them the dish. It was a plate of vegetables that was soaked in spicy sauce. Thinking about the king's expectations, it matched perfectly. They quickly traded the seaweed, and the merchant gladly accepted the trade. 'Now that we've got the dish we needed, let's return to the palace!' Sam ordered. And so they did, walking countless miles before arriving back at the Korean palace.

They ran into the palace excitedly, wondering how their king would react. 'My king!' Sam yelped. 'We have arrived with a unique Chinese dish!' The king snatched the dish and gobbled it up. Instead of being judgy, his eyes glowed, his taste buds content. 'This... this is delicious! The spiciness perfectly matches my standards, the vegetables' texture so crunchy and chewy.... This is the best dish I've ever had! This dish shall be called: 'kimchi'! Yes, that's the perfect name!' the king ecstatically said. From that day on, kimchi has been a famous and popular dish in the whole of Korea. The chefs were pardoned, and their legacies for discovering kimchi will forever live on.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Ng, Wing C Charis – 9

A long time ago, there were no cars, airplanes, or the internet, but the people were very smart. They figured out how to use a road to trade stuff with other countries; this road is called the Silk Road.

Why is it named the Silk Road? Was the road made of silk? Then we would be slipping and sliding all day...? Silly! It was a bunch of twisty, turny paths across deserts, over mountains, and through grasslands. The superstar of the Old Silk Road was the camel. Camels are grumpy and hairy; they have giant eyelids to keep out the sand, and their humps are not for storing water, but fat! It's like they carry their own lunchbox on their back. They walked for months, carrying silk, spices, and shiny jewels. It was a very slow way to get a new toy. If you ordered a teddy bear, it would probably take a whole year for delivery.

Now, we have the new Silk Road. Its name is "Goofy Path." The idea is the same as before: let's share stuff and be friends with people all over the world. But instead of using slow, spitting camels, we use the fastest, most powerful machines you can imagine. It is all about high-speed trains that help us connect; we can call them the "Mega-Ultra-Super Train".

Imagine a train so long that if you raced your bike alongside it, you would get exhausted. These trains carry a ton of boxes and packs inside containers. Inside the boxes is everything you can think of! One box might be full of the newest video games. The next box could be full of teddy bears; another box is full of "Minecraft squishes," too! These trains are so tough, they must go right through the middle of giant mountains. How? Tunnels! People made these incredible tunnels. One day, I want to be the engineer who drives that train; it's like the train is a giant mole playing a video game.

Also, there is a port named Crocodile Port. Crocodile Port is a giant parking lot for ships. The ships are very big, and they even look like "Lego Bricks". The coolest thing in the world happens: there are many robotic giraffes with long, metal necks that can stretch taller than the tallest building in town. These robotic giraffes are responsible for picking up all the colourful containers from the ships and carefully placing them onto the trucks and trains. They work all day and all night. The blue container full of sneakers goes this way! The red container full of comic books goes another way. It is the noisiest, busiest, most exciting puzzle you have ever seen.

In addition, Crocodile Port brings a lot of visitors to China from various countries, like Kenya, Italy, and Pakistan. They do not speak the same languages; they use their hands, draw pictures, point at things, and even use apps on their phones to translate, which sometimes say silly things by mistake. Still, this is the best way to solve a problem and communicate well. They also share sweet mangoes, and suddenly they understand each other perfectly! Food is the best language in the world.

Also, there are many buildings with giant cables under the ocean for the kids to watch funny videos. Whoa! We'd wear swimsuits to watch funny videos... It is incredible and unbelievable!

The "Goofy Path" is amazing because it shows that even if we live in different places and eat different delicious foods, we can all work together to build something fascinating. It is the coolest, longest super-highway in the world — and a path of friendship and sharing for the whole world.

The Bride on the Silk Road – Wang Zhaojun

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Tsang, Karen – 10

Family Life

I was born in a poor home with lots of siblings. Six, in fact. Unfortunately, there was a terrible famine in my hometown, and it became very hard to grow crops. We survived on bread and water. **For** this reason, my parents sent me to the Emperor's court to earn some money for the family. Although I was the apple of their eye, they had no choice but to let me go, since I was the eldest child. My beauty was also widely known throughout our small village, so my family, my neighbours, and my friends all believed that I had a good chance of becoming a concubine. Some even joked that I was so beautiful that one day I would become one of the **Four Great Beauties** of China.

Final Goodbyes

On the day I left, I ran around like a headless chicken, packing my belongings and preparing to leave home tearfully. My mother held my hand and said to me, **“Be** brave, Zhaojun. Although it may be only a drop in the bucket, we still must do something for our country.” Her words filled me with mixed feelings. I didn't want to leave home, but for my parents, for my family, for my country, I was willing to go to the palace, come rain or shine. After that, I went around the village to say my final goodbyes. My family and I embraced each other tightly before I set off for the Emperor's court, not knowing when I would see my friends and family again.

Into the Court

When I arrived at the court, I had to sit for a portrait by the royal artist. Everyone knew that if you wanted a beautiful portrait, you had to bribe the painter so that you might have a better chance of becoming a concubine. I had no money, but I believed that my natural beauty would be enough. However, I was **wrong**. I was only given a **lady-in-waiting**, a lowly role, in the court. Although I was down in the dumps, deep down I was secretly relieved, because life as a concubine was dangerous. Some concubines even poisoned each other or each other's babies in order to win the Emperor's favour. During my time in the court, I cultivated an interest in playing the pipa. I practised every day and soon became better and better, until my other **lady-in-waiting** friends also praised me for having a natural talent for the instrument.

The Rise to a Call

One day, when it was raining cats and dogs, an extremely handsome Mongolian prince arrived at the court. He planned to marry a wife from our land to stop the war between our peoples. The Emperor ordered that the portrait of the ugliest girl in the court be shown to the prince. He then announced that he needed a volunteer to marry the prince. His words caught all of us off guard. No one stepped forward, because no one wanted to give up the luxuries of the palace for the harsh life of the Mongolians, with their strange climate, food, clothes and everything. Just then, I suddenly remembered my mother's words: “...we must do something for our country.” I told the matron that I would marry the prince, and I received my reply two days later. I was summoned to see the Emperor! When he saw me, he was taken aback by my beauty. He checked the portrait again and realised that it was truly mine. The Emperor didn't want to give such a beautiful girl to the Mongolians, but he had no choice. A week later, I was sent to the Mongolians, unwillingly, along with servants and many beautiful treasures from China such as silk, jade, music and porcelain. Before I left, my friends warned **me**, **“Be** careful! They eat their meat raw! They are as enormous as elephants and as hairy as baboons! Be careful, be careful!”

Happily Ever After

In the end, I fell deeply in love with the prince, and he loved me to the moon and back. We had three **children** – **one** son (Yituzhiyashi) and two daughters (Subu Juci and Dangyu Juci). Subu Juci, later known as Yun, became a very important political figure in Mongolian history. After our marriage, the bond between Chinese and Mongolians improved enormously, and trade between our peoples became prosperous. The royal artist, who had tried to deceive the Emperor with his portraits, was promptly executed. Because of our marriage, Mongolia is now filled with Chinese goods, culture and music. I also had my **benefits**. I had a happy life with the prince, and I broadened my horizons when I journeyed along the Silk Road to **Mongolia** – **there** were many fascinating places along the way, like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. What an enthralling experience, all because I chose to marry a prince for the sake of my family and my country.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Yip, Ho Lam Anson – 9

Twenty-two centuries ago, under the golden sun of the Tang Dynasty, a little boy named Xin An lived in the bustling oasis city of Dunhuang. Xin An, whose name meant 'peaceful joy', was a small, quick-witted child of twelve with beautiful, glowing eyes that reflected the desert sky. He had never travelled beyond the reach of the city walls and the nearby caves carved into the Mingsha Mountains, where silent, colourful Buddhas watched, lit by flickering lamplight. His world was one of sun-baked walls, the rustle of poplar leaves, and the ever-present scent of dust, sheep's wool, and dye vats.

Xin An spent his days helping his father, Master Lin, a reputable silk weaver. Their workshop was alive with the rhythmic click-clack of looms, producing fine brocades that seemed to capture sunlight within their threads—their work was amazing. Xin An's tasks were humble: preparing the shimmering threads, sorting colours, and cleaning the looms. Yet, in the quiet hours, his father would let him practice on a small, old loom. There, Xin An learned not just the technique, but the language of the weave—how a shift in thread could suggest a cloud, or how a particular blue could hold the exact cool feeling of dawn before the heat descended.

One spring morning, a grand caravan arrived, dust swirling around the feet of the wary Bactrian camels. Among the merchants was an old man named Hakim, a Persian trader whose beard was as white as mountain snow and whose eyes held the weary wisdom of a thousand journeys.

Hakim had a big problem: a crucial bolt of shimmering blue silk, ordered by a noble in Samarkand, had been damaged in a sandstorm. A long, cruel tear ran through its centre, ruining a complex pattern of celestial birds and lotus flowers. Hakim was desperate, as if he had already lost hope. His downcast eyes made him look gloomy; without the silk, his reputation and fortune were ruined.

Xin An, listening from the shadows, saw his chance. His heart thrummed like a loom's shuttle. He stepped forward timidly. 'Master Hakim,' he said, his voice small but steady. 'My father and I can re-weave the pattern. However, it will take several days to finish.'

Hakim was sceptical of the small boy, who barely reached his waist. But Master Lin vouched for his son's skill. Over the next three days, Xin An worked tirelessly. Burning the candle at both ends, his nimble fingers guided by an innate sense of pattern and colour, he re-created the intricate design, matching the dye perfectly to the desert sky at dawn. 'Finally! It looks perfect!'

When Hakim saw the fantastic, finished silk, his eyes widened with relief, then moistened with something deeper than gratitude. Xin An, using both hands to hold the corners of the silk, had a bright smile on his face, beaming with pride in his work. 'You have saved me, Xin An!' he boomed, hugging Xin An tightly as a wave of relief washed over him, and presented the boy with a few golden coins and a beautiful purse—a fortune in the boy's eyes.

But Xin An refused the money. 'I wish only for one thing, Master Hakim,' he said, pushing the coins gently back. 'To travel with you to the next city, to see the world you speak of.'

Hakim looked shocked and surprised. He hesitated but agreed, seeing not just a skilled boy, but a spirit yearning for the horizon. Xin An packed his few belongings, said a tearful goodbye to his father, and joined the caravan as it departed Dunhuang, leaving the familiar green oasis behind for the vast, golden desert.

The journey was challenging. The days were scorching, with a heat that danced in visible waves and leached the moisture from one's bones. The nights were brutally cold, when the stars seemed like chips of ice in a black velvet sky. However, Xin An learned to wrap his face against the wind, conserve water, and sleep rocked by the gentle swaying of the camels. He listened to the songs and stories of the merchants—tales of phantom cities in the dunes, of river spirits, and of mountains that touched the moon. The desert, he learned, was not empty; it was full of stories, carried on the wind.

They travelled for weeks, through treacherous mountain passes and silent salt flats, until they reached the vibrant market city of Turpan, nestled in a depression below sea level. It was a cacophony of languages and smells—

spices from India, glass from Rome, furs from the Northern steppes, all mixing under the sun. The noise was overwhelming, a torrent of commerce and humanity.

Here, Xin An didn't trade silk, he applied the lesson of his own name—peaceful joy. Using the few coins Hakim insisted he take as payment for his weaving, Xin An bought a handful of local, sugary figs and small, brightly painted clay whistles, each capable of a single, pure note.

He walked to the edge of the market where travellers looked most weary. He sat down and began to play a simple, cheerful tune on his whistle. The clear sound cut through the gritty air. Then, he offered the fresh, sweet figs to dusty, tired travellers, holding them out with a small bow.

His bright smile and simple kindness cut through the harsh haggling of the market. People stopped to listen. They shared their own small treats with him, laughed at his simple tunes, and found a moment of 'peaceful joy' in the middle of a hard journey.

Hakim watched from afar, a warm smile on his face. He realised the boy didn't need to be a great merchant to trade the most valuable thing on the Silk Road.

The goods that traversed the desert—silk, spices, and tea—were important, but the true wealth of the road, Hakim realised, was the connection between people. Xin An, through his simple act of kindness, was trading in the currency of the heart, connecting strangers with a moment of shared humanity. The boy named Peaceful Joy had found his calling on the ancient highway of trade.

The Journey of a Piece of Silk

Pui Ching Primary School, Liu, Xiao Tung Sophie – 11

I was a piece of silk made in China and going on a journey to be traded.

From the time I was made, I was told that I am just a commodity which needs to be sold. But my embroiderer Lin Shi told me this is not true. She said, “You have your own mind. You have thoughts and feelings. I can feel you inside!” She was a very smart woman.

We were taken to the merchant. He checked us carefully and chose the silk he wanted. I was one of them. When he held me in his hand, he gasped, “What a lovely, brand-new piece of silk!”

Lin Shi smiled at him. “Yes, sir. She has a spirit. She has feelings inside her.” At first, the merchant was a little shocked, but then, he smiled back. “That’s what I want!” he laughed.

Before I left, Lin Shi instructed me carefully. She taught me what to do, “Silky (my name), make friends, be nice, find your home and take care of yourself. Wish you luck.”

As a “just born” silk, I didn’t understand what her words meant. When I asked her, she just smiled and shook her head. “You will understand it later,” she answered.

I was curious, but I have to find the answer by myself. They put me into a wooden box with other silks. The first silk I saw was a beautiful girl. She was purple, with flowers on her. She must be expensive. I walked to her with a big smile. “I am going to make friends with her.” I thought.

“Hi! My name is Silky! Nice to meet you, can you make friends with me?” That girl silk frowned and thought for a minute. Then she smiled, “Sure! My name is Jing Juan. Nice to meet you too!”

Just then, I heard a negative judgment.

“What a happy little friendship. They never know they are going to be separated. How ridiculous.”

We turned to the voice. She was a green silk with patterns. She sneered at us.

“Do you want to be our friend?” I asked. She stared at us like looking at a weird monster.

“Do you want to be my friend?” I copied my question.

She was silent. Then she sighed, “I had a friend before. She was an optimistic girl. I thought I found my light, but she was sold to a ugly man. I tried to save her, but look at me.”

She showed a corner of herself. We saw a terrible scar on her; she was ripped. I was shocked.

JingJuan sighed deeply. “She was taken away and I would have to hide in the corner to stay here. For years and years, maybe ten years? Every day was the same, hiding and finding my friend.”

It was a heavy topic. We were silent. Afterwards, we became friends, she told us her name was Valeria, it means to be strong. I asked her who named her. She said her best friend Lucilla did. She was very disappointed about her friend and didn’t say anything more about her friend. Later I learned that Lucilla means “light”.

The days in the box were peaceful. The camels walked steadily, sometimes it’s a little hot because of the desert. We told stories, jokes and played together, everything was perfect until one morning.

We heard something weird, footsteps from a lot of people. Suddenly, screams and yells rang out. Violent fights broke out all over the desert camp.

“What happened?” asked JingJuan. Valeria frowned, then she cried in panic and terrified: “It’s the desert robbers! Hide now! Or then you will be ripped into pieces.” We put twigs and sand on us, pretending we are just a useless box that was mixed with the other ones accidentally.

The robbers smashed the boxes, killed the camels left and burned the treasures they didn’t want.

“What should we do? We are going to be burned!” cried JingJuan.

“We should sneak out and hide. The merchant must have run away. If the robber didn’t notice us, maybe we can just wait for the merchant to come back later.”

We had no options but to do this. Valeria opened the box carefully. I can hear the screams from the other boxes.

We sneaked out. When JingJuan came out, the robbers found her! They picked her up and took her away.

“We are going to save her.” I said.”

“No! we’re not going to do this!” yelled Valeria,

“We have to.” I said. “Because she is our friend.” She became speechless, then she sighed and shook her head. “Let’s go to the sand hole where they hide the treasures.” I smiled, then we started following the footsteps.

When we finally arrived there, it was a day later. We heard weak cries for help. “JingJuan! We are here to rescue you!” I shouted.

“Silky? Valeria? Is that really you?”

“Yes! Come down!” She climbed off the gold “mountain”. But the robbers must have heard something.

“Who is there?” shouted one. Hundreds of people rushed into the cave. We secretly sneaked out of the cave and then we closed the door. The robbers were all stuck inside! We heard curses inside. As fast as we could, we ran to the hut. Inside, I saw our old friend, camel Matteo. We all rode on him.

“Run, Matteo! Run to the merchant! Run away!” said Valeria.

As we ran, the robbers chased us. But they all gave up when we were too far from them. We never knew how long it took, but we arrived in Rome!

“Look! Valeria! Look! It’s Rome! Isn’t it?” I screamed excitedly.

We never met the merchant again, but our story was famous in Rome. They called us “The Silks with Spirit”. Even the Emperor asked us for a book!

“Sure! Why not?” We smiled.

“I’m going to name it ‘The Journey of a Piece of Silk’!”

Fangs

Pui Ching Primary School, Ng, Yin Ting Triton – 11

Fangs snapping, throat hissing, a cobra was slithering forwards when an iron knife flew through the sand filled air, towards the cobra.

A deep growl emitted from the cobra's mouth, a last dying cry, with a knife ending its life.

"Fresh food, anybody?" Nico was daydreaming when he heard a salesman calling out to passersby.

"A town must be near." Nico thought excitedly, he whipped his horse Inferno, going towards the call.

The desert was vast, surrounded by sand dunes, it was like a scorching summer, extremely hot and dry, a place where a living thing can barely live. Inferno was struggling to keep itself galloping when finally, they spotted an oasis.

When they got closer, Nico realized it was an illusion.

He saw rows and rows of snakes, behind a gang of thieves. Inferno ran away out of fright, flipping Nico off his horse, slamming into the ground.

A man was wearing loose and layered clothing with pieces of bright copper armor covering his shoulders and chests. "Capture him!" The gang leader hissed. Rows and rows of snakes moved simultaneously, slithering towards their prey.

Galloping suddenly came from the east, it was Inferno, he had come to save Nico once again. Inferno charged at the rows of snakes. Snakes were dropping left and right.

Suddenly, a snake sank its teeth into Inferno's leg. A cry emitted from Nico's beloved horse. Even in pain, the brave horse kept fighting until all the snakes had fallen.

Nico ran towards Inferno, who had collapsed from the snake poison.

"No." Nico cried; he knew his horse was dying from the snake poison. "Don't die, Inferno." And after that Inferno closed his eyes forever.

"What am I going to do?" Nico thought, "I have to deliver the Emerald Vase in two months. A month has already passed. If I can't deliver it, Emperor Hadrian said my family's going to die, Emperor Shun needs it for his son's wedding."

After lots of thinking, Nico came up with the idea of pretending to be a thief, join one of the thieves' groups and steal their horses. Nico knew it was risky, but he didn't have another choice.

Nico journeyed all day through the desert, and after night had fallen, he finally found a group of thieves.

But first, Nico had to hide the vase. For if the thieves found it, they would discover he was delivering it for the emperor and steal it. Nico decided the best place to hide it was in a bag, with sand over it.

Feeling very nervous, Nico went up to the group of thieves named The Furiosos and introduced himself as a fellow thief.

The thieves were suspicious of Nico at first but after Nico told his made-up story of how he had gotten there, the group of thieves accepted him.

After a day of staying with the thieves, Nico asked them, "Can I borrow one of your horses to travel to Chang'an?"

"Of course!" They replied, "But we'll have to ride with you."

Nico was climbing onto one of the horses when a thief by the name of Gilgamesh, picked up Nico's bag and asked if he could look inside. Nico panicked and instantly said no to Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh asked Nico, “Why aren’t you letting me look in your bag? What’s so important there that you don’t want us to know about?”

“Nothing you need to worry about,” Nico replied, “It’s just something I stole.”

“Oh really? It seems to me you’re hiding something from us. I’ll be keeping an eye on you. You have my word on that.”

“Well, that went well,” Nico thought, “What am I supposed to do with him keeping an eye on me?” He decided to stay with the group for now, and make a plan to escape without them knowing.

With Nico and the group of thieves going towards Chang’an for a few hours, they decided to rest for the night.

Suddenly, Nico was approached by The Furiosos.

“Gilgamesh here says that you have something in your bag that you don’t want to show us,” says their leader Enki, “I’m afraid you’re going to have to show us this item if you want to stay with us.”

Nico had two choices he could think of: run away, or let the thieves have the Emerald Vase.

Nico ran as fast as he could. The thieves instantly started chasing after Nico.

“Don’t let him get away,” yelled Enki, “he has something important in his bag.”

Nico looked behind him for a moment and saw that the thieves were closing in on him fast. He looked around for anything. There, the horses.

The thieves were close behind him, but Nico managed to climb onto a horse and had already gone by the time the group of thieves arrived.

Nico felt relieved that he had managed to escape successfully. Now he could continue on his journey. Counting the days, he realized that he only had two weeks of time left.

Nico traveled tirelessly through the desert, sometimes not even sleeping or eating. However, he had managed to reach Chang’an in time with a week to spare, though that day had to be used to make his way back to the Roman empire.

Making his way towards the palace he saw many people selling and buying goods. When he had made his way into the palace, he presented Emperor Shun with the vase.

“Emperor Shun, here is the Emerald Vase from Emperor Hadrian,” said Nico.

After that, Emperor Shun called for Nico to give Emperor Hadrian a letter of gratitude. Nico felt proud of himself for finishing the quest given by Emperor Hadrian, now he only needed to make it back to the Roman empire in time.

When Nico was prepared, he climbed onto his horse, and rode off towards the Roman empire and his home as fast as he could.

The Gate of Time

Pui Ching Primary School, Qin, Tsz Long – 11

Camels' braying, sounds of footsteps filled the air. Tom Liu, who wore an orange jumper, fell on the sand and said, "Wow, why am I here?"

Tom saw a weird stranger wearing flowing, layered robes, wide sleeves and crossed lapels stood on a hill and looked at him kindly and asked, "Hey child, are you lost?"

Tom went to that man and asked to borrow his phone. The man scratched his head and asked, "What is a phone?"

He was shocked and thought, "Huh, he doesn't know what a phone is?"

Earlier that night, Tom saw a mysterious purple star-shaped mark on the floor. He was curious and stepped on it and it turned into a swirling vortex of colors and lights. Then, he was in a tunnel that was filled with purples, blues, hints of pink and with images of historical events. Then, he fell down and landed on the sand.

As the kind stranger left him, Tom thought, "Why am I in the desert?"

Tom found a special rock that emitted a holy aura next to him and pocketed it. He walked alone in the desert; his lips were as dry as rocks. He screamed in despair, "Where is the water? I want to go home!" Tom fainted.

Two scavengers, one looked very tall and skinny and the other looked short but full of muscles, spotted him and came over. One of them said, "Hey! You are finally here. We are your great-ancestors. Did you see that special rock? It controls time."

Tom decided not to say anything because he didn't trust him.

The tall and skinny one said, "You can call me John. I was the one who pulled you back. This is my buddy, Charlie."

"Why did you pull me back here and how did you do it?" Tom asked them.

John answered, "I need you to help me get the Warp Stone. I want to see what the future looks like. And I used the Warp Stone to pull you back."

John told Tom, "While Nu Wa was busy mending the sky with her incredible powers, she skillfully shaped a special rock known as the Warp Stone, a magical object that could transport people through space and time."

John was sweating and avoiding eye contact. Something felt wrong, but Tom had no clue what it could be.

They felt very tired so they decided to rest in an inn.

Charlie was acting very suspicious. He was always not with Tom and John and he always looked at Tom greedily.

The next day, when Tom woke up, he discovered that he was robbed. He moaned, "Oh my gosh! My wallet and my watch. But luckily my stone wasn't stolen."

Tom found a bracelet near him, the one that Charlie wore earlier today.

"Did Charlie drop his bracelet?" Tom thought. He woke John up and went to Charlie's room together to question Charlie.

Tom stormed into Charlie's room and shouted, "Hey Charlie, why did you steal my wallet and watch?"

Charlie froze for a moment, his eyes darted nervously. He smashed the window with his elbow, grabbed a bag stuffed with belongings, and leapt out, disappearing into the night.

Confused and angry, Tom turned around and saw John standing nearby. Narrowing his eyes, Tom demanded, "You were the one who planned this, weren't you? You stole my things, right?"

John's face went pale. He stood stunned, struggling to find words. He stammered, "What... do... you... mean?"

"I suspected something was wrong. First, when you were telling me about the Warp Stone and wanting to see the future, you were very nervous. Second, your bag is very full. I bet it's stolen goods, including my wallet and watch."

John laughed, "Very clever. I admit that I was the one who stole your property. I want to travel to the future to sell the Silk Road's goods I've been "collecting" as antiques. I will make twenty times its value."

Tom asked, "Why did you pull me back to the past?"

John continued, "There's a price for a person to travel to the future. To travel to the future, someone from that person's bloodline will be returned to the past. One for one. In a moment, the Gate of Time will open for one person to pass through... Me!"

As John let out an evil cackle, the Gate of Time began to glow and open.

John laughed loudly, sounding wild, "That little child is going to stay here forever."

Tom knew he had only seconds before the glowing portal closed. Just as John stepped forward, Tom dashed and threw himself at him with all his strength.

Both of them crashed to the ground, rolling in a messy tangle of arms and legs. John shouted angrily and reached for Tom's neck but Tom twisted away just in time. He kicked John hard on his leg.

"Argh!" John cried, clutching his leg. But he wasn't finished. John swung his fist at Tom, who dodged it quickly. The punch missed, hitting the floor with a loud thud.

Tom jumped back to his feet, breathing hard. John scrambled up too, his eyes blazing with fury. He charged at Tom like a bull. Tom sidestepped and shoved John's shoulder, making him stumble.

John growled again, this time tackling Tom to the ground. *Thud!* John pinned him down, but Tom wriggled free and pushed John in the side.

Both of them stood again, breathing hard, sweat dripped down their faces. The portal behind them flickered, glowing brighter and simmered like it was alive. Tom knew he had to end this fight quickly—or they would both be dragged into the unknown.

He quickly fainted him and without wasting a second, Tom rushed and leapt through the Gate of Time. Bright light surrounded him, and suddenly he landed on his own bed, back in 2026.

Tom laid there, breathing hard but smiling, "I am glad it's finally over." he whispered, feeling safe at last.

60 Days on the Silk Road

Pui Ching Primary School, Tang, Chi Chung – 11

“John, you are going to draw a map of the Silk Road. The deadline for this assignment: 60 days only, including the trip back. Your family will be executed if you haven’t finished before the deadline.” announced Emperor Taizong. The emperor was old and had deep wrinkles, but was a strong muscled man, full of confidence. His eyes were sharp swords, staring down at John.

As John stepped out from the city gates with his luggage, his tears slid down to his chin. He took a deep breath, his legs being a motor again.

The first few days in the Taklamaken desert were hard. “My family is counting on me. I must finish the map to save them.” John thought.

The sand of the whole Taklamaken desert covered his lungs, every single breath of dry, hot air.

Ten days had gone by. John scanned around the surrounding sand dunes with panda eyes. The eight mountains with sand surrounded him, one dune after the other.

“Where is everyone? I want to lie down and give up!” asked John, “I am serious.” His face looked bitter.

John grew too tired. He decided to sleep a while first to refill his energy. “You might wake up 1 hour later!” reminded himself before he fell asleep.

A wind full of sand was blown, it punched on John’s nose. He fainted immediately.

The next morning, John realized he forgot to mark the roads on the map yesterday. Luckily, he remembered some important details. He slid down to the bottom of the sand hill. He took out the unfinished sheepskin maps with a few carvings and laid out the map flat on the ground. He put a very sharp stone on the map, carefully carving lines to mark the roads.

He worked on the map for a while. As he finished, he sighed because he was so far from finishing the road map of the Silk Road.

John contemplated how to speed up his work. He dropped his head down in tears. As he came up for a deep breath, he suddenly saw merchants traveling on camels. Those merchants slowly stopped down and took a rest.

“Thank god, I love you so much!” whispered John. He wrapped a scarf and hid his face. He dawdled until he was near those merchants. He looked around for a while, and dashed towards the camels. With a perfect jump, he rode away on a camel.

“I finally don’t need to walk!” John yelled. He suddenly thought of an idea, “Why don’t I finish the map on the way back to China?”

He sat on his camel, the sheepskin map spread on his thigh, verifying how many areas he hadn't finished mapping yet. He set twenty miles a day, and as he travelled fourteen days, he started at the endpoint—Bukhara, and the map from the endpoint all the way back to China.

It was the perfect plan, but the sun was setting. John slept immediately.

As John looked at the stars hanging in the sky, a light breeze blew. A gale of wind swept through the desert, then silence came afterwards. The sand almost covered John, forming around John’s breath. He fell asleep in the soft, cool sand in the peaceful night.

With a good night's sleep, John woke up and rode on his camel at dawn, rushing to Bukhara as fast as possible. After three days of rushing, John finally arrived at Bukhara.

John carved 'Bukhara' at the endpoint on his map. He bought a reed pen and a pot of ink and had lunch at Bukhara. He gained fresh energy starting from his toes, soles, calves, up to his thighs. He continued his trip, riding the camel even faster. He marked branches of the roads in detail, day and night.

Several days later, he almost arrived at the boundary of China—Kashgar. John counted the days again. "Oh my goodness! I just have five days left. How can I rush to the palace?" shouted John with confusion.

"What am I going to do?" John screamed as he arrived at the Kashgar gates. John walked to the guard politely, with a brilliant smile, "Can you please give me a horse? I am the messenger for the Emperor." John murmured to the guard.

The guard waved a flag, and the city gate opened. From inside the gates came a horse with strong muscles and long legs. John put on his luggage, his legs pressing from both sides of the horse. The horse neighed, running as quick as it could through the cities, from Qinghai, Ningxia, Dunhuang, Shaanxi and finally, Changan.

Finally, John arrived at Emperor Taizong's court. He dropped down in front of the emperor, "My lord, may you release my family?" John beseeched with a waving voice and a face of tears.

The emperor opened his palm, without a look to John. John presented the map with both hands. The scholar stood beside the Emperor, grasping the map. He looked at it seriously, "It is finished, and quite detailed, my lord", reported the scholar.

The Emperor nodded his head, "Did you think I'd really kill your family?"

"My lord, you are the most benevolent." praised John.

The Emperor looked at the servant beside him. The servant helped John up, and took him out of the court.

"Follow me." whispered the servant politely as he led him to the prison.

"Number 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, you are approved to leave!" shouted the servant loudly. From behind the huge walls. John heard the sound of opening metal doors. "Tap, tap, tap, tap," with the sounds of walking, his family came out.

The servant smiled at John, "Congratulations," whispered the servant.

John looked at his family as they came out at the corridor exit. Their faces were smiling.

John rushed to them and hugged them with his long arms. He felt a bitterness in his throat, but his heart was warm.

The Magical Silk

Pui Ching Primary School, Wong, Tsz Yau – 11

"Hi, I am Scarlet! Please take me out."

Luna was flabbergasted and stunned. After a second or two, she pulled the silk out of her box.

"Hi! I am Luna Lui. You can call me Luna. I have so many questions. How are you alive? What is your name? Who made you? A witch? Or... a genie? " Luna asked the silk with curiosity.

The silk sat on Luna's lap and said mysteriously, "You will find out."

Luna didn't ask Scarlet about it anymore. Instead, they drifted into talking about their hobbies and soon discovered they shared favorites, like drama, reading, singing. Their laughter filled the space, and the way they shared stories made their connection feel genuine. Their friendship grew stronger and stronger. Their eyes sparked with the excitement of finding someone who truly understood them.

After a while, Luna got out of the wagon and held Scarlet tightly in her hands. She knew that the powerful Roman emperor would want this silk for himself. She walked towards a man in blue robes and asked, "Excuse me, are you a Taoist priest?"

The man looked at her with surprise. "Yes, I am. My name is Zhuang Li. Who are you? And what can I help you with?"

Luna took a deep breath and explained, "I am Luna, and I am going to London to trade some porcelain and silk. I discovered my silk is magical. Can you help me find another one that's the same colour and style? So I don't need to sell this one."

Zhuang Li's eyes sparkled with delight, he asked, "Can you sell it to me? I really want it. I can give you anything you want, money, jewelry, gold... How about a wish? I can make it come true!"

Luna held Scarlet tightly and said, "I won't give it to you! You said you wouldn't take it away!" The Taoist priest reached for it to steal it but Luna rushed back to the carriage and shouted to Samuel, "Keep going! The Taoist priest wants to steal my silk!"

Samuel pulled the bridle and the horse galloped away like lightning through the city. Luna looked behind as the priest chased the carriage like crazy.

Suddenly, the sun beamed into her eyes. Luna squeezed her eyes shut. When she opened her eyes again, Zhuang Li was gone. Gone. Luna didn't care and sat down. She closed her eyes and rested for a while. Scarlet snuggled into Luna's lap. The wind blew gently at Luna's face as she fell into a deep sleep.

When Luna opened her eyes unwittingly and looked at her lap, Scarlet was gone! Luna's heart pounded. She quickly asked Samuel to stop the carriage beside the market and started searching.

"Scarlet? Where are you?" Luna whispered to herself. She checked the wooden box, and the wagon but no Scarlet. "NO, SCARLET! WHERE ARE YOU?" Luna screamed from the top of her throat.

Her heart pounded.

"Scarlet?" she whispered, searching the wagon. The magical voice was gone. Gone. Luna was downhearted. She laid down on her seat and thought deeply, "Where is Scarlet? Is she just an imaginary friend? Like an illusion or something?"

Suddenly, a spark of light appeared in front of Luna. A voice echoed through Luna's head, a familiar voice, Scarlet's voice.

The voice echoed, "Help me! It's Scarlet! I was stolen and now trapped in a really bad situation, with lots of sharp stuff near me. I don't want to be cut or pierced!"

Luna was shocked and thought, "Am I having auditory hallucinations?" Luna shook her head and sigh.

The voice echoed again, "Luna, it's not an illusion. I am being kidnapped. Help me!"

Luna had so many questions, but she didn't care and searched for Scarlet once again. She looked into her accessory bag that had her earrings inside. She looked at the rear boot and the storage box, but still, no sign of Scarlet. Just as she was about to rest on the carriage, she spotted a little spark of light in the little abandoned alley in the market. She snuck to the alley and saw Zhuang Li holding a pair of scissors with his bony fingers in a workshop.

Overwhelmed, Luna screamed, "Put her down! She's my friend!"

Zhuang Li twisted his head and looked at Luna with an evil grin, "Child, you don't understand, this silk contains a spirit that will let me be an almighty god."

Luna whispered to herself, "I must save Scarlet."

She banged open the door and clung onto Zhuang Li.

As Zhuang Li spun over to the other side and punched Luna, he let go of Scarlet carelessly.

Luna dodged aside. She grabbed onto Scarlet and tears rolled down on her cheeks.

Luna cried, "I thought you were gone forever!"

A tear dropped onto Scarlet. Scarlet was overwhelmed with Luna's emotion and glowed in a bright light and floated away from Zhuang Li. She used her powers and pushed Zhuang Li back. Scarlet clutched on Luna and they ran away together.

Luna jumped on the carriage and asked Samuel to pull the bridle. When Zhuang Li caught up, the carriage was already gone. He cried in rage.

Sitting on the carriage, Luna asked, "Actually, who are you? And how did you talk to me just now?"

Scarlet didn't hide anymore and said, "I am a White Phoenix. I made this silk for me to put my spirit in. We can talk through our minds because our friendship is so strong. Let's rest."

Luna yawned and rested her head against the carriage window as Scarlet's golden shimmer turned to a soft silver light.

"You will stay, right?" Luna murmured sleepily.

"Of course. I'm your friend now. We will stay with each other and share laughter and tears every second."

Under the golden sun, a girl with her magical silk, a friendship bound by trust, laughter and cooperation. The kind of magic that can only be created by a pair of besties.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Alfarra, Insherah – 11

Thirty-five thousand years ago, there was a girl named Sabrina. One day, she wanted to go to the infamous Silk Road. At that time, she just handmade some new keychains. Therefore, she begged her sister, Olivia to come with her, and they decided to use their parents' caravan. They put the handmade keychains in a green pouch, then put the bag on the caravan. 'Do you know how to drive this thing? Well, because I can't,' Sabrina asked. Olivia sighed, 'Oh fine, I will drive. But I get to sell while you stay in the caravan!' Sabrina groaned and rolled her eyes, annoyed.

On the way, they sped to the center of Silk Road, Mongolia. However, they didn't realize that they were going too fast, like a struck of lightning. Therefore, they didn't realize that the pouch fell, it landed on a merchant's carriage. The merchant was picking his tooth with a toothpick. When he turned his head just to see the pouch. He saw two girls in a caravan, he thought the pouch was theirs. Therefore, he chased them in a hurry. When they stopped, the merchant was out of breath. He panted heavily "You girls have dropped your pouch. I think this is yours. It has a name 'Sabrina'. Is this either of you guys? If yes, please take it!" The girls looked at him and smiled. 'Thanks a lot! We didn't know we had dropped it. Take this bee keychain as a gift for your honesty!' The man smiled until his cheeks hurt. The girls realized that it was getting late and they said farewell to the merchant and left.

'What an amazing day!' they both agreed. From that day on, they looked back at this humorous incident.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Chan, Chin Ha – 10

Today was a beautiful day on the Modern Silk Road of China, the sun's warmth was just right and the air was dustless.

Suddenly, a terrible sandstorm was trembling in the whole sky! It was caused by a UFO (Unknown Flying Object)! When it landed, a dozen aliens and weird creatures came out! But unexpectedly, they were not ugly or scary as I thought. They were just detecting some traditional food for their country in space. I decided to help them.

But then, I felt dizzy, my eyes were blurry and I passed out. When I woke up, I realized the aliens saved me with their medicine. It was very useful! But a problem stopped us on our tracks. We had no food or water resources! I freaked out, but the aliens didn't. They told me their names, they were called Saldours. I was shocked. I didn't expect them to tell me their name.

We continued walking on the Silk Road until the end to fetch some traditional Chinese food for them. It was very hot, and of course dry. When I looked up, I saw the sun melting! That's why it was so hot! There was lava dropping from the sky! I panicked and told Saldours about the consequences of hot weather and about the sun. They panicked too, as we were running away from the drops of lava.

Suddenly, they stopped. They had a plan. They jumped on a weird and twisted flying train that works with flames and extreme heat. In less than a second, we were flying above the sky!

Finally, we got rid of the lava drops. And we arrived too! I helped Saldours pretend to be human and used diamonds and gold to achieve our goal of getting traditional Chinese food. We were very happy to taste it and help the aliens! They helped me get back to my home too.

When I finally had to say goodbye to Saldours, I couldn't bear it anymore, I let out drops of tears and hugged them between my laps. I will miss them!

After this day, I will never forget them, even if they were already in another world.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Chan, Wan Tung Anna – 10

Once upon a time, a nine-year-old girl loved history. Her parents were satisfied with her history exam grades. The girl's mother always said, "If there was a time machine, I would take Cindy on a journey through time so she could learn more about history. What a pity there was no time machine!" Cindy's parents always hoped for Cindy to have full marks in her history exam.

Cindy's parents tried every possible means to find a time machine but all they got in return was disappointment. One day, it was time for the history exam on the next day so Cindy's dad asked Cindy to watch a history movie about the Silk Road after reviewing. When Cindy was watching the movie, a miracle happened! A light and small door suddenly appeared from the TV, "Please come in, you will have an unforgettable and meaningful adventure inside." "Oh my god, a speaking door!" shouted Cindy in a scared voice. However, she didn't have time to think about it, because the door had already "sucked" her in like a magnet.

Cindy was very scared so she kept her eyes tightly closed. Then she heard, "Quickly, better be in a hurry, we need to be faster. I don't want the highness to scold us." When Cindy heard some people speaking, she forgot to be scared. She looked around and tried to find the source of the sound. After a while, Cindy found a lot of people, camels and horses! It looked like the man with the cloak was the leader of all these people. Cindy mustered up courage, she ran to the man and asked, "Hi there, may I please ask where am I?" But that person seemed to treat her as if she didn't exist, not even glancing at her. "Hi!" Cindy spoke again, but it looked like the man didn't even see her. At that moment, Cindy broke down. She felt very afraid and helpless.

Suddenly, a voice from the sky said, "Cindy, you are now invisible, don't be scared, just relax your adventure of the Silk Road." Cindy heard it and was shocked; however, she had no choice but to obey the "mission" of that voice. Cindy remembered, the Silk Road runs from Europe through Egypt, Somalia, Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Javan Islands and Philippines to China. Go through Continent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and China. At the 38th World Heritage Committee meeting held in Duha, the Silk Road, together with the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, was listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO too. The items received from the West on the Silk Road include spices such as incense, sandalwood, frankincense, myrrh, lilac, pepper, gemstones and minerals such as amber, agate, glaze, crystal, ivory and jade. Crops such as grapes, walnuts, cucumbers, carrots and hems. As well as medicinal materials and camel skins. In addition, at the level of cultural exchange, many works of art, technologies, animals and plants have also been introduced, such as some textile technologies, music, dance, and more. Cindy never imagined she would witness such a momentous occasion!

Cindy followed the man for a long walk, but those people seemed like they hadn't gotten to their destination. Under the resplendent and scorching hot sun, Cindy had a mouth like sandpaper, and her belly was issuing remonstrance. She thought, 'Being a modern person is better than being an ancient person.' When Cindy wanted to give up, she heard some noise, "Thanks for your crystal. Here's your paper." Seems like the "Cloak Man" was to conduct transactions with a man in the kurta and the shalwar. He had a turban on his head too. It looked like this man was from India. Cindy went close to the man, she covered her mouth excitedly because she saw many gorgeous crystals! Now she knows that crystal was from the Silk Road. Maybe her mum's crystal bracelets were from here too!

"The next stop is..." Cindy thought. She followed the man all the way to a place like Egypt. A woman in the kalasiris and with jewelry and wigs as decoration. That woman gave some gold to the man, and he returned some porcelain to her. Cindy had glee in her eyes. Wow, shiny gold! The next place was Pakistan. A woman in a chador received a lot of tea leaves from the 'Cloak Man' and gave back some wool. Oh, cozy wool! How about next? Somalia? Arabian Peninsula? India? No, it is Sri Lanka! A man dressed up in a sarong got some silk from the 'Cloak Man' and switched some textiles with him. Textiles? Not bad!

Now Cindy, the 'Cloak Man' and his subordinates were heading to Central Asia. A person from Central Asia gave a whole bunch of medicinal herbs to exchange for some lacquerware from China. "Is that the medicine I eat when I'm sick? I don't want to eat bitter medicine!" Cindy showed a look of disgust. Then they went to Somalia. That woman used a lot of ivory to permutate China's special handicrafts. What is ivory? Were that elephant's teeth? Afterward, they went to the Arabian Peninsula. The 'Arabian Peninsula Man' used lots of grapes, pomegranates and more fruits to swap tea from the 'Cloak Man'. Apples, bananas, oranges, longans...a lot of delicious and juicy fruits! Yum yum! The next place was...oh, let us guess, this place was quite poor, and this place always has persistent natural disasters. Could you guess where it was? Yes, you're right, it was Afghanistan. The 'Cloak Man' used Chinese paper technology to swap some sesame, carrot, cucumber with a man in the burqa. Sesame? Carrot? Cucumber? Not as yummy as fruits. After that, Cindy followed 'Cloak Man' to Iran. The 'Iran Man' asked 'Cloak Man' for bronze and returned some cinnamon and ginger. I knew about Cinnamoroll

but I didn't know about cinnamon. Next they went to Egypt. A man in the cottage gave gold and silverware and perfume to 'Cloak Man' and he gave back woodblock printing technology to him. Give me gold and silverware!

Afterwards, they went to Myanmar. The 'Myanmar Woman' wanted ironware from China and used rubber to exchange. Did rubber mean eraser? Then Cindy and the 'Cloak Man' went to the Java Islands. A man from the Java Islands received a lot of copper coins and returned a lot of silver. This reminded Cindy, she thought, "I need to ask mum for pocket money when I go back. My money!" Finally, they went to the Philippines. A man in the barong Tagalog gave 'Cloak Man' some sweet potatoes, tobacco, corn and peanuts. The 'Cloak Man' gave back some silk fabrics to him. Sweet potatoes, corn and peanuts were great, but tobacco was very bad. Don't give me that!

Suddenly, a strong light covered Cindy and she flew up in the sky, she closed her eyes again. After a while, a voice said, "Cindy, time for lunch." Lunch? Cindy opened her eyes and looked around, she saw a TV in front of her and everything around her were the things in her house. "Oh I'm back! Yay!" Cindy couldn't wait to share her adventure with her family. Now she is very busy writing her diary. I hope she can have another unforgettable adventure soon!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Chung, Hoi Man – 9

Once upon a time, there was a guy named Mei. He was only 27 years old, and he lived in a small village. He was a Chinese person trying to trade a silk scarf from China to Spain. However, the road was too long. When you try to walk on it, you will die from exhaustion.

Mei used a camel because it would take less than one hundred days. He started his journey from China to Spain. A few days later, he was bored but he was still determined to trade the silk scarf for the spices. Mei kept going and he said to himself, 'I must keep going and I will never give up even when something bad happens. I will keep going.' However, that was not going to last for too long.

Then, at halfway when he was sleeping at night, he suddenly woke up and he found out his camel was missing. He searched everywhere but he could not find his camel. He was down in the dumps. The next morning, a merchant was passing by. He saw Mei crying and he asked, 'What is happening and why are you crying?' Mei replied, 'I lost my camel and I am trying to trade a silk scarf for the spices, but now I can't trade it anymore!' The merchant thought for a moment and he suggested, 'How about this? You give me a silk scarf and I will give you a camel.' Mei nodded immediately. Once he got the camel, his face lit up. After finishing the trade, he continued with his journey.

Finally, at the final one hundred miles, suddenly a sandstorm was approaching and Mei was horrified. He quickly put on his safety mask. He was scared that he would end his life but thankfully he kept body and soul together. Therefore, Mei walked and walked and slowly it was getting closer. Mei could see the trader at the very end. First Mei requested the spices and the trader said, 'Not only that I will give you the spices, I will give you two spices and one silk scarf. Once the trader said that, Mei was delighted.

However, things went wrong at night. Some robbers came into his house and stole every single spice and silk scarf. The robber did not even leave a penny. When Mei woke up, he was heartbroken because he did not know where the silk scarf and stuff were. The next day, his friends found the robber. Mei quickly shouted, 'Police!' Therefore, the robber got arrested and Mei finally got his things back. He was on cloud nine.

In the end, Mei earned a big fortune, but he did not spend the money alone. He shared it with everybody in the village and his family. He is humble, as always.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Fung, Fong Mael Matthew – 10

High in the Pamir Mountains of the Silk Road, where the ancient routes twisted through dangerous passes, a young woman named Ayla guided travelers using her deep knowledge of the stars and terrain, a vital skill for safe passage.

Ayla's goal was to guide a caravan of scholars safely to a famous library in Samarkand. Her habit was consulting an old, cracked astrolabe every night to verify their position, a gift from her grandfather who had been a famous guide.

One evening, a sudden, heavy snowfall obscured all known landmarks and the stars themselves, leaving the caravan lost and morale dropping rapidly in the freezing conditions.

Remembering stories of how ancient travelers survived in blizzards by following natural water runoff paths down the mountain valleys, Ayla used her intuition to find a frozen stream bed and guided the group along it until they reached a known shelter.

Ayla felt a profound sense of relief and wisdom. The scholars were safe and grateful, recording her ingenuity in their journals. This is not just a story about a journey; it is a new tale about relying on ancient wisdom and instinct to overcome the Silk Road's challenges.

An Unforgettable Day for Janice and Mandy

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Fung, Tsz Ching – 11

One sunny morning, Janice and Mandy were walking on the Silk Road. They were going to buy some snacks which were as soft as silk. They raised their eyebrows and walked with bouncy steps. However, they didn't know that the road was full of danger.

Everything was going well until Janice and Mandy saw something strange on the road. Then, they walked to it curiously. After they saw what it was, their hands were shaking and their minds went blank because it was a big monster. Luckily, it was sleeping well.

The monster was ugly. It had ten big eyes, three large mouths but it didn't have any legs! Suddenly, it got up. When Janice and Mandy saw it, they ran away as fast as lightning. However, the monster said gently, 'Don't run! I will not eat you! Don't be afraid of me!' Janice and Mandy were shocked. They couldn't believe their ears. Then Mandy asked, 'Really? Can you help us find the snacks as soft as silk?' The monster nodded its head and answered, 'Of course! You can find them in the bear's cave. However, the bear is very fierce. Good luck!' Janice and Mandy thanked it gratefully.

After a while, they found the bear's dark cave and they shouted loudly, 'Hello Miss Bear, we hear you are selling some snacks that are as soft as silk. Can we buy some?' Just then, something unexpected happened. Miss Bear walked to them and replied, 'Here you are.' Their jaws dropped since Miss Bear's voice was as sweet as honey and she was very pretty! They asked, 'Miss Bear, why did the monster say you were fierce? You do not look fierce!' 'Last month, I was as fierce as a tiger but this month I turned a new leaf. I decided to be gentle.' After listening to what she said, Miss Bear gave them some free snacks as soft as silk. They thanked Miss Bear gratefully and went home happily with their snacks.

What an unforgettable day for Janice and Mandy.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Lai, Wing Hei – 11

Once upon a time, there was a girl called Yunjin that loved going around the world and traveling. One day, she went on the one and only Silk Road. Usually, she travels the world for fun and entertainment, but this time, she was sent by the president to go overseas to Europe to do some trading.

Everything was going well and perfect until she got into a sticky situation. The weather was terrible on the way to Europe. It was stormy, rainy, winds were blowing the ship left and right, the waves were heavy and scary. Yunjin rushed to the captain's side of the ship and recommended that he stop at an island until the weather gets better.

Thankfully, all of them successfully landed on the island safely. But they needed to figure out a way to survive with the remaining amount of food for the next few days. The storm doesn't look like it'll go away within two days, and all the prepared food was eaten by everyone in the past few days. Yunjin had a suggestion, 'How about we all go around the island in pairs of two and meet up back here in an hour? Otherwise, we won't have enough food to survive in the next few days.' Everyone agreed and they paired up and went to the island to find items that are edible.

An hour later, everyone gathered back where they all were before, none of them were able to find any edible items except for Yunjin; she was able to find some pineapple, strawberries, bread and many other natural ingredients to eat. She gathered some wooden sticks and made a fire.

In the next few days, all of them had survived all thanks to Yunjin's efforts, if she wasn't here, they would have starved. Thankfully, the storm stopped after three days, and they were able to complete their adventure on the Silk Road. They continued their adventure on the Silk Road and arrived in Europe to trade with each other.

After a month, Yunjin arrived back in China after completing her mission. This adventure would always remain unforgettable and valuable for her. That is what she enjoys most about going on different adventures. She likes having challenges as it teaches her how to live without relying on anyone. It also teaches her how to face different situations while staying calm and composed.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Leung, Yi Nga – 10

Wow! There was a cat on the Silk Road desert! Who is it? Her name is Penny and she had a great time on the Silk Road.

Penny has a poor family, but she is optimistic because they have a lot of silk. She always thought that one day they would be rich. 'Penny, you are 18 years old now. You can go to the Silk Road and swap useful things for our family!' Mum said excitedly. Penny was over the moon, and she jumped up and down so she packed her suitcase quickly and she skipped and hopped to the Silk Road.

The next day, she finally came to the Silk Road with her horse. 'Oh my! The road is so long, I need to ride my horse for a long time, it will be tiring!' Penny was shocked. She rode her horse along the road.

The first day, they went to Luoyang to swap some paper and draw some pictures. However, she rode and rode but she couldn't find Luoyang. She brought out the map and looked. 'I walked the wrong way! I need to go back the opposite way.' Penny shouted loudly. Again, they walked for a long time. Finally, they found a wooden plank. She picked it up and she saw that it said Luoyang. She's over the moon with stars in her eyes and when they finished swapping things it was nighttime. Penny found a place to sleep casually.

The next morning, Penny woke up early. 'Oh my god! Where is my horse?' Penny yelled. She ran quickly and her face was turning red. Soon, she saw her horse, but her horse was with a stranger. When she went to get her horse, the stranger stopped her. 'Is it yours?' he asked. 'Yes! It's mine!' Penny answered. 'Then give me your most precious thing to swap,' he said. Penny was very troubled and she got some sudden inspiration. She took out her paint and silk and started to draw on the silk. 'There, this is the most precious thing I have. Can I get my horse now?' Penny asked. 'Of course! I will give you some gems, and I'll give you the horse!' the stranger said excitedly. He looked at the silk attentively. When Penny went away the stranger touched the silk, his hand had a lot of paint. The stranger knew Penny cheated on him and his face turned red.

At last, Penny and her horse went to Dunhuang to look at the mural and they went back home.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Li, Michael – 11

My name is Li Wei, a silk and jewelry merchant from Chang'an. Last month, I packed my camel with soft silk rolls, shiny jade pendants and gold hairpins; treasures I traded for in the western region. My guide, Karin, a kind man with a thick beard and a clever camel named Dawa said, 'The journey home has risks, but we'll be careful.'

On the fifth night, we camped by a dry riverbed. The moon was bright when a loud roar shook the ground. A huge, scary monster with sharp claws and red eyes jumped from the rocks. It's pounced at our camel, trying to grab the treasure bags. I bit my nails and my face turned white. Karim yelled, 'Get the fire sticks!' I fumbled for the flint and lit the dirty grass around us. The monster hated the flames — it hissed and stepped back.

The next morning, we kept going. When we finally saw Chang'an's walls, I smiled. That night, I told everyone about our fight with the monster. They cheered and said we were brave. For me, this trip wasn't just about treasures — it was about the courage we found on the Silk Road.

From this experience, I learned that when we face problems, we shouldn't be afraid. We must always think of ways to solve difficult problems.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Li, Pok Yiu – 9

Tom and Penny were trailing on China's Silk Road. Suddenly, they heard a big sound. "Let's see what happened!" they said.

Tom and his sister, Penny, go to Grandma's house by using China's Silk Road. Before going out, Tom and Penny pack their bags gladly.

"Go! Go!" Tom said. It's time to go. Suddenly, Penny's horse fell on the ground! Penny fell too! Tom saw her get hurt and a horse-carriage was coming and he felt scared. Tom patted Penny on the shoulder.

Luckily, a sailor came and said, "Do you need magic water? It can make your horse feel better! Just nineteen dollars!" Tom answered "Yes, here is some money!" And he bought two- One for Penny and one for the horse. They got up and walked again.

After walking for a while, a big fan came. The horse can't walk because the fan is too strong. Tom and Penny cry their eyes out. Tom said, "Oh no! The fan created a ginormous gust of wind." Penny replied, "Yes, what can we do?" They all ran away. Fifteen minutes later, the fan stopped. Tom looked at the map and shouted, "Aaaaaaaa! We needed to walk one more hour!"

Tom and Penny were hungry and sleepy. A chef asked, "Would you like cheesecake? It is so delicious!" "I'd like two, please." said Tom. Then they ate quickly. They started walking again.

In the end, Tom and Penny arrived at Grandma's house. They drank some tea and played Chinese chess. They were over the moon.

A Trip to Turkey

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Li, Wing Lam – 9

Once upon a time, a young merchant called Kiki went on a trip to Turkey with her family on the Silk Road. The trip took 117 days, so they brought some camel caravans to bring goods like tea and silk scarves. On the 48th day, Kiki's camel suddenly fainted on the road. She found some food but could not find any water. Therefore, Kiki's sister, Lilly, found a well and got some water in a bucket. After the camel ate some food, it woke up again and the trip continued.

On the 70th day, they arrived at a guest house. They rested for a few days and started the trip again. On the 120th day, they finally arrived at the Turkey bazaar.

They got some spices, gold, gems and more and started the trip back home. However, on the way, they saw some robbers that wanted to steal their spices and gems. Then the robbers were caught in a sand trap, and some aliens appeared to bring the robbers back to their planet base. The aliens thanked Kiki by offering her a portal that can take them anywhere and a huge present. The aliens said, "You can only open the present at home, but you can go home quickly with the portal." Therefore, Kiki put the portal on the ground and zoom! They were sucked into the portal and went back home in the blink of an eye.

At home, they opened the huge present, and they saw a big pile of food, money and jewelry that's enough for them to survive. They switched their little house to a new castle, and they bought some new clothes and sold the jewelry to get money. They never have to go to the Silk Road again.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Moy, Tsz Tung – 10

Kuromi and Melody had an unforgettable day last Sunday!

Kuromi and Melody went to the Silk Road in the morning. They went along the Silk Road because they were poor and they needed to trade things to make money. It was their first time going there. They brought some food and drinks, such as apples, cakes and milk.

After they arrived at the Silk Road, they saw a very long road. Kuromi said, 'Wow! The view is beautiful!' They were over the moon, and they ran to the Silk Road immediately. A few hours later, Melody said, 'I feel so hot. I am tired and thirsty too.' Then they sat on the ground and drank some juice.

Thirty minutes later, Kuromi and Melody started to walk. Kuromi had an idea. They walked and played along the way, which made them less tired. After a while, they saw a cat. Melody said, 'Kuromi! The cat is so cute. Let's give some milk to it.' Kuromi nodded. They played with the cat for a long time. Suddenly, Kuromi yelled, 'Oh my god! It is very late now! I am hungry. I think I can eat a horse.' Her stomach started to rumble. They ate a lot of food. Melody said, 'I'm full. It's time to sleep.' They slept with bulging bellies. They forgot to trade.

The next day, Kuromi and Melody continued their journey. After a while, they arrived in Lanzhou. They wanted to take some food and drinks but there were no food and drinks left in the bag. They felt blue. Kuromi thought of ways to remedy it. At that time, an old woman called Mandy came across and asked, 'What happened? What can I help you with?' Melody cried her eyes out and answered, 'We have no money and have nothing to trade.' Suddenly, Melody shouted, 'I remember I took my watch with me before I left home. You can exchange that.' Kuromi said, 'It doesn't seem that ...' While Kuromi was struggling, Melody had already given the watch to Mandy. Mandy saw the watch and yelled, 'It is so beautiful! I want to own it.' Finally, they got a large amount of money. They jumped for joy. 'Let's go back home,' suggested Melody. In the end, they returned home in a relaxing mood. Kuromi and Melody would not forget this day!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Song, Jiacheng – 11

On China's Silk Road, there was a diligent monkey who brought his owner's scarf.

The person who owned the monkey is called Bob. The monkey's shoulder was full of goods from the Silk Road. He was so tired, so he tried to discuss it with his owner. He asked cautiously 'My dear owner! I'm so tired, may I rest for a minute, please?' The owner just glanced at him and said coldly, 'No, you are my servant, and I am your owner; a servant should do things for his owner.' After saying it, Bob commanded the monkey to keep going.

From then on, a seed of resentment gradually sprouted in his heart, he always believed "Virtue has its reward; vice will have its recompense."

In the dead of night, the monkey slept on the ground as usual. After a while, he had a magical dream. In the dream, he came to a winding road that shimmered with golden light, and he vaguely heard someone calling him from the end of the road. He walked along the road curiously. He walked for a long time until he reached the end of the road, he looked back and found that the path he had just walked disappeared! He felt perturbed and uncomfortable and his heart was racing. He thought, 'If only I didn't take this path.' But now it was all too late. Suddenly, a golden light appeared, an angel slowly descended and said softly, 'I will give you a treasure box that can help you fulfill three wishes. You must cherish these three opportunities.' He wanted to ask more questions, but the angel had already left. He picked up the treasure box from the ground and turned around to find that the original path had appeared. After that, he woke up.

Upon waking, he found a treasure box in front of him, and he examined it carefully with great curiosity. He glanced outside and realized it was already daylight. He quickly hid the treasure box, then organized the goods and woke his master. He opened the treasure box while his owner was using the toilet and made a wish: 'I hope my owner will be punished and stop such indifference towards animals.' The very next second, the owner, who had just come out of the toilet, transformed into a monkey while whistling, and the monkey transformed into the owner. The goods on the monkey's back instantly teleported onto its owner's shoulder. The owner, who had been turned into a monkey, immediately begged the monkey for mercy! 'I was wrong. I will never bully small animals again. Please...please forgive...me!'

Ultimately, the monkey demanded that his owner apologize to every animal he had ever bullied. In the end, all the animals who had been mistreated by their owner forgave him. After realizing his mistake, the owner reverted to his original state. He decided to become a kind person from now on. They always believed that 'what goes around comes around.'

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Tam, Heung Ching – 11

There is a special story about a little girl, Fiona.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, there was one special family. The Lam family. The family members were Fiona, her brothers, Ken and Christopher, her grandparents and her parents. Every month, they would go to the Silk Road to trade lots of things for silk to make clothes.

One day, they went on the Silk Road as usual. However, something unusual happened on their way. At first, they saw a lot more people going on the Silk Road than last time. Then, when they almost arrived, lots of people gathered around a machine. It was a time travel machine, and it can only help one person. The person must be the youngest person to walk on the Silk Road. Fiona was the youngest person so she would be the one go in the time machine. She was very nervous about it since she never left her family by herself.

After she entered the time machine, she got sent to 2020. When she got out of the time machine, it suddenly disappeared. Fiona's heart was pounding and her body was shaking. She was as timid as a mouse. Luckily, a lovely family saw her alone near their house, so they decided to let her in. Fiona has lived in their house ever since.

Fiona was very lucky that she met them. Every day, she was very happy as the family treated her as their own children. Fiona and the families' children, Ken and Christopher, became best friends. They never argued with each other or fought with each other.

One year later, Fiona suddenly remembered that her real family was still in the past. However, she knew that she had no way to get back to the past, so she decided to stay with the new family. Since she always loved to trade stuff with others, she decided to trade some new stuff from others.

Now, Fiona is the most special person in the world since she arrived here from the past. She keeps telling her old stories from the past about her family and the ancient Silk Road.

The History of the Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Tam, Kai Sen – 11

A long time ago, the Emperor of the Han Dynasty ordered Chang Xian to trade with other countries in Western Regions and be friends with them to attack Hun. He left Chang'an and started his diplomatic journey.

On the way to the Western Regions, he rode horses to go through the hills. Suddenly, there were some people rushing at him. They were the soldiers of Hun. He wanted to escape but he failed. He was caught and the leader of Hun asked him why he was here and of his purpose. He explained that he wanted to be friends with other counties to attack their country. The leader was mad and sent him to jail.

Every day, he was locked in jail, but he never forgot his mission. One day, the chance came. He broke away from their control and escaped. He ran to Tai Wan. Their king welcomed him to their kingdom. He even sent some people to help him reach Kangju. He visited different countries and learnt more about their cultures. After visiting different countries, he went back to Han but was caught by the Huns again. After one year, he escaped and finally returned to Han.

The journey took thirteen years. The Emperor of Han was so happy that he promoted Han and other countries' transactions so they could know about their cultures and history. He finally finished his mission. The Emperor gave him an award and thanked him for promoting Han and other countries' transactions. After that, Han traded more with other countries and got different kinds of new things that Han didn't have.

After many dynasties, China traded with other countries in a new way like travelling on ships. Zheng He led his marines to trade with Indonesia, Thailand and India. The other countries contributed to the Ming dynasty. Besides, he led his marine to Africa too. Even nowadays, China is still trading with other countries. In 2013, China's Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road and decided to give money to some countries where the people were poor. He wanted to help other countries to develop their cities. For example, China helped Indonesia build their railway called Whoosh. China helped some countries build their armies to defeat the terrorists.

In conclusion, the Silk Road can promote exchanges between the people of two countries and maintain friendly relations. Also, China helps other countries to build their armies to fight the terrorists. The most important thing is that we can enjoy the benefits of the Silk Road. Other countries can enjoy it, and they will be happy too.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Tang, King Ho – 10

On the sandy and barrel Gobi Desert, there were two penguins, who were skiing on the sand freely and liberally. They were traders in the Antarctic trying to earn a fortune by trading their local specialties: special fragrant krill sauce and their famous, sweet herbal tea from the rare colobanthus. They were going to Athens, Greece. When they got to Dubai, they realized they had no water left in their bottles. They were thirsty and dehydrated. All of a sudden, Emma saw a unique fruit among the aloe plants, she stuck out her wing to pick it. 'Don't pick that! This is dangerous...' shouted Bruce.

However, before the words left his mouth, Emma picked the luscious and mellow fruit from the aloe. All of a sudden, an enormous aloe monster with spiky thorns came up from the ground, with a canary flower on its head. It throws spiky fruits. 'It's the Aloe Ogre! I've seen it on the encyclopaedia!' shouted Bruce. They skied on the sand as fast as the wind. 'There's an oasis. Let's go there to think of an idea!' replied Emma.

When they got to the oasis, they had an idea! 'Let's make some parasols with the long, fresh reeds beside the stream!' suggested Emma excitedly. 'However, they are too fragile! They can be broken by the spiky fruits as easily as ABC!' refuted Bruce. When they're racking their brains, a polar bear passes by. He confronted Bruce and Emma, 'Hi, my name is Baloo. Are you trying to find out how to reach the aloe dune?' Bruce got out their map. 'We are at the west of the dune. Oh! There's a way that we can get over the dragon dam!' discovered Emma excitedly. All of a sudden, a 'Bang' sound came from the dam. 'Oh No!' cried Emma sadly. When the sun shone upon them, the Aloe Ogre ran to a piece of golden populus bushes. Bruce's penny dropped and his idea flashed over his brain! 'The Ogre is afraid of the sun! We can use silver or glass objects to reflect the sunlight!' 'I have a glass bowl for selling arctic blueberries! We can use it!' screamed Baloo excitedly.

When the Ogre was asleep, Emma yelled, 'Hey! You are ugly and slow ogre. Come and catch me!' provoked Emma. As the Ogre awoke, Emma skied over the sand mountains and marshes gracefully. She backflipped and camel-skinned on her skis while the Ogre was chasing her clumsily. When she got to Love Lake, she yelled, 'Bruce, Baloo! Get ready for the Ogre!' On a huge Graf tree with yellow flowers, Baloo hung the glass bowl with a wooden pole. When Emma brought the Aloe Ogre to Bruce & Baloo's tree, the hot, scorching sunlight reflected on the Aloe Ogre. 'Aah!' cried the ogre. Soon, it disappeared with a piece of thick, grey smoke. Emma, Bruce and Baloo cheered happily and got to Greece excitedly.

When they got to the bazaar, they sold many arctic specialties and earned a big fortune. They have a lot of money and help their country. They were satisfied with it.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Wong, Long Chit Anson – 10

China's silk road is interesting! It is more than 2000 years old! It will take around a year to walk the entire length of the Silk Road! There was a deer that was experimenting to be the protector of China's Silk Road, but something went wrong...it became a monster! It had sharp teeth and claws! People even named it Bob – the Devil of the Silk Road.

Other villagers thought that Bob was going to eat them! Bob only hunts animals on the Silk Road. Bob is nice to the villagers! He doesn't attack or eat them! He trades his look to a more friendly look. It's like changing its behavior from furious to nice so other animals won't be scared!

One time, Bob went to kill some animals for the villagers to eat but a lion bit his leg! It was bleeding like crazy! Bob soon had enough and went into nightmare mode! His eyes turned blood red, his claws sharper than ever. It violently grabbed the lion and...killed it! The villagers had a huge feast that night. Some of them brought medical items to heal Bob from the bite. It was hard but they did it! Now the villagers are friends with Bob. That's the story of the New Tales of China's Silk Road.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Wong, Yat Yiu – 10

Today I take my Time Machine to 2100 years ago. Then I went on a mission to the Western Regions with Zhang Qian. We rode in my sports car to unite with the Yuezhi to fight against Xiongnu.

But then, we met Xiongnu. They asked, 'What do you want to do?' Zhang Qian answered, 'We are just passing through.' After listening to what Zhang Qian said, Xiongnu did not quite believe what Zhang Qian said. They left after putting us in jail.

After they left, we laughed and lit up. Then, we detonated the bomb. We exploded in jail. We came back to China to raise an army to fight Xiongnu with Yuezhi. After we went to Yuezhi, I said, 'Xiongnu always harasses your people. Can you help us to fight Xiongnu?' Yuezhi said, 'Okay let's go.' Then we went to Xiongnu and fought them.

In the end, we killed all the Xiongnu and I went back to my era. What an exciting experience!

Camel Disaster on the Ultimate Silk Road!

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Yang, Tzi Yan Michaela – 9

It's a long walk from China to England and you might faint but it's a different story for Lee because of her friend Mau.

It was a wonderful day to walk on the Silk Road. We all know that it's a long walk from China to England. Lee was nicknamed 'little miss determined' because she didn't give up just because she was exhausted. She didn't even stop when her light brown camel fainted. She never gave up even if she had a problem, but one day, she had a very big problem.

Lee's camel, whose name was Lily, fainted in the middle of her journey to England. She was only seventy-two days from England. When she was about to start walking, some other villagers walked by. They asked Lee, "Are you okay? Do you need help going to England?" Lee answered anxiously, "Yes please! I need to send this porcelain before my grandma gets worried about me." She was unlucky to meet rude villagers because the villagers mimicked her in a high voice – in a way that made her very mad and heartbroken. The villagers were very cruel to her and before they left her, they bragged, "HAHA! Look at you, a ridiculous girl. Your camel fainted! Look at our camels, so nice and healthy. Look at yours, sleeping on the sand." Lee yelled back, "STOP IT! SHE JUST HAD NO FOOD BECAUSE I'M SO POOR!" The leader of the village's eyes were as big as a ping-pong ball but slowly he became calm again. Then, when he became calm, he signaled the villagers to rudely spit on her. Lee was enraged because of the villagers' spit but knew they would make a big mistake later.

When she was sobbing beside her camel, another camel caravan walked by and invited her to go to England with her. His name was Mau, but most people called him 'Mau the saver.' He usually helped people when they had problems on the Silk Road, and many praised him because he's as helpful as a robot. Today was more of a chaotic moment because he didn't know what to do about Lee's fainted camel. But when Lee explained the reason why her camel fainted, Mau immediately thought of an idea! He said to Lee, "I have thought of an idea on how your camel can wake up again, I could give some of my spare food to your camel!" Lee asked, "Won't you get hungry?" Mau just shook his head and gave his food to the camel. Then, he invited Lee to his camel they waited one night for the camel to wake up. They waited patiently because Lee didn't want to leave her camel alone. Her camel was her very best friend ever since she was born. They rested under a cave and built a fire so they could keep warm and cozy. Luckily, Lee brought some extra blankets to trade, so they used those to keep their bodies warm. After a day the camel finally woke up so they started their trip to England again. Halfway to England, some other traders were finding some porcelain and Lee offered some of hers. She was walking on air because for once she traded something for the first time ever in her whole life! The other traders were happy too, so they gave her something beautiful and precious to her, it was a beautiful sack for her things that she needed to trade. Still, even though she had a problem she still enjoyed her day trading porcelain. Lee could tell her camel was happy too just by looking at its face. Mau, Lee and their camels were very happy the whole time they were together and wrote letters to each other. The villagers that made Lee angry earlier were passing by. They were shocked that she had a handsome boy as a friend. Lee and Mau saw them then said, "Oh hello there villagers, did you sell something?" Then they showed them their empty sack. You couldn't believe this, but this was Lee's plan all along so they could get the villagers to cry their eyes out.

In the end, the villagers were jealous and even learnt a lesson to never be mean to anyone because later, they can get you back with something that really breaks your heart. Moreover, Mau and Lee became best friends after their adventure alongside the Silk Road. Their camels even had a very good experience together though their backs hurt because of the weight of the things and the humans.

Trading Things is Fun!

S.K.H. Ka Fuk Wing Chun Primary School, Yuen, Pui Ling – 11

Two hundred years ago, Kucina, Venus and I started a journey on China's Silk Road as we wanted to explore different countries. We were as happy as a clam after we started our trip; however, we didn't know we were already in danger.

After a while, Kucina heard footsteps and asked, 'Guys, can you hear someone walking behind us?' 'No! Don't worry, we don't have any expensive things. We just have our homework,' I replied. Venus nodded her head. 'I think you are too tired so you imagined there is someone behind us. Maybe we should take a rest now,' Venus suggested. We all agreed.

We sat on the grass and ate some snacks. That was when the real trouble began. An alien came out and caught us. We screamed loudly but no one could hear us. Our faces all turned pale.

The alien took us to their base and locked us in a cage. I murmured, 'Kucina, I am sorry that I did not trust you.' 'I am sorry too,' Venus replied. 'It's fine. Let's find some ways to get away from this cage,' Kucina said.

Soon the leader of the aliens came to our cage and asked, 'We don't have any books here for the aliens to read and learn so I ordered the smartest alien to find some books. To my surprise, he brought you here. Do you have any books that you can share with us?' Venus answered, 'Yes, we have some homework, but I don't know if you want it.' 'Let me see...Oh! What is this? I have never seen such challenging questions before. I love solving them. Can you teach us?' the leader of the aliens shouted. 'Let me ask my teacher to teach you,' I replied.

After a long time, our teacher finally arrived. He decided to hold a class in the alien's base, so we learned together with some aliens.

However, living with aliens was so boring since they love reading and doing Maths – they studied all the time. Therefore, we talked to the leader of the aliens. He understood and let us go. We couldn't help squealing in delight!

Before we left, we asked our teacher, 'We are leaving now. Would you like to come with us?' 'No, sorry. I enjoy teaching aliens as they are studious. I want to stay here. Goodbye.' 'Okay! Goodbye everyone!' we shouted. Suddenly, the leader of the aliens shouted, 'Wait! You gave us some precious books. To show our gratitude, we will give you three laser guns in return.' After taking the laser guns, we said goodbye to everyone again.

However, we didn't know the way back to the Silk Road. In a surprising twist, we saw a foreigner and we asked him to show us the way. He replied, 'Sorry, I didn't know the way to the Silk Road but I have made three pairs of shoes. May I trade them for your laser guns, please?' We agreed. When we put them on, Kucina felt something inside the shoes. This time we trusted her. We looked inside the shoes and found a note. We realized that they were magic shoes. We followed the instructions to use the shoes. Within minutes, we were back to the Silk Road safe and sound and continued our journey on the Silk Road.

The Remarkable Journey of the Archeologist Peter

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Chung, Aria – 10

One day, I woke up and washed just like always and ate my breakfast as normal.

I hopped in my truck and set off to the arid Gobi Desert where the Silk Road had once been. I hummed my favourite tune, “Oh oh oh, the Silk Road, oh, extremely long and historical, oh, oh, ohhhhhhh.” I opened a can of coffee and drank it, but it did not even taste like the coffee that was usually contained in this can.

I jumped down from my truck and pinned my badge on my chest which read “Archeologist (Silk Road) Peter”. I greeted all the other workers I came across including my best mate Mark who always helped me in different ways. I went to my digging spot and started digging for treasures the traders dropped in the past. Suddenly, I found a vase shimmering under the burning sun, it looked very new like that it had just been put in the sand. I carefully dug it out and quickly examined this mysterious vase which was different from the other pots and vases and many other treasures found on the Silk Road.

After a tiring search for treasures, I went back home as the sun was setting. I sat down on my sofa and examined the vase. After a few minutes examining the vase, I got thirsty and fetched myself a drink. I sat back on my sofa but the vase started to glow...I touched it and found myself swirling in a portal.

After what seemed like hours I finally landed on some sandy ground. The moment I regained consciousness I realized that the vase was gone and I was back at the place where I had dug up the vase. But it did not have any of the grids made of string we had set up or our digging tools, nothing at all, just camel footprints and cacti.

Suddenly, I could hear grunting sounds. People on camels started coming my way! I quickly dodged out of sight. One of the people jumped off their camel and said, ‘Hello! Why are you here? What do you think you are wearing? What are you trading?’ That was a lot of questions.

I answered ‘Hi, I got lost and... And, uh, I met a trader and bought this suit – it looks fancy ... so... umm, I wanted to wear it immediately ... ye...yeah!’ There was an awkward silence. The trader suddenly asked, ‘Do you want to go to the city Dunhuang? I am going there and we have shelter for you. We will fatten you up. No worries.’

So, I followed them to Dunhuang. They said that there might be bandits there so we tried to stay quiet.

We arrived in Dunhuang after a few hours. They told me to help myself here, gave me some money to spend. I met a fortune teller in a crystal shop, I learnt that the vase actually belonged to a magical potter and he already knew I had it. I knew immediately that I had to look for the potter called James and return the vase in order to get back to the present.

And so my journey began...

A Silk Road Letter to Victoria

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Keung, Greta – 10

Dear Victoria,

It's a long journey to the Silk Road! Do you remember that one time you watched a video about it? We saw some people walking on a road and the road was very long, and it's called the Silk Road. I think it's interesting so I travelled on it yesterday. I am coming back to the moon tomorrow. I hope you understand more about my adventure from this letter!

Bi bu bu bi! On the first day, I started my trip in Chang'an. I rode my camel to Dunhuang. The camel is huge, brown and yellow. On the way to Dunhuang, I met a girl, her name was Jezzynora. She was a bit scared of me because she seemed to think I was a bad, evil alien. But I started to trade with her and she traded with me too! I traded her the very strong metal – titanium. We have a lot of it on the moon, and she liked it very much. She gave me 700 coins for the titanium and I asked her, "Where are you going?"

Jezzynora replied, "I am going to Dunhuang. How about you?"

I felt shocked, "Me too! Let's go together!" I said. We walked for three more days. Jezzynora and I stopped at a market place and started trading with the other people who travelled on the Silk Road too. The market was super dirty and full of people.

You should know how I sell my things. They all speak in some strange languages. We stayed at a caravanserai after crossing the steppe grasslands and Tien Shan mountain! A desert Jezzynora and I wanted to go to was the Gobi Desert. There is a lake at the edge of it – an oasis!

From India, they had a lot of spices. Things like cumin, cardamom and black pepper. They had medicine and sugar to trade too! Melons came from Central Asia. What about the Middle East and Islamic Empires? Camels, nuts and wonderful perfumes. Glassware, wool and gold came all the way from the Roman Empire in Europe.

You know Zhang Qian? He is the diplomat and explorer who opened the Silk Road. (195–114BC) I know about XuanZang too, he travelled to India to learn about Buddhism.

I will tell you all about Baghdad, an important city on the Silk Road, when I get back to the moon.

See you soon!

Greta

My New Tale of China's Silk Road – A Letter to Mum and Dad

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Lam, Victoria – 10

Dear Mum and Dad,

It is a fantastic trip on the Silk Road! I am learning a lot on my trip too!

We bought a lot of things such as paper. It is one of the “Four Great Inventions” of ancient China. It was improved by Cai Lun. Gunpowder is one of the “Four Great Inventions” of ancient China too! And the most important thing to trade after all is silk.

We need to get through a very hot place called the Taklamakan Desert. There is no water at all so we have to carry lots. The sand there is hot enough to burn my feet! I felt bad for the Bactrian Camels and the horses we are riding. They need to walk all day and night. We can sit on them sometimes so we do not have to walk, but they cannot. For me, I just want to say goodbye to Taklamakan and go back to the moon as fast as I can. But when I see the Bactrian Camels and horses’ great patience and endurance, my heart swells and I decide to go on. No matter that it is hot enough to boil an egg in only 10 seconds or there’s not enough water for us to drink. I learned to be a patient alien. I remembered that Dad told me that animals can teach aliens important things, and I think it is true.

After a long, long time in the desert, we came to city called Dunhuang. It’s a noisy place. There were fruits, vegetables and spices such as ginger, turmeric, nutmeg, frankincense, black pepper, clove, saffron and my favourite cinnamon. The fragrant smells were everywhere. There were people speaking languages like Chinese, Sanskrit, Persian, Greek and Arabic.

Now, I want to tell you both about some of my new friends I have made on my trip along the Silk Road. Zhang Qian is the diplomat and explorer who opened the Silk Road. Ban Chao is a Han General in charge of the “western regions” and he has a son, called Ban Yong. I also met Marco Polo. He is a Venetian explorer, merchant and writer. That’s a lot of jobs, isn’t it? But Mr Pococo (our neighbour) has more jobs than him.

I’m glad I chose the Silk Road as a tourist attraction to visit. I like it very much. I will come back to the moon next week. See you next Monday. I hope you like the souvenir I bought for you.

Kind regards,

Your alien daughter,

Victoria

A Journey on the Arid Silk Road

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Leung, Joanna – 10

One day, in the depths of the Silk Road, there lay a desert fox. This fox would hunt for bunnies on top of the hissing sand and hop in the howling wind.

This fox would actively run around on the sand in the Gobi Desert. It would eat fruit, insects, spiders, small mammals and reptiles that lived in such an arid place.

One day, the fox saw some bandits in yurts, ready to steal diamonds, rubies, emeralds and more goods that traders had. But the fox went on with its journey, and went far far away from where the fox started.

The fox's goal was to hunt for food and feed it to its family. After a while, it found its jackpot. A fat, big-enough size for a fox's family to eat and just perfect rat. The fox sprinted on to the rat and took the rat with it.

The fox got thirsty but did act one bit. The fox went on with its journey. It saw a lot of water and ran quickly towards the water since it didn't drink water after 6 hours! But it was just a mirage... After all, was it worth running with all your strength just for nothing?

But, every story has a good ending! Right? So, a man came and saved the poor fox from starvation!

In the end, the fox was saved.

But did you already forget about the fox's family?

Bad for trade

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Chan, Anderson Georgio – 10

'Move!' I shouted to the camels and the soldiers. As we were just about to reach the next destination, in which our clients were waiting—

‘Fire!’ yelled someone from half a mile away. I immediately got down, bracing for dear life, unlike the merchants on the camels, who just looked around obliviously, not noticing them – bandits!

Gosh, do I hate them, since I am the general of the Han military, Ban Chao–

‘Defend. NOW!’ I bellowed. In an instant, arrows rained down. Our shields came up, blocking them, at least attempting to do so.

‘AH!’ I had trouble breathing, my throat was bleeding – I had been shot! I started going unconscious, my vision began to blur as five hundred thousand Han troops came to our support, defending our route. I used to think traveling on the Silk Road would bring peace, that’s what we tried to do, sending troops to trade, befriending other regions. We were sent to ally and trade with Rome and bring high amounts of our Han culture’s newest technology, our most precious silk, gems and jade to enforce our mutual connection with the Roman Empire, ensuring western safety of our civilization and unity against the Mongol empire whilst gaining military equipment and power, knowledge and other goods.

But the Gobi Desert we were traveling in was completely controlled by bandits. Happening to see such big interaction between two major nations, the bandits decided to infiltrate, turning a road going for peace into a literal battlefield.

I woke up in a medical tent. The medical soldiers were the first people I saw.

‘Dang it! I said, as I came to my senses, I demanded answers of what happened in the events of my absence from the battlefield. My throat still ached, but I could talk, just barely.

‘Did they get our valuables? What happened? What did they steal?’ No matter what I said, they did not answer, but just held their sad glares, looking down, like words that say ‘Nothing could’ve been done, we lost, lost everything.’

‘So, you’re telling me that we not only lost our nation’s most prized possessions, but also tens of thousands of soldiers, the army that was protecting it as living humans?’ I asked, not even questioning it, just pure rage. They looked up, maybe, or probably knowing something I didn’t. I just laid back down, processing the entire scene of the battlefield and the reality I was in at that moment, which was as if a nightmare.

‘Where are they? Any of them, people, our money, our items, anything, where is everything? Where?’ I asked, wanting to see the scene by myself. They pointed outside of the tent, looking down as if ashamed. To my horror, it was worse than I had thought. The dead bodies invaded every inch of land in sight. Just five tents, thousands of arrows, broken shields and blades and the last of my sanity.

So, that’s how it all ends for our region. Tens of thousands of lives, gone. Expensive items? Stolen. Do peace and sanity have any chance at all? We’ve seen the last of ours. There’s nothing left for our region to even gain anyway.

I Will Travel on the Silk Road

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Cheung, Yan Tung Jasmine – 10

Long ago, the Silk Road was two routes, one that connected Eastern Asia through Central Asia all the way to the Mediterranean with other traders.

I am a merchant and I am going to ride a camel carrying goods to Chang 'an. I will bring jade and spices like cinnamon, clove, black pepper and ginger to China. I will take a short rest in India. Then, I will head to Chang 'an, to sell jade and spices to earn gold. I am from Africa. This is my first time travelling on the Silk Road.

I expect on my way on the Silk Road I will meet a lot of other merchants from other different countries. They sell different goods and products. Also, they speak different languages, like Mandarin and more. In the desert, the sun is bright and the weather is as hot as fire.

I will feel excited when I meet and talk with other merchants. I will miss my family and I think I will learn new languages on this journey.

The Origin of the Silk Road

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Chow, Lok Yin Ethan – 10

The Silk Road was opened before Christ, but it is gone now. Still, there is a story behind it. This is the story of how the Silk Road was created.

Long long ago, there was a man called Zhang Qian. He was one of the first people who ever stepped on the Silk Road. He was a diplomat and explorer who opened the Silk Road. Then his move attracted more and more people, like wandering traders, bandits, and other people that are famous now like Ban Chao, Ban Wong and even Fu Jiezi. They tried to go to different places to trade their precious materials. When Zhang Qian opened the Silk Road, he didn't just want to. His country was in danger because it was at war. So, he went out to ask for help. The moment he went on his trip to the west, he just accidentally created the Silk Road. But, there is always a twist in stories, he and his team got capture by their enemies for 11 years.

Then, another famous person called Xuan Zang stepped into the story. His brother was a Buddhist. Therefore, he was interested in Buddhism. So, he travelled around half of the world so that he could go to India and learn about Buddhism in the foreign language.

The Silk Road is actually a bunch of networks that traders went trading along. If you asked 'How did the traders even travel that far? How did they survive without food?' Well, they actually didn't! They actually traded their camels (such as dromedary camels and Bactrian camels), horses and even the animals they caught while they were on the way to their destinations. How did they capture animals? Well, while they were travelling, they found out that a BUNCH of animals were lying on the road, so, they used a LEASH to tie them to their horses so they could put them in a pen to keep them. And the funny part is, they captured the animal KIDS instead of the adults. Why? Because their parents would follow their kids to the pen they were locked in. And when they are there, us humans did something violent and brutal: KILLED the animals' parents for food. The Silk Road just ended a few hundred years later, but there is still hope, for a new road opening.

Trip on the Silk Road

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Chung, Jacob Israel – 10

Here I am in Chang'an trying to go to Samarkand. I lost my time machine when a dust devil picked it up and blew it away there. I am so thirsty looking for an oasis to have a drink but every time I think I find one it turns out to be a mirage.

I was sent here by my science team [Magic Science] to do research on the old Silk Road [I come from year 2906]. My science team sent a person to come with me but he never came. I am currently in a caravan of camels with some Sogdian traders. I am riding on a dromedary camel. We have already endured a lot of dust devils and I am suffering from heat stroke.

It just turned dark and I am entering a caravanserai to spend the night here. We need to pay some money, so we do not need to encounter bandits. Inside the caravanserai there are tiny beds.

From all the days I have been here, I learned that the Silk Road is a very big network of trade routes that connected East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and even Europe.

It has been three days without food and water, if I don't find any food or water I will DIE! The good news is that I am close to finding my time machine and selling my goods (so I can bring back money from the olden times so my science team can get it studied.)

I overheard people saying goods were transported across very long distances by caravan. We often encountered bandits, many people were killed or were robbed but none of that happened to me.

The Silk Road began in the Han dynasty around the second century BCE, but sadly it will end in the fourteenth century (I know that because I am from the future.)

When I was selling goods, I suddenly saw a gleaming light in the sand dunes so I went to investigate. It turned out to be my time machine so I quickly dug it out and took all my stuff and went back to my era.

When I finally returned back to the lab I felt so relieved to be back in my era because there are no dust devils or bandits here. I tried to forget I have ever used the time machine and life became normal again but my science team never found the person who was supposed to come with me for some reason they said he went to the wrong place and time (the third century) and could not be found. Now I vowed to never use the time machine ever again.

Casey, Brittany and I went on the Silk Road

We are from America and decided to go to the silk road. To make our first Silk Road TikTok meme we wanted to say “six seven” so we went to the 1200s in our time machine.

There we saw a trader and bought some gold and fruits from him for 41 pieces of jade. We saw a camel that was half fridge, half camel it was called ‘Frigo Camelos’.

After that, we were unlucky to see bandits. Luckily, I had a sniper rifle in my backpack so I shot them in their heads.

We stayed in a hotel. We heard camels grunting, tasted spices that were not spicy, we smelled fresh air too.

We felt good, the air was fresh and stuff. All the other people spoke Chinese or Putonghua.

Then we saw lots and lots and lots and lots and lots of camels and again lots more camels that were all different ones. As always, I had a dream as I slept it was always a horror story; this time it was an escape room with scary faces and they were all following me with their full speed at 60 kilometres per hour – the speed I was running. I made it out. At last I ended up killing all the dream monsters and in real life the bandits too.

Adele and I on China's Wonderful Silk Road

S.K.H. Kei Yan Primary School, Yuen, Sin Chi Casey – 9

Today, Adele and I went to China’s Silk Road. It disappeared in the mid-1400’s, so we had to take a time machine to get there. The time machine was decorated by me. It was pink and purple and it has two comfy bean bags inside.

When we arrived, we first ran quickly (although Adele can’t) to Shanghai since we were near there and did an Instagram post: “Together with my bestie in the Shanghai part of China’s Silk Road!” We continued walking and saw people trading so we also traded some delicious spices like cinnamon and ginger, for some Frankincense and Nutmeg that are not spicy because we both ABSOLUTELY HATE spicy stuff!

We saw some camels and the person riding one told us a fun fact: “Did you know that the camels’ nose can close to prevent sand going into their nose when they are in the desert?” We answered: “Yes! We learnt that in science!” It has been a lovely day so far...

You know how good luck is followed by bad luck? Well... We met some bandits who tried to steal our stuff but luckily Adele remembered she had a sniper gun in her backpack so she shot most of them in their head and left before they could catch up with us because the team of bandits might get mad at us for killing a few of their members. We looked back to see where they had got to and saw they were dead. We walked excitedly to our yurt where we would be staying for the night. However, when we were walking, we saw some fluffy and cute Bactrian camels and heard their noises. We took some videos to send to our moms and they replied with, “Where are you?” We said, “We traveled in a time machine from 2025 back to the 1400s and landed in the Shanghai part of China’s Silk Road!” “Be careful and have fun!” they replied.

When we arrived at the caravanserai, we saw a tent and Adele said, “Look Casey! That will be where we’ll stay!” I replied, “Ooh! That looks sooooo comfy.” So, we went in and saw a nice king-sized bed. Adele said, “Ooooo! That’s nice!” While I cannonballed on the bed and fell asleep after the exhausting and tiring journey and had a dream of myself dreaming of myself dreaming. I was in a deep sleep when I was rudely awoken by my annoying mate Adele.

We started exploring once Adele finished her piece of bread that she left in her bag. We saw traders again and they asked us what languages we spoke. I said, “We speak English, Cantonese and some not-so-fluent-Putonghua. The person who asked us that said, “Well, welcome to China’s Silk Road!” And that is how our day one ended.

Thank you for spending time to read my story! I want to win something (hopefully). So...

Bye! I hope to see some of you if I get a prize.

The Silk Road Adventure

S.K.H. St. Peter's Primary School, Chan, Eric – 10

It was a quiet Friday evening, and Eric was tucked away in his favorite armchair, his nose buried deep in a heavy history book titled “The Last Echo: The Tale of the Silent Silk Road”. Eric was a history enthusiast who could spend hours imagining ancient civilizations. As he read about the legendary “Golden Road”, his eyes grew heavy, the lamp next to the armchair flickered, and suddenly, the modern world dissolved into a swirl of golden desert sand.

Eric blinked and found himself standing in the middle of a bustling marketplace in the year 1435. To his surprise, his best friends Kasper and Anthony were there too, wearing colorful robes and looking just as confused as he was. Little did they know, they were the characters in the history book Eric was reading!

“Welcome, young merchants!” a voice bellowed. It was a man who looked exactly like their history teacher, but he was wearing a turban. “I am Dr. Zhang, your guide through the Silk Road!”

The air smelled of rich cumin and grilled lamb, the crowds were much thinner than the history books described. Eric stood by a stall, sadly running his fingers over a pile of sparkling silk that had not sold in weeks.

“Hey Eric, look at this!” Kasper shouted, pointing at a grumpy-looking camel named Barnaby who was trying to eat a silk scarf. “I don’t think Barnaby is a very good business partner.”

Eric sighed. “For many generations, my family grew wealthy here, but now a strange and quiet shadow is creeping over the trails. This is the beginning of the end for the original Silk Road.”

While the boys explored the fading market, they overheard travelers whispering about a new and powerful rival: the Great Water.

“I heard the Portuguese and Spanish are building massive wooden houses that can float on the ocean!” one traveler whispered.

“Floating houses?” Anthony asked, his mystery-solving instincts kicking in. “That sounds like a much better way to travel.”

Dr. Zhang nodded. “These ships can carry ten times more silk and spices than a single camel like Barnaby. Plus, the sea is faster and allows merchants to avoid paying heavy taxes to the many different kings and warlords who control the desert paths.”

As the ships took over world trade, legendary cities like Dunhuang and Kashgar began to feel like lonely islands left behind by a fading tide.

The adventure took a dangerous turn when the boys decided to lead one last caravan. But the land had become a place of great danger. The powerful empires that once protected the road had collapsed, leaving the paths unguarded.

“Guys, look out!” Anthony shouted as they rounded a sand hill.

A group of bandits, wearing silly-looking masks but carrying very real-looking swords, waited to ambush them. Without soldiers to keep the peace, the boys had to use their wits to escape, dodging falling rocks and narrow mountain passes.

“It wasn’t just the bandits,” Kasper noted, pointing to a massive stone barrier. “They are building walls where bridges used to be. Different leaders are closing their borders and fighting, making it nearly impossible to travel from one end of the continent to the other.”

Eric remembered his grandfather’s stories of caravans so long they looked like giant snakes winding through the mountains, but now they were lucky to see even a few brave travelers a week.

Despite the dangers, the boys realized the road had left behind an incredible legacy. For over fifteen centuries, travelers had been the world’s first global citizens.

“Wait, is that soap?” Anthony asked, watching a merchant show a European traveler how to use an Eastern formula. “I guess the Silk Road helped everyone stay clean!”

They saw Chinese mathematicians exchanging complex ideas with Arabic scholars. Even though the road carried terrible things like the Black Death plague, it functioned like the world's very first internet—a vital network for information, art, and technology.

Suddenly, the dream fast-forwarded. The road had stayed silent for over five hundred years, buried under the shifting sands. But in 2013, the world decided to wake the sleeping giant.

“Look! It's the New Silk Road!” Eric exclaimed.

Instead of camels, they saw massive pipelines, high-speed railways, and fiber-optic cables traveling underground. This modern project involves 150 countries working together to ensure goods can travel from Asia to Europe in record time.

The ground began to rumble, and Eric felt himself being pulled back to the present. He saw his "Merchant self" closing his stall in 1450, perhaps moving his family to the coast for a new life.

Eric sat up with a start, his history book still open on his lap. Kasper and Anthony weren't there, but the lesson of the Silk Road was clear.

“The story proves that while our methods of travel change from dirt paths to satellites, the human desire to connect will never disappear,” Eric thought to himself.

He looked at the final sentence of the book: "We are always stronger when we build bridges instead of walls." Eric smiled.

Whispers of the Wind

The wind was howling—forewarning of yet another brutal sandstorm. I covered my face with my scarf. It was futile. My eyes could barely open in the relentless storm. My nose hurt and my mouth dried. The sun was a forgotten memory behind the swirling clouds of sand, and unfortunately, everywhere I looked it was desolate and barren. Not a soul in sight.

I had travelled along what must later be the ancient Silk Road for weeks; every day brought new challenges, but sandstorms and bandits were the worst. Both came out of nowhere, dispersed my companions and devoured the path that we followed. Now, I was all alone, and each step forward was a battle for life.

But it wasn't all bad. The further we headed west, the more we opened our eyes. We were occasionally welcomed to the tents of some small tribes that were herding their sheep and horses. They put on feasts of lamb and wine, and we reciprocated with silk and tea. Needless to say, my fellow travellers were blown away by the novelty of the experience; after all, it was the first time they had seen grapes, crystal green and purple, dangling from overhead trellis. I, too, was delighted to see what I learnt in History come to life before my very eyes.

This must be a time before Zhang Qian though. Trade between the East and the West was still informal and limited, and if only there were official way stations set up for travellers and merchants...

"I need to keep moving, I can do this!" I screamed, but the wind swallowed my words. Panic clawed at my chest, but I pushed it down, because fear would do me no good. With a burning heart, I kept pushing forward, searching for anything—a rock or a dune, for temporary shelter.

When I was about to give up, I saw a glimpse of a wall structure—and other mysterious shadows. As hope surged in, I broke into a sprint.

My vision started to blur, but if I could reach it, I might find safety, my companions and reunite with them.

I found myself at the front gate of a small settlement guarded by heavy clay soil walls. The gatekeeper let me in without much hassle—and took me to my friends. I didn't have anything valuable, so I gave him my iron dagger. His eyes lit up. We were shown around what was the beginning of the historic city of Yazd—'City of the Holy' and took in the exotic sights, smells and sounds in their bazaars. We demonstrated how we made iron swords and bronze mirrors, while they gifted us spices like cumin, rare gemstones and Persian rugs.

The governor agreed to let us stay with him and recover, so we could continue our journey to the West. Sitting by the pool in the courtyard and looking up at the badgir, I scribbled down the route we took, the people we met and advice for future travellers.

Just when I was about to get some rest, I heard a bell ringing. It was the end of History class.

Oh, how I wish I travelled back to Chang'an and showed Zhang Qian's ancestors my notes. Perhaps then he could avoid his 10ish-year detention by Xiongnu.

My First Adventures on the Silk Road

The morning was bitterly cold and dark, and my breath formed clouds of mist that danced and then disappeared around my face. I was about to embark on my first trading journey along the legendary Silk Road, with my father's carefully wrapped silk bundles secured tightly on our small caravan of a few sturdy donkeys.

At sixteen years old, I felt both excitement and terror bubbling inside me like a pot of hot tea. The marketplace of Chang 'an was alive with whispers of distant lands, of merchants who had traveled thousands of li across treacherous mountains and endless deserts. My family's silk – woven with threads more delicate than spider's webs and more valuable than gold – would be our passport to adventure.

The first days took us through the familiar landscapes of the Chinese provinces, rolling hills giving way to the stark beauty of the Gobi Desert. The wintery conditions painted the landscape in shades of pale gold and dusty brown. My thick wool coat, a gift from my grandmother, became my closest companion. At night, I would wrap myself tightly, listening to the wind's sounds and watching stars so bright they seemed close enough to touch.

Our caravan moved slowly. Each step was a negotiation of either rocky paths that twisted like dragon's tails or narrow mountain passes where one wrong move could send us tumbling into bottomless valleys. The donkeys, who were more experienced travelers than myself, moved with a quiet determination that comforted me.

As we entered Kyrgyzstan, the landscape transformed. Massive mountains rose around us like sleeping giants, their snow-covered peaks touching the sky. The Tian Shan mountains were not just a geographical boundary but a test of endurance. Freezing winds cut through our clothing, and I had to appreciate every warm moment, every brief respite in the small hostels and inns where traders from a dozen different lands would gather.

In Uzbekistan, the ancient city of Samarkand appeared like a dream. Its turquoise-tiled mosques and bustling bazaars were a feast for my young and fascinated eyes. Here, traders from Persia, India, and far-off lands exchanged not just goods, but stories. I listened, wide-eyed, to tales of distant kingdoms and mysterious cultures, my heart racing with the possibilities of the journey ahead.

The winter was unforgiving. Some nights were so cold that it felt like thousands of tiny needles pricking my skin. I was pleased by the warmth of a shared fire, the comfort of dried meat and hot tea. My father's stories kept our spirits high with tales of brave traders who had crossed these same routes generations before us.

In Turkmenistan's vast deserts, the landscape became a sea of sand and stone. The Karakum Desert stretched endlessly, a golden-brown canvas that seemed to have no beginning and no end. Here, survival was an art. We traveled during the cooler hours, our water carefully rationed, our spirits sustained by hope and determination.

My silk was more than just a commodity. Each carefully woven thread represented my family's hopes, our craftsmanship, our connection to a world much larger than our small village. I was not just a trader, but a storyteller carrying the dreams of my people across continents.

As we approached the borders of Persia, my excitement grew. The landscape softened, becoming gentler. Rolling hills replaced harsh mountains, and the air carried the promise of new opportunities. I imagined the Persian merchants examining our silk, their eyes lighting up at the quality of our work.

I had started this journey as a boy, uncertain and afraid. With each mile travelled, with each challenge overcome, I was becoming something more. The Silk Road was teaching me lessons no school could: resilience, adaptability, and the profound connection between different cultures.

The world, I was learning, was not divided by borders but connected by human stories. Our caravan was a tiny thread in a massive tapestry of human connection, weaving together civilizations, cultures, and dreams.

As the sun set on another day of travel, casting long shadows across the ancient landscape, I felt a sense of belonging, and a determination to keep on going.

Resilience Through the Sands of Time

S.K.H. St. Peter's Primary School, Liu, Laura – 10

2025 Iran

Having my cobalt blue coat and white shoes on, I stood proudly on display like my Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan in a glass case. I stood in the middle of the hall as the centrepiece. Visitors from all around the world came and admired but never talked to me. Until today, three masked men came in, each with a hammer in their hands. With a clunk, my crystal protection shattered into millions of pieces. A rough hand grabbed me by my neck. It dumped me in a dingy, droopy space. How dare you put me in such a saggy place! Put me down right now!

1292 Jingdezhen

I found myself on a spinning wheel with a damp hand on my body shaping. I was put in a kiln and all the moisture left me. A brush dipped with ink painted me line by line. I was presented to my master, Kublai Khan. He gazed at Marco Polo with sorrow, 'My most trusted emissary, you ought to go back to Venice now, but I have one last request. Can you escort my precious princess to her wedding in Persia?' Marco Polo knocked his forehead to the ground three times showing his utmost respect to the emperor. I was placed beside other luxuries: silk dressings, Jade ornaments, tea leaves and herbs and paintings...I was going to the wedding of the princess!

1293 Taklamakan Desert

It's been a week since the sandstorm. The sky was the ochre, the ground was ochre. All I could hear was the terrible sound of the wind howling. Sand choked me, it swallowed me. It was burning and dry. I desperately wanted to leave but we were still heavily rocking on the caravans. Then, I heard muffled footsteps hidden under the 'tap-tap' of the camel. The muffles became steady footsteps. In a flash, we were flying across the desert. The caravan darted down the slope without anyone driving. Men with brown hair hurled all the wedding gifts away. Sand blew on my face; the powerful wind pushed me. My glazed surface rattled as I bounced across the sound sand. The wind was still pushing as I rolled on the sand. I fell off into a dune.

1293-2023 Desert

The wind slammed me against the dune, and I thought I would shatter into dust. I was buried and wrapped in the parching sand. There's nothing here. Just me and the scratchy sand. I couldn't even see anything. It's so so lonely there. I waited, waited and waited.

2023 Desert

They call it the 'glided silence'. It was the largest sandstorm in the century. The wind pulled away the blankets of sand on me. Finally, I could hear and see! I could see workers tramping and digging along the road. I could see a huge machine with a pillar drilling in the ground, an ear piercing metallic ripped through the ear vibrating deep inside my whole body. I later learnt it was part of the 'belt and road' trade. Suddenly, a shovel knocked on my head. 'There's something over here,' a ruffled voice said. Later, I was examined and polished by some man before being transported to the museum.

2025 museum

I was still cranking in the back before I heard more footsteps coming. Someone shouted. I was taken out of the droopy space. I could see the masked men being dragged away by someone else. Days later, I was back in an upgraded unbreakable glass tank.

Celebrating Cultural Unity

Two thousand years ago, a group of Chinese merchants embarked on a journey that would weave a tapestry of cultures across continents. Driven by the desire to sell silk, they traversed treacherous terrains, transforming their initial venture into the vibrant Silk Road, a conduit for ideas and artistry that altered history.

In a small village near Chang'an, a young trader named Li Wei dreamed of adventure beyond the mountains. Born into a family of merchants, he listened wide-eyed to his father's tales of majestic lands filled with spices, gold, and silk. Each story ignited his imagination, painting vivid pictures of bustling markets. With a heart full of curiosity, Li Wei longed to explore the unknown.

One early morning, after weeks of preparation, Li Wei set off on his first journey along the Silk Road. He packed his camel with bolts of silk, hoping to captivate customers in distant markets. The rhythmic clapping of camel hooves accompanied him as he journeyed westward.

As he traveled, he encountered fellow traders who enriched his experience with stories, food, and laughter, forming bonds that transcended borders. He learned of the vast desert cultures and met merchants from Persia, who introduced him to exotic spices. Each encounter shaped his worldview and revealed the rich tapestry woven from shared experiences.

Fast forward to present day, where echoes of the ancient Silk Road still resonate. The Belt and Road Initiative has rekindled this spirit of connection, inviting nations to explore new possibilities. With 150 countries involved, the legacy of those early traders remains alive.

In a bustling market in Istanbul, a modern trader named Aisha prepares her stall, showcasing textiles inspired by traditional designs from across the Silk Road. Her creations blend patterns from Chinese silk, Uzbek embroidery, and Turkish motifs. Each piece tells a story, inviting buyers to embrace the shared legacy of cultures that prospered through trade.

One afternoon, a group of intrigued tourists gathers around Aisha. As she explains the intricacies of each design and shares tales of her grandparents' journeys, a sense of community blooms. Amidst laughter and curiosity, they form bonds that transcend language and background.

Among Aisha's customers is Maria, a student specializing in international relations, captivated by cultural interconnectedness. Dreaming of global cooperation, she shares her aspirations with Aisha, and a friendship blossoms between them.

Inspired by enriching discussions, Aisha and Maria decide to organize a cultural festival celebrating the diversity of the Silk Road. Their collaboration fuels a vision for an event where artisans can showcase crafts, chefs can share culinary traditions, and storytellers can recount formative histories.

Months later, the festival becomes a vibrant tapestry of sights and sounds. Chinese dragon dancers and Persian poets fill the atmosphere with energy, while cooking demonstrations infuse the air with delightful aromas. Families stroll through the market, collecting handmade crafts and enjoying culinary delights.

As night falls, soft lanterns illuminate the area, transforming the festival into a dreamlike gathering. Music fills the air, and even the oldest traditions find new life in this joyous celebration. Children dance under the stars, and elders share traditional songs, echoing memories of the past.

As the festival thrives, Maria and Aisha explore the larger implications of their connections. They reach out to local farmers and artisans to see how collaboration can extend beyond the festival. They envision workshops focusing on sustainable practices, blending tradition with innovation.

Together, they partner with artisan groups to create eco-friendly products that reflect the rich history of the Silk Road. Each item becomes a testament to their commitment to sustainability and shared prosperity. They host community classes, teaching the art of their crafts, fostering skills that can be passed down through generations.

As they deepen their involvement, Maria documents the stories of older artisans, capturing their experiences and preserving histories that might otherwise fade. Aisha incorporates elements inspired by these narratives into her textiles, infusing her crafts with meaning and depth.

Years later, the festival has evolved into a significant annual gathering, attracting visitors from around the world. Aisha and Maria reflect on how their dream of connection has blossomed into something greater. The Silk Road, once merely a trade route, has become a metaphor for a world where cultures intersect and enrich one another.

Through art, food, and stories, they have forged lasting bonds that extend beyond borders. As artisans and guests engage in discussions, they recognize that the connections formed are just as crucial as the transactions made.

As the sun sets on another successful festival, Aisha and Maria look out at the colorful gathering of faces and cultures. Their shared journey is just beginning. The new Silk Road holds infinite potential—a promise that, like the silk that once flowed from East to West, the stories we tell and connections we forge will continue to weave the fabric of humanity.

In an ever-changing world, they remain hopeful that collaboration and understanding will guide future generations. Aisha and Maria envision a global community where young minds gather to share and create, ensuring that the spirit of the Silk Road lives on in the hearts of all who dare to dream, explore, and connect. Each year, the festival grows, expanding horizons and fostering a legacy of inclusivity and celebration that will echo for centuries to come.

Tales Woven in Silk and Spice

Some time ago, I went along the Silk Road as a travelling merchant. I wanted to understand the vibrant cultures and exotic goods of the East, so I decided to become a merchant, acquiring silk, tea, and jade to bring back to Europe. But not only did I obtain the goods, but also the stories and artistry of those I encountered. Driven by both wanderlust and the ambition of a merchant, I viewed this journey as an opportunity to enrich my perspective.

As I set off on my journey along the legendary Silk Road, the air shimmered with the anticipation of exploration and trade. I went with a few fellow merchants. The sun rose over the horizon, casting light on the winding path through deserts and mountains. Traveling through a large stretch of desert and occasional tranquil oases, I met fellow travelers, merchants, and local villagers. Each encounter brought vibrant stories of bravery and trade, with the clamor of horses and camels laden with spices and textiles creating a symphony of commerce that echoed through the valleys.

When I reached China, the landscape transformed into lush valleys dotted with bustling towns. The scent of jasmine and incense filled the air as I approached the grand silk markets of Suzhou. The streets were lined with stalls adorned with colorful bolts of silk, glistening under the soft morning light. Before making my purchase, I was captivated by the art of silk-making. Visiting a workshop, I observed skilled artisans deftly spin cocoons into threads, their fingers transforming each strand into delicate fabric. They shared stories of the silk's journey, each thread infused with culture and history.

The merchant greeted me with a warm smile, gesturing to the colorful array. We engaged in a lively negotiation, exchanging pleasantries and bargaining over price. Haggling was a dance of respect and tradition. Soon, I secured a beautiful roll of silk—a rich, emerald green that perfectly matched the lush valleys of my journey. As I handed over the coins, my heart raced with satisfaction, knowing I carried a piece of history back with me.

As I wandered through the market, I stumbled upon a stall devoted to tea. Recognizing its significance in Chinese culture, I sampled various types—each cup revealed layers of flavor and history. The vendor educated me about the tea's journey from lush plantations to bustling streets, where it served as a medium of social connection. The mesmerizing ritual of tea preparation enticed me, and I purchased several types—green, oolong, and fragrant jasmine—each a reflection of the land's rich heritage.

While exploring a vibrant market, I discovered a stall filled with exquisite glassware. The sunlight danced upon their surfaces, casting a cascade of colors that caught my attention. These bottles ranged from small cups to larger, more ornate jars adorned with intricate designs. As I spoke with the glassblower, he shared the techniques used to create such beautiful containers, including the mixing of minerals to achieve different hues. Seeing their usefulness in storing oils, spices, and even my precious tea, I selected a few, each one a work of art that would serve both practical and decorative purposes. I also purchased a few glass orbs, each with a unique pattern.

While in China, I also became intrigued by the local knowledge of medicinal herbs. The markets were vibrant with stalls displaying an array of dried roots, leaves, and seeds, each claiming to cure ailments and promote health. I spoke with herbalists who passionately shared their expertise, explaining how traditional Chinese medicine focused on the balance of body and spirit. They guided me to herbs like ginseng for energy and chrysanthemum for cooling properties, introducing me to their immense healing power. Enchanted by their wisdom, I gathered a selection of these potent herbs, planning to introduce them into my own practices back in Europe.

In my exploration, I also encountered a vendor specializing in fine paper, a relatively new invention at the time. Drawn by its smooth texture, I realized the potential it held for recording my travels and thoughts. Engaging with the vendor, I learned about the methods of paper-making, which involved the careful processing of mulberry bark and other fibers. After a lively exchange, I purchased a stack of beautifully crafted sheets, envisioning how they would serve as a canvas for documenting my adventures and the knowledge I gained along the way.

In addition to silk, paper, herbs, and tea, I was drawn to the exquisite jade jewelry on display. Jade is treasured in Chinese culture. Artisans carved intricate designs, each piece symbolizing virtue and purity. I selected a delicate pendant, aware it would carry not just beauty but also a piece of the Silk Road's enduring legacy.

Upon my return to Europe, I was eager to share the stories I had gathered. I felt both excitement and anxiety. I was not just a traveler returning home, but a messenger of the East's rich culture. In the bustling marketplaces of my home city, I set up a stall adorned with my newly acquired silk, tea, glass, paper, and jade.

I organized tea preparations, inviting onlookers to experience the complex rituals. I introduced various herbs and their effects. People admired the detailed glass ornaments. The jade pendants became symbols of stories and conversations, drawing people in with their beauty and significance. My emerald silk was in high demand, admired for its quality and the tale of my journey.

As I shared my findings, my heart was filled with gratitude. The journey taught me more than the value of goods, it wove a tapestry of connections, cultures, and stories along the vibrant paths of trade.

I suppose you've heard of quite a few stories of the Silk Road. Some are true, some are slightly stretched, some are long, some are short. This is just one of them. But whether it is good or not, I hope you enjoyed it.

Across Deserts and Dreams: A Tale of the Silk Road

2nd Century BC

“Get ready, get ready! We're going to do something very important!”

My master, Zhang Qian, said to me in an excited voice. I tossed my head, confused. What was he playing at? I heard his partner, Ganfu, telling him that we were going to a place called Yuezhi. What was it? Where was it? I had no idea. It did not matter; Zhang Qian would take care of it.

The next morning, I woke to excited murmurs and a hearty breakfast of grain, hay, corn and a variety of plants. After finishing my brine, I was led out. The other stablemates were also led out one after another. A crowd chattered excitedly. The stableman stroked my mane and saddled me. I saw my master talking to him nervously. Why was he nervous?

“The Emperor arrives!” someone called.

A man in yellow robes was carried in a sedan chair to an open plaza, surrounded by many people. Then there was a conversation full with phrases I couldn't understand, like “Your subject obeys” and “Your subject will do his utmost.”

Just as I was about to fall asleep from boredom, Zhang Qian patted me. “Let's go!” He climbed onto my back.

About a hundred people accompanied us. We left the town and galloped for days and nights, crossing the Gobi Desert and mountain ranges. After months, we finally reached the Qilian Mountains.

Night fell, and the party settled. Exhausted, I drifted into sleep in a few seconds.

“Wake up! Wake up! It's the Xiongnu!” Zhang Qian's screams woke everyone.

“The Xiongnu!” My pupils widened. Zhang Qian had told me why we were journeying to Yuezhi—to seek an alliance against the Xiongnu, the mortal enemies of the Han Dynasty. If captured, the consequences would be unimaginable!

“Run! Quickly!” He mounted me again.

I fled as fast as my exhausted hooves could carry me. The camp descended into chaos—screaming, whinnying, and thundering hoofbeats filled the night.

“Caught you!” Even though I tried my best to escape, we were still surrounded. Zhang Qian was knocked off me, and I was roughly grabbed. “Think you could escape?”

I watched hopelessly as those people, holding everyone hostage, wantonly robbed us of our belongings.

By dusk, we were taken into the Xiongnu camp. The other horses and I were led into a stable, and the people were led away. I watched their retreating figures, lost in thought.

Ten Years Later.....

“The warehouse is on fire! Quick! Quick! Put out the fire!”

Inside the Xiongnu camp, flames roared and thick smoke rose in wisps.

The extent of the damage was clearly visible inside the stable. I tossed my head anxiously. Why wasn't he here yet? Hurry up... hurry up!

Yes! He's here! I would never mistake that figure running here! He raced into the stable, leapt onto my back, gripped the reins tightly with one hand, and clutched a small bundle with the other. Behind him, another familiar figure also mounted a horse.

“Go!” At his command, I burst from the stable, out of the camp, towards the freedom we had longed for day and night. Yes, the man on my back was none other than Zhang Qian, and close behind was Ganfu!

For a decade, we had been prisoners of the Xiongnu, yearning for our homeland, Chang'an. After earning their trust, Zhang Qian and Ganfu had secretly plotted their escape. Zhang Qian knew I was a spirited horse and would visit me nightly to explain the plan so I could assist when the day came. Even after he was forced to marry and have children, he never abandoned the plan, dreaming of escape.

Now, that day had arrived!

We rode nonstop for four days and three nights before finally grounding to a halt. Exhausted, the four of us rested, ate, and slept. At dawn, we continued.

For three months, we traveled, passing through the kingdoms of Loulan, Kucha, Shule, and others, crossing the Pamir Plateau until we reached Dayuan. There we saw magnificent Akhal-Teke horses—a breed unknown to us. The King of Dayuan welcomed us and provided guides to the Yuezhi.

Yet, the Yuezhi king refused the Han Dynasty's invitation to ally against the Xiongnu.

“He is afraid of offending the Xiongnu,” Zhang Qian told me afterward, frustrated. “What a coward! We return to Chang'an in a few days. Though we failed to secure an alliance, we have learned much.”

He stroked my glossy fur gently. “We will bring Akhal-Teke horses, seeds of the what—ah yes, the grapes. Oh, and also some—what was it—Alfalfa. Information on various plants is necessary—with a map of the Western Regions. The emperor will be satisfied,” Zhang Qian said, counting his fingers enthusiastically.

On the return journey, we were caught again by the Xiongnu. But a year later, after their chieftain died, Zhang Qian escaped with Ganfu, his Xiongnu wife on me.

By then, I was no longer swift and energetic. I was old and frail, nearing the end of my strength as we finally approached Chang'an.

Zhang Qian and Ganfu were honored by the Emperor—one as Palace Counsellor, the other as Imperial Envoy. Zhang Qian told me I, too, would receive an official title. But on the night before the ceremony, I closed my eyes and did not open them again.

Modern Day

“This is the end of the story. It tells of a horse that dedicated its life to the Silk Road. It had no superpower, yet it repeatedly assisted its master and made invaluable contributions. It reminds us that even without outstanding abilities, as long as we do our best, our contributions may be as light as a feather or as heavy as a mountain. You never know if your unintentional contribution will be the latter,” said the renowned writer Zhang Xuan, addressing a primary school assembly. “Thank you.”

Thunderous applause erupted from the audience.

Silk Road

Standing beneath the ancient city walls of Chang'an, I feel the bustle of the marketplace and the clamour of foreign merchants. This is the starting point of the Silk Road—and the beginning of my journey. As I gently stroke a piece of mulberry silk in my hand, my heart is full of curiosity about the unknown, tinged with a hint of nervousness. Sunlight spills across my shoulders, illuminating the road that stretches westward before me, leading to the distant lands of Central Asia and Europe. The Silk Road is not merely an exchange of goods—it is a grand stage where cultures freely collide, and at last, I have become part of it.

Before our caravan sets out, our guide, Andrew Yu, reminds us to prepare ample water and food. He says desert storms and cold nights often catch travelers unawares. I carefully check my backpack, stowing away valuables, and quietly memorize each face in our group. We need to trust one another to face the dangers along the way. This makes me realize that whether making friends or doing business, *trust* and a *shared goal* are the keys to overcoming hardship.

Leaving Chang'an, we follow the ancient road as the scenery grows desolate. The desert scorches by day and freezes at night. Once, a strong wind blew sand into my eyes; I could only wipe it away with a damp cloth and endure the discomfort. In that moment, I felt a bit discouraged, but my companions' encouragement lifted me up again. We told stories of our homelands—some spoke of Persian poetry, others of the Mongolian grasslands. Even though our languages differed, we all longed to connect sincerely, and I deeply felt the power of *diversity* and *inclusion*.

Arriving in Dunhuang, I was awestruck by the murals of the Mogao Caves. They depict travelers, monks, animals, deities—full of adventure and faith. I lingered in the caves, silently admiring, losing track of time and feeling myself intimately connected with history. Here, it's not only a trade post, but a witness to the fusion of Eastern and Western thought. Quietly, I asked myself, "What can we do to better connect people from different places?" It seems a spirit of *openness* and a heart that's always learning gives the answer.

Heading west, the food became wonderfully varied. There were soft, chewy noodles and aromatic roasted lamb. Sharing meals, exchanging gifts, and teaching each other new greetings made me realize that *understanding* can be simple. Sometimes, all it takes is a shared dinner or a sincere greeting.

Challenges still came unexpectedly. Crossing the Taklamakan Desert, a young merchant water pouch broke, forcing us to ration our remaining supply together. On that day, there was no complaint—just a quiet agreement to share both hope and hardship. During a tough negotiation, the other party refused to compromise. I fought off impatience and tried to see their side of things. In the end, we found a mutual solution. On the road, many things require *patience* and *empathy*.

Upon reaching Samarkand, the blue mosque glowed in the sunset. I wandered the bazaar, watching Persian, Turkic, and Indian merchants exchange goods. It felt like the beating heart of the world, with silk, porcelain, and spices all circulating here. Gazing at the stars, I pondered human connection—regardless of nationality or language; our greatest common wish is to be understood and respected.

After months on the road, my harvest was plentiful. My silks changed hands many times, and I gained many friendships and pieces of knowledge along the way. The Silk Road taught me *courage*, *perseverance*, and *tolerance*. The most precious thing is not the goods but the hearts and stories that cross boundaries. Whenever I face new people or challenges, I always ask myself, "What do we need to do now?" The answer is usually to stay open, keep learning, and treat everyone kindly.

When the journey ended, I stood on the Mediterranean shore, gazing at distant lights and looking back at everything. The Silk Road is not simply a trade route, but a vast network connecting every corner of the world. It has helped countless people like me realize that if we are curious, respectful, and inclusive, we can always move forward and gain more beauty and understanding.

One Of The Long, Long Stories Of The Silkroad

One chilly morning, Angpre was skipping down the road, both excited and guilty. He was running away from his family's mansion and heading to the Silk Road. Many years ago, Angpre had pleaded with his parents to let him go to the Silk Road but was stopped for a reason: IT WAS DANGEROUS Angpre knew they stopped him because they cared about his safety. "I will be back," Angpre whispered in a shameful voice.

If you are wondering how he looked like, He had hair as black as Halloween night, skin as white as snow and a mountain-like nose. He was clever and quick, but he never stayed still for long.

There on a bridge were his friends waiting for him. Arav, the one who had planned everything, galloped over and shouted, "Angpre, are you ready for an adventure?!" Angpre smirked at his life-long best friend. Oh, how Angpre and Arav longed for a trip to the Silk Road trading spices and silk while roaming the scorching deserts with camels. Soon the others started tugging at the reins of twelve camels. Four were extra, just in case. "When do we start?" they asked. Angpre raised his voice. "To the Silk Road!"

The next few months were both heaven and hell for Angpre and his friends. They rode sand-yellow camel, but it seemed golden to them. They camped under wide skies and traded goods like carpets and silk with merchants. But there were scorpions to bite them and spiders to make them shudder. It also was very hot in the morning and freezing at night. Many of his friends got a severe fever or flu. Poor Angpre was all right but seeing his friends suffering because of flu and fever was a torture. Angpre stayed healthy, but watching his friends suffer felt like torture. And even though he had chosen to leave home, he began to miss his family by the sixth month of the journey. On the final night before they reached their trading destination, everyone got better after that tragic event of flu. Everyone raised their glass cup and chanted, "For Angpre!" Angpre gasped. "You took care of us when we were sick," answered Arav with an obvious face. Everyone agreed, and soon Angpre was bursting with tears of joy. As the boys drifted to sleep in a huddle, Angpre had a sickly prediction of what happened in home. Angpre stared into the darkness and thought, I wonder what is happening at home. Nothing terrible... right?

The next day at their destination for trading, Angpre was fascinated! He never had seen such a place. It was filled with colorful silk and customers insisting on a lower price. There were Chinese cats, gold rings and the smooth, famous silk. He also traded some silk with a few precious bottles with jades stuck on their middles. In the end, Angpre had 11 pieces of silk and 17 sacks of gold. Even though others only earned three gold coins, they were joyful. At night Angpre felt like a balloon full with air. Yes, he was excited to meet his family again. He couldn't wait.

The voyage home was a playground for Angpre. Whether it was scorching or chilly, day or night, Angpre was determined to go to his family. When he arrived at home all of his family were there. "Where have you been?" someone cried. "I love you!" another voice said.

As he was hugging his sister, Jade, he noticed something strange. Inside the mansion stood nurses and doctors. "Father, who are they? Is somebody sick?" asked Angpre urgently. He had

not seen Uncle Xu. Nearby, a curtain covered something. Angpre lifted the snow— white silk curtain. His eyes widened. Angpre screamed, “No! No! This can't be! No...”.

There was a white bed with wheels on it to move around. On that bed was a scrawny man with a face like a dog. "UNCLE XU! WAKE UP! PLEASE!" Angpre shouted.

Angpre had enough surprises for one day. He cried his head off until a freezing wind rustled through the imposing mansion. Angpre saw someone standing in the shadowy hallway: a boy dressed in black, holding a small glass case that glowed faintly.

The boy looked strangely familiar.

Angpre followed him outside without thinking.

“You followed me out? Anyway, I am the boy of death.” He tapped the glass cage and offered, “Why don’t we compete on this soul?” “Fine.” Angpre spluttered. They made a rule: they would each say one statement, and the other must decide if it was a lie, without crying.

The Boy of Death spoke first. “I walk the Silk Road. The person I take to the next world often dies because of that road.”

Angpre’s guilt rose like quicksand. He forced himself to think. “No,” he said. “The legends say you appear where people die most in that time.”

The Boy of Death sighed. “Right.”

They walked back toward the mansion in silence. Then the Boy of Death muttered, “Actually... I think you are the Boy of Life. You brought your uncle’s soul back. I wish I could experience the Silk Road in the living world.”

Angpre looked at him and said softly, “You can come to this world anytime.”

The next week, two boys borrowed a couple of strong camels. The boy with the black turban seemed to be new to everything and the white turban boy was explaining it to his companion. When those boys set off, the shopkeeper exclaimed “They look identical!” Then he gazed at the boys as they rode toward the magnificent Silk Road, side by side, as if a new story had just begun.

The Silk Road

Recently, some archeologists have found a letter written by a curious Chinese girl named Molly to her father who travelled through the Silk Road.

Dear Dad,

Hi Dad! How are you? Mom and I missed you so much since you were gone for your trade adventure to Kashgar. You brought a lot of silky along your travel. I still remember the day you left us. Do you? You also said that you'll be back in about 500 days later. I was astonished with sadness. I knew I can't always keep you at home, and you always have to work, travel and explore. So I decided to let you go. Every day, I carve on the wall with a stick, counting down the rest of the days for you to return home. Mom has been a busy woman, so she doesn't have time to play with me. Our hometown is fine. Our crops are healthy, we're earning money and I'm studying hard too. You don't need to worry about it, just care about yourself and your travel.

As each day passed, mom and I have been worrying about you from the beginning you left us. This made mom sleepless every night. I felt so bored without you. You always comfort us when we needed. Without you is a gloomy day. You also tell me jokes which always make me laugh and giggle. By the way, how is your adventure? I can't go with you to travel because I'm too young. This always make me want to grow up faster and discover the mystery of the world.

Recently, there was a new kid to our town, and she quickly became my friend. Her name is Nora, who is from Arabic. She wears a scarf around her neck and always bundle up her hair, then she places silk on her head neatly, which made her very pretty and stylish. The silk had unique patterns that matches with her dress. Her elegant earrings and her golden necklace look expensive and rare. When Nora and her family came to Chang'an, they traded interesting things from their hometown that I never seen before. For example, one of them is a small round black bits that is called 'Pepper'. Nora shared a bit. It tastes bitter and a little spicy. Nora also gave me a long green vegetable which she called as 'Cucumber'. It tastes fresh and juicy. But I didn't really like it though, well, at least it's healthy. So, I kept it. Right after that, I just found out cucumbers were all over shops. It was very expensive so our family can't afford it. But Nora was kind enough to give us one.

When playing together, Nora also shared with me amazing things they have seen during the trip! One part of the travel is that they crossed over a large area that is full of sand, with no water at all. They were encountered sandstorms that they had to hide below the camels to survive! I hope you never had to face the same danger. You need to keep drinking water in the desert to keep hydrated like mum always reminds me to do. They also once lost their directions! It was super dangerous to lose directions in the desert! I am worried about you; you sometimes lost directions in Chang'an! I hope you always follow your guide! They also visited places where people like dancing, wearing beautiful silks and eating strange spices. Did you see the same thing too? I'm so jealous! I wish I could be with you. While exploring, did you meet any new friends? Did they help you on the adventure? Are there any kind of person you see alike in hometown than now? Well, I hope so!

I am asking a friend of Nora's father to carry this letter to you and I prayed to Buddha that this letter can find you well. Buddha is a new god introduced by the travelers to Chang'an and they said Buddha can protect us all if we pray hard. I am praying every night that you can be back home safe soon!

Love,

Your Little Molly

The letter was found in the ruin of ancient city of Lóulán. We don't know if the letter reached the girl's father and we don't know if her father came back safely. However, there have been thousands of people who travelled through the Silk Road and brought mixture of cultures.

The Adventure of the Silk Road

Long ago, during China's great Han Dynasty, a ten-year-old boy named Li Wei stood in a quiet village near Xi'an, staring down the road that led west. Every day his mother sat at the loom, weaving silk that shone like moonlight, and his dad made paper villagers bought cheaply. But the person Li Wei admired most was his uncle, Zhang Feng—a brave traveler who knew the paths of the legendary Silk Road better than anyone.

One warm evening, Li Wei stood tall in front of his uncle and said, "This time, Uncle, I'm coming with you."

Zhang Feng laughed gently. "The Silk Road is no place for a child, little nephew. Bandits wait in the shadows. Sandstorms swallow whole caravans. You might not see your mother or father for years. Stay here and help your father with his work."

Li Wei listened without arguing. But in his heart, the decision was already made.

A few days later, when everyone was asleep, Li Wei slipped out of the house with a small bag and followed the caravan into the night. He walked until his legs ached and his stomach growled, too stubborn to turn back.

When Uncle Zhang finally discovered him at dawn, he shouted, "You foolish, reckless child! Do you know how dangerous this is?"

"I do," Li Wei answered softly. "That's why I came. To face it with you."

There was no turning back now. Grumbling, Uncle Zhang tied a short rope from Li Wei's wrist to the saddle. "You have to obey all the rules. And you will work—hard."

Luckily, Li Wei had come prepared. Hidden in his bag were treasures from his mother: a few pieces of her finest silk, some precious sheets of paper his father made, and a tiny bottle of ink he had traded for in the village.

The journey was extremely dangerous. The sun scorched their skin during the day. Nights were so cold their breath turned to frost. Yet, Li Wei didn't give up.

Then one day, in the endless dunes, the wind began to howl. Sand blasted into Li Wei's eyes, nose, and mouth. Li Wei fainted, collapsing onto the sand.

A woman found him almost dead and carried him to safety. The caravan rested at a small oasis while Li Wei recovered. There he met A Duo, a boy a little older than him, writing clumsy characters onto flat stones with water-soaked fingers that faded quickly in the sun. When A Duo saw Li Wei's paper and ink, his eyes shone with wonder.

The next morning, a commotion woke Li Wei. His bag was open, and his paper and ink were gone. A Duo had taken them, desperate to learn.

Li Wei couldn't tell the truth. His family had saved his life! Li Wei had seen those bleeding fingers, the endless writing that vanished in the sun as soon as they appeared. But giving away things to sell broke the caravan's rules. After a long, painful silence, he lied to the caravan leaders: "I gave them to him. To thank him."

The punishment was great—no food from the caravan for a week. Li Wei grew weak, and his vision blurred. On the fifth day, Uncle Zhang gave him bread and dried meat secretly at night. No words were spoken, but Li Wei understood—this was a sign of forgiveness, a sign his uncle still loved him.

Two years later, in a bustling market town farther west, Li Wei met a tall boy named Raphael, who dreamed of making beautiful, comfortable clothes. Raphael showed sketches he had drawn and clothes he had made from linen and wool.

“I want to use real silk someday,” Raphael whispered. “But it’s so expensive...”

Li Wei thought of his mother’s tired hands. He made a deal. “Take some pieces of my mother’s silk. I’ll give it to you cheaply. Years from now, when I return, repay me in twice the real value.”

Raphael’s eyes shone with hope. The deal was struck.

Time passed like the wheels of the caravan. Li Wei, now a steady young adult, returned home after six years of traveling.

Centuries passed. Dynasties rose and fell. The world changed.

In an international school at modern Xi’an, a thirteen-year-old boy named Li Ming often found himself bullied by classmates Francesco and Michael. Francesco mocked his old, worn clothes, while Michael delighted in announcing his poor grades.

One day, their teacher assigned students to bring something meaningful from their families. To Li Ming’s surprise, Francesco, Michael, and he had all chosen letters that looked strikingly similar.

Michael stepped forward first, opening a scroll in the glass box. “Even though I am an American, my ancestor Duo was Chinese. He had a chance to study after Li Wei gave him paper and ink. This is the Li Wei Theorem, which you can see in our math textbook.”

Next was Francesco, showcasing a tablet and a modern silk scarf with patterns of ancient lotus flowers. “My ancestor Raphael designed the first Liwei patterns, inspired by the silk gifted to him by Li Wei. The shop was extremely successful, so they moved to Italy.”

At first, the children thought it was just a coincidence, until...

Li Ming took a deep breath and shared, “My ancestor Li Wei traveled the Silk Road at just ten years old. This is a page from his diary: Today, I gave my silk to a boy named Raphael. Uncle Zhang scolded me, but I felt it was worth it!”

As he continued reading, the classroom grew silent. For the first time, the three boys looked beyond their differences and truly saw one another.

The Silk Road wasn’t just a long path for trading silk, spices, gold, and other goods. It was a giant bridge connecting faraway places, where people also shared kindness, care, and trust along the way.

And somewhere in history, an old traveler named Li Wei smiled, proud of the connections being made through time.

Ken's Road

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Chan, Pak Yin – 11

With no university classes to attend, Ken wandered into the school library, heading straight for the Chinese history aisle. His destination was a specific, leather-bound book, its spine cracked with age. It was this book that had first fuelled his obsession with one question: *Might an undiscovered branch of the Silk Road exist?*

Finding it, he settled into a quiet nook. As he flipped to his favourite chapter, a passage he had never noticed leapt out: "Unexplored branches of the Silk Road..." His breath hitched. This was it! The proof he had been searching for.

As his finger traced the words, the text began to glow. The world around him dissolved. He was squeezed through a suffocating, ink-black tunnel, his heart hammering against his ribs. The library was gone.

In an instant, the panic subsided, replaced by a cacophony of sounds and smells. He stood in a bustling market. Camel caravans lumbered past merchants in flowing, cross-collared robes of silk. *Hanfu*, he realised, remembering his professor's lecture. He was in ancient China.

"Where am I?" he stammered to a silk-clad passer-by.

"Chang'an," the man replied, eyeing Ken's strange clothes suspiciously before vanishing into the crowd. *130 BCE?* Ken's disbelief deepened as a merchant's cry rang out: "Silk for the Silk Road!"

Pausing amid vibrant stalls, Ken realised with a jolt: he stood on the Silk Road itself, in the heart of its Han Dynasty origins.

"Hey, you lost?" Leo, a silk trader in Chang'an, eyed Ken's strange clothes with curiosity. When he mentioned he was leaving for Baghdad that afternoon, Ken agreed to join him.

They set out at dawn. Together, they took the western road, plunging deeper into the Taklamakan—the place people enter and never leave, a legend whispered by merchants and travellers alike. The desert was brutal and unforgiving. The ground shifted constantly from soft powder to sun-baked iron; the heat was blinding and relentless. The nights were crowded with cold, distant stars.

After a terrifying sandstorm nearly buried the caravan in choking sand and chaos, Ken noticed something peculiar: a faint fork in the tracks—two pale scars parting the sand like a secret pathway. "Is there really another path here?" Ken asked, his voice trembling with wonder. Leo shook his head slowly. "No. Just a trick of the light and wind. Trust only the route the camels know."

But curiosity burned hotter than fear. While Leo adjusted a camel's load, Ken stepped off the main trail quietly. He followed the ghost path alone, deeper into the golden silence. The caravan faded to nothing behind him.

For days, Ken walked into the furnace where no caravan dared go, rationing his single waterskin carefully. The silence was a weight.

Along the way, he found remnants of ancient travellers: a jade bead bright as new grass, a cracked bronze mirror, a child's wooden horse bleached bone-white. These artefacts told him he was not the first to seek this path.

On the fifteenth day, the desert simply stopped. The dunes fell back like curtains, revealing cool grass and the scent of roses carried on a gentle breeze. Across the valley rose the honey-coloured walls and turquoise domes of Baghdad, magnificent and real. Ken's heart swelled—he had done it.

"You absolute, reckless, impossible idiot!" Ken looked up to see Leo running towards him, the entire caravan frozen in disbelief behind him. Leo crushed Ken into a fierce, laughing hug, tears streaming down his weathered face. "Seventeen days," Leo marvelled in wonder. "You found a shortcut."

Ken had discovered something unfound before. The people named it 'Ken's Road'. Prices fell, fortunes rose, and the crossing became a legend. Ken never went home to the future; he never needed to. Leo was home enough. Together, they walked through the gates, two friends who changed the world because of one afternoon. Curiosity had proved stronger than the desert.

From the stall he shared with Leo, Ken watched the flourishing market. Caravans now moved safely between Baghdad and the new routes through the Taklamakan. Children ran between tents, traders bargained fairly, and families reunited. His shortcut had become a safe road for all, turning months-long journeys into weeks. Ken had changed more than maps; he had changed the rhythm of lives, turning peril into passage. Grain travelled where only luxuries once went, a schoolhouse stood in an oasis, and a teahouse welcomed travellers who could finally arrive safely.

For years, Ken stayed, driven by purpose and discovery. But meeting people across time taught him about courage, belonging, and the quiet pull of home. Over time, he began to miss the world of questions. He knew, eventually, he must return.

He felt a pride as wide as the desert sky after rain. The book that brought him here now lay wrapped on a high shelf behind their stall—its call to him had faded. It had started everything, but was now a memory. Ken decided to go back to the university library, to the quiet shelves and the person he once was.

Leo stood beside him, steady and sun-darkened. He understood. Together they walked to the bend in the road where the desert began. Before opening the book, they embraced in a wordless farewell. Leo pressed a small jade bead—bright as new grass—into Ken's hand. Ken touched his forehead to Leo's. No words were needed; their friendship was the promise.

Alone, Ken opened the book. The world dissolved into the ink-black tunnel, and in an instant he was back. Afternoon light fell through high windows, dust motes floating in the silent air of the university library. He stood before the same shelf, the leather-bound book now back in place.

Outside, centuries away, Ken's Road thrived. Inside, Ken returned to his studies—a different person, holding not just the answer to an ancient question, but the proof that curiosity can change the world, and the memory of a friendship that had been, for a glorious while, home.

Unsent Letters from the Silk Road

Shanghai Singapore International School, Cai, Nicole – 11

Nicole was on a summer vacation trip at the beach and was swimming in the ocean. After a while, she had found a wine bottle in the damp sand in the water, she picked it up and, out of curiosity, wanted to open the bottle. She unscrewed the cap of the wine bottle and opened the yellow letter. She saw a big letter of words, so she read it. It says, "Hello, my name is Resin. I am an ancient detective. And I am also a descendant of people from the Western Jin Dynasty. I want you to go back to 312–313 AD, one thousand years ago, to find a letter from Su Wan and his husband, Jin Min. You must find out about this letter and tell me the story of this letter. When you have found out this story, you just yell, 'Found it!' and I will transfer you back to real life. When you find out, go to 25 Maple Street; you will find a closed museum, but remember that only you are one person! Wait, I remember the place that you can find a clue is a place called Grape, and then I believe you that you can solve it, but it's okay; I know you can do it! Let's get ready!"

After Nicole had read this letter, she saw a shiny blue portal, and she went inside. A white shiny light went through her eyes, and she was dropped into a desert. She was so scared, she walked and walked, but luckily she found a boy called "little stone". Nicole said, "What is she looking for?" and mentioned that the letter said the place name starts with "Grape". Little Stone had an epiphany; he knows that it was Grape Valley, where Su Wan always stays to read books. So, they went to ask a passerby, "Do you know where Su Wan lives?" The passer-by points at a wooden house in the city centre. They walked to Su Wan's house. There were a lot of people buying things in the village; for women, they were wearing a long red dress or a yellow, orange, pink and blue one. But for men, they were wearing a long shirt and cuffed pants that can be black or brown. Nicole asks the neighbours;

they said Su Wan went to find his husband. Then Nicole and little Stone went inside the wooden house; she saw a letter. Nicole found the end of the letter had a little sentence that had been erased. “If you don’t return to me, then I will come to find you.” Then she knows that Su Wan had already gone to find her husband, Jin Min. They find out a clue, they quickly walk outside, and a soldier walks inside and says, “Are you finding her? She went to find her husband, Jin Min, but was stopped by the gate of Shu Le City and wasn’t allowed to enter. So, Su Wan decided to go find Jin Min.

Nicole and Little Stone finally came to “Shu Le Chen”. They found out Su Wan and Jin Min were hugging together, crying.

Then Nicole says finally goodbye to little stone, and Nicole yells, “Found it!” And then, a mystery power brought Nicole back to real life. She told her dad to drive her to the 25 Maple Street museum. Then after 35 minutes, Nicole walked into the closed museum, and she found a girl standing in front of her whose face had been covered by a black mask so that you could not see her face clearly, and she said, “Have you found out the story?” Nicole said “yes” and gave her the letter. At last, the girl knows why this letter wasn’t sent, because Su Wan had already gone to find Jin Min.

The Silk Road Adventure

Shanghai Singapore International School, Loh, Jya Voon Aaron – 10

The Silk Road is a path that connected the economies and civilizations of the East and West. For thousands of years, merchants and explorers travelled this path, leaving behind traces of ancient settlements. Our science enthusiasts Carry and Kerry will journey back in time to explore the relics of these civilizations.

One burning afternoon, Carry and Kerry were learning about the Silk Road in history class. Though Kerry loved the subject, he struggled to visualize what happened in Silk Road. So, Carry decided to use his Ultra Automatic Supernatural Time machine to travel back into the era and witness history firsthand. Suddenly, after Carry pressed the button of the time machine, Boom, Plash! The pair found themselves in Chang an modern-day Xi'an.

This was the starting point of the Silk Road, and the year was 138 BCE the Western Han Dynasty. The two boys shouted “Wow!” And soon they saw a man—leading a group of soldiers whose name is Zhang Qian. Carry recognized him and said “He’s the first person to map the Western Regions for the Han Dynasty!” The two boys followed them through their journey. Three days later, they encountered the Xiongnu—a powerful nomadic confederation from Northern China.

“Unfortunately, most soldiers were killed by the Xiongnu. They are too strong and very skilled.” Carry said. Only a few soldiers — Zhang Qian, Carry, and Kerry survived. But the Xiongnu caught them to their tribe and treat them as slaves.

“What is this!” shouted Kerry. “Come down, I know how the story goes, everything is going to be ok.” Carry reassured him. Zhang qian was separated from the group by the Xiongnu..... Some days later, the three of them are alive and in good health. They finally know Zhang Qian's mission: to ally with the Dayuezhi (a kingdom in central Asia) against the Xiongnu. “What time will we leave?” Kerry asked. “Probably in ten years.” answered Carry. K was shocked but Carry said they can skip ahead via the time machine.

BOOM! The two boys traveled to 10 years later. “Ni hao, nice to see you again. Kerry and Carry.” Greeted Zhang Qian. He told the two boys about what happened during these ten years. Zhang Qian had married a Xiongnu woman and started a family during his captivity. He had also escaped once, reached the Dayuezhi (who refused the alliance) and was recaptured by the Xiongnu again on his way back to Han. “That’s interesting! Continue I want to hear more stories!” urged Kerry.

Zhang Qian spent the whole night sharing his adventures, while the two boys listened intently, absorbed in every detail. After that day, Carry said to Kerry “I think it’s time to go,” Kerry replied sadly “Ok.” So, Boom, Splash and Plash. They went back to the familiar room. This had been an extraordinary adventure, Kerry and Carry learned what happened in silk road with Zhang Qian. Though Zhang Qian’s journey wasn’t over, the boys had to return to their own time... for now.

Guardian Angel of the Silk Road

St. Andrew's Catholic Primary School, Chung, Sean Kelvin – 11

Have you heard of the mythical, the legendary, the enchanted story of the “Silk Road”? Well neither have I. But this boy in poverty has, shall we go and see his journey?

Tim, a Chinese boy born to a poor family, borrowed a book from his local library titled “The History of the Silk Road”. Once he picked it up, he couldn’t stop reading. He was mesmerised by the idea that his family could escape poverty via the Silk Road – his family made silk! Day and night, he would share his brilliant idea with his family, but they just brushed it off as another one of his ‘creative’ thoughts that were detached from reality. Undeterred, Tim turned all the silkworms into silk, packed his bags, and took his family’s only horse and set off for his long, agonizing but exciting journey.

When Tim first arrived in Xi’an, he asked the locals for a place to settle, trading half of his 120 bronze coins for one night. After a few hours of rest, he realized he could not afford another night and carried on his journey towards Samarkand, Uzbekistan. When he walked past Emperor Qin Shi Huang’s Mausoleum, he saw a magnificent sight. There were over 8,000 life-sized figures made from terracotta. As he wandered around the unilluminated pit, he was shocked by how realistic the soldier in front of him appeared. Suddenly, he heard a loud ‘BANG!’ and felt an eerie presence. Without hesitation, he scrambled out of the pit. Thinking these were his last words, Tim left a message for those who may be looking for him, “Tim was here.”

As Tim darted towards the Zhongshan Bridge, he saw a shadowy figure trailing him. A chill went down his spine, and he felt like his heart was about to jump out. He took the twisty roads and ducked into stores but still couldn’t lose the figure. Eventually, he hopped onto his horse and crossed the Yellow River. He looked back

and the figure disappeared, leaving behind a shiny crystal necklace. He was confused but thought the necklace could be a lucky charm for the long journey ahead, so he kept it.

“Ah, finally, I am on the legendary Silk Road!” Tim proclaimed to himself in awe. But there was just one problem, not a tiny one too. The climate has transitioned to desert, where his horse was practically useless. He had to exchange it for a camel, but the local merchants were not interested in his bronze coins nor his horse. Running out of items to barter, Tim pulled out the crystal necklace he picked up at the Zhongshan Bridge. The merchants’ eyes widened and gladly accepted the trade. “Phew, that really was my lucky charm,” Tim thought.

As Tim’s camel seemingly wandered aimlessly across the desert, the blowing sand and the fatigue caught up with him. He blacked out on the back of the camel but somehow woke up in Samarkand. “How did the camel know the way? It must be my new guardian angel!” He glazed around at the beauty of the city known as the ‘Legendary Jewel of the Silk Road’ and muttered “I wonder why this looks like India...” under his breath. Then, an Uzbek came up to him, “*Alyackmacaou onoutcalket!*”

“Excuse me?” Tim couldn’t understand a single word, but the locals insisted on bringing him into a hotel-like room, giving him delicious food and a new change of clothes. When he offered his gold coins, they vehemently rejected. He knew it was impolite to accept the favour, so he offered his silk instead. The locals rejoiced and bowed to him. It was then he knew that he was holding the treasure of the Silk Road. But, in the corner of his eye, he saw the shadowy figure again. Then, he took his camel and dashed.

As Tim continued westward into Turkmenistan, he walked past a small hill-like volcano. He realized that this was actually the infamous gas crater aptly named “The Gates to Hell”. Despite the amazing sight of the lava-looking, reddish fire pit, it occurred to him how treacherous the Silk Road was, and how many travellers before him had perished. Tim also knew that he couldn’t stay for long because the figure was lurking behind somewhere.

Then, he set off for the final leg of his journey towards Turkey. Before long, they arrived at Istanbul, or Constantinople, where he met people from all over Europe and Asia. Staring at the Bosphorus Strait, he could not help but exclaim, “I have finally arrived in Europe!” He went to the Grand Bazaar and displayed all the silk he brought from the small village in China. The European and Arab traders immediately surrounded him, fighting to buy his prized goods. He was so busy counting the pouches of weird silver coins from different countries he received that he didn’t realize the shadowy figure appeared again. This time it was towering. This time it was not shadowy. “Father? What are you doing here? Were you following me this whole time since Xi’an?” He couldn’t believe it.

“Yes, son. How could we leave you alone on this long, lonely road? I also wanted to see what this promised land called Europe looks like!” Tim was moved but also flustered by the fact that he never stopped to find out it was his father who had been his guardian angel all along. Now it all made sense to him – the necklace, the camel finding its own way, the supportive locals... It was all his father’s meticulous planning and unwavering care.

“Let’s go home, son. You have done us proud. We can now bring home some gifts and gold coins to improve our village.” The duo toured the Bazaar and brought some Western delicacies back to China, such as olives, grapes and dates. As the sun set over the never-ending desert, Tim finally found his best travel companion on the Silk Road.

Oscar's First Adventure on the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Anglo-Chinese Primary School, Chen, Oscar Kangxin – 10

Once upon a time in the Tang Dynasty, there was a boy named Oscar. His father was a merchant who travelled the Silk Roads all year round, selling precious goods to faraway lands. After the Chinese New Year, father finally said, 'come with me – we're going to Persia!' Oscar jumped for joy. This would be his first big adventure.

Their small caravan included two camel drivers, three guards, 14 camels, and loads of silk, tea, and fine porcelain. Fully prepared for the long journey, they set off from Chang'an. Before long, they reached the edge of the Taklamakan Desert. Oscar was totally stunned by the endless golden dunes stretching to the horizon. It was the most impressive sight he had ever seen. But as the days dragged on – walking under the scorching sun, sleeping on sand, eating dried food – excitement turned into boredom. The vast desert seemed to go on forever, and every day felt the same.

Trouble struck on the 50th day of their journey. The clear blue sky suddenly turned dark. A fierce wind howled, whipping up a terrifying sandstorm that covered the sun. Oscar's dad shouted immediately, everybody huddled behind the camels for shelter. Stinging sand lashed at Oscar's face and body, the wind roared so hard he could barely hear. Terrified, he buried his face in his father's arms. The sandstorm lasted for like a century. When the sand finally settled, the caravan quickly tidied their scattered supplies and eager to leave the desert behind.

Their next challenge came at the Pamir Mountains. There were lots of tall snowy mountains around them. The strong wind blew very hard that terrified people might be blown off at any time. It was so cold that no plants, no animals and no residents could live there. Roads were slippery covering with thick ice and snow. Some roads

were only wide enough for one camel to go at a time. They wrapped the camel's feet with bandages to avoid sharp rocks hurting.

Oscar was scared because he was not good at riding camels, especially in this situation, he might slip off the deep cliff if he made a tiny mistake. But when he watched the camels' drivers crossing the road first, Oscar was greatly encouraged by their bravery. When he was riding his camel, it suddenly stepped on a loose rock. He immediately pulled his camel to the other side, and the rock fell off the mountain. Phew! Luckily, they did not run into any trouble on the Pamir Mountains.

After that, they hurried to Persia, which was not far away. But just before they got into Persia, two bandits appeared. They held 2 blades that shone in the sun. Oscar was scared – he thought the bandits might kill him or the other people. He hid behind a nearby rock. Just then, the guards stepped out, ready for a fight. With 3 quick swipes the bandits were defeated. One bandit got killed, and the other ran away.

The caravan finally met their customers in Persia. The local businessmen looked very nice, they wore long, loose colourful robes and beautiful turbans on their heads. Although our languages were different, the trading went smoothly. They got our goods and we got gemstones, delicate woollen carpets and colourful spices from them.

After about half a year, Oscar finished his first adventure. There were tears, fear, laughter and sweat along the way. Everything was a big challenge for him. For him everything was well worth on this journey. He can't wait for his second adventure on the Silk Road.

The Dangerous Virus That Spread Through the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Anglo-Chinese Primary School, Lai, Chun Mau Jamie – 10

Once upon a time, there was a tiny virus was just born in a lab, and the virus was very dangerous. When the virus enters a cat body, it can kill the cat immediately.

The virus managed to get out of the lab, because a bad scientist broke the glass of the virus that the normal scientist built for it. So the virus broke out, but there was an outer layer outside the lab. The virus still managed to get out, but because of the heat, the virus died, except one virus: it didn't go with the virus that had died through a gap in the outer layer, so it broke out!

The virus landed on food. Then, a man ate it. He sneezed, then he died. When he died, the virus wrapped around the man. If someone got near the egg, it would explode.

The virus spread through the city, then everyone died except one. He's a pilot. He ran through the virus and made it to the nearest airport in Spain, then he flew a plane to China. The man wrote a note, then he died in the plane.

When the plane arrived in China, the plane crashed in Hong Kong. Because of the heat, the virus died!

When someone saw the note, the note said, "be careful of the virus. It is so dangerous." The virus spread through the Silk Road, then entered Hong Kong.

The countries across the Silk Road were infected, too. Now, only Hong Kong was not infected. Hong Kong was lucky. It had prepared a heat bar to defeat the virus. When the virus came, because of the heat, they died. But there was a gap between the heat bar, so the virus went through the gap to get in. When the virus got in, it spread through the city. Luckily, everyone had guns that can shoot out heat.

When all the viruses died, the bad scientist came. He pretended to be good, and he told everyone that, “this all kill the virus,” but there is a stronger virus in the battle to come. When he said the battle will have more viruses even stronger, then he took the virus and escaped Hong Kong, because Hong Kong is too strong. Then the virus spread though the Silk Road. But luckily, three people somehow survived. The three people used a camel to get to Hong Kong. The three people told the virus case to the police, then the police believed them. The police told all the villagers to be prepared for the virus to come back. When the virus came back stronger than ever, the people shot at the virus. The virus barely died.

At last, the people had won. They lived happily ever after. Then, they had a secret party together.

An Untold Story About the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Anglo-Chinese Primary School, Lin, Yining Oscar – 12

There were some famous people who set foot on the renowned Silk Road, but I don't think you have heard about one of their stories. Let's start with the three most famous travellers: the Chinese diplomat Zhang Qian, the well-known Buddhist monk Xuanzang, and obviously the one and only Italian explorer (specifically, a Venetian) Marco Polo!

Zhang Qian

One hot summer day, Zhang Qian, commissioned by Emperor Wu to make an alliance to fight against the Xiongnu, travelled westward to seek allies. His journey begins there...

Xuanzang

That same day, Xuanzang, a monk who wanted to reach India by the Silk Road to study Buddhism at its source. Knowing India was the birthplace of Buddhism, that was the spark of his journey, just starting...

Marco Polo

Another famous traveller was also one of the most famous Italians. Born in Venice, the Italian travelled with his father and uncle to establish economic ties with the East. Marco's first journey began right here.

The Friendship

A few years had flown by, and suddenly Zhang Qian suddenly noticed some people walking towards him. Zhang, thinking they were enemies, pulled out his weapon for defence. He also warned his men to be careful, as those people in the front didn't look like Han people. He also thought carefully, plotting a way to escape if they were defeated. He glanced around, noticing another path, but there was another man walking towards him. Zhang didn't think twice and shouted loudly at them, 'WHO ARE YOU?'

The group of people jumped in shock, noticing Zhang for the first time. One of them walked closer and said, 'Marco Polo, at your service.'

On the other side, a bald man, wearing a luxurious golden robe. 'By the Buddha's mercy, I am Xuanzang, a monk.'

Zhang, realizing they were not enemies, lowered his weapon, and apologized. 'My apologies, I am Zhang Qian, commissioned by my emperor to seek allies.' After knowing that they were all not enemies, they went to a nearby restaurant to rest and eat. They talked for a long time, like best friends. But in the end, they did become friends! After polishing their food clean, they went out into the vast desert again and decided to make a camp and call it a day.

The Sandstorm

The group of men, now friends, were sound asleep after the tiring journey. They had travelled for hours, and now, they were snoring. Just a while after they fell asleep, a sudden gust of wind ran across the desert. That single gust of wind woke up the three men in shock. They stepped out of their tents, looking nervous, and looked at the situation. At a distance, a solid-looking brown wall of dust was getting closer, like a giant beast, ready to devour whatever was in reach. Thunderstorms also started.

As the explorers thought there was no hope to live, Marco Polo suddenly ran back to his tent shouting, 'WAIT HERE! I HAVE SOMETHING THAT CAN HELP US!'

Zhang, worried, screamed, 'BE QUICK! IT'S COMING CLOSER EVERY SECOND!' Xuanzang however, remained calm, and said that the Buddha will help them.

Marco jumped out of the tent like a rabbit, and handed them helmet visor like objects, and told them to put it on. 'Also, stay in my tent for a while longer until the condition becomes better!' They listened, put the helmets on, and prayed that they can survive. The 'monster' came closer, ready to demolish everything...

BOOM! CRASH! That is what happened in that tiny tent. Tables tumbled, chests thrown around, and even the three people can't balance very well. For 30 minutes, they probably experienced the worst time of their lives, not even able to breath normally. Even though their face was protected, the sand rushed into the tent, into their ears, making it very, very painful.

After 30 minutes past, they slowly went back to this world, and remembered what happened. They quickly took off the helmet, finally able to breath the fresh air. They also ran to a nearby river to clear their ears. They sighed in relief, and laughed for a while. Something else saved them. Friendship.

Friendship

The very next day, they were going to head their own ways. Before leaving, a souvenir was left for each of them to remember their friendship. A Venetian glass bead now rested in Zhang Qian's bag, a simple horse amulet is now worn on Xuanzang's neck. And in Marco Polo's journal, a new entry was written in careful Han characters: *The road is one. Walk with courage.*

They never met again after that. Yet, on the clear night sky where the stars shine brightly over the deserts and mountains, travellers still recall this tale of companionship.

This is the untold story of the Silk Road.

Time Capsule to the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Anglo-Chinese Primary School, Lo, Chuen Hei Erwin – 9

“Beep, beep, bang, bang!” The streets of Coops were alive with noise, like a bustling amusement park. Tom skipped along the cracked sidewalk, humming a tune, when suddenly, a yellow light blinked in a crevice! Intrigued, he bent down and uncovered a glowing stone inscribed with "Silk Road." It could still glow even though it looked as if it had been buried in pre-historic times. It resembled a celestial time capsule wrapped in starlight, probably, from aliens! Overflowing with curiosity, he opened it with a satisfying snap!

“Who dares touch my time capsule?!” A burst of golden light exploded into the air, coalescing into an irate orb while also making the bustling streets of Coops, the cars beeping, people talking, people’s footsteps, the construction site even the shadows just seemed to vanish into thin air like magic, while making the entire background, the void. “Oh, just a little fool! Just like I was when I was alive. Want to go home? Seek your answers, find friends and uncover mysteries that I can’t uncover now (since I’m literally a ghost,) in the desert!” And with that, the light vanished.

Tom blinked in disbelief as he was stuck in the void. A few moments later, he was transported from the void to the scorching hot desert. The wind whipped at his face, and he felt a rush of anxiety. Just as he was grappling with the situation, walking in circles repeatedly until he heard a lively “ding-ding” sound.

“Hey! Adventure boy in a T-shirt!” A boy with a rainbow-striped scarf approached, accompanied by a shaggy camel. “I’m Jack! You look like a penguin in the Sahara! Let me introduce you to my best friend, “Lika.” Jack chuckled, patting the camel affectionately and giving the camel a treat. “If you’re lost, you can join our caravan!”

“Actually, I’m looking for a temple,” Tom replied, still reeling from his bizarre circumstances.

“What a coincidence! I’m headed to the ‘Caves of a Thousand Buddhas’ to deliver goods! Lika knows the way!” Jack unfurled an old parchment covered with camel footprints. “We’re starting in Chang ‘an and trading silk and tea far across the desert...”

As they rode into the moonlit night on Lika, the stars twinkled like diamonds scattered carelessly across the velvety sky. Eventually, they reached a cliff riddled with caves. Jack led Tom into a vibrant cave adorned with colorful frescoes. “Quick! Let’s twist those stone camel statues at the wall together—three, two, one, go!”

“Boom!” The rocky wall rumbled, revealing a glowing scroll. “I am Kester, the founder of the Silk Road! Once, I escorted silkworms that spun golden threads through the sandstorms under my watch...” The glowing orb reappeared. “Unravel the secrets of the ancient city of Carnet, and Lika will return you home!”

Tom felt a rush of excitement mixed with urgency. “Let’s go, Jack!”

Setting up camp that night, Jack magically produced bricks of tea and a stunning piece of azure silk. “Here, try the energy brick from the Tang dynasty!” he smiled, handing it over. “Isn’t it like a solidified galaxy? Roman emperors would pay a fortune for this!”

Tom suddenly realized the markings on the tea—a small round stamp with a square hole! “Wait a second! Am I really in ancient times?!”

With renewed determination, they spent the night under the stars. Early the next morning, Lika took them closer to the “Caves of a Thousand Buddhas” mountains. Upon reaching the ancient city of Carnet, the two friends faced an iron grate that required two people to pull two levers, and massive weight on the pressure plate.

“We can use Lika’s heavy weight for the pressure plate!” said Jack. And then, he moved Lika so that he was on the pressure plate. After Jack moved Lika to the pressure plate, a pipe connecting the pressure plate to the iron grate, filled with water that had been dyed green.

“Three, two, one—pull!” they shouted in unison. The first, second and third pipe all lit up with water that had been dyed green.

“Wow!” They were astounded as the gate creaked open, revealing a glittering treasure chamber filled with mountains and mountains of seedless purple grapes sealed in opened chests on one side while on the other side, were mountains and mountains of gems that made a rainbow, there were some kinds of gems that even Tom didn’t recognize! In the center, white silkworm cocoons hung like little lanterns! “Let’s grab some of those cocoons!” Tom exclaimed as he quickly and softly stuffed a few into his backpack.

“Look!” Jack pointed. “Those round little guys are the silk magicians!”

Tom was puzzled. “Silk magicians?”

Jack laughed, “Yes! Silkworms spin their cocoons to make silk!”

Suddenly, Kester's orb returned, glowing gently. “Silk connects the East and West... It’s time to say goodbye!” As Tom held the stone, it started to radiate warmth. “Jack! Remember Lika is the best guide ever—” Before he could finish, golden light enveloped him, turning the entire background into the void again, and then, he felt himself drifting away.

“Tom! Wake up!” His mother’s voice stirred him. Tom bolted up in bed—his pockets and backpack were still heavy with silkworms and ancient coins! On the TV, news reporters buzzed about an ancient Tang dynasty coin that had just been found in town.

With a mix of disbelief and excitement, Tom rushed to the window. There, nestled under the moonlight, lay a camel bell covered in sand. The letter “L” shimmered invitingly. Tom picked the camel bell up and saw that there was a note, it was written: Dear Tom, I didn’t have enough time to tell you this because you were gone

the second I blinked, but I also saw Lika's bell slowly fade away, so I thought maybe it was going to where you are, so I quickly took a pen and paper and wrote this note down and stuck it onto the bell.

Lost on the Silk Road

St. Joseph's Anglo-Chinese Primary School, Yuen, Chun Hin Ryan – 10

One sunny morning, a group of Chinese traders went to the Silk Road of China to trade some valuables with Europeans. They thought it was just another day of their trading lives, but they didn't know the chaos that would come.

They walked all the way to the scorching Silk Road of China. All they possessed was food, water, a tent and a compass. Their compass broke and pointed to the wrong direction!

Of course, they unknowingly followed it because they had no way of knowing it! They said in a joking tone, "those Europeans have never seen better silk! I bet they dress in rags!"

Out of the blue, a sand monster emerged from the sand yelling loudly! It startled them and they fled. One trader asked, shaking like they just saw a ghost, "what is that?" No one had the thought. They continued traversing into the Silk Road until they were tired. They started trading furs and put up their tents and had a well-deserved rest.

When they woke up, they saw a strange reptile! The creature puzzled them until the thought of dinosaur came out! Luckily, it was an adorable dinosaur! They decided to name it Max! Max suddenly ran to a random

direction! It found food! The food from earlier had already ran out, so it was very valuable to them! Max found some more materials to make a shelter! They divided into groups. One group would find resources. Another would find people or rescuers. Finally, another group would keep the shelter safe. It was the waiting game now! Hours became days and there were still no signs of any rescuers! The news spread through the Chinese like wildfire! They wanted to help but had no way of knowing where they were on the Silk Road. The traders were worried that they would stay there forever!

Suddenly, the ground shook like an earthquake! The sand monster returned! They had no way to fight it off again! Max tried to scare it off, but it ended horribly! The sand monster threw Max onto the sand and got hurt really badly! When all hope seemed lost, a gust of strong wind hit them. It was so strong that they could barely open their eyes! Turns out a European rescuer came to rescue them! Their jaws dropped when they saw the massive bird the rescuer was riding! The rescuer grabbed them. The traders hopped on the bird as fast as they could! One was holding Max because he felt bad for him. The rescuer took off!

When they saw European inventions, they found out that no country has enough to provide for all human needs on their own! Every country has its own good culture! They hung their heads in shame.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tai Po Old Market Public School, Pang, Yuet Kiu Candice – 11

I stretched as I woke, expecting the comfort of my soft, warm bed, expecting the aroma of bread and waffles filling my nostrils. Instead, I breathed in the stench of the sea, accompanied by the wind. I sat up, only to find a young man in his late twenties checking a map on the ship's deck. I glanced at myself, seeing slick gray fur and feeling a craving for cheese. I screamed. A high-pitched squeak came out.

"This can't be real," I calmed myself. "I'm just in a dream."

Then a gruff yet familiar voice spoke in my mind. "Welcome, Navigator 7, to your first mission after graduating from archaeologist school. You need to collect a full list of all trades to finish this mission. If you succeed, you may return to the twenty-third century."

Oh, I haven't introduced myself. I am Clarissa, a graduate of archaeologist school, now a member of a navigation team that teleports us to realms long ago.

Now, let's get back to business.

A piercing sound came from a horn. "Captain Zhang, we have arrived back at our homeland. We must dock and report to the emperor," a man said as he bowed.

I had to sneak into the palace grounds, so I scurried into a pile of treasures, only to find a giraffe and gems of many kinds. I settled into the cart and closed my eyes for a bit. Soon, it turned into snores.

I woke up with a start, anxious to check the trades, but found myself in the storage room. I checked the whole place, counting ivory, delicate valuables, and even sensing a hint of spices. I spotted a slightly crumpled scroll, hinting that an emperor would visit the Han Dynasty for a tribute.

I wanted to check out the exotic palace; therefore, for the first time, a mouse was seen in the palace hall. A sultan—presumably from Sulu, as written on the scroll—bowed to a man in striking yellow robes, while his followers offered glimmering, smooth balls, which turned out to be pearls. Officers nearby gasped in awe, their gazes not leaving the pearls for even one millisecond.

Then I snapped out of the hypnotizing sight and finally focused on my mission. I hurriedly “borrowed” a quill and paper, then scribbled a long list down.

Just then, a bearded man in flaming scarlet robes caught sight of me, screaming, “Mouse! In the empire!” All turned their heads. Palace guards chased after me. As a fat yet nimble mouse, I sprinted from a short run into a marathon. Alas, a guard caught me by the tail.

“I could take it for the kitchen,” he said.

I sobbed in sorrow. Was this the end? Would my director send me back? My mind was filled with millions of questions.

As I was thinking, a menacing gleam of silver was already upon me. Goodbye, world! Goodbye, my friends! As I prepared to accept my fate, time stopped. A whirlwind consumed me.

I slowly opened my eyes, once again in my cozy bed, but with a wristband—the symbol of a completed mission. After a while, back in our office, the director praised our work. He asked me to report.

“As you all know, the Silk Road was a pathway for diplomacy between countries. But did you know that grapes, pearls, and even giraffes changed the world?”

I am sure all you readers know this fact!

The Old Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Balcombe, Fiona – 11

One sunny afternoon, Ms. Doris had just finished her day of work at school. She wondered what she would do on the weekend. She wanted to prepare a fun and exciting lesson for her Grade 4 and 5s about the Silk Road.

On the weekend, Ms. Doris said to herself, "Oh I wish I could go to the time of when people used the old Silk Road." Just then she remembered the watch that her granddad gave her. She moved the date to when the old Silk Road was most popular.

As quick as a flash, Ms. Doris was on the actual old Silk Road! She was so shocked her eyeballs almost popped out. She couldn't believe that she was there; she didn't know where to start.

Suddenly, Ms. Doris heard a loud shout, "The Emperor is here!" "Oh no, the Emperor!" Ms. Doris thought to herself. She tiptoed to a gigantic rock and hid behind it. She poked her head and looked at what was happening and why the Emperor was there.

Just then, her face went blank. She couldn't believe her eyes. She saw it for the first time in her life: a hangman! The man was kicking his legs hard and pulling the rope around his neck trying to take it off. After all that, he died.

After the man died, Ms. Doris continued in her journey along the Old Silk Road. She was very tired but luckily she bought Chinese tea. She walked to a man that was trying to trade a horse. She went to the man and asked, "Can I trade you with this tea for this horse?" "Really? Sure," the man explained.

Ms. Doris and her new horse trotted down the road continuing their journey along the Old Silk Road. Ms. Doris bought a lot of tea so she used it for trading things for her fun and exciting lesson on Monday.

She gathered all the things she traded and moved the date back on her watch.

Click, click! Ms. Doris was in her home making a PPT and an activity for the next day.

It's Monday! Ms. Doris is getting ready for the first lesson about The Old Silk Road. "Woah yeah! It's another day finished and a few days left of the week. I am so happy that Grade 4B liked the lesson. I hope everyone else will like it. Good luck me!"

The Princess and the Woods

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Bu, Yoyo – 8

Princess Claime lived in a beautiful castle with her mother. Right next to the castle was the Whispering Woods, a big, dark, mysterious forest. Claime's mother always told her to never go into the forest. It was dangerous. Why? Because Claime's father, the king, went into the woods many years ago and never returned.

But Claime was curious. She couldn't stop thinking, "What happened to my father?" "Your dad died," Mom said. "Why? I need to find my dad," said Claime.

At night, Claime secretly took three animals — a horse, a camel, and a dog — to the forest. The sky was very dark and they couldn't see anything. Claime and her animals were lost in the forest. She fell into a trap. Her dog found her, and then the horse helped her out of the trap.

Then they went to the Silk Road, but there was no food. They were very hungry, so they found a caravanserai. There was lots of food and drinks and a warm place to sleep. After two days, Claime and her animals travelled to Rome. It took them two months to get there. Finally, Claime opened the treasure box. Inside was a picture of Claime's grandfather took. Inside was another small diary entry...

"This is why my dad died," said Claime

“6th of January, I was with my son in the forest. I took people from another ethnic group, but they were not welcoming and scared of us. My son and I hiked up a mountain to try get away. They followed us and thought we were a danger to their land. As I hid behind a bush, I saw they had a fight and pushed my son off the cliff. It was the saddest day in my life.”.

After she saw the picture and read the story, she cried, and her dog comfort her with a warm hug. Then her mother came over and hugged her. Crying together, they went back to the castle to have a new life.

The Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Chen, Annie – 11

Danny loves adventures, and sometimes people think he is crazy when he hears about the Silk Road, but normally he quietly reads history books. Danny's eyes are as blue as the ocean. His hair is a few centimetres of golden hair. He is very thin, as thin as a stick. Danny was travelling on the Silk Road and was in Milan.

Milan is a rich city. The people in that city wear very fashionable clothes. Milan is known as the world's capital of fashion and design. Milan belongs to the Mediterranean region, with hot summers, dry winters, warm rainy seasons, and a long history. There is the Scala Opera House and Milan Cathedral. The buildings are very old.

That night, he joined the Silk Road journey with the locals in Milan. He was very excited. Their journey was from Milan to China. When they first set out, they were in a terrible storm. The locals in Milan had to make sure that the goods being exchanged could not be

destroyed. Everyone was worried about the journey this time. Danny was particularly nervous, but there was no way to change the distance. So, they had to bite the bullet and stick to it.

Danny was afraid, but what he liked most was adventure, so he chose to go on this difficult journey with the locals.

When they arrived at the First Exchange Point, the weather turned from rainstorms to sunny days. As the weather got better, the locals and Danny were also in a relaxed mood. Danny saw exchanges from different countries at the First Exchange Point. He saw goods from China such as tea sets and scarves. He also saw wreaths with Indian characteristics.

Every country speaks its own language. They exchanged goods with the Netherlands, and the Netherlands exchanged tulip flowers for Tuscany cowhide belts. After they exchanged the goods, they continued to the next exchange point.

As they went to the next exchange point, their horse tripped over a stone. The horse's leg twisted, and it was injured and could not move on. In this case, their speed would drop, but they could not leave the horse behind.

At this point, Danny said, "It's good I have something in my bag. There's a bandage I used before when I got hurt. Does the horse need it?"

The people said, "Oh my God, it really helps horses relieve their pain." They immediately wrapped the horse's leg with the bandage. After putting on the bandage, they called the emergency number and asked the emergency workers to take the horse away.

When the animal helpers arrived at the scene, they put the horse on a platform. Danny and the others continued to move forward. As they walked on, Danny felt more and more interested. Now that emergency services had arrived, they could continue travelling to China together.

Six months later, they arrived at a city called Xi'an in China. They tried on Chinese clothes that looked like emperor yellow robes. They ate famous Chinese food such as the "Chinese hamburger" known as Roujiamo.

After seeing the clothes and trying the food in Xi'an, Danny felt very happy to be in China.

The Kind Trader

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Chen, Shuhan – 9

A boy called Max was kind, friendly, and liked to help others. He was a businessman on the Silk Road. He traded tea, medicine, and books.

One day, a man from Iran found Max and told him that their king needed a special medicine, a red mushroom from China. If Max could help him, he would give him many coins that he could use forever.

Max was happy with the offer, so he found a hotel for the Iranian man at the beginning because he needed a month to find the medicine. Then he started to look for the medicine. He asked his friends for help and searched by himself. He went to the tops of mountains and dived to the bottom of the sea.

Twenty days later, he still had nothing, but he kept trying his best to look for it. A week passed, and Max was tired and upset because he believed he could not deliver the medicine on time. On his way home, he saw some traders passing by and talking about red mushrooms. Max ran to them and asked them where he could find the

red mushrooms. One man told Max that red mushrooms were kept by a monster, and only a brave man could have them. Max did not hesitate and headed to the cave where the monster lived.

When Max got to the cave, the monster was shocked but thrilled because he had never seen anyone as brave as Max. So the monster gave Max a bucket of red mushrooms and became good friends with him as well.

In the end, Max helped many people who needed the red mushrooms to survive and also became the richest man in the town. He also gave medicine and food to the poor, and everyone liked him.

The "Black Hole"

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Chen, Yihan – 10

“Quickly, Nebble! I’m waiting!” an angry voice shouted.

“Yes, Mom, but I just—”

SNAP!

A sharp pain shot through Nebble’s arm. A long red mark appeared on her skin.

“I don’t want to hear any excuses!” her mother yelled.

“Sorry...” Nebble whispered, staring at the floor.

“Get out of my sight!” her mother roared like a lion.

Nebble held back her tears and quietly walked away. This happened almost every day. Her mother shouted at her for the smallest things—sitting too slowly, asking too many questions, or making tiny mistakes. Ever since her

father left, her mother believed Nebble was the reason. Nebble didn't know if that was true, but she knew one thing: home felt like a black hole, pulling all her happiness away.

The next morning, Nebble went to school with heavy steps. School was the only place where she felt safe, calm, and welcome.

"Hey, Nebble! Wait up!" her friend Yi called as she ran over.

"Guess what? We're going to the Silk Road Museum today!" Yi said excitedly.

Nebble's eyes lit up. "Really? That's amazing! I love learning about the Silk Road. It connects so many places and people."

At school, the teacher clapped her hands. "Alright, everyone. Today we'll be visiting the Silk Road Museum. Pack your things and line up for the bus."

The bus ride was filled with laughter and chatter. Nebble tried to smile, but Yi noticed the red mark on her arm.

"Nebble... what happened?" Yi asked softly.

"It's my mom," Nebble replied quietly, tears forming in her eyes.

Yi held her hand. "I'm here for you."

When they arrived at the museum, the class followed the guide through large halls filled with maps, paintings, and ancient objects. Nebble slowly drifted away from the group. One painting caught her attention. It showed camels walking across a wide desert, travelers wearing different clothes, and long roads stretching into the distance.

As Nebble leaned closer, the painting began to glow. The light grew brighter and brighter.

Suddenly—WHOOSH!

Nebble felt herself being pulled forward.

When she opened her eyes, she was no longer in the museum. She was standing in a dusty land under a burning sun. Soldiers surrounded her.

"Who are you?" one of them shouted.

"What are you doing here?" another demanded.

"Take her to the prison!" a loud voice ordered.

Before Nebble could speak, soldiers grabbed her and pushed her forward. Inside the dark prison, she saw a familiar face.

"Zhang Qian?" Nebble whispered in disbelief. She recognized him from her Chinese lessons—the famous explorer of the Silk Road.

Before she could say anything else, soldiers stormed in and dragged Zhang Qian away.

"Why did you come here?" they shouted.

"To connect the world!" Zhang Qian replied bravely. "To bring understanding between lands!"

As he was taken away, something fell from his hand onto the ground. The soldiers didn't notice, but Nebble did. She quickly picked it up and hid it in her sleeve.

Moments later, the prison fell silent.

Nebble's hands trembled as she unfolded the paper.

Dear Reader,

If you are reading this, I am already gone. But my dream must not end. I want people to share not only goods, but ideas, food, and friendship from many lands. Only then can the world truly understand one another.

— Zhang Qian

Nebble felt her heart beat faster. She finally understood. The Silk Road was not just a road for trading—it was a bridge connecting cultures and hearts.

“I’ll finish your dream,” she whispered.

From that moment on, Nebble stayed in the ancient world. Life was not easy. The desert was hot, the journeys were long, and danger was everywhere. Many times, Nebble felt scared and lonely. But each time she remembered Zhang Qian’s words, she found the strength to continue.

Nebble couldn’t carry goods herself, but she shared Zhang Qian’s ideas. She helped travelers find safe paths, passed messages between traders, and encouraged people from different lands to work together. Little by little, the Silk Road became lively again.

Years passed. Nebble grew older and wiser. She learned different languages and customs. She listened to people’s stories and helped them understand one another. Traders began to trust her. Travelers asked for her advice. The road slowly became filled with voices, laughter, and hope.

Seventeen years later, Nebble stood at the edge of the desert, watching a long line of camels move across the land. The Silk Road was alive again—not because of one person, but because people had learned to connect.

Nebble knew it was time to leave.

Using the knowledge she had gained, she built a simple time machine. Before leaving, she wrote one last letter and placed it where Zhang Qian’s spirit could find it.

“Your dream did not disappear,” she wrote. “It traveled through time and changed the world. It also changed me.”

A bright light flashed.

Nebble opened her eyes and found herself back in the museum, standing in front of the same painting. The glow slowly faded. Her classmates were calling her name.

On the bus ride home, Nebble touched her arm. The red mark was gone.

That night, when she returned home, her mother looked tired and silent. Nebble took a deep breath. For the first time, she didn’t feel afraid.

She had traveled through history, faced fear, and learned that pain could turn into purpose. The black hole no longer controlled her.

Nebble smiled quietly.

She knew that, just like the Silk Road, even broken paths could lead to connection—and even a small girl could help bring the world together.

Adventure Story

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Chengxin, Xiao – 8

One day there was a humorous boy named Nicholas. He was smart and could speak both English and Chinese. Nicholas was a friendly boy and therefore he had so many friends. During the summer holiday, he decided to go on an adventure with Max, his best friend.

Suddenly there was a Washing sound in the air a sandstorm was coming from far away. They use canvas and an inflatable bowl to make a desert sale cart . They put a stone under the cart to help it to stop . However a bad bird from Mongolia named Lala took away the stone and the cart was blown away by the bit wind. Both ran as fast as they could to chase the cart. Max finally jumped on it but Nicholas was not fast enough. Max gave Nicholas his umbrella to help him but the fearless bird took Max’s umbrella. Nicholas started to lift into the sky. He was brave and didn’t cry but knew he had to come up with a plan quickly. A good idea popped into his head – what if he opened the umbrella? As he reached to press the small button, the bird yanked it harder! He had to try again! With all of with strength he tried again and finally opened it up and shot the bird in the sky. The bird was

quickly swallowed by the sandstorm which was now very close! Nicholas jumped onto the cart and him and Max set sail to their next destination – Egypt. The sand pushed and pushed the cart and they got away safely.

Even though their Silk Road adventure had a rocky start they didn't get mad. Although they didn't get to trade or buy lots of treasures they got a great friendship. Nicholas knew that when you are in trouble having a good friend with you is much better than any treasure you could find.

Jayden and Me

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Dai, Hanlin – 10

I am a trader on the Silk Road and my trader is tea and china. I have ten guards because I have many money and gold. One day I wanted to go to the Silk Road, but I need to go to the Silk Road, but I didn't have any camel. Oh then I thought, my friend Jayden had camels, I need him.

I climbed on big mountain. At the top of the mountain, I saw Jayden standing there. He was with two camels. He gave me two camels. He said, "We are almost to Silk Road". I felt very excited. Then we walked down the mountain together. It was night, we went to caravanserai to sleep.

Next day the Jayden was kidnapped. The kidnapper took the dagger out from his waist and pointed at Jayden's neck. The Jayden said, "Help! Help me!". I said: "Where is the guard!". "I am here! I am here!" the guard said. The guard took the dagger out from his waist too. The kidnapper saw the guard, and he was very scared so the kidnapper is run away.

Jayden was very gratitude to the guard. At the end, Jayden bought gold to give the guard, me and Jayden continued to go to the Silk Road.

The Ring of the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Falcone, Diana – 8

This story is about two sweet sisters named Manfy and Lila. They were both 10 years old and attended the same school. Manfy was honest and Lila was strong. They both loved going on exciting adventures!

One day, Manfy found a mysterious book in the library. They opened the book, and inside it said, "If you go to the Silk Road, you will get a ring that makes wishes come true." At first, they decided not to go because the Silk Road was very dangerous. But after some thought, they knew that if they could get the ring, they could solve any problems they wanted. So they packed their bags with food, water, and a map. Then they bought two strong and sturdy horses and went to travel the Silk Road.

On the road, they came across a little mouse that was in danger. They helped the small mouse and let it go. After that, they continued their journey on the Silk Road. They walked and walked for a long time, when suddenly they spotted an ancient castle that was empty. They were very curious and went inside! In the living room, they

found a shiny object; it was a ring with green and gold diamonds on it. “This is it!”, said Manfy. “We found the ring, and now we need to find a way out before someone sees us!”, suggested Lila. They were very tired and thirsty, and had no water left. Luckily their horses travelled the road before and took them to an oasis to fill up their bottles.

At last, they brought the ring home to their mother and knew they made her very happy.

The Mistaken Boy

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Fraser, Jennifer – 10

Once upon a time in the old Silk Road there was a mistaken boy whose name was James he was known for killing the king. It all started when he was walking down the silk road trying to find a nice gift for his mother for her birthday. Suddenly a little child around the age of 5 snatched his money when James was paying he cheered claiming he won free money. James lunged at him and showed excellent kung fu skills.

As soon as the king saw this he instantly knew that James had to be a royal guard. But James didn't want to be a royal guard but the king insisted and gave he and his family five hundred thousand. James knew that he and his family would be super happy so he agreed instantly the king insisted on taking care of James family, James was super excited now.

After a few months of being a royal guard James wanted to go home but the king aggressively told James he would never leave this castle ever until he dies. After a few more sad weeks James had a plan he was going to escape no matter what it takes James even gathered up three or more guards to escape with him. But little did James know one of the guards was actually not willing to listen to James and willing to stay in this miserable life.

On the night of the escape all of the guards followed their instructions except for one when everybody snuck out of the window one snuck into the king's bedroom and killed him with a small pocket knife. As soon as everybody woke up and saw blood on the king's bed everybody froze in shock everybody guessed it was James although James did no harm.

of the remaining guards sprinted down the Silk Road until they found James they threw him into the dungeon and left James was worried about his own life. But James had recorded everything on his little watch and everyone saw it wasn't James who killed the king it was another royal guard. After that James and his family weren't only rich but also very happy to be all together after that James and his family lived happier than ever together.

Fastman: The Silk Road Adventure, Part One

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Fuston, Thor – 9

Two days ago, Fastman was looking at his time travel machine after he came back from 7–11. Suddenly, his time travel machine started activating without Fastman touching it. Then he was teleported to a desert with a camel in 67 AD.

Fastman looked at his surroundings and sadly said, “Where am I? I want to go back home.”

After two long minutes, Fastman saw a guy with a sack riding a camel. The guy quickly took out an axe, but Fastman took out his toy gun that he had earlier bought at 7–11.

In a flash, the strange guy ran away and forgot his sack. Fastman opened the sack and saw a lot of silver ingots, enough to survive for this period of time in the past.

Fastman climbed on the camel and started to ride across the sand.

When Fastman was riding on his camel, he forgot that he needed to drink water, so Fastman had no energy left to stay awake in the extremely hot weather. He closed his eyes from exhaustion and feared the worst.

When Fastman woke up, he saw that he was still far outside a city in a place he guessed was ancient China or somewhere in the Middle East. His camel, that he still had no name for, had brought him to this strange city while he slept.

He then started to drink the first of three Ice Red Teas that he had bought from 7–11. After a few hours of more riding, Fastman realised that he needed food, but the city was still too far away.

The next day, Fastman woke up at around seven o'clock in the morning, but he was thinking about eating his breakfast because he had loads of silver but no food to eat.

Fastman decided to ride his camel closer to the city. After three hours, Fastman found that the strange city was in what today he knew to be Iraq.

Fastman then used his silver ingots to trade for food, some bread and meat. After his breakfast, he saw a mysterious guy wearing a black hood and the man said,

“Hello, Fastman! You have unlocked the first goal, but you must now travel to Ancient Rome before nine o'clock AM or you will be lost and forgotten in the history books. There'll be a show in the Colosseum at ten o'clock AM, and you must jump into the arena to fight. If you win, you get to go back to 2026; if you lose, then you will stay here in 67 AD.”

Fastman made a quick movement and laughed at this stranger.

“I accept,” Fastman said. “Let the games begin!”

So, Fastman started his journey riding his camel to get to Ancient Rome. After two hours of riding his super speedy camel, Fastman was in Constantinople, or modern-day Istanbul. For you see, Fastman's powers were temporarily given to his camel friend.

While he was feeding his camel some cactus, Fastman gave the camel a name, and he called the camel “Buddy.”

At three o'clock PM, when the desert was getting monstrously hot, Fastman started his ride to Europe with Buddy, the super-fast camel.

After six hours of riding, he finally made it to Ancient Rome.

After Fastman bought Buddy the camel and himself some dinner, Fastman found a stable for his hairy, four-legged friend. Afterwards, Fastman and Buddy slept in the warm stable ready for the big fight the next day.

At six in the morning, Fastman and Buddy woke up and ate breakfast. Fastman and Buddy then nervously rested for thirty minutes thinking of the dangers to come.

At seven o'clock, they headed to the Colosseum. By eight o'clock, Fastman and Buddy arrived at the Colosseum where Fastman started drinking his second bottle of Ice Red Tea to get some quick energy.

The bell and shouts signalling the games starting at ten o'clock rang out loudly.

The game started. Fastman walked alone into the centre of the Colosseum surrounded by thousands of screaming Romans of all ages.

Fastman saw his lone enemy, and it was none other than that mysterious guy he had met in Iraq the day before.

While Fastman smiled and laughed at his enemy, the mysterious guy tried to pull out his weapon but there was nothing. The mysterious guy wrongly believed that he still had his sword, but Fastman was laughing because he had stolen the sword the day before.

“Missing anything?” Fastman was having fun now.

Then Fastman took out his toy gun that had the stranger's sword attached to it.

“Give up or die,” Fastman yelled over the crowd.

Then the stranger pulled out an object that resembled a small lantern with magic sand inside.

“You have beat me today, Fastman! But your luck is going to run out one day, either here or there, yesterday in the past or in the tomorrows of the future.”

Then the stranger used his enchanted lantern to open a portal through Time.

Fastman found his super-camel friend Buddy, and they both jumped into the portal and went back to 2026.

Fastman was back at his house with Buddy and they were in the big backyard.

Fastman quickly built a stable for Buddy, and then Fastman searched for his third Ice Red Tea, but it was lost someplace in 67 AD.

Fastman went to his bookshelf and started reading a book about the Silk Road, and on page sixty-seven in an old photograph, Fastman saw a familiar item called “Ice Red Tea,” and it was the exact tea drink that Fastman had lost on his journey.

Fastman continued reading and learning about the Silk Road for the whole afternoon while Buddy was playing outside in the stable.

Fastman learned about the Silk Road and he is ready for his next Silk Road adventure any time. But who was that stranger in the black hood and would Fastman ever see his enemy again?

To be continued

The Story about the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Gan, Dora – 9

Near Dunhuang, Luly and Larry lived together for 20 years. They were two sisters.

Luly was thoughtful and quiet. she liked to plan before acting and often stopped to think when others rushed forward. she believed that every choice had a cost, even small ones.

Larry was bold and fast. she laughed easily, spoke loudly, and loved adventure. she believed that chances came only once and should be taken quickly.

When they were small, their families made silk. They helped their families to feed the silkworms. Now their families still made silk, and they would help them to make it too.

One day, Larry said, “I don’t want to stay in my home anymore. I want to go to the Silk Road.”

Larry talked to her mother and father for a long time, and their parents let them go together, but they needed ...

To make more silk at home, their mother let them go to the Silk Road.

Before they got to the desert, they needed to buy some camels.

Luly only wanted 20 camels, not too much, but Larry wanted 2 camels. They argued for a long time, and then Luly said, “We need 20 camels to carry silk and other goods we’ve got.” Larry said, “You’re right. We need 20 camels.”

When they went to Hotan, they saw lots of jade. They wanted to trade some by a shop.

Larry wanted to trade big jade.

But Luly wanted small jade. They argued again, but quietly. Larry was thinking about the Silk Road for a long time, and then she said, “Let’s buy some small jade.”

When they got to Persia, the air smelled of spices. Larry took some spices, but Luly grabbed her hand. She said, “I don’t trust him.”

Luly inspected the spices carefully, and she took real spices and traded for the spice. Larry said, “You are right. If I take that one, I will take a fake spice.”

When they were finished trading spices, they were ready to go to the desert, but Luly said, “We need to throw some goods.”

To buy some water, Larry didn’t like that idea. She thought about the desert and decided to throw some goods to buy some water.

When they reached Rome, they were very excited to buy some gold and books. They used some silk to trade gold and books. The gold was heavy but very useful.

When they were ready, they happily went back to Arabia to buy more spices and went to Hotan to buy more jade because they needed to trade jade to other countries, so they needed to buy the jade, now.

Finally, they came home, on the way home, they talked differently. Larry listened more. Luly spoke more. They had learned how to balance each other. The Silk Road had taught them more than trade. It had taught them how to choose, how to lose, how to trust—and how to walk forward together. And this time, they both knew where they wanted to go next. Their mum and dad were very proud of them.

The Time Traveller

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Hu, William – 9

Far away in China, there was a historian called Peter. He wanted to complete the story of the Silk Road, but he couldn’t, so he decided to make a car that could go back in time. The Silk Road fascinated him ever since he was a child because it connected cultures, languages, and people across continents. Peter spent years reading ancient scrolls, studying maps, and comparing different versions of the same historical events, yet something always felt missing. No matter how many books he read, there were gaps in the story that no one could explain. He believed the only way to truly understand history was to witness it himself.

He spent the next twenty years making the car, and he almost forgot about his family and friends just to make it. During those years, his workshop became his entire world, filled with blueprints, broken metal parts, and unfinished inventions. Nights passed without sleep, and days blurred together as his obsession grew stronger. Finally, he made it. It was red with flaming orange fire stamps on it. The car could be faster than the speed of light, being able to go back and forth in time.

So he travelled back to complete history. He found himself in a place that had horses, grapes, silk, pots, ceramics, and many different types of things. The air smelled of dust and spices, and voices from distant lands filled the streets. Traders shouted in languages he had only seen written on paper. There, his own story was about to start.

He wanted to be able to complete the whole original story by following its steps, but at the same time, he wanted to go off the script and look around the market. His curiosity pulled him in different directions, making it hard to stay focused on his mission. He carefully observed how goods were exchanged, how people dressed, and how cultures blended naturally along the route.

He found a horse whose sweat was as red as blood, a legendary animal he had only read about in ancient texts. Amazed and forgetting the danger of standing out, he tried to give it a piece of carrot that he had in his pocket. However, the horse got scared and kicked him out of the fence, causing the soldiers to come and take both him and his car away.

He was then locked up before being taken in front of the emperor, who wanted to know what that “car” was and where he came from. The palace was enormous, decorated with gold, silk banners, and stone dragons carved into the walls. Peter’s heart raced as he realized how fragile his situation truly was.

The emperor threatened him, saying that he either had to tell them how to use the car or they would end his life. The ruler’s voice was calm but deadly, and his eyes showed no mercy. Peter knew that revealing the secrets of time travel could destroy history itself. Just when he was going to confront him, he ran away, leaving the car behind.

He kept following the steps of the Silk Road to finish the story, but once he was about to end his trip, the emperor captured him again, actually ending his life this time. Despite his efforts, history followed its cruel path, proving that some events could not be changed. As his life faded, Peter realized that his journey itself had become part of the history he wanted to record.

Overall, his life was so he didn’t complete the book but made a “time traveller”.

The Sandstorm on the Silk Road

The King’s School Qianhai Shenzhen, Leng, Max – 8

Chapter 1: The Sandstorm on the Silk Road

In a dusty desert—the Gobi Desert—Ray and Mark travelled together. They wanted to bring silk from China and show it to their families.

“Hah!” Mark said proudly. “We’re almost at China!”

“Oh, great,” replied Ray. “We just have thousands of kilometres to go...”

Suddenly, Ray smelled dust in the air.

“Mark, did you smell that?” Ray asked.

“NO!” replied Mark. “But... is it like... hmmm... like... Oh! I know! It’s the dust!”

“Yes,” said Ray.

Then they heard a sound as loud as an airplane. It was rushing towards them.

Slowly, they turned around in fear.

“It’s a sandstorm!” Ray shouted.

“Look, there are two camels over there!” Mark shouted.

They sprinted as fast as they could towards the camels and used their rope to control them.

“Ride!” Ray shouted to Mark.

“Okay, okay!” Mark replied. “Even if you didn’t say it, I’d still know!”

While they were riding the camels, they didn’t know that danger was creeping closer and closer.

“Hey Mark, look! There’s a caravanserai over there,” Ray said.

So, they rode quickly towards the caravanserai for safety.

Chapter 2: The Animals on the Silk Road

The next morning, Ray woke up early, but Mark was still sleeping.

Ray looked at the Silk Road map. He realised they were in the first caravanserai in the Gobi Desert. Suddenly...

Ray’s face turned pale.

He shook Mark awake.

“Mark, we must get out of here!” said Ray.

“Why?” asked Mark.

“You’ll understand later,” replied Ray as he packed his bag.

“Okay, I’ll listen to you,” said Mark.

They were ready to leave, but first they needed two bridles. Ray went to a trader called Stely.

“Excuse me...” Ray began.

“WHAT?!” growled Stely.

“Do you have any bridles?” Ray asked.

“Yes. So WHAT?” Stely replied loudly.

“I would like to trade for two of them.”

“So what will you trade for them?!” growled Stely.

“Carrots?” asked Ray.

“No.”

“Cotton?”

“No!”

“Cabbage?”

“No.”

One minute later...

“Egg fruit?” asked Ray.

“Oh, could you cut that out?!” barked Stely. “I’ll give them to you for free!”

Stely slammed the bridles into Ray’s hand, and the boys continued their journey.

“Hey Ray, I see dogs in the Gobi Desert!” Mark squeaked.

“Don’t joke, you silly billy!” said Ray, rolling his eyes.

“It’s true!” barked Mark.

“Okay, okay!” laughed Ray. “Don’t be a baby.”

Suddenly, Ray froze.

“Wait... those are hyenas!” he whispered loudly. “Quick, run away!”

“Ruff!” the hyenas growled.

“Oh no! The hyenas see us!” Ray screamed.

“What? You think they want to eat seaweed?” laughed Mark. “This is the desert, not the sea!”

The hyenas began to attack Mark.

“Hey, little dogs, stop attacking me!” shouted Mark. “Or I’ll use my rope!”

Swoosh—bang! Swoosh—bang! Swoosh—bang!

The hyenas became dizzy and ran away. Mark felt proud—but Ray smacked his forehead in disbelief.

Merchant's Long Journey

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Li, Young – 10

Long ago, there lived a merchant known only as an unknown figure. He was a novice in the art of trade, embarking on his very first journey to exchange goods. Mounting his trusty camels, he prepared to travel a grueling distance of seven thousand kilometers in search of riches.

The merchant carried with him the finest treasures of China—exquisite porcelain and fragrant goods. His destination was far away, and his ambition was to exchange these delicate wares for gold from foreign lands. Thus, he set off on his grand expedition.

Along the road, he encountered countless trials and tribulations. The journey was long and dangerous, taking one or two years before he finally arrived at his destination, ready to conduct business. While traveling along the Silk Road, he stopped to rest at a caravanserai. After that, he encountered bandits, but his security guards protected him bravely.

At last, he reached his destination and successfully bartered for heavy ingots of gold. More importantly, he returned home not only with great wealth, but also with wondrous tales and rare treasures from distant lands. Thus, he embarked upon a path paved with both fortune and renown.

Rock's Silk Road Adventure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Lian, Frank – 10

Rock loved reading about Rome. He looked at maps every day. But war came to his village. Soldiers burned his school. Rock had to run away. His teacher gave him a compass. "Follow the Silk Road to Rome," she said. "Knowledge will help you."

Rock walked across the hot desert. He slept under the stars. He learned to save water. One day, the sky turned yellow. A sandstorm was coming! The wind blew hard. Sand was everywhere. Rock heard a shout. He saw an old man. The man's camel was scared. The camel jumped up and down. Its big feet were about to crush the old man!

Rock ran fast. He pulled the old man behind a big rock. The camel ran away. The old man coughed sand. "Thank you," he said. "I am Marco. You saved me." After the storm, Marco gave Rock water. "You are brave," Marco said. "But you need more than courage. You need knowledge. Courage without knowledge is like a dull knife."

Marco taught Rock many things. He taught him to use the North Star to find direction. He taught him new words in other languages. He taught him to trade fairly. He taught him to see when a storm is coming. "Gold is not the most important thing," Marco said. "What you learn is."

Rock listened carefully. He became a good student. He and Marco traveled together. Rock shared his food with hungry people. He helped sick travelers. He helped build a school in a poor village.

Five years later, Rock reached Rome. He had money. He was rich. But he felt richer because of his knowledge. Rock decided not to stay in Rome. He wanted to go back and help people. Rock built safe rest stops for travelers. He built libraries in desert towns. He built schools in mountain villages. He paid teachers to help children learn.

Mesopotamia to Rome

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Liang, Zhixuan – 10

The hot sun burned over my head like a giant heater turned on in the middle of summer, I was walking across the Silk Road dragging my small wagon behind me, in the wagon was a precious cargo of paper, wheat, gold, and water. These are the things I'm supposed to deliver the things to

Rome, but also trading them on the way. I really want to quit right now, but thank goodness

I spotted a caravansary up ahead! I can finally get a break after going 40 KM nonstop!

I reached the caravansary and sat down on a wooden bench to rest. After the absolute amazing break! I found myself at the trading post to trade with people from all around the world! At first a man came to me and traded a beautiful glass for my wheat and somebody else traded a piece of jade for a piece of paper.

I didn't trade much but I did get some more water. Then I was on my way again, when I was leaving the caravansary I saw a person running towards me, when he reached me he asked if I would trade the glass cup for a box of silver, then of course I said YES!!! So then I traded the glass cup for the box of silver. Right now I have a ton of treasures but I still don't have enough food, but at least I can trade the gold and silver for food.

Then I walked another 30 KM, on the road I made several encounters with other Merchants, like the one who is selling cloth, I traded 1 bar of silver for the cloth, I also saw a man who is trading food like bread and wheat so I traded 2 bars of gold for both of those items. One of the best things I have traded so far is with a person from Rome who is travelling to China, "It's such a long way," I told him, "Yeah," he answered "But it's worth it," then he asked if I will trade a gold nugget for a bow and arrows to protect against thieves, now I have NEVER in my life have I heard about robbing thieves, but my new friend told me about that "They will steal your cargo without you noticing," "So, my good friend be careful of the thieves," I thanked him for his advice and wished him good luck.

As the sun slowly sets, I made to another caravansary to rest for the night, I made sure that all my stuff was tucked away so the thieves won't get to it. Then I did my night routine and went to bed. Last night I did not sleep well at all, because I had this crazy nightmare about me waking up to a empty wagon with only some crumbs, I thought it was the thieves that had robbed me when I was asleep, it was horrible. Maybe next time I will try and make friends who is going the same direction as me.

For the morning, I totally forgot about the nightmare, because I found a guy who is going to the same destination as me, Rome. His name was Emon, he said he knows the exact path of where we were going because he's been studying all the maps he's father gave to him before he passed.

We were on the road for 1 hour and traded with A LOT of people like: C, he asked if I would trade a silver nugget for rare herbs and spices, I said yes because I only had plain bread for the last few days so spices would help right now, and there is a guy who absolute almost have every thing!!! So

I went to that guy and traded quite a lot with him, I traded the piece of jade for more food and water, I also traded 4 stacks of paper for a few bars of gold.

After the trading frenzy, I was again with my friend on the road, we went to another caravansary to rest and trade some more but we were so exhausted we could barely open our eyes right now. After a great night sleep, I was back on the road with Emon, while we chatted, I saw a guy in black, running towards another merchant, as quick as a flash he snatched one of the items and ran away, "Look!", I said "Its a thief," Emon quickly looked around and started to walk faster. I ran to catchup with him, I was a bit scared because it reminded me of the dream I had. But I tried not to think

about it, so I kept walking and days passed and I finally arrived at Rome!!!!!!!

Me and Emon said good bye and I went to my home at Rome
THE END !!!!!

Silk Road Adventures

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Lin, Zeki – 10

I am a merchant, and my name is Zeki. I went to search for treasures with my friend Liara. She is an experienced merchant. We bought two camels and started our journey.

First, we arrived at a caravanserai. I exchanged some silk for a treasure map. However, it was quite late, so we decided to take a break and set off the next day.

The next morning, after having breakfast, we continued our journey. On the way to find the treasure, we ran out of water. The camels were very thirsty and could not move. Suddenly, we saw a cave and found a bottle of water inside. After we finished drinking the water, we set off again.

This time, we met some robbers on the road. At that moment, we hid from them and managed to escape. Soon after, we arrived at the place marked on the map. At first, we saw nothing. Liara said that maybe the treasure was buried underground. We started digging, and eventually, we found a treasure chest. When we opened it, there was a lot of gold and spices inside.

Finally, we rushed back, and I shared our exciting story with everyone.

A Tale of the Old Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Liu, Junran – 11

“KHAN, GO WASH THE PLATES!!”

Khan's dad was a strict and an angry guy. He always hit and kicked his children. Khan is the oldest child in his family who always got hit. His little heart was filled with madness and an energy that made him want to escape.

One day he started his little plan: bring all the things he needs and go to China. He packed all his belongings and waited until the night. He tiptoed outside of his home, ran across the streets and stole a camel. After all these works he unfolded his map and tried to find a way to go on the Silk Road. When he got on the camel and tried to ride it. “PACHA!!” he fell off.

He climbed up and got on the camel again. It seems like the camel knew

the dream of Khan. It carried him and started their journey. A few days later, Khan was sitting on a rock and eating his bread. He doesn't know that there will be a sandstorm coming and he still needs 10 km to reach the

Caravanserai . The only thing he knew is reach the Caravanserai as fast as he can and if he can't there will be massive trouble.

5 hours later.....

"Hey kid, do you have something to trade?" A man with a big moustache said "um... I'm a runaway, and I'm from Syria . I have some Syria Dishdasha it's a traditional wearing of mans in Syria." Khan said quietly. "Umm I'll give you my horse and I'm from "Tokhara", a country from the north." The man said. "Are you going to China" Khan asked gently .

" Of course! China is the best place to live and earn money! Also my name is Shadab, if you're going to China we can go together!" the man said. " ok lets go together!"

They went to India Shu Le and Yu men pass. When they go to Yumen pass its closed. Shadab tried to find out why. " why is it closed Shadab?" "because the **mountain bandits** is coming!!!!" The mountain bandits is coming! This is the second difficulty that he had. " hide! Khan" The horses neigh and the stepping sound was getting closer and closer.

"Everyone give all your money and your goods!!" but they didn't see anyone. They only heard a tiny sound that sounds like the Yu Men pass door is opening. They got closer and closer " BOOMMMMM!!!!" the tang army's cannon started to fire and in the chaos, Shadab and Khan sneak into the Yu Men pass and bought a carriage. They travelled for three days and finally reached Xi an!

He first used his money for buy a house , then he went to a interview for be a cleaner of the bar. He can't speak well Chinese so he can only be a Arabian bar cleaner. His working was not well at the start, because he don't know how to speak Chinese so he practiced very hard and he became a waiter! He thought be a waiter will have more salary but the reality made him mad . He got insulted and bullied he was very mad and upset. He found Shadab and told him that is he can help Khan find a job. Shadab told him that he could be a merchant or be a little boss in Xi An.

He told Shadab " Ummmm I want to be a merchant and sell Syria traditional things for example foods" "off course Shadab said .

The next day he opened his little store and sell things.

15 years later, he already had a family and his big company is earning a lot of money. One day, he told his family " I can't believe that runaway is the good choice!"

Mimi and Musy's Amazing Journey Along the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Lu, Luna – 8

Mimi had no idea that her birthday would end with footprints in the sand and secrets revealed.

It all began with an adventure along the Silk Road.

Mimi was a little girl, the daughter of a king. Her best friend, Musy, was always by her side, and the two girls shared everything. For Mimi's birthday, they planned an extraordinary journey along the Silk Road, hoping it would be fun and exciting.

Before setting off, they soon realised that travelling on the Silk Road required an adult and a parchment signed by the king. Although the girls felt disappointed, they were far too excited to wait. Without hesitation, they quietly packed their things and left the castle at night, hoping no one would notice.

A few hours later, the sun rose over the endless desert. The sound of camel bells echoed in the distance, and the hot wind carried sand across the golden path. Mimi began to feel bored and looked around, hoping to find

something interesting. Suddenly, she noticed something strange. One camel was travelling by itself, and it was wearing golden mats on its hump.

Curious and excited, Mimi quickly ran towards the camel without telling Musy or her father. Meanwhile, Musy and the king continued walking, unaware that Mimi had disappeared. Musy was busy asking the king questions about his palace and what it was like to be a king.

By the time Musy realised Mimi was missing, it was already too late. Some bad guys had taken away Mimi. When Musy discovered footprints left in the sand, she shouted, “Look! The bad guys have left footprints in the sand!” Without wasting a moment, they followed the trail across the desert.

At last, Musy found Mimi, but the bad guys were about to kill them. Just when everything seemed hopeless, something astonishing happened. Musy revealed her secret — she was a witch. She had always known strange spells, but she had never used them before. With a few whispered words, Musy turned the bad guys away and rescued Mimi.

“I told you it worked!” Musy said proudly.

The king stared at her in amazement. “Why would you say that it worked?” he asked.

Mimi smiled and replied, “It was part of our plan. I already knew Musy was a witch years ago. I made friends with her because she is a witch.”

The king asked again, “Who were the bad guys, and where did they come from?”

“Oh, those were my parents,” Musy said carelessly. “I asked them to pretend to be bad guys.”

That was the first time the king had ever been tricked by his own daughter.

As for that big trick, the two girls were already excited to plan another adventure. The Silk Road still held many secrets waiting to be discovered. What could they do next?

The Ship Island and Magical Monster

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Min, Yifan – 9

A long time ago, there was a ship sailed on the sea. One day, a giant monster ate all the people on the ship, and the monster cracked the ship into a giant rock, then the monster disappeared in the sea.

3000 years later the ship turned into an island. On the island there were some people living there. One day a baby was born in a party. Everyone went to see the baby. But when they saw the baby, they were all scared of the baby. The baby had sharp teeth and a pair of wings. The grandma of the baby said: “Don’t be scared, I will take care of her and I won’t let her hurt anyone.”

18 years later, the baby turned into a big girl. She liked to play with some animals, and she had a friend called Alisa. Alisa was a cute little cat that can turned into a human or turned into an owl. Alisa liked to call the girl Shelly. She always played with Shelly and slept with her. But not everyone liked Shelly that much. Some people even hated Shelly because they thought Shelly was a monster, and they always made fun of her.

One day, when Alisa and Shelly was playing, someone called them to come to Shelly's grandmother's house. When they got to her grandmother, her grandmother was on a bed and she was bleeding. Shelly asked, "who hurt you?" Grandmother said, "you don't need to know who hurt me, you just need to know a monster will come in two days soon. And you must kill it and bring his heart back." Then Shelly's grandmother died. Shelly asked Alisa if she would come with her. Alisa agreed. So, they began their journey.

First, they came to a giant mountain and a river with some grass beside the river. Then, they came to a forest. When they got to the beautiful sea, they decided to sleep on the shore. When it was night, they sat on a rock and looked at the sea. Suddenly, the sea was shaking, a monster got out of the sea. It was moving closer to them. Shelly took a magic sword and Alisa turned into an owl. Shelly tried to use her magic sword to kill the monster, but the monster dodged Shelly's attack. Alisa also tried to kill the monster, but the monster used his arms to hit them. Shelly let Alisa to get her magic sword when the monster was not looking at them. Alisa got the sword and flew into the sky. She carried the sword and flew to the monster's back. When he was not looking at her, she killed him and Shelly took his heart out of his body and brought it back to the place where they live.

No one ever hated Shelly anymore, and they thought Shelly and Alisa were the heroes of their island.

One Day on the Old Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Pan, Qishi – 10

A hot afternoon, on the old Silk Road, I pack my stuff ready went to Rome.

First, I boarded a camel that's strong enough to went to Rome and some things such as silk paper and books. And I needed some food and water that can be enough to go to Rome. After I bought the things, I need I saw a runaway kids on the silk road I ask a warrior that was old. "What's happening?" I asked. The warrior answered me in his deep voice, "that's a runaway kids, he maybe hate his family at home." I didn't ask him why cus I knew that that isn't a good warrior. But my heart just jumped the warrior had a knife with blood. I imagine that the how dangerous is the Silk Road was, and my camel stopped I wet to check my camel. And the warrior told me "Your camel want to drink some water now."

I just went to the river to let camel to have some water. And the warrior told me you need to find a cave before the sun set. And the warrior told me he wants to bring his family's legacy to Rome.

When its sun set, me and the warrior came to a cave with certain and a bed it seem someone already come here before, but there's still a have two perfume on the corner. One has a smell of the lavender and a smell of cedar that let me feel comfortable. After I went to sleep.

Tomorrow, I get of my bed. And I went out to see my camel. "Warrior!" What happen to the camel?" I shout out in a loud voice. "It's fine." I was mad but warrior still like a statue that didn't care anything. I found some water and help the camel, and said goodbye to the warrior, and ready to went to Rome.....

The Old Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Qiao, Zeyu – 9

"What will this magic door lead to?" wondered Tom as he touched the magic door that he discovered the day before. Suddenly, the light flickered. Golden lights swirled above Tom, forming patterns of dragons and camels. "Wow!" whispered Tom, as he stepped into a shadowy tunnel humming with the scent of saffron and the jingle of camel bells.

Without warning, Tom ventured into the Old Silk Road. "Yes!" he yelled, "I did it!" Now, he was there, but a new thought hit him: "What am I going to do?" he repeated his boss' sentence. "Go to the Old Silk Road and capture the time traveling man," Tom thought. "Okay," said Tom to himself, "I will go and ask."

Just as Tom wanted to step into a random market to ask where was the time traveling man, a group of soldiers carrying weapons rushed to Tom! Without thinking, Tom hid under a group of trees, but he was already out of breath. "What?" Tom wondered, "have they already discovered the deadly secret?" But the only answer to that

was yes because then how could they find Tom? All of that was behind the only secret magic of the time of traveling.

Suddenly, a colorful spider crawled onto Tom's hand. Before he could even squeak, it bit him! Tom was scared and worried. Then, a strange thing happened. Tom didn't feel any pain, but a weird, powerful feeling. Suddenly Tom noticed that he could control time! Before he could react, the soldiers came and found Tom, "No!" cried Tom, "I need to use my power now," said Tom quickly, as he controlled time backwards 10 minutes.

Tom used his power, and suddenly, he found himself back in the busy market—ten minute earlier. "I wonder where I am?" said Tom. Tom looked up and saw a sign that said "The Silk Road Market," labeled big and bold. Suddenly, Tom saw something shining with golden colour, it was hard to read because it was far away and gleaming. Finally, Tom found out that it said Time Traveling Man's house! Tom was fascinated, he didn't even think he could find such a place by accident.

"Why am I going to capture the Time Travelling Man?" Tom thought. He walked down the street toward the man's house. Tom became more confused. "Oh! Yes!" said Tom as he remembered his boss' words, "Capture the Time Travelling Man because he disrupts time travelling and soon it will become worse, because he has already stolen ninety—six time machines! Only four have not been stolen, and not been modified by the dangerous Time Travelling Man."

"But how can I capture the time travelling man," Tom considered. "Maybe I can steal the ninety—six time machines back."

As Tom came closer to the Time travelling man's house, he saw a gigantic robot standing there, with the only gate that Tom can go in. Now Tom really needs to use his brain. On the corner of his eyes, Tom caught a glimpse of a shop that said 'Using Tools for Doing Unbelievable Things.' "Maybe that fits," said Tom with excitement.

The first thing that caught Tom's eyes in the shop was a big bucket of iron grapple. "I think it would work," said Tom happily.

Tom crept behind the wall that the robot stand, with all his might, Tom sprinted at full speed and threw the iron gapple onto the wall and leaped up in one swift motion. Tom hid on the roof and peered down, hoping the robot will not see his move. Luckily, the robot didn't see his move. Tom quickly crawled up the roof to the chimney and slipped down carefully in the Time Travelling Man's house.

Tom quietly went inside the Time Travelling Man's house, as he grabbed the iron grapple with one hand, and looked at the surrounding. Tom sneakily went infront but suddenly Tom saw a big figure coming to him. "It must be the Time Travelling Man!" thought Tom, he quickly hid behind a big chair and looked at him. He come nearer and nearer, just as Tom wanted to use his superpower, The Time Travelling Man suddenly lied down on the sofa and opened the television, Tom sighed with relief.

Tom focused on the Time Travelling Man as he moved slowly and on tiptoe from the big chair to the hallway. Tom nearly jumped out of his skin, now, Tom thought, "Where was the time machine?" Suddenly, something caught on Tom's eye when he goes to the hallway junction, a label that says 'TIME MACHINE ON THE LEFT!' Tom follow the label and got to a humongous room where it has the ninety—six Time Machine! "Yes!" cried Tom but still making sure that the Time Travelling Man cannot hear it.

Just as Tom wants to take away the ninety—six time machine, a gigantic robot became face to face with Tom! The robot shouted some alien words that Tom didn't know, suddenly all of the other robot come from other places and surrounds Tom layer by layer.

Tom quickly put the machines in his pockets, then with his lighting speed Tom gathered all of his might and sprint with full speed toward the chimney. Just three meters till the chimney!! Two meter!!! One meter!!!! With a big throw, Tom threw the iron grapple up the chimney and to the roof of the house, with a leap from the iron grapple's help, Tom went on the roof and slipped down to the ground with a jump!

Suddenly, a big, robotic hand grab on Tom's shoulder, "Help!" screamed Tom, "the robot caught me!"

"Ha ha!" said Tom, I could use my...Three hours earlier, beeped the Time Travelling Machine. Tom was back to the lab where he has discovered the magic door, he checked his pockets, the ninety—six time machines were still in it.

But Tom will never know his boss' real, evil plan behind the move...

The Way to Rome

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Shi, Carlos – 8

Charlie was 13, so his family let him go to Rome. His dad gave him silk, 20 gold coins, and 20 servants. Charlie thanked his dad politely and set off. What kind of journey would this be? Charlie was truly excited about his journey.

When he got out of China, he entered the desert directly, the one by the Silk Road. First, when they got into the desert, Charlie heard a beeping sound suddenly close to him. He then found out what the beeping sound was. It was his phone. The phone beeped urgently because a sandstorm was coming close to Charlie.

Charlie ignored the sandstorm warning stubbornly as he kept walking two kilometres. He kept walking nonstop for 2 kilometres. Later, Charlie could clearly see the sandstorm, and the sandstorm was coming toward him quickly. Charlie got scared badly, but he saw another path was open luckily, so Charlie went to the other side and turned right immediately. Therefore, he was safe totally and didn't get hurt or anything at all.

Charlie kept walking tirelessly until it was night. When night fell, he put the camels somewhere they could rest comfortably. The servants fed the camels carefully and went to sleep soon. The next morning, they kept walking steadily, they just kept walking on and on. They saw some people eating something happily by the road. Those people saw Charlie suddenly, and they put Charlie in prison rudely for 5 years.

Five years later, he finally got out of prison freely. He kept traveling determinedly until he thought he was near Rome. When he thought he was there, he told his servant to go faster. They went too quickly that they got lost completely. “Now what will we do?” said Charlie anxiously. “We have to go back,” said one of his servants calmly. Charlie went back slowly and took the other side carefully.

The beeping sound rang again. Charlie thought it would be OK naively. But he was totally wrong. 11 of his servants got blown away violently. Even some of his food and drink were blown away instantly. Seven days later, he couldn't walk anymore. He was so hungry terribly. He found a helpful man named Harold accidentally. Harold helped Charlie kindly, and Charlie found some of his servants gradually. Harold welcomed Charlie to live in Rome warmly. Those two people became very good friends soon. They had a wonderful time together in Rome.

Bandits of the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Shi, Ivan – 9

One early morning, a brave and curious boy named Edwood secretly crept out of his house onto the Silk Road. He smelt old ceramic vases and pots. Then, he saw a caravan slowly moving. He watched carefully and saw a whole bag of expensive goods and silk. Suddenly, a big group of bandits and robbers swarmed the surroundings and pointed sharp knives at the villagers' head. The villagers were terrified because they knew they were going to get their goods stolen and if they didn't hand them over, they would die. Edwood's stomach dropped when he saw the bandits. He sprinted to his home and awakened his dad and told him everything that just happened.

His dad alerted the king and the king sent heavily armed guards to get them. The bandits moved closer and closer. Suddenly, a guard shouted “what do you think you are doing?!?” The leader of the bandits turned around and saw an enormous group of men holding axes. The bandits and robbers fought the guards. Secretly this was all a plan. While they were fighting the villagers ran away and continued the journey while the bandits and guards

fought. They kept fighting until the bandits and robbers realised that the villagers were gone. Edwood had a sigh of relief and went back home. The bandits were frustrated because they didn't get anything.

Once the caravan got to its destination, they got rewarded 5 bags of the finest and most expensive silk in the whole village. They cheered with happiness and joy they also gave Edwood 2 bags of silk and smiled at Edwood saying "thank you for saving our lives and goods" Edwood smiled back. From that day on Edward was remembered as a hero for his quick thinking.

The Hidden Gemstone

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wang, Keyan – 8

A long time ago, there was a strong and brave boy called Nico who had a smart and kind twin sister named Bianca, they were left in the Silk Road as kids and found by a rattlesnake who raised them as its own.

When they were teenagers, they found a group of caravans and a nice family to live with, so the couple traveled everywhere, until a war started.

"RUN!" yelled Nico. Suddenly, the town they living in were caught on fire and everyone in it started to go crazy, then Bianca started to worry, "Nico, what should we do?" she asked "Don't worry, "Nico told her, "Just follow me".

Together, they went into a priest's house which was not on fire, they asked the priest how to stop the war and the priest told them they must find one very secret gemstone that was hidden in the center of the earth, he gave them a map, a compass, clothes and everything they would need for their journey.

Finally, they were ready and left, on the way they came to a gravestone and a rattlesnake appeared but this was not any snake, it was their mother!

"Follow me", the snake hissed and they obeyed. They came to a trapdoor that opened by itself and swallowed Nico and Bianca!

They fell into a deep tunnel with dust swirling around them. When the dust cleared, Nico could see a ghost standing in their path, but this was the ghost of Marco Polo who were the first guidance of the Silkroad! "I will guide you to the exit, it should be all the way to the east Asia" he said "but you must give me something in return as trading!"

Bianca gave him some spice and they started to follow him. At last, they came to the exit, into another room. "I can only guide you here, you need to find the way on your own to your destination." said Marco Polo and faded away.

This room was filled with lava, which meant they were close to the center of the earth. At first, they jumped on rocks, but then there were no more rocks to jump on!

Bianca was very smart, so she asked Nico to throw a bottle at the ceiling and Nico obeyed. Rocks came tumbling down from the ceiling. But it wasn't an avalanche. The rocks made a path that led to the exit.

They entered a room full of crystals. At the end of the room, a box was floating in the air and towards them. When it reached them, they saw a sentence carved on the box: "If you came here alone, there is no help for you. This box will only open in a circle of two."

They knew what it meant immediately. They each stood on opposite sides of the box and held hands. The box opened all of a sudden and a beautiful green gemstone floated out.

There was a dazzling light and they transported to where they started their journey. The gemstone began to shake and a green light filled the town.

And "Boom!" the light exploded. The enemies of the war disappeared and everything turned back to the normal again, except Nico and Bianca were made the heroes of the town. The gemstone gloriously blasted lighting up the path of the Silk Road lighting it up forever.

Ramon's Adventure on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wen, Arthur – 8

There was a famous trade route called the Silk Road, where people from different countries exchanged goods. A brave young boy named Ramon travelled with his dad on a camel, ready for an exciting adventure.

The sun shone brightly, and the sand felt warm beneath their feet. They had already travelled for three days without rest, so they decided to stop at a cosy palace. However, something unexpected happened.

Ramon and his dad rushed inside, hoping to find food, but instead they saw piles of sparkling jewellery.

"Oh no—we've come to the wrong palace!" Dad cried.

"We need to leave now!" Ramon shouted.

They tried to escape, but the gate was locked.

"Nobody leaves this palace!" a robber yelled.

Thinking quickly, Ramon picked up a giant diamond and threw it at the robber. The robber dodged, but the diamond rolled past him and landed perfectly in a round hole. To everyone's surprise, the gate opened instantly!

Ramon and his dad ran through the gate while the robber was distracted by the diamonds. On their way to the next palace, they met two security guards and told them what had happened. "Don't worry, we will catch the robber," the guards said. The guards followed Ramon's footprints, found the robber, and captured him after a struggle. They took him away to jail. From that day on, Ramon and his dad continued their journey along the Silk Road and travelled happily ever after.

War and Peace on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wong, Gogo – 10

One day in the Han dynasty, a war was about to break out in China's western regions. This war was between China and Rome. Han Xin, a general of China's armed forces, was leading his soldiers to wait for Rome's attack. After a few minutes, the Romans arrived. At this time, the cruel war officially began. They fought very hard. Although the Chinese army was very tenacious, Rome's weapons were better than China's, and Rome had more manpower than China. In the end, Rome occupied the area, so China's armed forces had to retreat to their base.

Far from that place in China, there was a young boy named Nike. He was a strong adventurer who often went hunting and always brought back some surprise, such as gemstones, large prey, precious herbs and many other things. But one day, some people found him and asked him to join the army. He did not want to join, but those people insisted that he enlist, so he had no choice but to join reluctantly.

A few weeks later, after packing his bag, he set off on the way to the army. When he arrived at the army camp, he found that although there was a break for lunch, there was no freedom here. He had to practice every day. Then, after a few days like this, they suddenly went to the battlefield. Because all the other teams had finished their tasks, only they could go to the battlefield to fight against Rome. When he got to the battlefield, he saw that there were so many soldiers who had died heroically in the war. Under the leadership of the general, they fought against Rome. Suddenly, Nike thought that their troops were not enough to defeat the Romans. So Nike told the leadership to call the base for more troops. As he had said, the troops were really insufficient, but fortunately, he had called the support team in advance. In the end, China won the war.

After that war, both countries lost a lot of their resources and troops, so they stopped the war and gained peace in the end. The main character Nike went back to his home and had fun with his family.

Friendship and Adventure on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wong, Long Kio Max – 9

Long long ago, a kind merchant named Ben wanted to go to a busy trade city along the Silk Road. He had lovely tea, soft silk, shiny jade and precious gold to sell. His best helper was a strong camel called Lulu, which carrying all the goods on its back.

On the way, Ben met a friendly driver named Tim with a small cart, and a big brave guard named Sam who knew how to keep people safe. They decided to travel together. The desert was hot and windy, but they helped each other. Ben shared his dry bread, Tim sang funny songs and Sam watched for danger at night.

One morning, Ben cried out, "Oh no! My gold is gone!" He looked very sad. Everyone was worried. Tim stopped to check the bags, and Sam looked around carefully. Then he saw some footprints in the sand. They

followed the footprints and walked for a long time. At last, they saw a little fox with the gold bag in its mouth. The fox was scared and dropped the bag when it saw them. They got the gold back happily.

After many days of walking, they finally reached a busy trade city. The gates were big, and the streets were full of people from different places. Ben sold all his tea, silk, jade and gold for a lot of money. He bought sweet fruits for Tim, Sam and Lulu. That night, they sat under the bright moon and talked about their trip. They knew that the Silk Road was not just a road for trade, but also a road for friendship.

The Secrets of the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wu, Kai – 9

One morning, the sun shone brightly on the King's palace. Sam and his big brother Jerry received a scroll from the King! Sam and Jerry ran as fast as lightning to their home to tell their dad about the scroll. The scroll said: "Please go on a journey along the Silk Road. This scroll will help you pass every gate on the Silk Road."

Their father said, "It will be dangerous on the way!" Sam felt excited, but Jerry noticed something strange on the scroll. Some of the writing was in an unknown language. Too late—his dad had already prepared seven camels and supplies. He had also decided they would leave at six o'clock.

They decided to travel at night. That evening, as the wind howled softly, the group began their journey. They travelled through the desert sands. Days passed, and the group moved slowly and carefully. Finally, they reached the first gate. A priest showed the scroll to the guards. The guards said, "Pay," so they took the scroll and allowed the group to continue on to the second gate.

They were almost near Rome when Jerry noticed some strange writing on a stone. Sam and Jerry felt curious, so they called their guide to help. They walked closer with the group. Sam touched the writing and realised the letters were carved deep into the stone. Suddenly, a giant statue appeared!

Sand burst into the air, and two bad men suddenly jumped out. Their dad and the group grabbed rocks and plates and banged them loudly to scare the bad men away. The bad men became frightened and ran away. Then the statue rumbled, and a secret shortcut to Rome appeared! They followed the new route and only travelled for two years because of the shortcut.

At last, they arrived in Rome. They traded their goods and then returned safely to China. The King was pleased. He rewarded them with gold and money. From that day on, Sam and Jerry were not just travellers. They were the first to discover the secrets of the Silk Road.

The Secret Castle

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wu, Meiyun – 8

A long time ago, a brave girl named Coco set out from Beijing along the Silk Road. One day, a trader named Coco prepared to travel to Shenzhen with her good friend called Ruby. Coco and Ruby wanted to travel to Shenzhen to explore new places. The next day, they started their exciting trip together.

On their journey, they went into a forest. The forest was called the Evil Monster Forest, but Coco and Ruby did not know this. The forest was very dark and dangerous. First, Coco and Ruby met a goblin. The goblin looked ugly. It had green skin, small eyes, and it did not wear shoes or clothes. Ruby and Coco were very scared. They held hands to comfort each other, but the goblin was too strong, so the goblin arrested them.

The goblin's home was in a castle. The security guards of the castle were two huge dogs. The dogs looked very scary, and the goblin brought Coco and Ruby into the castle. The goblin put Coco and Ruby in a jail. Coco had

a map that showed the castle was near Shenzhen. Coco and Ruby really wanted to escape. One night, when the goblin was sleeping, Coco and Ruby escaped quietly and ran away together!

Finally, Coco and Ruby arrived in Shenzhen safely. Coco and Ruby traded many goods and learned about new cultures and people. They felt proud of their adventure. Ruby smiled and said, "Next time, we will travel to Xinjiang!"

Finally, Coco and Ruby arrived home happily.

Journey on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wu, Yoyo – 9

One day the king gave a mission to Rany and her dad. The mission is to go to the Silk Road and buy goods. The king gave them two camels and they ride the camels to go to the Silk Road.

At the night Rany and her dad go to a caravanserai to rest. On the next day morning they woke up very early because they are so exciting and want to arrive Rome quickly.

On the afternoon, they arrive Rome. Rany and her dad bought goods. Then they go back to China.

When night comes, they go to a caravanserai. In the caravanserai, there's a thief. When Rany and her dad are sleeping, the thief stole a piece of silk. On the next day morning, Rany and her dad found that the silk disappeared. They don't know where the silk has gone.

On the desert they find the thief. When Rany and her dad go to the desert, the thief ran away and they chase the thief quickly.

Rany's dad got the silk. Rany and her dad keep going. At the night they arrive China. They brought some goods to the king and they keep the others for themselves.

On the afternoon of the next day, Rany thinks the journey is very nice. They also bought some fruits on the Silk Road. Then Rany and her dad taste the fruits.

Wu and Long

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wu, Ziyu – 10

In the ancient city of Chang'an, where caravans gathered and spices filled the air, a young man set off with camels, ready to travel across the Silk Road.

The name of the young man was Wu and he's got a very brave friend called Long. They together will travel through the Silk Road. They need to go through three stations: first is the station to buy some food. The second station is the place to buy swords, and the third station is the dragon fight, they need to defeat a dragon to finish the journey.

They travel to the first stop and they were happy that they are still alive.

They feel very hungry so they get down the camel, but what they see is the worst thing ever happen. Their food has been stolen, so they have to use their gold to exchange some food.

After a great meal, they start their journey again. In order to protect themselves, they need to buy some weapons. They go to the weapon store to buy some weapon.

Next, they go to the third stop. They were very scared because there is a paper says the person that is on this ground must defeat a dragon. After a few seconds the soldiers come to take them away but they take out their weapons to fight with them. At the same time, the dragon flies out and breathes fire at them. At this dangerous moment, Wu and Long unite together to slay the dragon.

This story tells us that only unity brings victory.

The Budding Journey

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, You, Cynthia – 7

Once upon a time, there was a boy who longed to go on a journey on the Silk Road. He often asked his parents things like, “Can we go on a trip to the Silk Road?” But his mum said, “It will be too dangerous.” Then he would tell his dad, “Mum said the trip will be too dangerous, so can I go by myself?” But Dad said, “If it’s too dangerous, that means it’s also dangerous for you.” Even his sister started saying that he was too annoying.

So now he could only pretend with his friend that they were going to have a trip to the Silk Road. Then he asked his friends, “Why don’t our parents allow us to do this?” Then one of them said, “Most of us are only 10, and some of us are even 8 or 9, so this means we are too small!”

One day, he asked his mother, “Where is our bow?” His mother said, “Why do you need that? That’s a crossbow. It’s very heavy.” So he said, “To practise.” “What do you mean by practising?” his mother asked.

Then his mother said, “Do you mean to practise for the Silk Road?” He nodded. Then his mum said, “Don’t even think about that!” “But, but—” Before he could say the next sentence, his mum walked away.

Now the boy really decided never to think about it, because he didn’t even have things to practise with. So he thought for a moment, then ran out of the house, calling his friends to the corner of their house. That was the place where they always schemed and talked. So he asked his friend, “Do any of your parents allow you to bring weapons, like crossbows or something? It can be anything, as long as it’s a weapon.” Most of them looked at each other and didn’t know what to do, but then one of his friends suddenly said, “I do. I have a bow that my parents gave to me to practise hunting.”

Suddenly, his expression changed into a delighted look, and he said, “Very good! Now get your bow and let’s practise shooting!” Everyone cheered as his friend ran back as fast as he could, not to waste any time. Then he told his friends to get some wood to build a target. He and his friends were very tired after collecting wood and building a target out of it.

After that, it was already noon, but anyway he suggested not eating anything and just practising his bow skills with his friends. However, all of his friends said they were hungry, so he had to pick one of the choices: to eat or not to eat, since all of his friends had already gone for lunch.

Now he decided to eat some food so he would not struggle with hunger in the afternoon. So he went off for lunch. After he finished his lunch and got back to the front of his door, most of his friends had also finished. So he waited for his friends and got ready for the afternoon. They kept practising until they were all tired out, and then they went back home for some food, then got to bed very late and slept, too tired to say anything.

Days and days, weeks and weeks, months and years passed like this, until, after six years, late on a cold night, he and his friends gathered together, preparing things to trade and camels. So they got ready to leave and walked for hours. By the time their parents had already woken up, they still hadn’t found out that their sons had left, and they had almost already walked out of China.

After one day of travelling, they walked out of China and were prepared for fighting robbers. Just when they had walked for 7 kilometres, they met a bunch of robbers, so they shot arrows before even thinking. But the last robber caught him. Thanks to his friend, his friend shot the robber, so they continued their journey.

Soon, they went to a caravansary. They rested and traded, but unexpectedly, a robber went into the caravansary. Two of the friends saw the robber, but they had no idea what to do. Then that morning, when they woke up, that boy was missing. So they went everywhere to search. Then they found a little lever and they pulled it around to open the door. Then they sneaked into a room and found the leader. They returned, but then a robber caught them. Fortunately, one of the boys had brought a bow and shot the robber dead, so they kept on continuing the journey and got home at the age of 16.

Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Young, Mia – 10

Percy’s Notebook of Wonder

Percy put down his pen with a satisfied sigh. His latest notebook, was covered by scratched and stained from travel was finally full. This one held sketches of Mongolian hours, a pressed flower from a Tibetan valley and stories whispered around campfire. Percy was a traveler and a writer, his favorite road wasn’t made of asphalt, but made out of history! And it was called the silk road

His backpack was always ready, he also brought a fresh notebook, pencils, a water bottle and a compass. Now that he is ready, his next great journey was about to begin.

Percy’s adventure started in the ancient Chinese city of Xi’an, He stood before the emperor’s palace, their carts loaded with bundles of a special cloth called silk. This silk was smoother than a pebble in a stream and so precious

that people in faraway— lands would trade big treasure for it! He drew the walls and wrote: “This is where the biggest adventure in the world started. “

He sat in a train that went into the desert. Out the window, the world became a giant ocean of sand dunes the Taklamakan Desert. A friendly man at the train station told him the meaning of the name was “Once you get in you won’t get out!” But Percy knew that clever travelers did come out, but how? He thought to himself, they stopped at Oases. There were like magical spots In the desert with pools of cool, blue water, tall, whispering palm tree and the sweetest, juiciest fruits. Percy ate a slice of orange melon, the sweet juice making his fingers sticky. He wrote in his notebook : ”Rule for adventure : Always stop at the green spots on the map .”

Next he found himself in a huge, noisy, wonderful market in a city called Kashgar. It was like a carnival for your nose and ears! The air smelled of sizzling meat on sticks, fresh—baked round breads and even fluffy sheep! He heard language that sounded like singing, chattering or some type of laughing all mixed up together! Percy don’t just watch. He used his hands and a big smile to help him buy three small, sweet pies from a woman in an embroidered dress. He wrote: “ Your friendly face is the best passport of all !”

Under a sky painted pink and orange by the setting sun Percy finally finished his adventure, but then he thought about something then opened his book again and in the last page he wrote:

“Dear reader, the best treasure isn’t something you buy. It’s the adventure you have and the friends you make along the way .

Your friend, Percy the traveler.....

Across the Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Yue, Leo – 10

Long before the ancient times there was a road that stretched thousands of miles.

It was used for trading many exciting goods such as silk or silver.

In the city of Athens was Sugoi, he learnt kung fu from his mom and was very excited to visit his dad who was working in Iraq because he had not seen his dad in years. He had to go to Turkey and go through Syria to get to Iraq. He was going to go through the Silk Road. When he went to the port, he paid a small fee and rode on the boat. While he was on the boat he was bored, so he thought about his dad’s job. His dad worked as a trader selling and buying various goods from other countries.

Out of nowhere some robbers shot sharp arrows at the boat driver and Sugoi, almost hitting them. “Give us the boat now or we will shoot you!” said the robbers. At that moment Sugoi remembered his mom put a small grenade in his bag in case anything bad happened so Sugoi bravely threw the grenade at the robbers, frightening them and making them leave.

Once Sugoi arrived in Turkey, he used the broken pieces of the grenade to make a weapon and traded it to the locals in exchange for food.

He found a horse in the distance and decided to use his fishing rod from his bag and use the food as bait. Then he rode on the horse and put the bait in front of the horse, dangling from the fishing rod. The horse ran miles trying to carry Sugoi to Syria, but on the way two people blocked the way. Sugoi felt a shiver down his spine. One of them said to each other “adi nun sırt çantasını çalalım ve satalım! (let's steal his backpack and sell it!).” Sugoi thought the people were speaking an alien language. Then, they both charged into Sugoi and successfully stole his backpack. Sugoi was devastated because in his bag was his favourite baseball card. He decided that there was nothing he could do about it because the thieves ran away using their horses. He used the horse to go to Syria but at the border, he was stopped from bringing the horse into Syria because the horse could be dangerous. In Syria Sugoi thought the city looked nice because there were many tall buildings. Sugoi then walked to a nice hotel to sleep. In the hotel, Sugoi noticed the roads were crowded with people trading goods.

When he woke up, he noticed all the lights were off. He thought that there was a black out but when he went out of the hotel he saw a man breaking the electric wires using scissors. When Sugoi was about to tell the man to stop cutting the wire, he noticed that the man was holding his bag. He kindly asked the man to give him his bag but when the man saw him, the man tried to kick Sugoi but Sugoi dodged and used kung fu to paralyze the man. Sugoi took his bag and walked to Iraq. When he saw his dad, he told him how he got to Iraq. His dad was happy that he was safe and Sugoi was relieved to get his backpack back.

Franky's silk road adventure:

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhang, Tianyi – 9

One day, Franky and his army is giving some weapons to another army, but they must get past silk road, when the army hear silk road this word, they were shocked, because they all know that silk road is a very long road, so they need to go a longlong way.

And when the army goes a little bit, Franky used a telescope and see a pile of black thing, And when they walk a little bit forward, they see that is another army running at our army, and when they got more closer, they know, it's an army defending our way to the finish line so they messaged everyone in this group, so they prepared everything to battle, When the enemy comes, they see that the enemy was a lot of people, but they still got some time to talk how to defeat the other army, and when Franky get past everyone, the soldier say that he Smells like woodsmoke and Franky's talking sound is like heavy thud of boots, and when Franky Finish talking, and the other army already arrived at the fighting arena, the battle starts.

But Franky's Army only have 100 soldiers and the other army got 170 soldiers, so Franky's army needs to fight very fantastic and perfect, or they will lose, but at the start of the battle, it was pretty normal, no one died, but when the other army's boss Franko's shadow is been seeked, a deadly game started, our army already loses 15 soldiers but they also lost 30 soldiers, but the battle is Keep going, some soldiers get damaged, some soldiers die, and now, the fighting arena is full of blood, it's like a pacific ocean but filled with blood, but suddenly, a large voice, appear in the arena, it was Franky's sound, he said:lets stop the fight today and fight tomorrow, okay?okay!,said Franko, I'm tired lets go!,said Franky, calling his army back to there tent, but Franky already planned a plan to defeat Franko.

At night, Franky get up at 0 o'clock and sneak into Franko's tent, and use a fire torch to burn the tent, aaaaaah!!!!,bellowed Franko, at the morning, Franko's army all been shocked, because they see Franko died in the tent, but, suddenly ,nearly one trillion arrows flying at them, they got no Time to dodge, so they can only can open his eyes and look at the arrows fly to them, and finally, all the soldiers from Franko's army all died, and at last, they only got 10 miles to go, at the road,

They see traders riding camos and different shops selling different stuffs like foods, art works, poterys, different stuffs like that, and they see beautiful mountains and different trees, and Franky say he love silk road now, this is the best place he ever go!

The Robbers on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhao, Nuoyi – 8

I am a robber with two friends on the Silk Road. The goods we carry are different kinds of tea because we are from China. China has many kinds of delicious teas. We got our tea from trading expensive things we stole from other people on the Silk Road. We eat dried food like fruits, but we love to eat snacks from different places too. We get the dried fruits and snacks from gold we stole from other people. We sleep in tents next to the Silk Road. These tents are very special because they can protect us from the bad weather. They are made from things like animal skin and cloth. We travel by camels. There are three of us, so we have three camels.

Every day, my friends help me steal gold and expensive things from other people. The people we steal gold and expensive things from the people look like they have a lot of money. We will take the expensive things and trade them for more gold. Then, we will take the gold to buy special kinds of food from other countries to eat because

we love to eat delicious snacks from new places. We don't have those kinds of delicious food to eat because we love to eat delicious snacks from new places.

One day, we met a stranger on the Silk Road. He was carrying a lot of weapons like swords and daggers. He looked like a trader from his clothes. It looked like he was wearing something underneath his clothes, but we couldn't see. My friends and I wanted to steal his things, so we were thinking talking something funny to him. The other one of us would sneak over to his tent and steal his things. But my friend found out he was a soldier! A sword dropped off. Then, the stranger knew we were trying to steal his things, so we took what we could and ran away.

The next day, we saw lots of soldiers on the Silk Road. They were looking for us. We found a hiding place in a house with nobody living in it. The soldier looked everywhere except for this house, or we could have been in trouble.

In the end, we thought three friends were not enough, so we got more friends to help us steal things from people.

The Secret of the Jade

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhou, Miley – 8

It was a very special day when Caroline and her family, that they are planning to go on a trip to the Silk Road. That was our family heirloom – a jade pendant that was lost in a fight, it might be in a temple. Caroline's grandmother told her father this secret and hope her father can be found back. So now her father is going to try find it with Caroline and her mother. Caroline quietly asked father what that jade pendant looked like, and her father said he had never seen it either. He had only heard from her grandmother that a phoenix was carved on the jade pendant.

"Hurry up, Caroline!" mother cried.

"Alright! Alright!" Says Caroline, packing up her bag.

They headed to the Silk Road. Even though Caroline's parent don't want her take Gigi and Zhazha, which is two parrots that are their family pets, she still brang them secretly in her case.

Caroline's parents are archaeologists, but they still did some research and discover that the jade really is in the Silk Road.

When they arrived at the desert, Caroline complained, "Argh, it's so hot in the desert! How close are we?"

"We are nearly there," mother encouraged patiently. Later on, they found something that makes Caroline happy: they saw camels! They could ride on them and that makes things a lot easier.

Suddenly, they heard something behind them... They turned around and saw shadows moving silently, father took a close look and gasped, they were bandits hiding behind the dunes!

Unfortunately, father was discovered by the bandits. He tried to defend, but his arm was hurt and started bleeding. Mother and Caroline gave the bandits all their foods, but the bandits are so greedy and food isn't enough. They want father to be their servant, but then, Gigi and Zhazha flew out of case and started pecking the bandits. They are small animals but always smart and obedient, thought Caroline.

After a while, they became starving and thirsty, "I'm starving!" moaned Caroline. Just then, Gigi and Zhazha came and started chirping, "It seems like they are leading us to somewhere." says Caroline, sounding confused, "let's follow them." As they followed the two little 'leaders'. As they walked, they suddenly discovered a very beautiful place. There were large patches of grass, flowers and lake, and some small animals were running around. There were cute little rabbits, cows and butterflies flying around. It was too magical. This oasis makes Caroline feel like it's really a fantastic adventure. She thinks this journey must find the thing that they're finding.

They took a rest beside the lake, then they heard a voice from behind, it was a old woman, she asked where are they from and gave them medicine when she saw father's injury. She was nice to them and introduced herself briefly and knew the old woman's name is Adam. She told mother that the temple is not far, Caroline heard that and says, "Dad needs to rest, and I'm old enough to go to find the jade by myself. I want to do it. Don't worry, please trust me!" Mother thought for a moment and agreed with her decision, then Caroline took the two parrots and continued on her way.

The Silk Road: A Road of Ideas and Exchange

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Cheng, Chun Hee Edgar – 11

The Silk Road was one of the most important trade networks in history. More than just a route for goods, it acted as a bridge between the East and the West, allowing people to exchange ideas, religions, technologies, and cultures. Stretching thousands of miles across deserts and mountain ranges, the Silk Road connected ancient China to regions as far as the Mediterranean world. Learning about it helped me realise how connected the world has been for thousands of years.

The Silk Road is often linked to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). During this time, Emperor Wu of Han sent an envoy named Zhang Qian to form alliances against northern nomadic tribes. Although his mission did not succeed, Zhang Qian returned with valuable knowledge about the "Western Regions." He discovered advanced civilisations in Central Asia and learned about the strong demand for Chinese silk. I was surprised that one journey could lead to such an important change in history.

The Silk Road reached its peak during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE). The capital city, Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an), became a lively and multicultural city where merchants from Persia, India, and Byzantium gathered. When I imagine the city at that time, I picture people speaking different languages and sharing stories from distant lands. However, the Silk Road gradually declined in the 15th century when new sea routes were discovered and overland trade became less important.

Although the route was named after silk, many other goods were traded. China exported silk, porcelain, tea, and lacquerware. In return, it imported glassware, wool, gemstones, and precious metals. Even more important than goods were the ideas and technologies that travelled along the route. Papermaking and printing spread westward, changing how knowledge was recorded and shared. I found it interesting that inventions we still use today travelled such long distances in the past.

Travelling the Silk Road was dangerous. Merchants faced harsh weather, difficult terrain, and bandits. To stay safe, they travelled in caravans and rested at caravanserais, which were inns built along the route. These provided food, water, and protection, and some still exist today.

The Silk Road was also a path for religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. By studying the Silk Road, I have learned that exchange and cooperation between different cultures have shaped our world. It reminds me that understanding others has always been important, both in the past and today.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Ng, Lok Him Norton – 11

I live in the Taklamakan Desert, where mighty winds blow sand everywhere. We grow melons near a small watchtower. Grandpa told me camels passed through here long ago on the Silk Road. Now, I watch the white train pass by every day at 3:17. It goes to distant cities like Urumqi and Kashgar, and to other countries. Grandpa knows these names but has never been to these places.

I help Grandpa in the field every morning, irrigating the melons while birds search for food in the sand. The melons ripen slowly in the hot sun. My grandfather, Tursun, sometimes watches the train pass, then spits in the sand. “A train that does not stop is like a river that does not provide water,” he says. “What’s the use of being fast if it does not benefit anyone?”

At night, Grandpa tells me stories about the old Silk Road, when merchants brought camels with silk and spices through the desert. "The train is faster and can hold a thousand camels," I tell him.

After school, my best friend Nur visits. We run through the melon fields pretending to be train operators. "Maybe someday we can go to Shanghai by train!" Nur exclaims. "The train is full of numbers and papers," Grandpa says. "Not carpets or spices or stories. Look at our melons in the sun. That's reality."

One day, I receive a colorful paper from a company offering to deliver our melons to Europe by train. They call them 'Taklamakan Gold' and want to teach us proper storage methods. My parents are excited but worried. "If we work hard, perhaps foreigners will love our melons," my mom says.

At dinner, we eat bread, melons, and lamb, discussing the future. I want to contribute, but I'm afraid. Grandpa is angry. "Our family has grown melons for generations," he says. "We don't need computers to teach us about water or to sell our name to strangers."

A woman named Li Wei from Shanghai visits our farm. Grandpa and I show her how we plant melons while she takes pictures with her tablet. I show her my favorite melon. Perhaps the train and the company will help my family, and my children might remain on the farm to grow melons.

Li Wei tells me about Shanghai's vast high-rise buildings. I've never left Xinjiang but would like to see new places. She promises to write me postcards from other countries and explains the boxes that keep melons fresh. Grandpa gives her tea but doesn't smile much.

I hand Li Wei a small melon. "This is the sweetest melon," she says, and I feel proud. "We must send them quickly before they spoil. The old camels needed months, but our train only needs two days. This is how 'Taklamakan Gold' stays fresh and sweet."

One night, a large sandstorm arrives. The wind roars and the sky turns brown. The electricity goes out, stopping our water pumps. Grandpa remains calm. He takes an antique lamp outside, and Li Wei and I follow. He uses traditional methods to redirect water to the grape vines, learned from his elders. After the storm, we repair the pipes and tidy the fields. I understand that both traditional and modern approaches are needed.

During the outage, I sit outside with Wei under the stars. She talks about city life; I talk about the desert. We become fast friends. Grandpa calls out, "The sensors aren't working. The satellite is useless. This," he points to the ground, "is the map we need."

Li Wei incorporates my family's ideas into her project report. "We need both technology and tradition," she says. The company agrees we can use both methods. Li Wei tells Grandpa he is brilliant.

Grandma prepares tea and talks with Li Wei about our old melon seeds. "These seeds remember the desert wind," she explains. Li Wei promises to honor our tradition. Grandpa shows her where the sand is soft. "The morning water stays longer there," he says. "My grandfather's grandfather found it."

My parents are pleased to see everyone working together. Nur and I discuss learning English to communicate with foreigners who buy our melons. Li Wei says, "Trains, roads, or products are less precious than our knowledge. We must not forget our old ways."

At harvest season, neighbors help us. There are songs and laughter, and the sweet-smelling melons are distributed to everyone. "This must be the best melon!" they say. We build a new cold-storage warehouse. The "Taklamakan Gold" boxes are printed with Grandpa's picture. I take a photo with my family and Li Wei in front of the boxes, wanting to remember this day. When the new system begins, Li Wei, Grandpa, and I choose melons and load them into a cold truck. At the border, we see giant cranes and containers—so different from our farm. Our melon boxes sit on a huge train, each with a particular number. I wave goodbye, hoping they're delivered safely and bring joy. I wonder if someone far away will taste our desert melon and remember our desert.

As the train begins to move, Grandpa hands the driver a small melon—a tradition for saying goodbye that has gone on for generations. The driver smiles. The train departs like a caravan from years ago, carrying our melons, our hopes, and our love for the land. That evening, I lie in bed listening to the wind, feeling proud and thrilled. Changes are underway, but our family's stories remain with us. I dream of visiting other lands, yet feel deeply proud to be from mine. Standing with Grandpa and Li Wei, we feel the desert wind. We hear the camel bells, still there, now blended with the sound of the train. Our story has changed.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Yeung Fan Chun, Carlos – 11

A long time ago, in a faraway place, there was a road called the Silk Road. The Silk Road was not just a normal road. It was super long and went through many countries, connecting cities and villages from China to places far away. People traveled on it to trade things and to share interesting stories.

Every morning, my village felt very busy and happy because everyone wondered what would happen that day. I liked playing with my friends near the river. We pretended to be explorers and merchants. We traded pebbles and flowers, acting like they were real silk and spices. The old people sat under the big willow tree. They talked about the times when they dreamed about traveling far away, too.

I live in a small village in China. We really loved listening to stories about brave people who went on adventures on the Silk Road. When someone told a story, everyone came together. The village leader always told us about a famous man called Zhang Qian. He was very brave and traveled very far to make new friends and trade for new things. We all wished we could be like him.

Before any trip, everyone gathered in the village square to make gifts—painted fans, small jade animals, and dried tea leaves. Children like me helped tie everything together and sang songs for good luck. All travelers wore red strings on their wrists for safe return. As we left, the whole village waved goodbye. One day, someone found a piece of silk so soft that our village leader said it came from faraway Asia. This inspired us all to trade and travel like Zhang Qian.

One day we began our journey, traveling for many days through green valleys and rocky hills. At night, we slept under the stars and told stories by the fire, hearing other travelers' laughter and music—and sometimes wild animals in the dark, which made me scared and excited. We brought silk and spices to trade, wondering what friends we'd meet. One day, we met Xiao Ming, a skilled weaver who made cloth with pictures of heroes and villains. We loved his work and asked him to teach us.

Xiao Ming showed us how to dye cloth with bright colors. He taught us to make patterns that told stories about our families. He said zigzag lines meant rivers and circles meant the sun and moon. We made new patterns with our old ones and what we learned from him. We laughed a lot and told stories. The days felt short because we were happy. I learned that weaving is not just about making things. It is about friendship and sharing stories, just like the Silk Road.

After some time, the land changed a lot. We saw big sand dunes and felt the desert was super hot. We learned to walk in the morning or evening and rest in the shade when it was too hot. Sometimes, we found oases with palm trees and sweet water. At the oases, we met traders from India and Persia. They told us stories about their homes and their dreams. It was cool to hear about places so different from my village.

We kept traveling, crossing deserts and shiny rivers. We met a smart woman named Xiao Mei who liked learning new things. She showed us how to find our way at night. We talked with her for a long time and shared stories from our homes. I learned that not only things like silk and spices travel on the Silk Road. Ideas and knowledge can travel too, and that brings people together.

Because Xiao Mei was so smart, we wanted to remember everything. So, at night, we wrote in our journals about what we saw and learned. Our journals became very special to us. Sometimes, the trip was hard. One day, we crossed a mountain and a big storm came. The rain was heavy, and the wind was strong. We were scared. We almost went home, but we remembered what Xiao Mei had taught us.

When the weather was bad or we felt tired, we played games. We made up riddles and tried to solve them. The children sat with the old people, who told us stories about secret cities and magical animals on the Silk Road. These stories made us feel brave and hopeful. We built shelters with wood and leather and waited for the storm to end. We shared our food and waited together. When the storm was gone, I saw that being friends helped us be brave.

When the villagers and I returned, we brought goods, stories, music, recipes, and dances learned from friends across the Silk Road. We taught everyone to cook sweet pastries and shared new songs with the children. We told of our adventures, the wise weavers we met, and the importance of sharing. The village became a welcoming place for many traditions, and the spirit of the Silk Road lived on in daily life.

Over time, the villagers' stories grew richer with each retelling. Some children imagined they saw dragons flying above the mountains or hidden treasures buried beneath the desert sands. Others dreamed of setting out on their own journeys one day. The Silk Road remained alive in their hearts, a thread connecting them to the world and to each other. As the villagers grew older, they became storytellers and shared their Silk Road adventures with children, just as the village head had done for them. In this way, the stories of the Silk Road inspired new

generations, reminding everyone that friendship, learning, and bravery can endure over time, just as the magical road does.

Even now, travelers who pass through the village can hear laughter and music echoing through the streets. The Silk Road may have changed over the years, but the lessons of friendship, courage, building trust, and curiosity remain. This is how the New Tales of the China Silk Road begin.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Yi, Hou Lok Zoe – 11

In ancient China, the city of Chang'an stood tall. Its towers swayed gently in the breeze, making the banners flutter. Emperor Zhao Lie looked out to the west, lost in thought.

Zhao Lie was not thinking about mountains or deserts. He imagined cooler, greener places with lively cities, fast horses carrying messages, and friends waiting for him. So, he chose a brave and smart man named Li Ming to travel to this faraway land.

Li Ming felt both excited and scared. He knew the journey would be hard. One morning, he and other students left Chang'an with a caravan of a hundred camels loaded with soft, beautiful silk.

At first, their journey went well. But soon, they reached a huge desert. The sun burned their feet, and sand scraped their skin. At night, strong winds brought sandstorms. They had little water and food.

Many travelers grew tired and worried. Chen Yu fell into the sand and cried. “I can’t go any farther! Let’s go home!” he yelled. Li Ming stayed calm. “This silk is for friends,” he said, showing it in the moonlight. The fibers sparkled as if touched by magic. “We walk to make friends,” Li Ming said.

Soon, they heard bells. Camels arrived, carrying people from the West. These travelers admired the silk, laughed, shared food, and danced around a small fire. They spoke different languages, but their laughter felt friendly and familiar.

Feeling renewed, they crossed the desert, climbed snowy mountains, and visited busy markets in small towns. They saw goats in green fields and animal paintings on cave walls. They tasted new fruits and shared ideas about farming and metalwork. Some planted trees, others left their marks on walls. They knew they were creating a new path.

The Silk Road stretched like a ribbon from Chang’an to Luoyang. Caravans traveled with horses, jewels, and spices. In Chang’an, the sound of weaving and spinning silk was always present. At Hangu Pass, tall walls stood over winding paths. Maybe you can still hear the footsteps there.

Many years later, in the Tang Dynasty, the Silk Road was busy and full of life. Four travelers went west: the wise monk Yuan Zheng, the clever Sun Wukong, the hungry pig Tao Cong, and the quiet Wu Ping. This time, they carried not silk, but religion, riding on a white dragon horse.

They faced many challenges. The Flaming Mountains were very hot, but Sun Wukong used magic fans to cool them. When they needed to cross a dangerous river, Wu Ping led the way. A king invited them to rest, but they politely said no and kept going.

On their journey, they met many people. Some had tanned skin and rough hands from farming. Others had bright eyes and loved to talk and trade. Barefoot children teased Sun Wukong’s tail, while their grandparents shared stories of past travels.

Tao Cong grew fond of the villagers and happily accepted their food. “I smell bread and melons,” he shouted with joy, and the villagers were glad to share. Sun Wukong quickly picked up new languages and understood people’s gestures and smiles. Yuan Zheng talked with monks, teachers, and wise people about kindness, peace, and helping others.

Over time, many people faced problems. When rivers in the village dried up, Wu Ping helped dig wells. During floods, Sun Wukong made village walls stronger. In places with poor soil, Tao Cong offered comfort, even if it was just a sigh. Where robbers threatened, Sun Wukong kept watch at night. They received gifts of fruit, bread, and blankets as thanks. Finally, they reached India to find religious texts, then started their journey home. People along the way recognized them and waved. The road, now filled with silk, knowledge, kindness, and trust, left a lasting mark. Western cities grew because of Silk Road adventures. Years went by, and trains and ships replaced camels, but the spirit of the Silk Road stayed. Today, Chinatowns in the West are full of color, with red lanterns hanging from street lamps.

Chinese vendors sell noodles, dumplings, and tea. During Chinese New Year, people wear bright costumes, red shirts, and silk dragon robes. Children dress up as rabbits or tigers. Fireworks light up the sky, drums beat, and dragons dance. Friendships are made. Chinese technology is known around the world. Electric cars, quiet buses, and smart computers are built. Chinese phones, AI, and other inventions help doctors, teachers, and workers. AI makes translation easier and helps people talk to each other. Trains link China and Europe, carrying goods and dreams. Ships move food, equipment, and gifts. Companies from different countries work together on science and medicine. They also develop green technology and explore space. People and students travel and make new friends. Ideas and discoveries move along, just like the Silk Road.

Looking back, the Silk Road is more than a memory. It is a living thread that still connects people and nations. Its spirit is present in every cultural exchange and every time people share, learn, and grow together. The journey that started in ancient Chang'an now reaches far beyond deserts and mountains, linking classrooms, labs, cities, and hearts around the world. The Silk Road's legacy encourages us to keep building friendships and discovering new things, sharing not just silk and spices, but also ideas, kindness, and hope for the future.

Invisible Shadow

W F Joseph Lee Primary School, Kong, Jane – 10

In the bustling city of Urumqi lived a merchant named Li Wei, who traded the finest handmade carpets along the silk road—every stitch on the tapestries brought the dragons and phoenixes to life.

Li Wei had a black cat named Shadow. With sleek fur glistening in the sunlight and eyes the color of raw turquoise, Shadow was no ordinary cat. He had a secret that only Li Wei and himself knew about—invisibility. When Shadow turned invisible, anything he touched would disappear along with him.

One sunny morning, Li Wei ringed his camels together and whistled for Shadow cheerfully, “The snow has melted on the Alps. It’s time to trade our carpets on the Silk Road, Shadow. We’re going to the city of Chang’an!”

Shadow leapt silently onto the topmost pile of the carpets, heaped and tied safely to the camels’ backs. He stretched lazily, but his blue eyes glowed with excitement as they began their long journey to Chang’an—the dazzling

capital of lights, where the aroma of lamb skewers warmed weary travellers, awaiting to fill their pockets as well as their stomachs.

They travelled through the busy streets, passing lane after lane. By afternoon, their caravan had reached the city gates. Ahead lay their greatest challenge—crossing the Gobi Desert. Legend goes that an ancient prince, consumed by greed, lost his way in the rough terrain in search of foreign gold. In the rage of his failure, he turned into a demon, trapped forever in the barren land. Yet, the tale also warned that one day, the demons might break free. From time to time, there were rumours of merchants vanishing mysteriously along this part of the Silk Road. It terrified most travellers, but Shadow and Li Wei were unafraid because they had a secret plan. So, they ventured into this endless desert, leaving the vibrancy and comfort of Urumqi behind them.

They spent days in the scorching desert, passing through mountains of sand. Shadow spent most of his time napping on the carpets, except for the occasional twitch of his tail, brushing against Li Wei from time to time, reminding his owner that he was not alone. Sometimes, Li Wei would point out exotic plants and the ghost of a desert fox to Shadow, whose unwavering stare promised that he could understand every word Li Wei shared. The journey seemed almost pleasant, when unbeknownst to them, a team of bandits were tracking the pair. Dangerously outnumbered and temptingly loaded.

Every night, the bandits' greedy eyes fixed themselves on the precious carpets, behind the mounds of sand that hid the curve of their blades, and the savage plans in their hearts. They waited for night to come, for the darkness to swallow their shadows and take the pair by surprise. When the moon sunk into the clouds, they finally decided that it would be their chance.

In the silence, under the blanket of stars, Shadow and Li Wei set up their tents in the desert. Just when they were settling in, the bandits struck. They sprang out from behind the hillocks with horrific war cries. Their silver swords gleamed cold and cruel as they closed in on Li Wei.

Shadow hissed, fur bristling and hackles raised. The pupils of his eyes narrowed and focused onto the figure that had placed itself between him and the bandits—Li Wei, his lips white with determination as he threw his arms in front of the carpets. Shadow crouched low, sheathing his claws and reading the signal. It was his turn in their plan.

He slinked to the top of the carpets, hiding his every move behind Li Wei. When he felt the tightening of Li Wei's hands on the camel's reins, he let out a bloodcurdling yowl, knocking over a small box hidden in at the side of the camels, and sent a shower of shattered jewels into the air. Then, Li Wei, the carpets, and the camels disappeared into thin air.

The bandits froze to the spot, the legend of the demons flashing through their minds.

"D-d-do you think th-the legends are r-r-r-real?" One of the bandits stammered. Hearing this, all the bandits fled in terror, dropping their loot as they ran for their lives.

Shadow waited until the screams of the bandits finally died away. Then, he felt Li Wei's reassuring hand smoothing his ruffled fur. Shadow purred contentedly and released his magical grip on the carpets. The carpets reappeared safely on the camels' backs. Li Wei was so relieved that he ran over to Shadow and scooped him up in his arms, giving him a big hug.

"Clever Shadow! I knew I could count on you!" Shadow rubbed his head under Li Wei's chin in delight, feeling proud for saving both his master and the carpets.

As dawn came, Li Wei and Shadow set off again. Even though the encounter with the bandits was over, they knew that there would still be more challenges out there on the silk road waiting for them. For the silk road was not just a woven road of trades or silk. Beneath the golden sand, the seed of unsatiable greed spilled a river of blood. Regardless, they hopped onto the camels back continuing their journey to Chang'an into another dawn.

Kong's Adventure

W F Joseph Lee Primary School, Lee, Chloe – 10

There was once an adventurous man named Kong. He was tall, with black, beady eyes, filled with dreams to fulfill. Born into a family of royal silk weavers, he wore hand-embroidered cloaks famed and fawned over by generations of hungry buyers.

One day, Kong was ordered to venture across the Silk Road and deliver his silks to the Emperor of the West. Kong set off immediately, with nothing more than a piece of homemade naan and a lucky charm in his pocket. He'd bundled up the silk tightly, for what he carried wasn't just fabric. It was his family's blood and fortune.

The first day on the Silk Road was not bad at all. In fact, he liked the idea of going someplace new. The second day, however, was agonizing. He trudged through golden sand dunes, wishing for an end in the endless desert. On

the third night, the bandits came. Not with a thunderous charge, but with the soft scuffle of boots on the shifting sea of sand.

Kong ran. Not for his life, but for fear of the silk falling into the wrong hands. His father had warned him of a secret message sewn into the seams of the glimmering cloth. But Kong cared little for it. He knew that the silks were special because each thread was stitched with pain, sweat and tears—the perseverance of his parents.

And so Kong plunged into the darkness. The silks threatened to slip from his hands as he scrambled through the wild land. Wilder thoughts whirled in his mind—the wrath of the Emperor, the safety of his family and the ending of a century's legacy, all wrecked in his hands—

—Kong stumbled and fell, cutting his face as a bandit slammed his head into the shards of obsidian rocks. The bandits forced Kong up by his hair, their eyes glittering coldly in the moonlight.

“Please! I have a family! I will do anything you ask of me if you spare me from dishonoring their name!”

Heedlessly, the bandits kicked him into the dust, binding his arms behind him. Just as they reached for the silks, a bone-chilling whistle cut through the air. A woman with scarred hands and midnight eyes stepped forward. The bandits fell back, muttering in the shadows.

Kong stared at her, half afraid and half in awe. She wore an ashy dress with a scarlet collar that rippled across her collar bones. Beneath it gleamed a silver necklace. The same glow as the hilt of the dagger strapped to her side. Kong felt its thin blade nip into his neck.

“Tell me,” she mused, “You march through our lands with no offerings. You disrupt our plans with no remorse. What kind of honor do you have, and how much more is your honor worth than the treasure you hold?”

Kong's heart hammered in his chest, “I promise you, a thousand threads in exchange for these simple silks.”

There was a clean snap of thread in the dead silence. Kong stared at his freed hands in disbelief, until he met the steely eyes of the bandit leader.

“Keep your word, weaver, and I shall keep mine.”

For weeks, Kong travelled with her ragged crew. Each day, Kong was ordered to weave raw gems into rolls of priceless cloth, proving his expertise. As the sun beat on, his eyes never strayed from his art, but his ears learnt the name of the bandit leader—Vanessa—and with her, the language of the desert.

As she mapped out different patterns on his silks, she taught him the whisper of a coming storm, the hidden scent of the distant sand dunes, and the slithering of the hillock snakes. Then a tense respect, woven like silk, grew between them.

One starry night, Kong and Vanessa sat by the fireplace sharing the last of his naan. Kong told Vanessa of the silk's secret. Vanessa stared into the flames of the bonfire, her eyes misting.

“Knowledge and wisdom is a burden heavier than all,” she murmured, “I was once as gifted as you, but my confidence swelled beyond pride and it broke me.”

For a moment, Kong wondered if the unforgiving desert could hold a friendship as wistful as theirs. Alas, Kong could not find the words he needed and Vanessa had turned away. All that was left in the dying embers was Kong's silent offering—his lucky charm tied to Vanessa's dagger.

One day, while Vanessa and Kong approached the borders of an ancient city, masked soldiers cornered them in a narrow canyon, claiming to be in search of the Emperor's war map. Kong expected betrayal. Instead, Vanessa pulled him towards a cavity of a cave.

"Go!" she urged him, "Your secret is safe with me."

He caught at her sleeves as the desert winds picked up into a deadly swirl, willing her to leave with him, but she shoved him away ferociously.

"The desert swallows lies but stories have roots. Go and find your tree, Kong." With that, she disappeared into the raging sandstorm.

Kong fled, never daring to turn or face the war cries of the bandits. Tears streamed down his face as he prayed for the dunes to be reshaped by the winds, and with it the trail of the bandits. To keep the silks safe. To keep Vanessa safe.

Years later, a package arrived at his store. Inside was a length of beautiful cloth, a blend of Chinese and Western threads Kong didn't know. Dancing warriors and green sandbars were etched in silver across the folds. The silvery glint he would recognise anywhere.

"Vanessa," He breathed. There was no name on the package, only a lucky charm with the words "*Zhi yin*" carved at the back.

Kong smiled wistfully. There was too much between him and Vanessa. More than the fragile trust passed between them under that night sky. But he was content with the uncut cloth. For it was their story, woven, and it made Kong feel enough.

The Gobi Rose Legacy

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Cheng, Sing Yan – 12

Riko awoke. The vibrant smells of a market—cumin, dust, sweat—vanished, replaced by the sterile air of the space colony. On her ceiling screen, scarred Earth hung silent.

Since her grandmother's death, these Silk Road dreams had intensified, a persistent pull to a lost world. While sorting the last of her grandmother's belongings, Riko found a seam in the wall. A hidden compartment slid open.

Inside, wrapped in jasmine-scented cloth, was a book of real paper. *Earth-Keeping: A History of the Silk Road*. Her grandmother had been a Conservation Archivist. With trembling hands, Riko opened it. Maps, sketches, lists of spices. Then, she froze. A pressed crimson flower was taped to a page headed "*The Gobi Desert Rose*." It was the flower from her dream last night.

This was no coincidence. Her grandmother was sending her a map.

She raced downstairs to tell her mother everything. But as she hurried down, her ankle twisted painfully. Scrambling back, she heard violent screams from the living room.

"She's a disappointment! Just disown her already! We never should have let her near her brain-dead grandma!" her father shouted, slurred.

"We are *not* disowning her!" her mother retorted, her voice bruised.

Riko, frozen on the steps, had heard everything. Tears streaming, she limped back to her room, slammed the door, and stomped in frustration. The tile beneath her foot cracked, revealing a page of Silk Road documents and a bottle of old spice. She tucked the paper away as midnight crept in.

The next day at school, her eyes red, she confided in her friend Tia, who loved mysteries. Tia's eyes lit up at the mention of the Silk Road.

After school, they researched in the library. An old man overheard them. "Why the interest in the Silk Road?" he asked.

"My grandmother's last treasure was tied to it," Riko said.

The man's face darkened. He introduced himself as Fred, a former colleague of her grandmother, now a space ferryman.

That night, Riko returned home to find the house in ruins. A vase shattered against the wall beside her. Staring at the wreck of her room, her boiling resentment unleashed.

"Why can't you be normal?" she screamed at her drunk father.

She packed her things and left, moving in with Tia, who welcomed her with open arms.

That night, Riko dreamt of the Silk Road again. A shadowy figure beckoned her into an alley, where she saw a terrifying sight: her grandmother's lifeless form. The figure transformed into the driver from the accident. *Beep! Beep!*

Riko awoke, shaking. Tia comforted her. Since it was Saturday, they went to find Fred, who lived by a dumpster. Riko had salvaged her grandmother's book and the hidden page.

They explained their quest. To their surprise, Fred produced an old data disk. A recorded voice filled the space—her grandmother's. It spoke of her Silk Road discoveries and a terrible truth about why Earth was sealed, a government secret.

"We need to learn more," Riko insisted, asking Fred to take them to a lunar archive. Reluctantly, he agreed to prepare his ferry. Unseen, two strangers overheard their plans.

Later, adrift in a sea of stars, another ship appeared behind them. "The government patrol!" Fred hissed. "Keep down!"

A gunshot rang out, piercing the hull. "Hope you know how to use these," Fred said, handing them pistols. Riko fired. A scream echoed from the other ship. Tia loaded a cannon with a scrap-metal boulder and fired.

Whoosh! Boom! The patrol ship reeled and retreated. They had avoided death, for now.

The lunar archive was a tomb of silent data, bathed in Earth's pale light. At a dead terminal, Riko played the final log. Her grandmother's voice crackled into the stillness.

"They lied. The Silk Road wasn't sealed by sandstorms. The government's relentless subsurface mining fractured the desert basins. They buried the truth. You must expose this."

The recording died. Shadows moved. Two enforcers seized Fred. "The archive. And the girl."

"Run!" Fred shouted, struggling.

Tia acted without hesitation. She blew a handful of ancient spice into an agent's face—the very spice from Riko's broken floor. He stumbled back, choking on the ghosts of cinnamon and forgotten earth.

Hand in hand, Riko and Tia burst into a lunar storage yard. A shuttle gleamed ahead under the stars. Their hope shattered as soldiers emerged, weapons raised. A cold-eyed officer stood with Fred in a chokehold.

"Your grandmother's quest ends here," he said. "Stay silent, and the old man lives. Speak, and you all vanish."

Riko's eyes darted from the officer's smug face to Fred's defiant gaze, to Tia trembling beside her. She saw the Gobi rose in her mind—a speck of crimson truth in a sterile universe, a legacy passed hand to hand. She would not let it be erased like her home, like her history.

"For my grandmother!" Riko screamed. With all her strength, she hurled the precious book—the maps, the pressed flower—high over the soldiers' heads.

As they flinched, Fred head-butted the officer and broke free, before being wrestled back to the ground. "GO, NOW!"

Riko and Tia sprinted. A shot rang out. White-hot pain pierced Riko's side. She crumpled onto the cold regolith, warmth spreading beneath her.

Tia slid to her knees, clutching the book to her chest.

"Tell the story," Riko whispered, her breath fogging in the thin air. She pressed the hidden Silk Road page into Tia's hand. Her voice was the last echo of the Road. "For her. For all of it."

With a last, shuddering breath, Riko's vision filled not with soldiers or the sterile moon, but with the vibrant market of her dreams—the smell of cumin and dust, her grandmother's smiling face reaching out.

Tia nodded, a promise etched in her tears. She fled to the shuttle.

As engines roared to life, the vessel ascended—a tiny, brave spark carrying its secret of roses and rebellion into the vast and waiting dark.

The Truer Path

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Choi, Hei Yuet – 10

In the throne room of Kashgar, a vital oasis kingdom on the Silk Road, Princess Yurai stood ashamed before her mother, the Queen. The Queen's expression was one of cold, final disdain. All eyes were upon Yurai as her mother announced her banishment.

This was the consequence of her reckless tongue. Her public insult to the Ambassador of Khotan—mocking their traditions as "the customs of simple sheep—herders"—had shattered a vital alliance. For Kashgar, which thrives on the trade between East and West, peace with its powerful neighbour, Khotan, is essential. Yurai's words had threatened war.

A shocked gasp echoed through the court. Yurai's own eyes widened in disbelief. She had been raised in a court where power was everything, but she had never imagined her own mother would discard her so completely. The severity in the Queen's voice left no room for argument.

Yurai was sent to her chambers to pack. She took only simple dresses and a handful of gems—the currency for a journey, not the jewels of a princess. Forced from the palace, she found her loyal servants lined up at the kingdom's gates, offering whispered prayers and small, meaningful gifts.

The sun was hidden behind a harsh winter sky as she rode into the barren landscape. A quiet, burning resolve solidified within her. She whispered a promise to herself: they would see who she truly was, not just a rebellious girl.

She turned her gaze east, towards the treacherous paths of the Silk Road that led to Khotan. Her banishment was not an end; it was a beginning. She would travel to the very kingdom she had offended, learn its ways, and earn its respect. She was beginning her journey of revenge, friendship, and, most importantly, a chance to forge her own freedom.

The avalanche had been nature's blunt lesson. For days after, Yurai travelled in wary silence, until the outpost appeared—a more cunning test.

The merchant's eyes, sharp as a hawk's, found Yurai the moment she led Orb into the dusty outpost. "A fine animal," he said, blocking her path. "Too fine for these trails. Trade her. I offer donkeys, supplies, safety."

Yurai's old pride flared. *Safety from you*, she almost spat. But she remembered the avalanche—a force she couldn't insult into submission. This man was the same. She met his gaze, her voice controlled. "The mare is not for trade. Sell me grain and directions to Khotan. Name your price."

His smile turned venomous. "The price is my offer, girl. Or you walk." He stepped closer.

"Master Bo." A young woman's voice was calm behind him. Elisa stood with a water bucket, her mountain-worn clothes patched but sturdy. She looked only at Yurai. "The west-pass guard is looking for you, Bo. Something about a missing tax seal."

Bo's confidence faltered. He cursed, shot a glare at Elisa, and spat out a ridiculous price for the supplies. Yurai paid with a small sapphire, her last act as a princess with gems to burn.

As he stalked away, Yurai turned to Elisa. "Why help me?"

Elisa shrugged. "He preys on the lost. You are not from a caravan, yet you go to Khotan. That is a story I want to hear." Her eyes were intelligent, appraising.

"A storm is closing the high pass tonight. You will not find the path alone."

"And you know it?"

"I live here. My business is knowing what others do not." Elisa glanced at the darkening sky. "Ride with me to the next ridge. In return, you tell me why a noble-born rider seeks Khotan alone."

It was not a request, but a proposal. Yurai saw no pity in Elisa's face, only curious calculation. Here was the first real choice of her exile: trust her pride, or trust a stranger's knowledge.

"Very well," Yurai said. She offered a hand up.

Elisa mounted behind her with ease. As they left the outpost, the world narrowed to the winding trail and the gathering wind.

"The main path here is a bandit's lure," Elisa said, pointing to a deceptive fork. "The real way is hidden."

"How do you know?"

"My brother took the wrong path," Elisa said flatly. "I guide others so they do not."

The truth of the Silk Road settled over her like dust—its dangers were not just in nature, but in the false choices of the proud. She had just traded a gem for her first true necessity: a guide who knew the difference.

Before the gates of Khotan, Captain Varik and his Kashgar guards blocked Yurai's path. "The Queen commands your return," he stated.

Yurai's old pride surged, but Elisa's steady silence grounded her. She remembered the avalanche, the hidden paths—lessons in humility. "I am not returning," Yurai replied calmly. "I enter Khotan as a traveller, not a princess."

Varik signalled his guards forward.

Suddenly, the city gates opened. The Khotanese gate captain stepped out, her guard beside her. "No foreign arms on our soil," she declared, then eyed Yurai. "You are the one who mocked our traditions."

Yurai dismounted and bowed her head slightly. "I spoke from pride. I come to learn, and to offer service in apology."

The captain looked to Elisa. "You vouch for her?"

"She has learned the true path from the royal road," Elisa said simply.

A pause. Then the captain nodded. "Enter. But you earn your place by deeds, not words."

Varik scowled. "The Queen will hear of this."

"Tell her," Yurai said, meeting his gaze, "her daughter seeks respect, not revenge."

The Kashgar guards withdrew into the gathering dark.

Elisa fell in beside Yurai as they passed through the gates. "Not the welcome you imagined?"

"No," Yurai said, gazing into the lantern-lit city, its air thick with incense and distant song. "But it is the one I earned."

Together, they walked forward—not as princess and guide, but as travellers choosing the truer path.

A Thousand Golden Threads

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Ho, Ka Yao Kiyo – 11

Manon watched over her mother's shop on a bustling Beijing street. Bolts of silk—crimson, jade, and saffron—glowed in the afternoon sun, each one a testament to a tradition her mother's worn, skilled hands poured into every thread. But as Manon folded a length of cobalt blue, her mind was not on the familiar patterns. It was wandering the dusty, sun-baked streets of Rome, tracing the shadows of ancient ruins she knew only from whispered tales.

"We cannot afford such fancies, Manon." Her mother's voice, gentle yet firm, had crushed that dream a dozen times. The sorrow in it was a physical ache. Manon understood her duty, yet the longing to leave, to *see*, was a constant, restless flutter in her chest.

One afternoon, a trader from the West entered, his eyes alight with a keen appreciation. He lingered over her mother's finest piece—a tapestry woven with a thousand golden threads. When he named his price, it was a small fortune.

Manon's heart stuttered. This was not merely a sale; it was a key, glinting with possibility. In that charged silence, she saw it all: the weight of her mother's life, and the uncharted path of her own. This was passage on a west-bound caravan. This was the taste of strange spices and the sight of mountain passes. This was the dust of the Roman Forum on her shoes. This could be the beginning of everything.

The weight of the trader's coins felt like a secret in Manon's palm. That night, she showed them to her mother under the flickering lamp light.

"Passage on a west-bound caravan," Manon whispered, her voice trembling with a mix of fear and exhilaration. "I can go to Samarkand. I can secure better prices for our silk than any trader here. Let me prove our silk's true worth."

Her mother's face was a landscape of conflict—pride warring with fear. Finally, she nodded, a single tear tracing the lines by her eye. "Do not just trade silk," she said, her voice thick. "Trade our name. Earn us a reputation that will outlive us both."

Manon's goal was no longer a vague dream. It was a mission: to earn the "Seal of Samarkand", a mark of quality from the city's most powerful guild that would make their family's silk legendary.

The *desert* was a brutal teacher. The sandstorm that hit wasn't just an obstacle; it was a predator. It stole her water skin and buried her compass. For two days, she wandered, parched and delirious, the coins in her pouch feeling like worthless metal. She was saved not by luck, but by her own wits, spotting a specific rock formation her mother had once described.

When she finally stumbled into Samarkand, it wasn't as a confident trader, but as a desperate, dusty girl. The guild master, a man with eyes like chips of flint, laughed at her. "A child, with silk from a no-name Beijing shop? The Seal is not for you."

This was the real test. Defeated, she met Amina, a young translator whose own family had fallen from grace. "The guild master values stories," Amina explained. "Not just quality. He wants to know *why* your silk matters."

Together, they devised a new strategy. Manon didn't just show her silk; she unfolded it before the guild master, her voice growing strong as she spoke of her mother's hands, the thousand golden threads, the dream woven into every inch. She wasn't just selling fabric; she was selling a legacy.

The guild master was silent for a long time. "The quality is... exceptional," he admitted. "But the story is better. There is a Roman Senator in the city. He seeks a gift of unparalleled beauty for the Empress. If you can secure *that* trade, you will have your Seal."

A new, terrifying goal was set. The Roman Senator was surrounded by shrewd guards and seasoned competitors. To even get an audience, Manon and Amina had to use all their cunning, bribing a guard with the last of Manon's dates to get a moment of his time.

As Manon stood before the Senator, her heart hammered, not with fear, but with purpose. She had not just travelled the Silk Road; she had survived it. And she was ready to prove her worth.

Standing before the Roman Senator, Manon felt the weight of every mile she had travelled—not in her bones, but in her voice. She did not merely present the silk; she let it fall open like a revealed secret, its golden threads catching the lamplight.

"This is not just silk," she said, her voice clear and steady. "It is my mother's life, woven with a thousand prayers. It survived the desert so it could reach you."

The Senator, a man accustomed to flattery and barter, grew still. He touched the fabric not as a buyer, but as a witness. "You speak of its journey," he said. "And now it has found mine."

In the guild hall's solemn silence, the master presented the Seal of Samarkand. The disc was heavy, its surface etched with a lotus encircling a star—a mark of permanence. He pressed it into her palm, its cool metal a shock against her skin. "You did not just bring silk," he said, his flinty gaze now holding respect. "You brought a story worth more than gold. Your family's name is now part of ours."

Outside, under a sky streaked with twilight, Manon clasped Amina's hands. The Seal's weight in her pouch felt like a promise kept—to her mother, and to herself.

"We did it," she whispered. Amina's smile was the final reward, more brilliant than any seal. They had not just traded silk; they had woven a new story together, one of resilience and unbroken faith.

She thought of her mother's shop, the bolts of silk glowing in the Beijing sun. They were no longer just lengths of fabric. They were beginnings.

The Price of Sand

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Lau, Chloe Kate – 12

The physician's words hung in the air of their small, stone house, as unattainable as the stars. A cure existed. Diana's fingers, stained from grinding cheap herbs, clenched around the meagre coins in her pocket. They were not enough. Since her mother's death, her father was all she had. Now, each day was a countdown, the chill of the house deepening with his ragged breathing.

Trudging home through the dusty forum, a parchment poster snagged her gaze. "WANTED," it read. "Brave souls to trade sparkling Roman glass to Chang'an. Reward: 10,000 denarii." Her heart slammed against her ribs. This was the lifeline. Then she saw the words beneath: "The Silk Road". The very name was a whisper of peril.

She rushed home. 'No, you can't. The world is too dangerous for a girl,' her father pleaded, his voice frail. His fear was a cage. If she went, she could die. But if she stayed, she would certainly lose him.

That night, she made her choice. She packed a bag with bread, dried meat, and her most precious possession: a vase of brilliant Roman glass. After asking her neighbour to care for her father, she kissed his sleeping cheek and left.

The sun was a merciless hammer. Before her stretched the Taklamakan, the "Sea of Death." Its dunes rolled like golden waves. The air was so dry it stole the moisture from her lips. After two days, her water skin was dangerously light. She saw the bleached bones of a camel half-buried in the dust, and a true, cold fear gripped her. *I cannot do this.* But then she saw a vision of her father's smile. Gritting her teeth, she forced herself on.

On the third day, she saw a figure slumped against a dune—a boy, his lips parched and cracked. Without thought, Diana stumbled to him and offered a few precious sips of her water. He said his name was Kavi. His guide had abandoned him, taking the supplies.

"My father is sick," Diana explained, her voice rough. "This glass is his only hope." She unwrapped the vase, letting the sun catch its deep blue hue.

Kavi's eyes widened. "I have nothing to trade, but I know the stars. I can navigate. Let me help you."

Their partnership was born of necessity. Kavi guided them by night; Diana shared her food and fierce determination.

Weeks later, they reached the Tianshan Mountains. The desert's furnace was replaced by a needle-sharp cold. On an icy path, Diana's foot slipped. She fell, a sharp crack echoing as blinding pain shot through her finger. It was bent at a sickening angle.

Kavi's face was pale, but his hands were steady. "We have to set it." Using a stick and cloth from his tunic, he splinted the broken finger. The pain was intense, but Diana bit her lip until it bled.

One night, huddled in a cave, Kavi pointed to the brightest star. "My brother taught me that," he said, his voice soft. "He was a soldier. He didn't come back." Diana understood. They were both fighting for a future stolen from someone else.

After a gruelling journey, the walls of Chang'an finally appeared. Their relief was short-lived. The trader, a man with hard eyes, examined the flawless vase.

"A fine piece," he admitted. "But I can offer only 2,000 denarii."

Diana's heart plummeted. It was not enough. But the Diana who had crossed the desert felt a fiery anger rise. She stood tall, her voice steady.

"Sir, this glass is priceless. I was promised 10,000. If you do not honour our agreement, I will take it to the Imperial court. I am sure they will appreciate its beauty... and question the word of a merchant who cheats a girl who has crossed the Sea of Death."

She held his gaze, her splinted finger resting on the vase. The trader was taken aback. He looked from her determined face to the glass, and with a sigh of frustration and respect, pushed the full sack across the table.

"You have your father's spirit, girl," he grumbled.

The heavy sack felt like more than payment; it felt like justice. She had done it. Not with magic, but with her own courage, wit, and the strength she never knew she had.

The journey back was a different kind of trial. When she and Kavi finally reached the fork where their paths would diverge, no lengthy farewell was needed. He simply pressed a smooth desert stone into her palm—a navigator's token. She clasped his hand, her splinted finger a reminder of all they'd endured. Then she turned towards home, the weight of the coins in her sack matched by the lighter, solid weight of the stone in her pocket.

When the familiar silhouette of her stone house finally appeared, Diana's breath caught in her throat. Then, she rushed inside.

Her father lay still, his breathing a faint rustle. "Father?" she whispered, kneeling.

His eyes fluttered open, clouded with pain. "Diana? A dream..."

"No dream." She placed the heavy sack in his hand, closing his frail fingers around the leather. "The cure is yours."

Tears traced the dust on his cheeks. He pulled her into a weak embrace, his hand brushing the clumsy splint on her finger. "My brave girl. What did it cost you?"

Diana thought of the blinding dunes, the shattering cold, the moment she found her voice before the hard-eyed trader. She thought of Kavi, a brother forged not by blood, but by survival. She thought of her own strength, uncovered layer by layer like a buried city.

"It cost fear," she said softly, resting her head on his shoulder. "And it bought more than medicine."

Outside, the wind swept over the path that led east. It was no longer just a road of peril, but a thread connecting her to a wider world, and to the unshakeable knowledge that within her was a fortitude more enduring than Roman glass.

The Woven Road

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Lee, Sze Long – 11

One summer evening, Ming was told never to touch the old carpet in the cabinet. It was a firm family rule. But when he saw a corner of it peeking out, his curiosity won. He gave it a pull, and the heavy carpet fell with a solid *thump*.

As he reached to lift it, his hand brushed against a woven pattern—a brilliant, coiled serpent. Suddenly, the threads under his fingers began to glow with a soft, golden light. The serpent seemed to writhe, and the other patterns on the carpet—camels, mountains, a winding road—shimmered as if seen through a heat haze.

"Ming! Dinner!" his father called from downstairs.

Startled, Ming tried to snatch his hand away, but it was stuck fast. The glow from the carpet surged, wrapping around him like a warm blanket. The world twisted and spun. He felt a terrifying lurch, and then...

...a scorching wind blasted his face. The familiar walls of his room were gone. An endless sea of golden sand stretched out under a blazing white sun. The air itself tasted of dust and heat.

A tall man in a long, blue robe looked down at him, his face etched with surprise. "By the sands," the man muttered. "Where did you come from, little one?"

Ming looked down at his hands. They were empty. But in his mind, he could still see the glowing serpent on the carpet. He knew with a jolt of fear and excitement: the carpet had sent him here. He was on the Silk Road.

Suddenly, a stranger's cry was swallowed by a deafening roar. "Sandstorm!"

Ming's heart hammered against his ribs. A monstrous, brown wall was devouring the horizon. Yet the kind stranger remained calm. "This is the third time today! The caravanserai is close. Hold onto my robe!"

The wind screamed, whipping stinging sand into every inch of exposed skin. Ming squeezed his eyes shut, blind and choking, and held on as the stranger pulled him through the fury towards shelter.

Inside the caravanserai's thick walls, the air was thick with the smell of spices and animals. As Ming caught his breath, a flicker of colour caught his eye—a carpet with patterns just like his own, except the serpent was missing.

He asked the merchant for its price. "You need to trade something for this," the merchant said, eyeing Ming's modern clothes. "Perhaps your most precious stones."

Ming's hands flew to his pockets, but they were empty. He had nothing to trade.

Just then, the kind stranger stepped forward. "Would you exchange the carpet for one of my jades?" He held one up. It was as green as grass and shone like the stars. The merchant's eyes locked onto it, sparkling with greed. "I could trade you everything for one of these!"

"Just the carpet will do," the man said.

As he handed the carpet to Ming, he smiled. "Oh, I haven't introduced myself. My name is Xi Chou, a jade trader from China." The name hit Ming like a physical blow. *Xi Chou. My ancestor.*

"My name is Ming. I'm also from China. I'm not sure how I ended up here."

Xi Chou looked confused. "You don't know? I know a famous sorcerer in Hotan. We can go to his tower after the storm."

After the sandstorm had passed, they embarked on their journey. It was then Ming noticed two of the carpet's corners had vanished, not torn, but as if unmade. He ignored it.

When they reached Hotan, half the carpet was gone! This time, he couldn't ignore it. "It's fading!" he cried, holding it up.

Inside the sorcerer's tower, a figure in a black cloak stood by a fire. "The fabric of time is thin around you," the sorcerer rasped, not turning around. "Show me the carpet that is unwriting itself."

Stunned, Ming unrolled it. The sorcerer traced the air where the threads had vanished. "The magic that brought you here is unstable. To go home, you must find the Jade of the Ruins in the Taklamakan Desert. But be careful—it is called the 'Desert of Death' for a reason. And you must be quick. When the last thread fades, you will be stuck here forever!"

A cold dread seized Ming. "We need to go now!" he cried, his voice cracking as he ran to the door.

Xi Chou nodded, his expression grim. He wanted to help Ming go home, but as he followed, a new thought whispered in his heart: *If I could get my hands on that jade, my fortune would be made.*

As Ming's fingers closed around the cool, luminous jade, and the world dissolved. He found himself breathless on his bedroom floor, the old carpet beneath him.

But it was changed. The woven serpent now lay dormant, its gold thread dull. And there, beside it, a new detail shimmered into being: a tiny, perfect green jade, intricately stitched where none had been before.

His father's call echoed upstairs. "Ming! Dinner!"

"Coming!" he shouted, his voice unsteady. He knelt, tracing the new thread. *Xi Chou*, he thought. In the desert, there had been a desperate scuffle, a shared gasp for the same treasure. His ancestor had tried to take the jade, but Ming had touched it first. Was this thread the proof? Had his own journey just *woven* itself back into the carpet's history?

He understood now. The carpet wasn't just a portal; it was a family story, its patterns recording what his ancestors had lived—and what he had just lived *with* them. The magic had chosen him to complete the pattern.

Ming carefully folded the carpet, the weight of centuries in his hands. He would keep its secret. He, Ming, was now a part of its weave, a guardian of its unfinished tale. For now, he went downstairs, the taste of desert dust still on his tongue, and a glint of ancient jade forever stitched into his memory.

The Keeper's Key

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Li, Cheuk Tung – 11

The scent of ginger and garlic filled the tiny kitchen of their Hong Kong apartment. Penelope focused on her hands, carefully pleating the dough of a dumpling—a family recipe passed down for generations. It was a tradition

that always made her miss her mother the most. As she worked, her fingers brushed against the small, jade locket she always wore. It was the last gift from her mother, a historian who had spent her life studying the Silk Road.

"This locket was a secret the city keeps," her mother had told her, her voice soft but sure. "It was found right here, in Hong Kong. It's for you, my bridge."

Suddenly, the cool jade grew warm against her skin. A soft, green light pulsed from it, casting long, shifting shadows across the room. Penelope gasped and stepped back as the shadows in the corner of the kitchen deepened and swirled. From them, a figure emerged—a man with the intelligent eyes of a human but the legs and curved horns of a goat. A satyr.

"The gateway has been opened," the creature whispered, his gaze fixed on the glowing jade. "Your mother was a Keeper of the Road. Now, the task falls to you."

He placed a cracked, bronze compass into her trembling hand. Its needle spun wildly before pointing insistently away from the city's skyline, towards the distant heart of Asia.

"This will not guide you north, but to what you have lost," he said. "Follow the Silk Road to the Oasis of Echoes. But know this: to find a connection, you must risk losing what matters most in the present."

With those final, chilling words, he vanished into the shadows. The locket's light faded, but the compass needle held its course. Penelope knew with a terrifying certainty that it was pointing to the Silk Road. Her mother's locket had not just been a gift; it was a key. And she had just unlocked her destiny.

The satyr's words still echoing in her mind, Penelope found herself not on a familiar Hong Kong street, but in a dusty, winding lane in a strange city. The bronze compass in her hand pointed unwavering down a narrow alley labelled 'Meshi Street'.

Following it, she was drawn to a small, cluttered antiques shop. Inside, a man was frantically searching through scrolls. He started as she entered, but his eyes widened, fixed on the jade locket around her neck.

"The Keeper's Key," he breathed, his anger melting into desperate hope. "My name is Martin. I was your mother's guide." He led her to a back room, where a young woman lay pale and still. "My daughter, Luna. A sickness of forgetfulness has taken her. The Oasis of Echoes holds a cure, but only the true Keeper can open the path."

He showed Penelope an ancient book, its pages detailing the locket's powers: *'1. The compass within will guide you to what was lost. 2. A double tap will carry you to a place you hold in mind.'* The third power was lost, a page torn away.

"The Oasis does not give without a price," Martin warned, echoing the satyr. "To find a connection, you must risk a present loss."

Determined to help, Penelope double-tapped the locket. A radiant, emerald light enveloped them, and the world shifted. The air grew thin and cold. They were standing at the foot of the formidable Fann Mountains, a stone tablet before them: *'Climb to see the path.'*

The ascent was treacherous. Penelope's foot slipped on a loose stone, and she tumbled, a sharp rock gashing her leg. As Martin helped her up, a figure emerged from the crags—a teenage boy with sandy hair. With gentle hands, he helped bind her wound. He communicated through gestures; his name was Alan, and he too sought the Oasis to find a lost brother.

Together, the three reached a hidden cavern—the entrance to the Oasis of Echoes. Inside, the air hummed with whispers, and illusions swirled. Martin recoiled from visions of failing his daughter. Alan reached out for a phantom brother. Then, Penelope saw it: her mother, in her final moments. The sight was a dagger to her heart, the sorrow so immense she could hardly bear it.

"We must leave!" she cried, tearing her eyes away.

But a golden note materialised: *'The past is the key to flee. To leave, you must watch the entire scene.'*

Understanding the terrible price, they turned back. They endured the painful visions, witnessing their loved ones' suffering until the very end. As the final illusion faded, a gateway shimmered into view. A guardian stood before it.

"What is the price of a memory?" he asked.

Penelope, her heart raw but clear, answered, "The price is the pain of remembering. It is the loss of the comforting lie."

The guardian nodded and let them pass. Penelope stepped forward, and finally, she heard her mother's voice, warm and real. "Thank you for coming, my bridge. But you must let me go, and live your life."

With those words, her mother vanished, granting Penelope the closure she desperately needed. She had found the connection, but at the cost of a final farewell. As she emerged from the Oasis, the locket felt lighter, its magic spent, its purpose fulfilled.

As Penelope stepped back into her Hong Kong kitchen, the scent of ginger and garlic was now mingled with the faint, magical scent of desert sand and mountain air. The jade locket lay cool against her skin, its light faded to a soft, constant glow. She looked out at the neon-lit skyline and saw, superimposed upon it, a shimmering web of silvery light—threads of connection stretching from her window to Martin's shop, to the mountains of Tajikistan, and beyond.

Her mother's voice echoed in her heart: *"My bridge."*

She wasn't just Penelope anymore. She was a Keeper of the New Silk Road. And her journey had only just begun.

Beyond the Crown

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Ma, Hiu Ching – 11

Princess Athena of Rome stared at her reflection, trapped in a gown of priceless Chinese silk. Tonight, her father, the Emperor, would announce her betrothal to a Germanic prince she had never met—a political trade to secure an alliance. She was not a daughter; she was a commodity.

When she confronted him, her father boomed, "The entire empire will benefit from this union!"

"And what of my life?" Athena cried. "Am I just another spoil of war to be traded, like this silk?"

"Do not dare question me! You are lucky to be a princess!" he shouted.

"Lucky?" she whispered, her voice trembling with a new, terrifying resolve. "Then I no longer wish to be lucky."

That night, she packed not jewels, but practical clothes, a dagger, and the one possession she truly treasured: a map of the Silk Road. An old merchant from the East had given it to her, his eyes twinkling as he spoke of caravans led by women, of sprawling markets in Samarkand, and of an empire, China, that valued scholarship and art. It was a world where a person could be valued for more than their bloodline.

She looked at the map, its lines pointing to freedom. She wasn't just running away from a marriage. She was running towards the legendary Silk Road, *to a self she had only imagined*, to find a place where she could be more than just a princess. She slipped into the night, leaving the palace, and her old life, behind forever.

The freedom of the open road was a terrifying illusion.

By the third day, Athena's fine sandals were in tatters, and the money she'd taken was dangerously low. The map was her guide, but it couldn't show her how to barter for a stale loaf of bread without being cheated, or how to sleep in a ditch, listening for the footsteps of bandits or her father's soldiers.

Her salvation came in the form of a dusty caravan bound for the East. Its leader, a sharp-eyed woman named Zahra, looked her up and down. "You have the hands of a princess, not a traveller," she stated. "Why should I let you slow us down?"

"I can read and write Latin and Greek," Athena blurted out, her voice trembling but clear. "I can keep your records, translate for you. My father is... was... a merchant." The lie tasted bitter, but it was her only currency.

Zahra considered her, then nodded. "You will work. And you will learn."

The caravan became her university. She learned to tie a secure knot, to judge the quality of silk by its sheen, and to understand the unspoken rules of the road. The other travellers, initially suspicious, slowly warmed to her relentless work ethic. She traded stories of Roman palaces for tales of Samarkand's golden domes, her world expanding with every mile.

The real test came at the edge of the Taklamakan Desert. The "Sea of Death" stretched before them, a vast, silent ocean of dunes. Here, a sandstorm struck, a roaring, blinding wall of fury. Tents tore, and camels bellowed in fear. In the chaos, Athena didn't freeze. Remembering a trick Zahra had taught her, she helped secure the water skins and guide the panicked animals into a huddle, her voice a calm anchor in the storm.

When the calm returned, Zahra clapped a hand on her shoulder, a gesture of respect. "The princess is dead," she said, her voice low. "Out here stands a woman of the Silk Road."

Months turned into a year. The journey was a tapestry of blistered feet, breathtaking landscapes, and hard-won friendships. When she finally saw the winding streets of a bustling city—not Beijing, but a Central Asian hub like Samarkand—her heart swelled. She had done the impossible.

But as she marvelled at her new home, a familiar sight made her blood run cold: the crest of a Roman helmet bobbing through the crowd. Her father's men had found her.

Athena's breath caught, but she didn't run. Three Roman soldiers faced her, armour gleaming under the Samarkand sun.

"Princess Athena," their leader said. "You return with us."

The market quietened. Athena stood tall. "The princess you seek is gone. She died in the desert."

The centurion stepped forward. "Our orders—"

"—can be satisfied another way." Athena lifted her father's signet ring. "Take this. Tell him I was lost in the Taklamakan. That saves your honour."

She glanced at Zahra, who stood nearby with Khasan and others from the caravan. Without a word, they moved behind her—a silent, unyielding wall.

The soldier hesitated. Athena pressed on. "And take this too." Zahra handed her a bolt of luminous silk. "A gift for my father. Proof the Silk Road holds more value than a runaway daughter."

The centurion weighed the silk, then tucked both it and the ring into his satchel. He gave a stiff nod.

"The desert shows no mercy," he said quietly. "Your story will be told."

He turned, and his men vanished into the crowd.

Only then did Athena breathe freely. Zahra squeezed her shoulder. "Well bargained."

In the weeks that followed, no one in the caravanserais spoke of princesses. They spoke of Athena the translator, the record-keeper, the merchant.

She sat in a courtyard scented with spice, a ledger open before her. Her hands, once soft, were marked with ink and sun. She tracked shipments in Greek, bartered in three tongues, mapped routes her father had never dreamed of.

A breeze lifted a strand of hair from her face. Beyond the mountains lay Rome—a memory of silk and confinement.

Here, she was free. Not because she had run from a crown, but because she had chosen a life. Not because she was given a name, but because she had earned one.

She closed the ledger and gazed out at the bustling square—her home, her world, her making.

The Stone and the Sand

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Sut, Yui Ching Abbie – 10

After school, the first thing Amy saw was the stone. It was a deep, celestial blue, veined with specks of gold—a piece of lapis lazuli. Her archaeologist father had told her, "This was more precious than gold to the traders of the Silk Road. Hold it, and you're holding history."

She picked it up. It was unnaturally warm. A faint vibration hummed under her thumb.

The air in her room began to shimmer, and the sounds of modern Hong Kong faded into a golden blur.

When her senses returned, a crushing heat pressed down on her. She stood in a vast, empty desert, the horizon wavering like a mirage. The silence was absolute. "Hello?" she whispered. Her voice was swallowed by the landscape. Panic seized her. "HELP!" she screamed, the sound lost in the expanse.

As her fear peaked, the sand at her feet swirled, coalescing into a tall figure. It was not human; its body was made of swirling dust and heat, and its eyes glowed like embers.

"Who... what are you?" Amy stammered.

"I am a Djinn," it rustled, pointing to the glowing stone in her palm. "Bound to the path you hold."

"The stone brought me here! I need to go home!"

"Every journey has a price," the Djinn intoned, his voice like shifting dunes. "To find your way back, you must first help me find mine." It gestured to a tarnished lamp half-buried in the dunes. "My prison, and your key."

With the lamp in her hand, Amy trudged into the burning desert. The sun was merciless, bleaching the sky pale. Soon, a dizzying thirst took hold, her tongue clinging to her mouth. Her foot caught on a stone, sending her stumbling to her knees.

As she fell, a familiar warmth bloomed in her pocket. The lapis stone pulsed, and the Djinn materialised before her.

"Water is near," he rasped, pointing to a lush grove of palm trees in the distance. An oasis. Amy's heart leapt, but suspicion followed. *A trick*, she thought. But to die of thirst was certain. "I trust you," she said, the words dry in her throat.

She followed the illusion, only for it to dissolve into nothing. There was no water. Yet, the Djinn looked almost pleased. He glided to a cactus and collected precious drops of dew onto a leaf, offering it to her. The first test of trust was passed.

As the scorching day faded into a freezing night, Amy looked up. The stars were brilliant diamonds scattered across endless black. Remembering her father's lessons, she traced the constellations. "We go east," she whispered. The Djinn watched, his ember-like eyes flickering with quiet respect.

They did not see the bandits watching from the shadows. The men emerged, their eyes locked on her pocket. "The stone, child," their leader snarled, his voice rough as sandstone.

Amy's fingers tightened around the lapis. As the men lunged, she turned and ran. The Djinn rose, summoning a whirlwind of sand that sent the bandits tumbling away. Gasping for breath, Amy felt a sudden tug at her legs. She looked down in horror. The ground had turned to liquid. Quicksand.

It pulled her down with a terrible, hungry force. The Djinn reached for her, but they were both consumed by the swallowing darkness.

They landed in a cavernous space, ruins of a caravanserai under glowing crystals. The Djinn grew quiet, drifting towards a fossilised campfire.

"He sat here," he sighed. "He was kind."

Amy saw then he wasn't just powerful—he was a lonely soul, tethered to the past.

As she explored, the lapis stone flared, pointing to a rusty metal box. At her touch, the ruins shimmered. Inside lay a map in ancient script. The only word she recognised was 'Han'.

The Djinn stared at the map, his features shifting with long-buried emotion. "This is a map to a temple," he translated, voice hushed. "It holds the key."

"How do we get there?" she asked.

The Djinn took her hand and placed it over the map, the lapis stone glowing fiercely in her palm. "Like this," he said. The world twisted, and they were pulled into the parchment itself.

They landed in a grand, silent temple, air thick with incense and age. An old guardian stood before them, robes the colour of forgotten sand. "The curse can only be broken," he said, his voice echoing, "by an act of selfless trade."

Amy and the Djinn looked at one another. They understood. The magic was not in the lamp or the stone, but in the fragile connection they had forged—woven from trust and shared hardship.

"I trade my return for his freedom," Amy said, the declaration ringing clear.

As the words left her lips, the lamp on the Djinn's belt shattered into dust. The curse was broken.

For a moment, there was only silence. Amy felt the cost of her choice—her way home, gone—settle in her chest. The Djinn's form settled, the restless sand calming into serenity. His eyes held a new peace.

"You are free," she whispered.

"Because of you," he said, his voice now clear and deep. He looked at her, stranded. "Your courage deserves a reply."

He raised his hands. The lapis stone glowed with a gentle light. It rose, spinning, weaving a vortex of sapphire dust—a portal, lovingly made.

"Go home, friend."

Amy's heart ached, but she felt a quiet triumph glow within. She picked up the stone, now cool and inert, and placed it by the ancient guardian.

"It stays with its history."

She stepped into the light. Warmth bloomed, then faded.

She was in her room. Hong Kong's glow framed the window.

In her heart, a warm certainty remained. Under ancient stars, a lonely soul was free. She had learnt that the greatest treasures are not carried, but forged—in trust, and in the choices made for another.

The Starlight Bloom

Stewards Pooi Kei Primary School, Yam, Manuel Colin – 10

Yario was not heading to Earth in a UFO, but sailing the starlanes of the Celestial Silk Road in his sleek, solar-sailed ship. His heart was as heavy as a black hole. His young son was fading, stricken by the Crystal Plague, and the final ingredient for the cure was nowhere to be found in the known galactic markets.

For weeks, he had scoured the Silk Road's major hubs: the crystalline cities of Sirius, the floating bazaars of Jupiter. But the rare "Starlight Bloom" eluded him. Now, his last hope was a small, blue planet on a remote spur of the Silk Road: Earth. Ancient trade logs suggested it was rich in unique, undocumented resources.

Yario was Sigma Prime's most renowned scientist. His eyes, sharp as a telescope, could decipher cosmic maps, and his unique strength—a result of being born without myostatin—had helped him build defences for Saturn and mine water on Mars. But all his intelligence and power were useless against his son's illness.

As his ship descended from the starlane into Earth's atmosphere, the global trade network of this "New Silk Road" lit up his viewscreen. It wasn't just roads and ships; it was a dazzling web of digital pathways, flights, and cultural exchanges connecting East to West. His target was a major hub on this network, a place where the ancient Silk Road had once begun and where the new one now thrived: the city of Xi'an.

Here, amidst the bustling markets selling spices and silks to tourists from all over the world, he hoped to find his miracle. The air buzzed with a dozen different languages, a modern caravan. He wasn't just an alien looking for a cure; he was a trader on the grandest Silk Road of all, seeking the one treasure that could save his family.

Stepping out of his ship, Yario found himself in an overwhelming metropolis. A brilliant yet perpetually clumsy inventor, he realised he had committed a classic blunder: he'd left his map on the ship. Before anything else, he aimed his dimensional compressor at his own vessel, shrinking it to pocket-size. His robotic companion, a sleek feline unit named Tiger, detached itself and landed silently at his feet, ready to assist.

As he stood disoriented, a young woman named Delphie approached. "You look lost," she said. When he explained his quest, her eyes lit up. She dreamt of traversing the Silk Road's legends. "My grandfather was a curator of its history," she said. "His old maps covered our walls. I know these markets. Let me help."

Their first objective was the vast desert along the Silk Road. Yario's research suggested a lost city, and the cure he sought, might be buried there. As they located what he believed to be a secret entrance, the sky darkened. A violent sandstorm erupted around them. Delphie, gripped by terror, gasped and collapsed. Acting quickly, Yario used his power-absorber device to draw the storm's chaotic energy into itself, calming the winds and returning the sky to a serene blue. Delphie stirred, revived from her faint.

Yet their respite was brief. As if conjured by the storm itself, a figure materialised before them: Kaelen, a rogue bio-harvester from Yario's past. Yario's composure frayed—first the storm, and now this? Kaelen had come for vengeance. Years ago, a tragic reactor breach at a shared research facility had left Kaelen's son in a stasis coma, and the man had sworn retribution.

"Your search ends here, scientist," Kaelen spat. Before Yario could react, Kaelen fired a canister that burst into a shimmering gas—a neural mist that clouded Yario's mind with horrific, paralysing visions. Disoriented, he and Delphie were easily overpowered by Kaelen's robbers and bound.

As the psychic fog thickened, a low hum cut through the chaos. It was Tiger, who had analysed the mist's frequency. The robotic unit emitted a sharp counter-pulse that shattered the illusion's hold. Clarity returned.

Yario saw Kaelen, a black hole generator now in hand, and the encircling robbers. He also saw Kaelen's open satchel, glinting with vials of rare organic compounds—samples harvested along the Silk Road.

"You seek a cure," Kaelen sneered. "But you'll find only a void."

"No," Yario said, his voice steady as a new understanding crystallised. "The Starlight Bloom isn't a plant to be found. It's a compound synthesised by extreme energy stress—like a singularity's decay."

While Delphie worked silently to pick her cuffs, Yario formulated a desperate plan. With a final click, her bonds fell away. She didn't flee. Instead, she snatched a discarded datapad and fed a structural weak point analysis to Tiger, guiding its attack. As debris rattled, Yario aimed his compressor not at Kaelen, but at a leaking coolant pipe above, firing a super-cooled pellet directly into the barrel of the black hole generator.

The weapon's containment field faltered. "The Bloom is forged in energy's crucible!" Yario shouted.

The generator imploded in a brilliant, contained flash of light—a miniature starburst. When it faded, Kaelen was disarmed and stunned, his samples scattered.

Among them, glowing softly, was a newly formed crystal: the Starlight Bloom, created in the weapon's catastrophic failure.

The robbers fled. Authorities, alerted by Tiger's signal, arrived to take Kaelen into custody.

Standing in the quiet aftermath, Yario carefully held the synthesised crystal. It pulsed with a gentle warmth in his palm, a rhythm that felt like a heartbeat—like hope given solid form. For the first time in months, the weight in his chest began to lift.

"You connected the pieces," Delphie said, gazing at the blend of ancient and modern in the distant city.

Yario nodded. He thought of the long road behind and the one ahead. His son would live. The Silk Road had promised connection, and in the end, it had delivered the final, crucial element: not just a cure, but the proof that even in the darkest void, light could be forged.

A Compass to Connection

Taikoo Primary School, Chan, Hei Yu Harriet – 11

Catherine was an eighteen-year-old girl who had always dreamt of running her own cake shop, "Catherine's Heavenly Cakes." Although her cakes were beautiful and tasty, her shop was struggling. Instead of engaging with customers, she relied entirely on social media for promotion, taking fantastic photos each day and posting them online. However, when customers visited, they often left disappointed. Catherine didn't communicate with them. The problem of poor service didn't leave a good impression on guests.

One day, while exploring her attic, she found an old compass that belonged to her great-grandfather. When she picked it up and tried to take a look, she was transported back to the era of the Silk Road, a vibrant trade route where East met West. In this bustling world, filled with sights and smells, Catherine met a baker named Li, who sold round dumplings and sweet pastries. Li was very busy, not with social media but communicating with the customers. He greeted them with smiles, remembered their names, and each interaction made customers feel valued.

Curious, Catherine went to Li's stall. "How do you make your customers so happy?" she asked. Li replied, "I listen to them and reply patiently. Trading is about connections." Catherine rebutted, "But I already posted stunning photos online. Don't they attract customers?" Li shook his head gently, "Beauty catches the eyes, but warmth captures the heart. People always remember how you make them feel. Engaging with customers makes them feel really valued."

This lesson was deeply engraved in Catherine's heart. She realised that, while she focused on her social media, she had overlooked the essence of her business. She needed to create a community. A place where personal connections were as important as the products themselves.

Inspired, Catherine began to transform. She observed Li's meticulous preparation, his infectious laugh, and the joy radiating from his customers. They were not just buying food; they were part of a warm, inviting experience. Eager to create her own stall, she baked cakes not just for their beauty but for the heart they carried. Each cake had a name that reflected a feeling, and she decorated her stall with photos that she was proud of. When people arrived, she greeted them warmly, thanked them, and asked about their favourite flavours. They enjoyed Catherine's treats.

When it was time for Catherine to return home, she felt grateful for the lessons learned on the Silk Road. Back in her own time, she transformed her shop into a welcoming place. The journey had taught her that true success lies in personal connections.

From that day forward, Catherine immersed herself into her shop, engaging with customers, and learning from their feedback. Every cake became a piece of her heart. She brought warmth and a sense of belonging to everyone who walked through her doors.

The Gems of the Silk Road

Taikoo Primary School, Cheung, Yee Chun Bridget – 10

A fierce typhoon was raging outside. The wind howled like a wild beast, and the rain hammered against the windows. As the typhoon lashed the city with unstoppable fury, the sky turned a dark shade of grey, and the wind screamed through the deserted streets. Seeking shelter from the bad weather, the two siblings, Leo and Maya, spotted a different, mysterious shop tucked away between two modern buildings. Its old, wooden sign creaked strangely in the storm.

They opened the door of the shop and there was an old lady cleaning the cupboards. They looked everywhere in the shop, and a glint of light from a dusty shelf caught Maya's eye. There, nestled between old jars, was a small, carved box that seemed to glow with an inner light. Maya opened the box and there were three gems inside. Leo said, "I saw it first! The blue one is mine!" Maya said, "No, I am the one who opened the box! I want the red one!" In their frantic struggle, the precious gems flew into the air and shimmered for a moment. The old lady

said, 'Don't be afraid! You just need to collect three gems; they are the Honest, Kind and Respectful gems.' Then, Leo and Maya vanished into the dark.

They traveled back in time to the old Silk Road. They went to a market where there were many people; it was very lively. They helped a Sogdian merchant whose ledger was a mess. While counting his goods, Leo and Maya found that he had undercharged a customer. The merchant was poor and every coin counted. They could keep silent and let the customer keep the extra goods, helping him. Knowing it might anger the merchant, Leo and Maya spoke up with an honest and respectful tone. The customer was very surprised and paid the right amount. The merchant was deeply impressed by their integrity. He said, 'Your honesty shines brighter than any gold.' He handed them the golden gem because they were so honest. The merchant smiled at Maya and Leo as they walked away to look for the next gem.

Next, Leo and Maya needed to earn the red gem of kindness. Leo and Maya were walking along the Silk Road, trying to find something to earn it. They saw a lost and crying child who was separated from her parents. They were in a hurry because they needed to find the gem to get home faster. Stopping to help a girl would waste precious time. Without a second thought, they pushed their own mission aside. Maya comforted the tearful girl while Leo asked around to help the girl find her parents. Leo asked around and found the lost girl's parents. The grateful parents, overcome with emotion, thanked them. They said, 'Your kindness has saved our family. Thank you for helping our child find us.' The girl's mother pressed the red gem into Maya's hand, now radiating a gentle and warm heat. She thought that Leo and Maya were very kind and helpful to lend a helping hand.

After that, Leo and Maya needed to find the blue gem which was the Respectful gem. They entered a part of the market that sold religious things. There were many people of different faiths; they gathered together to worship different religions. They saw a Buddhist monk sitting peacefully in meditation near a small shrine. Eager to find the next clue, Leo, thinking the monk was ignoring them, walked directly in front of him and loudly asked for directions, unintentionally casting a shadow over the shrine and disrupting the peace. A young Muslim merchant from next to the Buddhist monk gently but firmly pushed Leo aside. She said, 'Wait, young traveler. Do not disturb him. On the Silk Road, there are many paths and roads. We may pray to different gods, in different ways, but we all share this sun and this desert. Show respect for each other's peace, for that is what makes this place great.' They realized that their actions, though not meaning to be rude, had shown a lack of respect for a tradition they didn't understand. Instead of rushing off, they waited for him to finish his meditation. Leo and Maya gently apologized to the Buddhist monk and told him that they wouldn't do it again in the future. The Muslim merchant softly nodded her head because she thought that Leo and Maya did the right thing. She was very happy with them and gave them the last gem, which was the Respectful gem.

After taking all the gems, Leo and Maya traveled back to the shop. The old lady smiled at them and said, 'Leo and Maya, you two have learned some very important lessons which are to be honest, kind and respectful.' Leo and Maya looked at each other, a silent understanding passing between them. They didn't need the physical gems anymore, but the real treasure of this time travel was being kind, honest and respectful.

They Key to Silk Road

Taikoo Primary School, Chua, Jilliana Shaine Varon – 10

Once upon a time, there were two best friends, Aisha and Benjamin, in Aisha's grandmother's basement. Then they saw a key on the floor to a secret room. When they saw the key, their eyes sparkled with curiosity. Benjamin asked, 'I wonder what this key goes to... is it alright if we explore wherever the key guides us to?' Aisha hesitated for a split second, then sighed softly with a gentle smile on her face. 'Sure, but if we somehow get lost in wherever we are, I'll call my mom,' Aisha said teasingly in response. Benjamin pouted softly and followed her to a dark room, where the key worked. Then, they opened the door with the key. They saw a portal, and held hands. Taking a deep breath, they went into the portal.

After that, they arrived at the Silk Road. Benjamin was amazed by the scenery, since he had always wanted to see something ancient in person, while Aisha was processing what had just happened, zoning out for a few seconds. But there was a problem; the portal had disappeared. The two were getting comfortable with being at the Silk

Road, until they realized they were stuck. Aisha was worried while Benjamin was panicking softly, looking around nervously for any sign of an exit back to the basement. But they couldn't find anything, and they were devastated.

They walked around the Silk Road, admiring the ancient times, almost forgetting about the situation earlier. Then they asked the people if they saw the portal, but everyone kept saying, 'No, I haven't. What's a portal supposed to be?' and sometimes, one of the two would ask about the Silk Road, learning more about it with each answer. They were doing this so that it would be easier to look for the portal, since they knew where to go. After asking, they wandered off to a remote spot of the stairs.

Then, they saw a familiar, circular silhouette next to the Silk Road. Aisha's eyes shone in glee and relief, finally finding the way back to the basement. Benjamin was also relieved, while also missing the Silk Road, but he and Aisha had to go, so he smiled at the people far away and waved farewell to them, knowing he probably wouldn't be coming back later on. Aisha gently pulled Benjamin's hand as the portal slowly closed, and smiled at him with a teasing yet genuine expression. As she turned around, she saw her grandmother looking for the two. Aisha called her grandmother, and told her the full story.

They had an unforgettable experience at the Silk Road. They hoped they could learn more about the history of the Silk Road, so they could write about it in a school writing competition about different places and their history. The results aren't out yet, but they are sure they will win, considering they know a lot of information about the Silk Road.

My Journey to the Silk Road

Taikoo Primary School, Ko, Hau Yee Zoe – 11

Do you know about China's Silk Road? The Silk Road was a network of Asian trade routes active from the second century BCE until the mid-15th century. But do you know how the Silk Road was opened? It started in the Western Han Dynasty. It was a land passage opened after Han Wudi sent Zhang Qian to the western region. Starting from Chang'an (now Xi'an), the capital at that time, it led to Central Asia, West Asia and the Mediterranean countries in the west. At first, Zhang Qian opened this road to transport or trade goods, such as silk. It was also for promoting economic, political and cultural exchanges between the east and the west.

I was sleeping peacefully in my room. After a while, I started to dream. At first, it was just nonsense dreams but then, I found myself in a white room, with a time travel machine inside. The machine was ancient! But surprisingly, it still worked. I walked towards the machine and took a look at it. I sat on the old metal chair. Suddenly, I started to feel dizzy. My vision was blurry. All I could see were just clocks and dates. I couldn't see anything, but I could feel that it was shaky. Finally, after a while it stopped.

When I opened my eyes, I couldn't believe what I had seen. I saw an ancient explorer wearing the Chinese traditional clothing, Hanfu, with a hat. It was Zhang Qian. I saw a lot of camels and people wearing Chinese traditional clothing. And I'd just realized that I had time travelled back to the Han Dynasty. I searched around for the time travel machine. But it was nowhere to be found. So I came up to Zhang Qian and asked him, "Excuse me, are you Zhang Qian?" He nodded and asked me how I knew that. I explained everything to him. "I've learned about you in my general studies!" I said excitedly. Then he told me that this was actually his second time opening the Silk Road. He had been sent by Han Wudi to the Western region. Then Zhang Qian set out with a delegation of 99 people, but was caught by the Xiongnu. He was held for about 10 years but fortunately, he successfully escaped and told Han Wudi about all the things that he had witnessed. And he continued his journey. In the end of the first journey, he collected valuable information about the western regions.

Zhang Qian was then sent on the second expedition. His mission was to send his assistants to visit the Fergana Valley, Bactria and Sogdiana. After the journey, he gathered information on the geography, politics and cultures of the region. Then he gave me some grapes and showed me the arts and music of different countries and cultures.

Sadly, it was morning already and I got woken up by the alarm clock. Although it was just a dream, I at least learned more about the Silk Road and Zhang Qian. It wasn't just a dream, but a fantastic adventure, an unforgettable memory. His journey was amazing. Thanks to this adventure, East and West got to know more about each other and exchanged produce. The Silk Road was a vast trade network that connected East and West. It's a famous route for trading that Zhang Qian has opened. And this is the story of China's Silk Road.

Carl and the Time-Turner

Taikoo Primary School, Ko, Ling Wan – 11

Like every day for the past ten years of his life, Carl the delivery driver woke up to his screeching, high-pitched alarm clock. After five minutes of moaning, he finally managed to stand up properly. He then put on an out of style old jacket and his most boring tie as he yawned for at least six times and then saw a boatload of parcels on his doorstep.

While delivering his final parcel, he started daydreaming about himself being in an enormous mansion, eating anything he wished, doing anything he wanted.

All of a sudden, Carl saw a tiny rock in front of his eyes. At first, he thought that it was nothing. However, after a few seconds he fell straight onto the floor. As he was screaming like a baby, he saw a golden light coming out of the box. Without thinking, he took the thing out of the box, and started admiring its beauty as if it was a diamond ring. It was shining brightly like a star in the sky, looking just like a watch. As he pressed a mysterious button, he fell through what looked like a veil. "Woahhh," he yelled as he started falling, for the first time, he was worried. He thought, "Wh-What's happening to me? A-Am I falling, w-where am I exactly?"

He thought that he would have seen a bright blue sky, but instead saw a sunset like, bright orange sky above his head with people wearing silk robes around him. He asked, "Who in the world are you?"

"Merchants from China of course. Now, it's time for you to pick up that box of silk and come with us. We used to have horses to ride, but you know, they died too because of the harsh weather and the plague," said one of the other merchants with very messy hair and wearing incredibly dirty clothes.

After months of walking, Carl was starting to get used to walking so much. However, during one fateful day his fellow merchants had disappeared. He didn't know what happened and gave up going to Afghanistan, and went back to China.

Even after he returned, he still felt constant pain in his head, and had nightmares about his fellow merchants getting killed.

Soon, he and fifty other merchants were going to Uzbekistan to trade with the people there, and they made Carl himself the leader. However, someone thought that Carl was a spy working for the bandits, causing him to get demoted from leader.

As December was approaching, the merchants and Carl headed to Uzbekistan. This time, the Taklamakan Desert was still as hot as the sun, but some parts became freezing cold. Compared to a delivery driver, being a delivery driver was like an easy job.

Two months later, he had finally reached Uzbekistan but saw none of the merchants who were originally with him just like last time. The new year felt more like suffering rather than having fun. He stayed up every night, trying to trade his silk for food, trying not to think about the raid that happened. He also received a mysterious book one night from a stranger called "The book of mysteries on the Silk Road".

The wind howled in the pitch-black sky as he slowly opened the book with fear and excitement. On the first page he read out loud, “The plague on the Silk Road was a massive outbreak of bubonic plague which turned the Silk Road from a corridor of wealth into a pathway of disease and social collapse, killing around 13 million people by 1333.”

Next, he read the paragraph below,” Bandits were a constant threat to travelers in the silk Road, ambushing them in deserts, mountains to steal valuable goods like silk, spices and gold. Groups of outlaws usually hide in narrow paths like the “Trail of bones” in the Taklamakan Desert. They specifically target slow-moving camels, sometimes even killing them, with places like the “Vale of blood” being infamous for such raids.

After he read that paragraph, he felt his soul leave his body, finally realizing that he had probably passed the “Vale of blood”, and his merchant friends were probably gone for good. In the end, he finally decided that he would return to seek help, so that he can help free the innocents captured.

After asking for help over and over again, the emperor still said no, no matter how many times he asked. In the end, he decided that he would free the innocent people all by himself.

He still remembered that he had the old jacket which was almost transparent. He decided to hide beneath it and try breaking out of the country. Unexpectedly, he managed to break out. Now, he needed to think of a way to survive the severe weather in the Taklamakan Desert and how he was going to survive the bandits. Luckily, Carl still had water and the jacket.

Five months later, he had finally reached the mountain where the merchants and other innocent people were captured. He immediately put on his jacket to disguise himself among the other bandits. After reaching the cells where the people were held, he freed everyone who was captured. They all broke out together like a team.

After going back, everyone loved him for saving innocents. As a reward, the emperor gifted him a golden, tiny box with something shiny. As he opened the tiny golden box, he realized that it was a time-turner, exactly like the one he used to come here.

The crowd chanted his name, and he looked into all of their watery eyes and said,” Well, this is it. Looks like my five-year voyage has come to an end, so..... Goodbye!”

Like a man-made wish, Carl returned to his world, and had changed from being a spoiled man to being someone who was brighter. Even after he had retired, he still remembered those five long years, five years that nobody else had ever experienced in their life.

The Baghdad Glassmaker

Taikoo Primary School, Leung, Hoi Ching Angie – 11

A long time ago, there lived two skilled glassmakers in Baghdad. They were brothers. One was Amin, the other Jamal.

One day, Jamal was working in his studio when suddenly three rough bandits pushed open the door and growled, “We have taken your brother. We demand the formula for your ruby red glass by sunrise. Then your brother is free.” Then they left and stormed out without saying another word. Suddenly Jamal was faced with a big decision. Should he save his glass or his brother? He chose his brother, and immediately rushed after the men.

In the winding streets of Baghdad, Jamal found himself at the docks. He hurriedly hid behind some crates and saw his brother unconscious in a boat. Suddenly, the boat moved. It was actually tied to a large merchant vessel! He was tricked; the men were never actually going to set his brother free. With seconds to spare, he bravely leaped toward the boat and plunged into the ice-cold water. Shivering, Jamal still did not give up so easily. He grabbed onto the side of the boat and pulled himself onto it. To wake up his brother, he shook him awake and explained the situation to him. “How will we get home? We’re lost at sea and there’s no food or water. How will we survive?” Freezing, Jamal noticed some coiled rope in the boat and quickly came up with a brilliant idea.

He tied the rope into a tight knot and threw it onto the vessel. He loudly yelled, “Help! Can anyone hear me? Help us!”

As luck would have it, one of the merchants onboard heard Jamal and quickly woke up his shipmates, and they quickly pulled Jamal and his brother with the rope onboard. The merchants were confused at first. They mistook the brothers for robbers and were about to push them overboard when Amin quickly and calmly told them the story. The merchants took pity and they welcomed the brothers onboard. Jamal, worried that he and his brother would never go home again, asked the merchants, “Where are we going? Will we ever go back to Baghdad?” One of the merchants, Tariq, said, “We’re sailing across The Silk Road to China to trade our goods. The journey will take three weeks before we return to Baghdad.” Jamal and Amin both knew that they had no choice but to wait until they got home, so they agreed to help around the ship. That night, they fell asleep under the open night sky, with a feeling that an adventure was starting.

Over the next few days, most of the time, Jamal and Amin both helped around the ship, making sure the goods were all in good condition. When there was nothing to do, they sat at the stern of the ship, gazing at the wonderful view that lay ahead. Aside from the beautiful azure-blue ocean, there were many small towns and cities along the coastline, which were all full of life and colourful. They reminded Jamal of Baghdad, with its bustling marketplace and vibrant environment.

The days passed, and soon Jamal and Amin arrived in China. They were helping their shipmates pack some crates to trade when suddenly Amin saw the same bandits that started all the trouble in the first place. Amin hurriedly shook his brother and mouthed, “They’re here!” They were talking to a merchant. Suddenly, one of them turned round and saw the brothers. They were furious and they chased after the brothers. They ran through markets, shops and alleys until the brothers were cornered. Both of them knew that they couldn’t beat them in strength, so they thought of other ways. Jamal quickly grabbed some fruit and threw them at the bandits. They couldn’t dodge in time and they were splattered in fruit. The brothers ran for their lives, with the bandits in pursuit. They hid behind some crates and waited until the bandits caught up to them. Boldly, they stepped out in front of them. When the bandits saw them, they were ready to strike, but a policeman blew his whistle and arrested the bandits. The brothers had thought up an ingenious plan, and the bandits fell right for it. They knew that the bandits were wanted by the police, and they made sure that there was a policeman nearby so they could arrest them and the brothers would be safe. It was a carefully executed plan.

They went back to the dock, and they climbed on the ship and set sail again. After all their adventures, they felt braver and bolder than before. Both the brothers felt glad the bandits were caught, but a bit sad that their adventure was over. They headed back home, to Baghdad. I hope there are some lessons you can learn from this story. The brothers knew that they couldn’t always prevent bad things from happening, but they tried to confront them. You have to be brave and face your fear or problem. I hope after reading this story you’ll understand that. Now go and have your own adventure!

The Time Travelling Adventure

Taikoo Primary School, Leung, Tsz Wing Toki – 11

At Happy Primary School, there were two naughty boys. They were Timmy and Albert, and they were both 11 years old. They always went to a forest and had some exciting adventures. But one day, they found a cool thing that they had never seen before...

On Monday, Timmy and Albert went to the forest as they always did. They found many things, like a lot of big trees, some mushrooms and some coconuts.

Suddenly, Timmy said, 'Albert, come! I found a dilapidated house right here!'

Albert came and looked at it. 'Wow! Timmy, wanna go inside and check?' asked Albert. Timmy answered immediately, 'Of course! Let’s go inside!'

Then, they went inside. They found the inside empty, except for the corner of the house. They went closer to the to look as there was something hiding in the darkness.

Suddenly, Timmy said, 'Oh my gosh! Albert, we found a secret time travelling machine!'

'This is so cool! I see a button right here. Should we press it?' asked Albert.

'Absolutely! Then we can have the greatest adventure in the world!'

After that, Timmy pressed the button and they suddenly felt dizzy.

Soon, they woke up. They looked around and they found that they were not in the house or the forest anymore. Albert asked, 'Where are we? Are we in ancient China now?'

Timmy answered, 'I don't know. Let's go and ask some villagers.'

They went to find some villagers to ask. All of them said it was the Han Dynasty. After they heard this, they thought that they had learned about the Han Dynasty and the old Silk Road in General Studies lessons. So, they wanted to follow the people who would go to the old Silk Road, they followed the people quietly. The journey had started!

Timmy and Albert followed the people to different countries. At the first stop, they went to Chang'an. It was the place to take many products like: silk, porcelain, tea leaves, ironware and bronze. They saw many people were moving heavy goods and saw the people were tired. Timmy asked, 'Albert, should we help?'

'Sure! Let's help them!' answered Albert.

So, they used their power to help them and all of the people were grateful to them.

After they had finally finished moving the products, they started going to the next stop. They crossed Liangzhou, Ganzhou, Suzhou and Dunhuang. After Dunhuang, they started the beginning of the epic journey to the west. At Dunhuang, there were three roads. The first one, the Northern Route. It could take them to Hami, Turpan, Urumqi, Kucha and Kashgar. The second one, the Central Route, went to Loulan, Yanqi, Kucha and Kashgar. The third one, the Southern Route, the road to Miran, Qarkilik, Qiemo, Khotan, Hotan, Yarkand and Kashgar. Then, these three routes could take them to Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Baghdad, Damascus, Constantinople, Istanbul and Antioch.

In this journey, Timmy and Albert learned more about the products of different countries, like India. They traded for spices, diamonds and pearls. Also, in the Middle East, they had glassware, carpets and musical instruments. After their travels, they followed the people and came back to Chang'an. Then, they said goodbye. They were very happy with this adventure!

Suddenly, they woke up again and found that they were at home. They found out that this adventure was just a dream! So, they went to school and shared this wonderful adventure with their friends and teachers. Later, at recess, Timmy and Albert chatted together. Albert said, 'This adventure was meaningful for us.'

'Yeah, it made us learn more about ancient times. Also, we learned how to respect others too,' said Timmy. They kept thinking about their adventure in the following weeks. It had left a lasting impression on the boys and they wondered when their next adventure would be!

A New Era of Prosperity on the Silk Road

Taikoo Primary School, Tang, Ming Yee Jessie – 10

I am a businesswoman from Hong Kong and I work with rare earth elements. I want to share my experience of how the New Silk Road changed my life and my business.

The New Silk Road, also called China's Belt and Road Initiative, is a global trade and infrastructure project launched by China in 2013. The idea comes from the ancient Silk Road, which started during the Han Dynasty. A brave man named Zhang Qian traveled far to China's borders and opened vast lands beyond the borders of the Chinese Empire and opened new lands for trade. It is a great plan to build roads, railways, ports and other infrastructure to enable countries to trade more easily. It connects China with many parts of the world, just like the ancient Silk Road from history, but much bigger. Through this plan, China works with many important countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, and some other countries in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. This means countries can trade goods more easily because there will be better roads, trains, ports and transportation networks. It helps businessmen like me to reach more markets around the world. The New Silk Road project influences many parts of the world, using both land routes and sea routes.

People might wonder why I got involved in the business in the rare earth elements industry; this is because China is the world's largest producer of rare earth elements, and many businesses rely on China for supply. In fact, rare earth elements are not a kind of “rare” material; they are mixtures with other minerals, making mining and processing extremely difficult. Moreover, rare earth elements are crucial for green energy, without them, modern technology could not develop. For example: electric cars, smartphones and other technology items.

Currently, China controls the export of rare earth elements through a licencing and quota system. At the same time, China has strict environmental protection rules and has established many green environmental protection standards that companies must comply with, all of which increase operating costs for businesses. Nevertheless, these rules are beneficial to the environment and the planet.

Let me share an example. Before the New Silk Road project existed, I used to send my products to Vietnam by big container trucks. It took a very long time and it cost a lot of money. Sometimes, the roads were not good and delays happened often. But nowadays, there are railway crossing the border, which helps me to move the containers from Hong Kong to Vietnam cheaper and faster. It feels like magic! wars between countries, exports may be reduced and transportation can be affected. This would hurt my business, so peace is very important.

Hong Kong is a great place and a premier global center for international business. It is a global financial centre, and I can use Renminbi (RMB) freely. This makes running my business much easier because paying money to China can be done directly. Now, with Hong Kong's free RMB system, I can transfer money anytime without trouble! This makes my business smooth and stable.

In addition, the New Silk Road is not only about trade; it also helps to share culture, ideas, and traditions between countries and connect people all around the world! A long time ago, the ancient Silk Road brought people from different parts of the world together. Today, the New Silk Road does the same thing but on an even bigger scale. It is like a bridge between the worlds.

Compared to the past, the New Silk Road is now very modern. In the 19th century, trade was slow and difficult. Today, we have high-speed connectivity and digital networks. The New Silk Road is not merely a channel for merchants to earn profits, but it also shows human wisdom and creativity. It teaches us that when countries work together, everyone can benefit.

In today's globalized world, the history and experience of the Silk Road tell us that isolation leads to stagnation, while openness brings prosperity. The New Silk Road has given me a better understanding of China's economic

development and made me admire it for its achievements. It is amazing to see how this concept is changing the world and the remarkable things it has accomplished.

For me, the New Silk Road is fascinating, as it not only improved the business environment but also played a central role in global cultural, political and religious exchange. It is a story of friendship, opportunities and dreams. Furthermore, it helped me explore new markets, meet new friends, expand my global business network and bring many other benefits. I hope that through these few hundred words, I can guide you on this wonderful journey from the ancient Silk Road to the New Silk Road and bring you a vast space for imagination!

A Door to the Past

Taikoo Primary School, Wang, Fung Hoi Charlie – 12

One sunny Saturday morning, four friends—Liam, Aria, Malik, and Fiona—embarked on an adventure to explore the mysterious forest at the edge of their town. Each of them loved uncovering hidden secrets, and today promised something extraordinary. As they entered the forest, towering trees loomed over them, their branches swaying gently in the breeze. Sunlight peeped through the leaves, creating an enchanting interplay of light and shadow on the forest floor, making everything feel magical.

After walking for what seemed like hours, they reached a steep hill. The anticipation grew in their hearts, and as they climbed to the top, Fiona suddenly halted. “Look over there!” she exclaimed, pointing excitedly. On the rocky wall of the hill stood an ornate door, beautifully crafted and adorned with intricate carvings of dragons, flowers, and swirling patterns. The door looked ancient, and its brass handle gleamed invitingly in the sunlight. “Should we open it?” Malik asked, eyes wide with wonder.

“Definitely! It looks like something from a fairy tale!” Aria replied, her heart racing with excitement. They gathered around the door, filled with curiosity. Liam, ever the brave one, stepped up and grasped the brass handle. He felt a flutter of nerves as he turned it.

With a loud creak, the door swung open, revealing a dazzling light that poured out like a waterfall of colors—reds, blues, and greens swirling in a breathtaking dance. Before they could fully process the enchanting sight, a gust of wind surged from within, pulling them inside. In an instant, everything went dark.

When the darkness faded, they found themselves standing in a bustling marketplace unlike anything they had ever seen. People hurried past, shouting, laughing, and haggling over goods. The air was thick with aromas—spices, fruits, and roasted meats filled their lungs, making their mouths water. Wide-eyed, Liam spun around, trying to take in the vibrant scene. “Where are we?” he asked, his voice filled with awe and confusion.

“I have no idea!” Fiona exclaimed, her eyes sparkling like the bustling market. “But it’s amazing!”

Malik, inspired by his love for history, quickly chimed in. “I think we might be on the Silk Road!” he exclaimed, recalling stories from his books. The Silk Road was an ancient trade route that connected the East and West, allowing merchants to exchange not just goods but also cultures and ideas.

“The Silk Road? This is incredible!” Aria shouted, excitement bubbling within her. They walked deeper into the market, overwhelmed by the vibrant displays. Stalls overflowed with colorful silks, fragrant spices, and exotic fruits that glimmered in the sunlight.

But as the sun began to set, painting the sky with shades of orange and pink, a sense of unease crept into their hearts. “What about finding a way home?” Liam asked, a hint of concern in his voice. “What if we can’t get back?”

Fiona’s expression grew serious. “I don’t want to be stuck here forever!” she said, biting her lip.

Malik tried to be reassuring. “We need to find that door again. It has to be around here somewhere! We can’t give up,” he insisted. But deep inside, he felt a knot of fear twist in his stomach. How could they locate a doorway in this massive, bustling marketplace?

Malik suggested they ask the merchants for help. “Maybe they know something.”

“Good idea,” Liam agreed. “Let’s ask that merchant over there.” He pointed to a tall woman selling colorful spices, her face warm and inviting.

Gathering their courage, they approached her. “Excuse me! Do you know how we can find a door back to our home? We really need to go back!” Malik asked hopefully.

The merchant studied them thoughtfully for a moment before shaking her head gently. “Many travelers come here seeking adventure, but the paths to other worlds are not always easy to discover. You must search for what you seek, but it requires great determination—and perhaps a bit of luck.”

They thanked her, but her words left a lingering worry hanging in the air. As the sun dipped below the horizon, they felt a growing sense of isolation. The vibrant market started to feel like a maze, and each day brought them no closer to what they wanted.

Days turned into a blur of exploration, but their hope slowly faded. Each evening ended with disappointment as they attempted to retrace their steps, their minds swirling with questions and anxiety. They approached more merchants, asking if anyone had seen a glowing door, yet they were met only with friendly smiles and shaking heads.

“I miss my family,” Fiona confessed one night, looking up at the unfamiliar stars twinkling above the market. “What if they think we’re lost forever?”

One day, as they wandered further into the market, Aria suddenly noticed a narrow alleyway shimmering with a soft, inviting glow. “Look at that!” she exclaimed, her heart racing with renewed hope.

Malik’s eyes lit up. “Let’s check it out!” Together, they hurried toward the alley, their excitement bubbling over.

As they ventured deeper, they felt increasingly confident. The alleyway was lined with beautiful tapestries that seemed to dance in the soft breeze. Faced with a familiar atmosphere, Malik felt a sense of determination wash over him.

At the end of the alley, they discovered another door—identical to the one they had first opened. It radiated warmth, beckoning them from the shadows.

“It’s the door!” Liam shouted, an overwhelming sense of joy surging through him. Without hesitation, they rushed forward together, and Malik pushed the door open.

As a bright light enveloped them again, they experienced the familiar rush of wind. Suddenly, they stood back in the forest, surrounded by tall trees and chirping birds.

“We made it!” Liam yelled, leaping with joy.

The friends hugged each other tightly, relief flooding over them. It felt incredible to be home again, safe and sound.

Silk Road Elegance: Weaving a New Tapestry of Friendship

The British International School, Shanghai Puxi, Khan, Huzaifa Ahmad – 9

Around 2000 years ago, in an ancient, forgotten village close to where Gilgit Baltistan of Pakistan stands today, lived a curious, adventurous and sensitive 9-year-old boy named Huzaifa. For his entire life he had always dreamt of travelling to places he had never known existed, to discover what life is like beyond the borders. One morning, after hearing tales of a suspicious trade route from the wise ones of his town, (aka his Grandma) he packed his back—

pack with some dry fruits, spices, and a tiny piece of embroidered cloth from his mother—and accompanied by his father(also he is the chief of the village), set out on the Silk Road. Though he knew that he wanted silk, he would take anything he was offered.

This road, he had heard, connected China with faraway lands, passing through deserts, snowy mountains, and green valleys. As Huzaifa walked, he met traders with camels loaded with silk, tea, and paper, headed west to exchange for gold, glass, and strong horses. Seeing traders with silk rose his excitement level a lot. Along the way, Huzaifa met a Chinese girl named Leia. They didn't speak the same language, but they shared food, played music, and traded small items. Leia gave Huzaifa a paper kite, and Huzaifa gifted her a colorful scarf with traditional patterns from his town.

As Huzaifa and Leia travelled together, they passed through lands that are now Pakistan and China. They saw how their people exchanged more than goods; they shared stories, cultures, and ideas. After that his mind changed completely. He knew that he needed friendship. Over time, their bond definitely grew stronger and by a lot. They often said to each other, “We are two nations, but we walk one road.” They didn't know it then, but they were part of something much bigger – a friendship that would continue even thousands of years later.

Suddenly, a time wormhole appeared, someone had broken the time verse. Then Mr. Time Breaker himself (AKA Louis) pulled Huzaifa into the time wormhole. Huzaifa found himself standing in the modern world—with cars, phones, and bright cities like Shanghai all around him, as his father was posted as a senior diplomat in Shanghai. He felt lost. “Where are the caravans? The traders? The stories of friendship?” he wondered. He saw that the old Silk Road was no longer used as it once was. People were busy with machines and computers. “Has the spirit of the Silk Road vanished?” he asked himself with a feeling that he was going to faint write there, where he was standing.

Just then, Huzaifa heard his father having some strange discussion with some men in fancy suits, talking about something called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—a new project connecting countries just like the old Silk Road did, but with modern technology like highways, railways, and digital networks. Suddenly, he had a spark of hope. He dashed to his father to talk about this discussion and he was told that in the modern-day age of connectivity, China and Pakistan are collaborating with each other on a project named China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under BRI, to have both countries economy to grow. Could it be that his friendship with Leia has caused this?

His father also told him about “Silk Road Elegance: Two Nations, One Runway.” a fashion show where Pakistani and Chinese designers brought their cultures to life through clothing. Embroidered shawls from Pakistan swirled beside colorful Chinese silk gowns. It felt like the past had returned—but even more beautiful. Huzaifa also learned about the Silk Road Dining events, where dishes from both countries were shared. Imagine Chinese egg fried rice made with Pakistani Basmati rice, or Pakistani biryani made with Chinese sticky rice! There were also food festivals, cooking videos, and recipe exchanges online. He saw artists selling paintings online, children learning each other's languages with mobile apps, and festivals being celebrated together. Even though things were different, the spirit of sharing and friendship was stronger than ever before.

This is the friendship between Pakistan and China a living, growing masterpiece. The ancient Silk Road was the first thread. Today, we are all weavers—the government officials like my father, the engineers building new projects, and the designers creating beautiful art. Together, we are weaving a new tapestry that is even stronger and more colorful than before. I am very proud that my life here in Shanghai is a small part of this beautiful picture. I hope that one day, I can also contribute to this incredible bond of friendship.

The Spellbinding School Trip (To The Silk Road)

The British International School, Shanghai Puxi, Parekh, Viana Nikhil – 9

It was a nice, warm day for another adventurous Friday. Every week, on Friday, Class 4 would go on a spellbinding adventure on the School Bus of Surprises while the other classes would have a regular classroom history lesson. Class 4 students were all eager to see where they would go this time.

“Line up, kids!” Mrs. Prendi called from the entrance of the bus. It was like any other bus except it looked wilder, cooler, cheekier and more magical. Blair and her friends, Amelia and Selina, exchanged excited glances. They were surely going to go somewhere extraordinary this time, Blair thought as she remembered the day they had visited the Roman Empire just last week. As soon as they left the school gates, there was a whoosh and a magical tinkling sound as they disappeared into thin air.

“What is this place?” Selina called out impatiently.

“Looks like a desert!” Amelia whimpered.

“We are on the famous Silk Road; do you not remember our history lesson?” Mrs. Prendi queried. “Come on out now, what are you waiting for? Time to explore the rich history of the Silk Road.”

Not waiting for even a moment, the students hopped out of the bus to see the long, vast desert landscapes, bustling with traders from all over the world. They all spoke different languages, traded goods, exchanged ideas, and shared their cultures too. Also of course it was boiling hot.

Blair looked around and felt thrilled to be alongside the new sites and people. She was mesmerized. She was so lucky to be experiencing all this in real life! She rushed to Selina, who was petting a baby camel. The girls were quickly drawn to a beautiful mischievous camel, named Goldie, and started to groom the camel’s pelt.

Soon, after some persuasion, Mrs. Prendi managed to get the children to leave Goldie to rest, and also sleep themselves in their air-conditioned bus. Looking out of her window, Blair thought that the people outside must be very hot.

The next morning, Mrs. Prendi counted the students and their camels as a group of Indian traders walked up to them and offered them a ride, noticing that the class’s own camels were far too young to carry anyone.

Suddenly, Amelia gave a high-pitched cry. “Goldie the camel is missing!” Goldie’s rope lay loose on the sand, and the coloured ribbon Mrs. Prendi had tied around Goldie’s neck was gone too. The girls panicked.

Amira, the youngest of the Indian traders, hurried over. “What happened?”

“Goldie has disappeared... someone must’ve taken her,” Selina said, near tears.

“We can track her!” One of the girls shouted. “Let’s use a GPS!”

Amira looked puzzled and asked, “What is a GPS?”

“Global Positioning System,” the girls replied proudly, forgetting they were two thousand years in the past.

Amira told them that her father, Rahul, was known for being able to track any camel. “We can help you,” she said.

“If that is alright with you, we would love your company and support.” Mrs. Prendi said. The whole class looked up hopefully at Rahul.

After a long moment, Rahul nodded. “It would be my pleasure.”

The children cheered.

“Let us begin,” Rahul announced.

Rahul knelt and examined the ground. “Fresh camel tracks. And look...” He picked up a small scrap of turquoise ribbon half-buried in the sand. “This belonged to your camel, didn’t it?”

The whole class nodded.

“Then we will follow the trail,” Rahul said.

They travelled across the desert until Blair pointed at a tent. "I think I see her!"

Goldie stood tied beside a trader's stall, and the missing ribbon was tucked into a leather pouch hanging from the saddle.

As Selina ran forward, she saw the trader was none other but the famous Marco Polo.

Rahul approached him and said, "This camel belongs to these children."

Marco Polo looked startled. "I bought this one from a passing caravan. I did not know she was theirs."

Rahul held up the ribbon. "This was tied around her neck."

The trader sighed, embarrassed. "Young camels wander off. Take her. I did not mean any trouble."

They all cheered loudly in relief as Goldie bleated happily and nudged Selina.

As the class continued their journey alongside the Indian traders through deserts, into valleys, over mountains and across plains, they listened to Mrs. Prendi explaining the stories of the Silk Road. "It was a network of trade routes connecting the Mediterranean with East Asia, named for the Chinese silk that was a highly valued commodity," she said. "Its total length was about nine thousand kilometers." They bought silk scarves, spices and ceramics along the way until they finally reached Chang'an.

Suddenly, Amira shrieked, "Sandstorm! Run for your lives!"

Chaos began. Flying plants, buildings, animals and goods too. Tornadoes of sand burst throughout, destroying everything in Chang'an.

Blair gulped. Maybe this is how the Silk Road must have ended.

Just before she was pulled into the storm, Mrs. Prendi grabbed her. She yelled for everyone to cover their faces with silk scarves and get under the trees. They ran as fast as they could while Mrs. Prendi shielded them.

When everyone was safe, she rushed to join them and said quietly that it was time to go home.

The students hugged their new friends. Amira gifted Blair, Selina and Amelia gem necklaces that she had planned to trade. "I will never forget you," she said tearfully. "Us too," the girls replied as they hugged her tightly.

A minute later, Blair woke up to her mother shaking her. She was in her warm, pink bedroom, curled up in her nice and cozy bed, wearing her pink and white nightgown. She sat up, confused.

All that history, the trip to the Silk Road, the sandstorm, Goldie going missing, leaving Amira. Had it all been a dream? She wondered as she dragged herself out of bed, still dazed.

What a night!

Tarik and Liya: The Road of the Silk

The British International School, Shanghai Puxi, Park, Seohyun Claire – 10

I am a camel from the West called" Tarik." On the day of the first meeting with a 10 years old girl called Liya, the biggest gates of Chang'an were full of people, camels, and horses and all of them were busy to load silk, papers, herbs, and spices for their long journey to the West and I was one of them.

Liya was a small girl with full of courage and fear in her eyes because she had lost her parents during the war. In somehow, she was managed to join the caravan, and the leader of the caravan allowed her to help him with small things, such as carrying water and running errands.

Fate brought her here as a member of the caravan. The road ahead wasn't good enough for 10 years old girl because it was too long and the full of danger. When we glanced at each other for a long moment, I could feel that she wanted to be survived.

Then— "Pooo!" The horns were blown, and the caravan began its journey toward the West. As one step moved forward, all the crowds from all around the town waved their hands and shouted with some smiling and some crying to say goodbye to someone they loved.

We crossed the yellow plains and headed toward Dunhuang. The days were burning hot, and the nights were freezing cold. Sandstorms howled like angry spirits. Liya walked close beside me, holding the rope tight.

The leader of our caravan wasn't a bad man, but he never treated Liya like a child either. To him, she was just a helper—someone to fetch water and carry messages. Liya worked hard as she could and kept walking.

In Dunhuang, we met monks returning from India. They carried thick books wrapped in cloth.

Liya asked one monk, "Did you go all that way just to bring back these books?"

The monk smiled kindly. "We bring back the words of truth," he said softly. "They help people when they feel lost or sad. Everyone has a little shining gem in their heart. But to make it shine, we must believe and search for the truth."

I wondered if Liya really understood those deep words. But she looked thoughtful and quiet after that. She was already beginning to see that this road was not just about gold and silk—it was also about finding something precious inside the heart.

We left the flat lands and reached the snowy mountains. The air was cold. One night, when the moon was hidden, a terrible sound echoed.

wolves!

Hungry wolves tore out of the dark with bright yellow eyes. They attacked our caravan. Cries filled the night. Some people were hurt. Some never got up again. Fear spread through everyone. Many said, "It's over. We can't go on."

But in our caravan, there was a kind man who knew medicine. He opened his small bag of herbs and began to heal the wounded. He said, "If we care for one another, we can keep going."

Liya stayed beside him, bringing water and learning the names of the herbs. Her small hands shook, but she didn't run away. I could see something changing in her eyes—a quiet strength, the kind that grows when people help each other. When the doctor's words spread, hope returned. The people started to get up. They began fixing saddles, washing wounds, and preparing to move on.

After the wolf attack, our caravan was only half its size. But those who were left stood up again. The traders, the doctor, and camels like me—we all had to keep going. Liya looked tired but determined.

She whispered to me, "Tarik, let's go. If we stay together, the road won't end."

Her voice was small but full of light. So, we walked again and soon the snow turned to sand. We had reached the edge of the great desert, the Taklamakan, the biggest desert in the world. The people called it "the place you enter but never leave." The hot wind burned our faces. The sky was endless and empty. Even the air felt heavy, but Liya didn't stop walking.

The man's name was Santiago. We met him in the middle of the desert. He looked different from the traders and spoke another language. Luckily, we had a man who could translate. Santiago told us how to avoid thieves hiding near the next oasis. Our leader thanked him and shared some of our food.

Liya looked at Santiago with bright, curious eyes. That night, under the stars, the two of them sat beside me and talked using gestures. Santiago told his stories—about his home far away, about the sheep he once kept, and about a dream that told him to look for a treasure near the pyramids.

They were both travellers trying to find something precious.

Before Santiago left, he said to Liya,

“When you really want something, all the universe will help you to achieve it. Just know what you want and never give up. Then the universe will guide you.”

Liya never forgot his words. Even when the wind was cruel and the sand burned our feet, she whispered them to herself at night.

After crossing many more deserts and a village, we finally reached Persia. The air smelled sweet with spice and flowers, and the colours of the markets were bright.

The traders sold the silk and jewels they had carried all the way from Chang'an. They also bought new and mysterious things to bring back. Liya worked beside the leader, writing lists, she wasn't the little girl anymore, she was almost twelve now, taller, stronger, and wiser.

I was very old. I knew my time on the road was ending. People gave me a quiet place to rest near the market. One evening, Liya came and put her hand gently on my neck. Her hand was warm and steady. “Tarik,” she said softly, “I couldn't have come this far without you. You were my friend, family, and best teacher.”

I made a deep sound in my throat. Her kind eyes were full of tears but also full of light. I closed my eyes and felt peaceful. I knew Liya would keep walking her own road.

One day she would lead a caravan, or like Santiago, she would go look for her own treasure.

Whatever she chose, I believed she would always remember the lessons she had learned on the Silk Road.

Ellie's Great Adventure to Silk Road

Once upon a time, there was an eight-year-old girl named Ellie who lived in a beautiful, lively town in India. She was very smart and always wanted to discover new things. Her father was a cook, and he was especially good at making curry, but he was never satisfied with the curry he made. He dreamed of making the world's best curry, but he didn't know how to achieve his goal. Every day, Ellie watched her father try new ingredients and different cooking methods, but the food never had the special taste he was looking for.

One day, Ellie's father looked very upset. Ellie walked over and asked, "Dad, why are you so depressed?" Her dad sighed and said, "I tried and tried, but it's still not working. I'll never be able to make the most delicious curry in the world." Ellie smiled gently and said, "Don't give up so soon. Even if you can't make the best curry, you are still the best father in the world."

Suddenly, an idea popped into Ellie's head. "Maybe we could go to the Silk Road! Yesterday, I heard from a traveler that people from all over the world communicate there. They must have a lot of new spices and flavors that we could try!"

Her father's eyes sparkled with excitement. "That's a fantastic idea, Ellie!"

So, Ellie and her family packed their bags and set off on an exciting adventure to the Silk Road.

The journey was not easy. First, they faced a major problem—water shortage. The sun was burning, and they felt as if they were trapped in a giant oven. The whole family felt their skin was as hot as a red-hot frying pan on which one could fry eggs.

"What's that?" Ellie's dad said in shock. The sand was rustling, and a giant, blazing red snake raised its head. Its eyes were as terrifying as a devil's, and its skin was as red as the blood moon. The snake was as gigantic as a tall building. Ellie was extremely shocked because she had never seen such a huge snake in her entire life.

Ellie's family began to scream out of fear, but their reaction made the snake furious. Then, a sharp laser shot from a ruby on its head towards Ellie's family. They started to run, but the problem of how to stop the laser remained.

As the snake slithered towards Ellie's family, Ellie suddenly noticed a hole. It was not large, but it was big enough for the entire family to take shelter in. Their minds were almost rotted with fear, but intuition told them that there would always be light ahead.

In despair, they saw several indistinct figures approaching them. Gradually, they realized that this was a team from China. When Ellie's family saw the Chinese team, they felt like they had seen the last hope in this terrible situation.

At that dangerous moment, a man from China opened his bag, took out some red-yellow stones, and threw them at the snake. The snake was startled by the sudden movement, and the strong scent from the stones made it twist and hiss in discomfort. Slowly, it stopped moving and lay still. The ruby fell from the snake. Ellie's father picked up the ruby and it suddenly turned into a burst of water, creating a beautiful oasis right in front of everyone. The problem of water shortage was finally solved as well. Ellie's family believed it was a gift from God.

Everyone had a look of surprise on their faces and hugged each other excitedly. They formed a circle beside the oasis, and they laughed, clapped, and cheered, celebrating their victory.

They tried to communicate with each other, but it was difficult because they spoke different languages. The adults sat in silence, exchanging awkward smiles. Then their eyes drifted toward the two girls sitting nearby, who were chatting away happily as if nothing could bother them. By using body language and drawings in the sand, Ellie finally learned that the little girl from China was named Qian Qian. They became very close friends.

The next day, Ellie's family and the Chinese team packed their bags and set off once again on a journey along the historically significant route—the Silk Road. The two teams walked and walked until finally they reached their destinations.

Ellie told Qian Qian that she wanted to find something tasty that could enhance her father's curry. Qian Qian suggested that Ellie try some Chinese spices, and Ellie suddenly had a moment of enlightenment. Ellie's father found a great shop and bought some Chinese spices. When Ellie and her father added the spices to the curry, something magical seemed to happen. The aroma filled in the air, and Ellie took a bite. "It's so yummy" said Ellie in amazement. Ellie turned to her father and said "This is it! The 'tasty stuff' that we've been looking for!" The Silk Road had given Ellie new friends, a chance to taste new foods and to see new things.

When Ellie and her family returned to the lively town, they couldn't stop talking about their amazing adventure on the Silk Road. The Chinese spices became the secret ingredient in her father's famous curry. Every customer who tried it smiled and asked for more. People came from far away just to taste the special dish.

Ellie often wrote letters to Qian Qian, telling her about her life and their successful curry. She even sent some of the delicious curry in a jar with detailed instructions on how to make it to Qian Qian. The two girls promised to meet again one day and explore more of the world together.

Ellie learned that sometimes the best treasures are not found in shops, but in unbeatable courage, warm friendships, and shared kindness. Whenever she smelled the fragrant curry cooking, she remembered the brave Chinese team, the oasis in the desert, and the exciting journey to the Silk Road that changed their lives forever.

The Journey of Silk

The International School of Macao, Choi, Pak Long Lonzo – 9

Sunlight streamed through the wooden shutters of the weaving room. A small cluster of silkworms nibbled their breakfast: fresh mulberry leaves. The soft sound of chewing blended with the chatter of young silk weavers and the whistling wind, creating a gentle, comforting tune.

The master weaver lifted me carefully from the loom. Her hands were rough from years of work, yet her touch was soft and full of pride.

"You are my joy and pride," she whispered through red eyes and parched lips.

I was folded gently and placed in a wooden chest lined with cotton.

That was the moment my journey began.

The market of Chang'an was lively and grand—like a festival that never ended. Merchants shouted to advertise their goods, and the air was filled with scent after scent: hot dumplings, roasted duck, exotic spices, and sweet tea. Tables were covered with treasures—blue and white porcelain, shining bronze mirrors, and colorful embroidered fabrics.

“Gorgeous Tang Sancai!” hollered a shopkeeper.

“Yummy dim sum and hot tea!” shouted a restaurant owner.

I was placed carefully on a fine oak table. Days turned into weeks. Other silks were purchased quickly and taken away to begin their adventures. People admired me and whispered that I was beautiful—yet too expensive.

So I waited.

Finally, one morning, a wealthy merchant stopped in front of me. His eyes widened.

“This,” he said, “will make a perfect gift for the Doge of Venice!”

Before I could blink, I was purchased, rolled carefully, and tucked safely into the merchant's leather bag. From that moment on, I never left his side.

At dawn the next day, a large caravan prepared for departure. Hundreds of men loaded camels with supplies: dried meat, dates, apricots, and gallons of water. Precious goods—jade carvings, porcelain bowls, fragrant tea, scrolls, and silk like me—were wrapped carefully in layers of fabric and rope.

The merchant climbed onto the first camel. He looked back at his workers and bellowed:

“Our journey shall begin!”

The caravan marched forward. The camels' padded feet kicked up dirt and sand, creating a swirl of heat and motion around the travelers. Chang'an slowly disappeared into the distance.

Scorching days burned skin, freezing nights chilled bones, and sandstorms sometimes forced the caravan to stop. After many days, a small dot appeared on the horizon.

It was Dunhuang—home of the famous Mogao Caves, where thousands of Buddha statues rested inside stone temples. Travelers exchanged news from distant lands while monks prayed for peace. I heard the merchant murmur:

“Buddhas, protect our men and bless our faithful camels with water.”

After a short rest, the caravan entered the vast Taklamakan Desert.

Miles and miles of shimmering golden sand stretched ahead. Beautiful—but dangerous. In the heat, skin peeled and sweat poured down. At night, the cold cracked lips and numbed fingers. Yet still, we pressed on.

Finally, we reached Kashgar.

Kashgar was a crowded crossroads where cultures met: Chinese, Persians, and Uyghurs all lived and traded together. Colorful fabrics, spices, precious stones, and carved wood filled the marketplace. The caravan men finally enjoyed hot laghman—hand-pulled noodles served with meat, vegetables, and tomatoes.

Beyond Kashgar stood the towering Tian Shan Mountains. Their lakes were clear as crystal, and their meadows bloomed with flowers and the camels happily munched. After climbing and crossing rivers and rocky trails, we eventually reached Merv—a city of scholars.

Here, mathematicians, poets, and philosophers talked joyfully in shaded courtyards while others enjoyed sweet melons. The caravan restocked bread, rice, and meat before continuing toward Damascus.

More mountains and deserts passed beneath the camels’ steady footsteps until we finally reached Damascus, famous for its master craftsmen.

Shops overflowed with strong steel blades and fine leather goods. The merchant traded some silk for shining armor and steel swords—but I remained close, still guarded inside his personal bag.

A nobleman hosted a great banquet for the travelers. They ate enormous portions of lamb flavored with clove, saffron, and pepper. They enjoyed pastries, nuts, and sweet jams. Stories filled the hall—stories about families, myths, and lands far beyond the horizon.

Soon after, the merchant boarded a ship on the Mediterranean Sea. Moonlight shimmered on the water as the ship sailed westward.

When we reached Venice, gondolas carried the goods along shining canals to the palace.

The merchant presented me to the Doge as a royal treasure—a symbol of wealth and status. I hung proudly in a magnificent room filled with mahogany furniture, decorated walls, and soft velvet sofas. One wall displayed heroic battle scenes. Another held a giant polished mirror.

For the first time, I saw myself clearly.

I was beautiful.

I remained in the palace for many years.

Then came chaos.

Muffled cries. Heavy footsteps. Horses galloped. Smoke filled the air. A frightened servant rushed into the room, gathering valuables. He grabbed me and stuffed me into a wooden crate filled with scrolls, books, and coins.

He whispered,

“Someday, someone will want to remember.”

The crate was carried away and buried deep beneath desert sands.

Centuries passed.

Then one day—

Clink. Clang. Clink.

Sunlight burst through the darkness.

An archaeologist gasped.

“Wow... what a beautiful treasure.”

Once, I traveled in a caravan.

Now, I travel in a specimen box.

I have returned to Xi'an—once known as Chang'an. I am carefully displayed inside a grand museum.

Once, I was a treasure.

Now, I am a testimony—welcoming people from around the world, sharing friendship, culture, and the long, unforgettable story of the Silk Road.

A BLACK CAT'S JOURNEY ON THE SILK ROAD

The International School of Macao, Chu, Justin – 11

Hi! My name is Ralph. I was a black cat and today I am telling you my life before I went to the heavens. Long ago, traders crossed the deserts and seas carrying grain, spices, and silk. Hidden along their cargo were cats. These smart travelers followed the mice that stole grain and supplies, forming their place besides merchants on every journey. As traders moved between China, Asia, The Middle East, and Europe. Cats went with them spreading across continents. They became the silent travelers of the silk road, guarding grain, controlling pests, and becoming symbols of good fortune.

Now I am telling you my thoughts during my life and try to imagine a vast network of routes stretching from China to the Mediterranean, booming with traders, camels, and treasures. This was the silk road, established around 130 BC, which became the lifeline of ancient globalization. It was not just silk that traveled these paths. Spices, gold, glassware, religions, and inventions were passed on, shaping ancient cities. The silk road introduced paper to the west and Buddhism to the east, while cities like Bursa, Turkey flourished as trade hubs. Its legacy stands, reminding us how exchange can transform the world.

I saw some traders put poison in their spices. I wondered why they would do that. Now I am telling you about what happened in this event of wonder. Did you know merchants once turned spices into weapons?! Picture this, rival traders putting rare spices with deadly toxins. Turning precious cargo into lethal traps. Unsuspecting buyers sometimes entire families fell victim to poisoned cinnamon or other exotic spices. Sparking violent battles between merchant families. These acts of ruin didn't just cost lives, but also set off waves of distrust, as everyone wondered if their next meal or deal would be their last. These spice merchants were the real villains of ancient business, and their poison plans nearly brought trade routes to a halt.

I saw that the Silk Road was a place that was not easy to go onto. There were many dangers. Such as the spice bombs and the scammers of the silk road, but despite all that the silk road still managed to thrive with bustling markets, shops, and trade posts. There were different kinds of trade stops, hubs and guard posts. The trade posts were divided into 3 main categories. The basic trade posts, the more advanced markets, and the entire city hubs and giant outdoor malls. Then there are the guard posts. They were also divided into categories. Small guard posts/Checkpoints, Signal towers, Fortified walls, reinforced houses, Forts, and Garrisons. These helped prevent fights and battles between cities and families. I also saw that the signal towers made a lot of noise and woke me

up in the middle of the night many times! Although they were very noisy (and so were my masters) they actually prevented intruders from penetrating my cozy bed beside my masters bed. So the next time your cat curls by a window, imagine it once walked the silk road and got carried by camels in cargo.

The Wonders Of The Silk Road

The International School of Macao, Dai, William – 9

NO SUBMISSION

Carson's last countries

The International School of Macao, Lo, Gabriel Lucas – 11

Carson had always dreamed of adventure. At 79 years old, he had already traveled along the Silk Road, visiting places like China, Korea, and Japan. However, he felt there were still many countries he hadn't seen and he wanted to share his experiences and treasures with his family.

One morning, Carson packed his bags for his final journey. He got his guitar, some food, and his horse. He felt nervous, and excited at the same time. He wanted to make the adventure more extreme. \Carson rode along the ancient roads. He played his guitar, the music made his horse joyful as well. "This is life!" he thought, smiling.

That night, he set up camp near a peaceful lake. He saw a wishing start, and wished that his children could have also come. Weeks passed as Carson traveled through mountains and valleys. He encountered many friendly people who welcomed him with warm smiles and delicious food. However, one unfortunate day, after heavy rain, his horse slipped on a muddy path and fell. Carson rushed to help but quickly realized the horse wouldn't make the cut.

Heartbroken, he felt more alone than ever. "I have to keep going," he told himself, wiping away his tears. There was no turning back, he needed to complete the journey.

With hope in his soul, Carson set out on foot toward Turkey. On his travels, he reached a small village in Iran and met a kind man named Amir. They exchanged goods and stories, and Carson felt joyed by the friendship. In exchange for some tea bags he had saved, Amir offered him jars of fragrant spices.

"Thank you," Carson said, grateful for this opportunity. He realized how precious these moments were and how they added to his journey.

After days of walking, Carson finally reached Turkey. The market was alive with music and people. He wandered through the market, his eyes got sucked into a stunning carpet, covered with colourful patterns and colors that seemed to come straight out of Van Gogh art pieces.

"This will be perfect for my kids," he thought, imagining their joy. He approached the vendor, shared stories of his travels, and after some quick bargaining, he managed to get the carpet.

That night, he rested in an abandoned cozy shed near the main road. After weeks of exploration, Carson's heart ached for home. Walking the familiar paths back, he felt a mix of happiness, but at the same time sadness. He missed Amir, the vendor and a lot more. Slowly he headed back to his home town in Russia. Finally, as he approached his village, the sun set in a beautiful mix of purple and pink.

“Dad!” his children shouted when they spotted him and ran toward him with open arms. He knelt down, their laughter filled his ears as he hugged them. “I missed you all so much!” he exclaimed, joyfully lifting them into the air.

Once inside, Carson gathered his family around the fireplace. He displayed the carpet, its colors glowing. “This is from Turkey,” he said proudly. “It tells stories of the people I met and the places I’ve been.”

His children listened wide-eyed as he retold tales of friendly villagers, delicious foods, and even the funny moment he chased a goat through a field. They laughed and laughed, feeling as if they were right there with him.

As the fire crackled and sparks danced into the night sky, Carson felt a deep sense of happiness. He realized that while he had collected treasures along the way, the most valuable moments were those spent with his family, sharing stories and laughter.

That night, as they all tucked in, Carson knew that every adventure led him back to where he truly belonged. With his children by his side and joy surrounding him, he felt like the luckiest man alive in the world.

And so, with memories of his travels and the love provided by his family, Carson looked forward to the next part of his life. There were always new stories to tell and new adventures to be together, as a family.

The Silk Road

The International School of Macao, Rao, Qianqian Jojo – 9

Look, a statue!” One of the merchants yelled. “Look at it! A man holding flowers?!” Another merchant laughed. The other merchants except for Elara and her parents all laughed at the joke. Elara’s father sighs “Stop! This is a bad idea, a really bad one, You don’t want to insult a god.” None of the merchants listened to Elara’s father and instead, they laughed at him “Come on! He’s just a man holding flowers!” Elara look around the building and asked “is this a temple?” Elara pointed at the statue “and is that a god?” Elara’s Zephyrus.” Elara saw paintings on the wall that show a god blowing wind to revive a nymph.

The group continue their journey to Greece to trade for wine, Elara and her parents were merchants from the capital of Tang dynasty—Chang An. Elara’s father began to tell Elara the story of Zephyrus “Zephyrus was the god of west wind. He has control over the west wind...” Elara’s father continue “...he was also called one the Aneomi, there are three other gods: Boreas, the god of north wind, Eurus, the god of east wind, Notus, the god of south wind, They control the wind and they are very powerful, we should respect the gods...” Before Elara’s father finished, they heard a merchant yelling “Hide! There is a sandstorm coming!” The merchants all froze mid-laugh and began finding a place to hide.

After the sandstorm, Elara heard her mom crying “Elara! Where are you! Elara looked around and spotted her mother “I’m here!” Elara ran toward her mother and her mother asked “Did you see your dad?” Elara looked around and found her father’s wind hood near a pile of sand. “Mom, dad is here!” The two began to dig. After a few minutes of digging, Elara and her mother pull her father out and put him onto one of the two camels they had, Elara’s father was in a coma. Elara feeds her father some water but it doesn’t work. Elara’s mother whimpered “We have to get to Greece, quick!” Elara looked around, trying to find a town, there was nothing but a tree about 13m tall with light grayish-brown barks. Elara recognized the tree as the desert poplar. Elara ran toward the tree as she called her mother “Mom, I found desert poplar, we can have more water now!” Elara began to dig for the root where she can get water.

As the night fell, Elara's father was still in a coma. Without Elara's father, they wouldn't know which direction to go! Elara looked up into the sky and saw stars and began to try to locate the Taurus, because it rose in the east and set in the west. After a few minutes, Elara finally saw the Taurus—a group of stars that make a shape of a bull, and she yelled in joy “Mom! I found it!”. Elara's mother rushed toward Elara “So, which way do we go?” Elara pointed toward the star “we follow it.” Elara's mother looked at Elara's father and nodded, “the faster we get to Greece, the better.”

After a few nights of following the Taurus, Elara's father was finally awake. At the very moment Elara's father was awake, he began murmuring about: it must be a curse by him. Elara looked at her father and asked “Dad, who is the one you are talking about that cursed us?” Elara's father looked at Elara seriously “Zephyrus—God of the west wind!” Elara's mother ran toward the two, with a smile on her face “I think we are near Greece!” Elara's mother looks at Elara and gives her a big smile “If it weren't for following Taurus, we would still be in the middle of nowhere...well, the middle of a desert.”

After another few nights of traveling, Elara and her parents finally arrived at their destination—Greece. There are temples of gods almost everywhere. At the moment Elara's father steps into Greece, he runs toward a temple—Zephyrus's temple. Elara's father kneels in front of the statue, it was almost the same as the statue in the temple in the middle of the desert. Elara's father began to pray to the god “Lord Zephyrus, please forgive my family and the other merchants, we are from Chang An. We bring Chinese tea, porcelain and silk to Greece and take wine and spices back to Chang An. Most people in my group travel to Greece and see Greek gods for the first time. They don't mean to offend you. I promise I will tell stories of you to people in Chang An!”

At last, Elara and her parents were back in Chang A with tons of wines and spices from Greece. On the way back, there wasn't any sandstorm or any danger. They arrived in Chang An safe and sound. Elara's father began to tell stories about Zephyrus in a tea house, just like how he had promised.

The Silk Road(Time Travel)

The International School of Macao, Wong, Lap Fong Dawson – 11

The classroom buzzed with excitement as sunlight streamed through the windows looking as if it was honey going all over the maps. The maps of the ancient trade routes were happily being read by the other classmates. I put my hands over the jagged remains of the glass vase made of porcelain. Suddenly, the world started trembling and everything faded black...

The trip to Greece is very tiring, the map routes are very confusing. I check if the 139 vases and paintings are still intact. As I check, the busy chatter in Jingquan put an invisible blanket around my caravan. I hope this trip will keep us in business. As we trudge toward, the first canversais, I look around, the warm desert as we start to get close to the canversais.

When I woke up, I felt as if I had gone through a metal detector and my brain is made out of metal. I stand up and look around, I am in a building with falling debris everywhere. As I walk out of the building that was once my classroom, I see a lot of people and camels carrying lots of packages. I smell some meat cooking and I am filled with hunger, but I don't have any money so I have to starve. There are also stalls that sell meat pies. I walk around this strange neighborhood and that is when I realize that this is the medieval times, when the silk road was still open...

As we got closer and closer to Greece, the desert was starting to turn into a village that was built into the sand. When we got to the village I started to check the packages again to see if any of them broke and if they broke, our family will start to collapse under big chain markets. As soon as I thought that one of the vases was broken.

As night starts to come, I go back to the mysterious building and I sleep there, as I wander into sleep, I still hear footsteps walking outside. I wonder how I am going to get back to the normal world. Then another pair of thundering footsteps come, and walking towards me as I pretend to sleep, the person drags me outside and leaves me on the hard rock of the floor.

I remember the harsh things my dad said "If you break even one of the vases, we might be going to be beggars." I thought we would be beggars until a passerby gave me some money as he said "the conditions here are too harsh for me, here you go," I used the rest of my strength to push myself towards the last conversais.

I am woken up to the sounds of camels and busy chattering of the town, I walk around wondering if I will ever go back to school or home. I wander around the neighborhood and see a boy about the same age as me tugging a ton of boxes with vases and paintings. He looks at me and looks back towards the customer. He is paid a LOT of cash for his age.

I am happy because my first customer in Greece paid me 500 dollars. The girl stares at the thick wad of cash. My parents are going to be very happy with the money I have received. The girl follows me around Greece, as I give the packages out to the customers, we exchange glances. When I'm about to give out one of the last packages, she bumps into me and I say sorry.

A figure loomed at the end of the intersection, it charged straight at me making the world turn dark with no light. He dragged me across the floor and threw me onto a smooth floor. Heavy footsteps faded away and I was alone in the darkness. A sudden yelp when I touched an object scared the fright out of me, it was the same voice of that boy with a lot of money. I stand up, I try to remove the black hood but it is tight. I pull with all my might and it comes off. I see nothing but darkness except for a tiny stream of light coming from the wall. I find a switch, when I press it, it turns on the light.

I keep trying to take off the mask on the floor but it doesn't come off, the girl suddenly clicks something and through a tiny hole, I can see the outside. I ask the girl to help me take off my mask object. When the mask is taken care of, I say my name: "I'm leili, who are you?"

"I'm alexandra," she replies. "Lets get out of here,"

Leili finds a door and we step out of the building. He runs toward his camel and bag of stuff. He gives me a broken vase but I decline saying that he could stick them together. He buys some resin, and tries to glue them together without touching it, but then he fails, he lets me try and I successfully stick together three pieces before it crumbles in my hands. Some fall onto the floor but I can't find them.

I thank Alexandra for her journey and escaping the building with me, instead of a happy smile she frowns, she is wondering how she can go home.

"What do you mean? You can come with me," I say,

"What no! I'm not from here, I'm from the year 2025!" she exclaimed,

“Well how did you get here?” I ask

“By touching a similar vase of that one” pointing to the broken one,

“Well try touching it to see if you go back” I reply.

Alexandra touches the broken vase and her body starts to get smaller and smaller and smaller.

“Well bye, nice meeting you!” she loudly shouts,

Then she disappeared into thin air.

I'm back in the classroom, with a special piece of porcelain from Leili.

Survival on the Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Cao, Angela – 8

My name is Angel, a 9-year-old girl with a love for adventure. This autumn, I'm travelling on the ancient Silk Road with my mom and dad, who are silk merchants, and a big trade caravan led by Uncle Ali, a kind man with a bushy beard who's travelled the Silk Road a hundred times. Our caravan has twenty camels, each loaded with colourful silk scarves, boxes of fragrant green tea, and jars of sweet dried apricots. My favourite camel is Milk—she has soft brown fur, big, gentle eyes, and a warm nose that nuzzles my hand when I feed her dates. We've been travelling for two weeks, crossing golden dunes and small desert villages, and every day brings a new sight or sound. One evening, as we entered a narrow mountain pass called the “Stone Gate,” I had no idea an exciting adventure was waiting for us.

The sun was slowly sinking below the Rocky Mountains, painting the sky in shades of pink and orange. The pass was lined with tall, jagged rocks that looked like giant teeth, and the cold wind whistled through the cracks, making a spooky howling sound. Below us was a deep valley filled with sharp boulders, and our camels plodded slowly on the rough path, their bells tinkling softly like a quiet song. “Stay close to the caravan, Angela,” Mom said, taking my hand. “This pass is beautiful but dangerous after dark.” Dad walked ahead with Uncle Ali, holding a torch to light the way, and I stuck close to Milk, feeling safe by her side.

Suddenly, Milk stopped in her tracks and let out a loud, nervous neigh. She raised her head, ears pricked forward, and stamped her hooves on the ground. I looked up and saw dark clouds rolling toward us fast, covering the stars in the blink of an eye. The wind picked up, blowing sand into my face, and I heard Uncle Ali shout, “Sandstorm! Everyone gathers around the camels!”

Panic spread through the caravan as the storm got closer. The sky turned black, and the wind roared like a wild lion, carrying a wall of sand that blocked out everything. Mom and Dad pulled me into a tight hug, and we huddled with the other travellers in a circle around the camels. My heart was pounding so hard I could hear it in my ears, and I buried my face in Milk's soft fur. “It's okay, Angela,” Dad whispered. “Stick together, and we'll be safe.”

I remembered something Uncle Ali told us earlier: in a sandstorm, the worst thing is getting separated from the group. So, I yelled over the wind, “Everyone hold hands! Don't let go!” The travellers linked their hands together, making a strong circle, and we closed our eyes, pressing close to the camels. Milk stood still, her body shielding me from the worst of the wind, and I held onto her reins tightly. The sand hit our faces like tiny needles, and the wind howled for what felt like hours, but we didn't let go of each other's hands.

Finally, the wind died down, and the sand stopped flying. We slowly opened our eyes, and the first light of dawn was breaking over the mountains. The rocky pass looked calm now, and the air was fresh and clean. Everyone cheered, hugging each other in relief—we were all safe! Milk nuzzled my cheek, and I fed her a sweet date to thank her for protecting me. Uncle Ali clapped his hands and smiled. “You were very brave, Angela. Your idea to hold hands saved us from getting lost!”

After resting and drinking some water, we continued our journey through the Stone Gate pass. A few days later, we reached a busy market town in northern India, where colourful tents lined the streets, and merchants called out their wares in loud, cheerful voices. We traded our silk and tea for bags of spicy cinnamon, bright blue pottery, and soft woollen blankets. Mom and Dad bought me a small silver elephant figurine as a souvenir, and I kept it in my pocket, close to my heart.

When our trading was done, we started the long journey back home. As we crossed the desert again, I looked at the starry sky and thought about our adventure in the Stone Gate pass. I learned that courage isn’t about being fearless—it’s about holding on to your friends and family when things get scary. Milk walked beside me, her bells tinkling, and I knew this Silk Road adventure would be a story I’d tell for the rest of my life. When we finally arrived home, I hung the elephant figurine on my bedroom wall, and every time I look at it, I remember the sandstorm, the camels, and the amazing friends we made on the Silk Road.

The Camel Journey

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Liu, Hannah – 8

A long time ago, it was a long way from China to the west. People travelled and called it the Silk Road. It was not as wide and flat as right now.

There was a camel caravan, the leader called Grandpa Sam was an old and experienced guy, he was more than 60 years old, and walked along the silk road many times, he always told his stories to us.

There were around 20 camels in the caravan, I was one of them, my name is Momo, the youngest one. I had never gone to silk road before.

At the beginning we had enough food and water, the weather was also good. As we went farther west, there were less plants and rivers. It was hotter and drier; there was more sand.

One Evening, it suddenly turned dark, strong winds were coming. Sam shouted” it was a sandstorm”, I felt very scared and could hardly open my eyes, Grandpa Sam told us to calm down and follow him. He led us to big rocks so we could cover our heads with clothes and sit together. We could hear nothing but the sound of the storm and sands going past us

It was a long time since I woke up, I saw the others hidden by sand, and we found the shape of desert around us all changed, we were lost.

Grandpa Sam told us not to be sad, he said we could find the direction by the sun, and the camels could help us to find water. We walked for a long time, and the weather was so hot that it was hard to move on. Sam encouraged us. Finally, I got a little smell of water, it means the water is not far. We were excited and ran ahead, we found the oasis.

We walked through the desert and arrived in the west. People there were surprised by such beautiful silk, and they like our tea very much, we also took back their spices and diamonds.

Later, we went along the Silk Road several times, we would always think of Grandpa Sam who helped us overcome the troubles. I became brave and wise, and prepared to find the way out when we met difficulties.

The Silk Road Adventure of Andy's Caravan

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Ma, Ian – 8

Andy was smart and energetic, but also a bit of a naughty monkey. He had two best friends, Henry and Sandy. Henry was an extremely fat, silent hippo and Sandy was a strong and powerful Iron Camel. They grew up together, they played together, they studied together and they read together, but their favourite activity was going on adventures! They usually played adventure games in the park near their home. Andy's family owned a huge, beautiful tea garden with a wide variety of tea. A few years later, they really wanted to make a lot of money because they could help poor families. Andy had a good idea, they could sell the tea all over the world through the Silk Road.

The next morning, they packed up 100 large boxes of tea. They bought some horses to carry the boxes. They also brought some food, three bottles of water and plenty of money. After they had a tasty breakfast, they started their adventure on a winter morning. They felt so excited!

A few weeks later, the crew arrived in Xingjiang and saw a huge snowy mountain, the largest mountain they had ever seen. Andy, Sandy and Henry climbed up the mountain slowly. They found that as they climbed higher, the temperature became colder and colder, the snow also became thicker.

"It's freezing!" they cried.

"If the weather gets worse, we won't be able to see anything!" Sandy shouted, "We will get lost!"

Suddenly, a snow leopard appeared and said "Do you need help?"

"Can you lead us off this mountain?" asked Andy.

"No problem! I know a shortcut to get out quickly!" said the snow leopard.

A few days later, they had almost got off the mountain, but the horses were extremely tired.

"I pull these heavy boxes." said Sandy.

At last, they walked off the mountain.

"Thank you for your help, snow leopard." Andy said "This is our black tea, we hope you like it!"

The crew said goodbye to the snow leopard and kept traveling.

It was summer when they arrived in the Middle East. The desert was so hot and vast. It almost burnt them alive.

A group of bandits, the Arabian wolves, found this caravan and tried to rob them.

"Stop walking right now and give us all your money!" Shouted the head of the bandits.

“We can’t give you our money, but we can give few leaves of black tea if you want.” said Henry.

“How dare you! We don’t want your black tea! We want your money! As you know, we are deadly predators!” yelled the wolves, and showed their powerful jaws.

“Let’s make a deal.” Andy said “If you guard us to Turkey, we will give you all of our money, but if you don’t, we will destroy you all!”

The wolves thought that it was a great deal, so they agreed to protect them.

After that, they went to Turkey safely. Andy gave his money to the bandits as he promised and also gave them plenty of black tea to try.

They had no money left, so they couldn’t buy a ship to cross the sea. Luckily, they found a broken ship near the dock. They decided to fix it. Another month later, they finished fixing the ship and were ready to sail across the Aegean Sea.

However, the caravan just travelled half the way. A storm suddenly came and the ship started to leak. Sandy and Andy were very scared.

“Don’t worry!” said Henry, “I will push the ship to Rome!” Henry jumped into the sea bravely and used his strong arms to push the ship.

Finally, they made it to Rome! They sold the black tea to the markets in the Rome. The Italians really liked the Chinese black tea. The caravan made a lot of money and became very famous. A few months later, the snow leopard and the wolves asked for some more black tea. The Chinese black tea was successfully sold to the whole world! The money they earned also helped many poor families!

The Lost Treasure

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Tang, Daniel – 8

Ali, Amy and Jack are very good friends. Ali is a clever girl who has a lot of knowledge. Amy is a careful girl. Jack is a boy who likes to play football, and they are all 9 years old. They all love ancient stories, especially tales about the Silk Road.

One day, Amy found an ancient storybook about the Silk Road and they were captivated by it. The book describes the Silk Road as an old trade route connecting ancient China with other countries.

Chinese people sent silk, porcelain and tea to other countries. They also brought back grapes, walnuts and jewels from abroad. It helped Chinese and foreign people share culture and skills, and it was a bridge for friendly exchanges between China and the world.

When they finished reading, suddenly Ali found out there is a crinkly old map inside the cover of the book. “It’s a Silk Road treasure map!” She yells. Amy and Jack were so excited, they said, “Let’s go on a treasure hunt!”

The three friends packed their luggage with bread, water and the equipment they needed. They took a bus to a small town on the old Silk Road. The town is surrounded by desert. The sun is hot, and the wind blows sand into their hair, but they don’t mind.

They walked ahead to the west and a sandstorm blew so hard that they had to find somewhere to hide. After the sandstorm, they kept following the direction of the map. One hour later, Ali points to a row of old mud-brick houses, “Traders used to rest here hundreds of years ago,” she says. Jack waved his scanner and it started to make a sound, “Beep! Beep!” it went. “There’s something special under this big stone!” Jack shouted.

They ran to the stone and pushed with all their might. It rolled away and a small hole appeared. Inside the hole was a tiny key with a camel carved on it.” This must open the treasure chest!” Amy said, her eyes shining.

The map leads them to an old well at the edge of the houses. The well is half-filled with sand. Ali remembers the story of the book: "The Silk Road's best treasures aren't gold— they're memories." At the same time, Jack spotted a small metal box hidden behind the well's wall. The camel key fit perfectly.

They hold their breath as Amy opens the box. Inside, there was no shining gold or sparkly jewels. Instead, there was a piece of silk from China, a spice pod from India, a coin from Rome and a note.

The note said: "The real treasure of the Silk Road is the friends you meet and the stories you share. "Amy, Ali and Jack looked at each other and smiled happily.

On their way home, they stopped to share bread with a traveller. Ali told stories of Silk Road traders, Jack showed off his scanner, and Amy read the note again. They knew they didn't find gold, but they found something much better – an adventure they'd never forget, and friendships stronger than ever.

That night, they put the treasure box in their secret play base. Every time they look at it, they remember their fun Silk Road treasure hunt. They can't wait for their next big adventure together!

The Lost

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Wei, Carson – 8

Tom was seven years old and he lived in Shenzhen. His dad was called Jerry, his mother was called Janice. One day Jerry took Tom and his mother to the desert for a trip. They went there at 8am. When they started the journey it was windy and the sky was black. Tom was dreaming about lots of exciting things about the trip. Because he never been to the desert. Suddenly a strong sand storm blew in. Tom said, "there is a sand storm coming". His father said, "OH no, hurry up! Run back to the car". The wind was so strong and the sands blew in their eyes. They can't see anything in the desert. Tom and his mother ran back to the car, except his father. He could not see his dad when the sand storm stopped. Tom walked in the desert to find his dad.

Tom kept finding his dad in the desert. While he was waling he felt very hungry and thirsty. He saw something were moving, so he ran there and saw three camels. He felt very happy because he think maybe the camels could help him to find his dad. He ran back to the car and told his mother, he said, "Mom, you see, there are three camels over there". Mom said:" let 's go to the camels to see whether they can help". Tom and his mother ran very fast to those three camels, then he climbed up on one of the camel's back. The camels were walking to another way, Mom said" the camel seems like finding other friends". Those three camels took them to the sand mountain. They stood on a higher place so that they could see further.

Suddenly Tom and his mother saw another camel coming from far away. Tom said "Mom, can you see there is a camel coming? Is that a person ride on the camel?" Mom said, "Yes, yes, I see a person riding on the camel. Maybe we can ask him whether he has seen your dad or not." When the camel came up, they found it was dad. Tom felt happy. Tom said" It was wonderful. Finally we find you, dad." Then those four camels went away. Mom said" Oh, the camel is finding his friends too!" Tom said" Thanks to the camels, I find him." When they returned home, Tom said" I am very happy!" At last Tom and camels became friends and Tom learned an important thing. A person can not give up when they are in trouble.

The Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhang, Matthew – 8

Introduction: This is about me and my friend went to silk road to make many many deals, we can 't finds the correct road and how we walk back to Shenzhen, can we?!

Main body: First we packed our things like water bottles, paper, homework pencil, rubber pencil and sharpeners. we used gold, silk, diamond, basketball football real car airplane, iPhone iPad and TVs to make many deals. Next we went to the elevator." ten night eight seven six...three two one! "said my friend and I arrived at the car park. And we called an F1 driver and he drove F1 racing car to the Silk Road. "Zoom zoom! "said my mum. Then we got to the first station of the silk road—Xian.

We saw many things like send camera cameras and some people food under country is hold my friend what you say ad portion from another country he was front so where I set my friend and my friend talked and talked "we made a deal! We made 1000 deals. "Said my friend.

But unluckily we walked into the sandstorm. "wow! it is very very big. "said my friend. "Zoom zoom! "The F1 driver came, "I will bring you to a safe place as fast as I can." said the F1 driver." It took one second to arrive to a safe place. "said my friend. "No! It took 24 hours to arrive to a safe place." I said. "We can't find compass that I can't find the correct road "said my friend. What? My friend and me need 10000 hours to find the correct road. Because we think the Silk Road is so vast and extensive, stretching across numerous countries and regions.

"The F1 driver's car broke down, so we can't get back to Shenzhen by car—it'll take us ten thousand years to get there!" I shouted loudly. But wait, we do have a car, so we can take this one home. The Silk Road is extremely long—hurry up! we said.

The Long Silk Road

The King's School Qianhai Shenzhen, Zhao, Gordon – 8

There was a 17-year-old boy called Sunday who was a senior high school student. He learned about the Silk Road one day and he was totally attracted by this mysterious road. After that, an idea grew in his mind, which was he wanted to go there on his own. Then, when his dad knew it, he decided to realize his son's dream and take him to the Silk Road. He was so happy to hear that and made some preparation for it.

The day finally came. He was sitting on a camel with guars beside him on both sides. He was so happy to know that they were going to Turkey because he had wanted to go there for ever but he always spent his time learning. He was so happy but suddenly he thought to himself what if there is danger, what if I lose my things, what if I forget something. He was a little worried that he couldn't survive there. He was a little bit afraid to go to Turkey now.

On the way, it was good, but suddenly behind the rocks and the cactus, there were bandits!!! But then, there was an enormous sand storm. The whole caravan started camping but the bandits didn't know there was a sand storm and the caravan went into their own camps, while the bandits were laughing because they thought the caravan was afraid of them. A moment later, a bandit saw the enormous sand storm but it was late. The bandits were covered in sand storm and never came out again. After the sand storm stopped, the caravan continued going to Turkey again.

After 10 days, they stopped at a rest stop where you can go to the toilet, fill some water and eat some food. After that, they went on their way again. One day, they finally walked out of the Taklamakan Desert into the snow-capped mountains, but before that they saw the beacon ruins. They went up the snow-capped mountains, but they saw there was an avalanche so everyone hid behind a rock. The avalanche was fast, it was powerful, and it crashed loudly on the mountains, but it went slower and slower and it stopped in front of everyone. The caravan

went on again. When they went down, it was a bit hard because it was a bit cold and the camels moved slower. Everyone became colder and colder until they arrived at another desert and everyone was warmed up until they stopped at a rest stop to go to the toilet and eat food. Suddenly, Sunday's dad, Saturday, shouted "we have no food or water left!" Sunday then said to his dad "we need to find an oasis!" Everyone thought it was a good idea so they went to find an oasis. After several minutes, a man said happily "Look! I found one there!" Everyone ran as fast as they could to get water but they sadly found out that it was a mirage. After two minutes, a woman called loudly "I found an oasis there!", but then they found out it was a mirage, too. After five minutes, Sunday called "I think I found one this time! Look!" Everyone ran to see and it was real this time! Everyone filled their water bottles up and they cheered for Sunday, but Sunday said "We need to find a village and food as well." So, they went on. After ten minutes, a man said "I found a village there." But when they went to check it out, there were no villagers and no food. After seven minutes, a woman said "I found a village there." But like last time, there was no villagers and no food, so they went on again. Two minutes later, Sunday called "I found a village with villagers! I hope this time we can get some food there!" So they ran to the village and got welcomed by the villagers. Sunday helped everyone find water and food. The caravan decided to have a feast that night to cheer for Sunday.

Finally, the whole caravan arrived in Turkey. Everyone was quite happy and they were so proud of Sunday, because Sunday helped find water and food for everyone, even for the camels. He dreamed that he started to relax. He saw so many beautiful and tall buildings. He thought to himself "I found water and food for everyone" and he was so proud of himself, too. The whole journey was not easy; it was quite adventurous and full of fun. Suddenly, someone shouted to him, "Wake up! Wake up!" and then he opened his eyes and he thought to himself "Oh! It was just a dream! But it was a nice dream!" He learned that not everything is so important in front of life!

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Chan, Vivian Tsz Yau – 10

Maya was an 11-year-old Chinese girl who lived in a small city with her parents, brother, and grandmother. They lived in an apartment building filled with other families. At night, she could hear the singing or the thumping beats from next-door mahjong games. Maya loved her family very much. She always did her best to make them proud. This included helping her brother with homework, doing the dishes after dinner without being asked, and working hard in small ways. Every night, her father told her about the Silk Road: the merchants from long ago, the ships carrying silk and tea, and the adventurous people who dared to traverse mountains and deserts. Her grandmother taught her the value of doing her best when something really counted—whether for school or when a friend needed help. These words echoed in the background of her mind. A tune she loved.

One day in school, Maya had plenty to do in the upgraded classroom filled with computers and sunny windows. A special project was given to the children in the classroom, and Maya was instructed to put on the full VR gloves and headset. She was nervous—some technology could be confusing—but she was also thrilled. As she put on the full VR gloves, the lights flashed like fireflies in the evening. Then she was transported to the Takla-Makan Desert in the VR computer. The sand was endless, and the ridges of the mountains looked like waves. The activity was meant to transport her into the mindset of the travelers who were part of the Southern Silk Road, who were 'lonely but very, very brave'.

Maya's accent was a nonissue in the VR world. Communication was simple for all, and if a person used a word she didn't know, it flashed on the computer screen like magic. Other kids in school made fun of her accent, but in the computer world, she was more confident. The teacher's confused expression caught her attention, observing the computer screen's changing scenery in Maya's virtual reality. Maya listened attentively to all the sounds, observing camels made from small blocks moving slowly under a purple sky painted in watercolor.

strokes. A faint, confusing message from the last camel, a beep, piqued Maya's interest, suggesting she might uncover a clue about something interesting.

The desert looked beautiful but also a little scary. The wind sounded like whispers. Maya touched the sand with her funny gloves. Suddenly, she saw a girl named Sarnai. Sarnai was about fifteen and wore thick wool clothes. Maya felt Sarnai's sadness and hope, and it made her think of how she sometimes missed her home in China, too.

What was she dreaming about? What did she like to eat? Dumplings? Noodles? Spicy hot pot? Did she ever play games with her friends? Maya leaned in close to the VR, whispering, "Hello, Sarnai," feeling just a little ridiculous, hoping the wind might carry her message to Sarnai in the past. It was almost as though she was seeing a ghost in the screen in front of her. Yet she was not afraid. She was filled instead with a rush of emotions that were equal parts anticipation and sadness. In the scene in front of her was the Pamir Mountain range, bright white and majestic in the snow. Just how cold was she when she walked there? What was her favorite song? Did she ever play games with her friends?

Maya got tired and drew a picture of Sarnai in her notebook. She wondered what it would be like if Sarnai could come to her school and eat lunch with her. She sometimes spoke to Sarnai in Chinese and wondered what Sarnai would think about today's world. As days passed, Maya learned more about how hard and sad Sarnai's life was, even though Sarnai never talked back.

One day, Sarnai got kicked by a mule in the mountains. There was a bright flash, and then everything was quiet. Maya felt very sad for Sarnai. When she drew Sarnai, she made Sarnai look a little bit like she was crying. The world was too loud and strange for Sarnai.

Every night, Maya had a dream about Sarnai. In her dreams, they were traveling along the Silk Road together, conversing and laughing, sometimes on camels or mountain peaks. Every morning, she woke up feeling each side of her emotions—happy and sad at the same time, missing Sarnai as a friend. Maya started writing a biography about Sarnai, describing her life history, her emotions, and questions she would like to have answered by Sarnai. Maya decided not to reveal to her teacher what she had found out, in case she got into trouble for daydreaming too often. Instead, she read all the books there were on the Silk Road in the school library, and asked her dad to tell her more bedtime stories. She could tell that Sarnai's voice in the dream wasn't just abnormal, but something real almost magic. She remembered her grandmother's advice: if it mattered, give it your best try, no matter how hard it seemed. Sometimes she questioned what was really happening, but she believed the experience was important and unique.

Finally, Maya was proud and a little scared when she finished telling her story. She read it to her brother, who clapped for the funny parts. She wasn't sure she'd get points for it in class, but she was glad she'd tried to show everyone was loved. She named it "Sarnai_Final," being careful about spelling in both languages. Grown-ups might think it was silly, but Maya liked magic and taking care of people who'd lived a long time ago. She looked at the city lights twinkling and felt happy. To Maya, Sarnai was real. Other people might think of it as a dream or a computer game. But as long as one remembered a person, she was sure they were real in one's memory.

Maya started finding the happiness in small things—raindrops on the windowpane, the taste of red bean soup, the brother's laughter during a play of hide-and-seek. Stories were all around—in the park, in the marketplace, in her home. When Maya finished writing hers, she entered her story into a competition at her school; she wrote, "Every path is walked twice—once in the real world and once in our memories." Maya realized later that the Silk Road was not all about trains and computers; it was all about hearts and dreams and the love shared.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

My name is Xiao Ming. I am eleven years old, and I live in China. Today, I want to tell you a magical story—an epic Silk Road adventure with a twist, since it also features Aladdin, a boy who possesses a magic lamp. This adventure is a story that has been created in my mind, and I hope you enjoy it.

A very long time ago in ancient China, there was a way called the Silk Road. It was more than a road—it was a bridge that allowed the East and the West to meet, trade with each other, and even be friends. With the ringing of the camel bells in the mornings across the sandy dunes of the desert, the white sail-filled huge ships cruised in the blue ocean. Many people from different places traveled through the Silk Road—some in search of silk, others for gems, and others for the mere pleasure of exploration.

One bright morning, Zhang Qian, a great explorer in days of yore, received a clandestine letter from the Emperor. The Emperor encouraged Zhang Qian to head West, make some new acquaintances, but reminded him to be cautious of the Huns. Zhang Qian, undaunted as before, set out with his trusted associate Ganfu, as well as a hundred other assistants. They traversed the blazing Taklamakan Desert, where the sand was like fire. They had limited water, but clever Ganfu's resourcefulness kept them afloat; he located some wild beasts for them to chase, and they drank, ate, and survived.

Then the Huns captured them. These Huns were strong and terrifying. Zhang Qian was held captive for ten years. He never forgot his vision. Even when he decided to rebuild his life among the Huns, he did not forget the special token from the Emperor. He finally escaped with Ganfu after many years to find the Dayuezhi tribe. However, when he and Ganfu finally found the Dayuezhi tribe, the Dayezhi had no intention to go to battle with the Huns. Zhang Qian was disappointed and set out on the long journey home. Once again, the Huns captured him. But he never gave up. Eventually, only Zhang Qian and Ganfu returned. Yet his journey was the inspiration to open the eyes of the Chinese to the West, and so the Silk Road was born.

This is where the magic comes into the story. Because they are on the Silk Road, Zhang Qian meets a young Arabian boy named Aladdin. The young boy is very poor but has a heart of gold. The surprise factor about the young boy is the "magic lamp" in his possession. Rub the lamp, and a giant genie will appear who will grant your request thrice. Initially, Zhang Qian finds it difficult to believe the concept of "magic," but when the genie appears before him, his jaw drops in wonder, "as wide as the sky."

Aladdin and Zhang Qian become friends. "We can use the genie to help people on the Silk Road," Aladdin says. Zhang Qian agrees. He asks for a river through the desert so travelers would never have a lack of water. The genie's massive hand wavers, and a silver river appears among the dunes. The camels drink and travelers rest along the cool river.

Trouble is looming in the background. An evil magician has his sights on the lamp. He lurks around their encampment, intending to get the lamp in the middle of the night. Ganfu suddenly wakes with a loud roar, shouting, "Stop!" The magician disappears into thin air, but the trio knows to remain alert.

The Silk Road is not short of surprises. They encounter people who come from far-off lands. These include Ban Chao, a courageous soldier who wanted to revive the route which had been hindered by some disturbing individuals. Ban Chao was as clever as ever. He managed to bring peace to many kings. Aladdin called upon the services of the genie once again. He wanted protection along the Silk Road so that thieves would desert it.

The Silk Road is now filled with active traffic: Chinese silk, Arabian spices, Roman gold, and grapes and horses coming and going. People exchange stories, food, games, and friendship. Zhang Qian learns how to play chess from Aladdin, and Aladdin finds the noodles in China tasty.

One day, there was a massive storm brewing. The sky grew dark, sand was swirling everywhere, and everybody was filled with fear. But Aladdin still had one wish left. "Can you somehow dispel the storm so that nobody would be harmed?" he asked the genie. The genie waved his hand, and a magic shield appeared. The storm went away.

In the path of his travel, he meets a Chinese girl named Lanlan, who loves to depict the scenes of the Silk Route, such as camels, ships, busy cities, and high mountains. She draws Aladdin and the genie, who becomes her gift to him.

Years go by, and the friends all grow up. They assist others in digging wells so everyone can get drinking water. The friends also teach one another Chinese and Arabian phrases. Aladdin learns to write his name in Chinese, and Zhang Qian learns to say "Thank you" in Arabian.

Finally, it is Aladdin's turn to go home. Aladdin hugs Zhang Qian and Lanlan. "I will never forget you," he said. Zhang Qian hands Aladdin some silk cloth. "Take this with you to your mother. It is from your Chinese friend," said Zhang Qian. Aladdin laughs and wipes away tears.

As he is leaving, the genie winks at Zhang Qian. "Remember, friendship is the greatest magic." Nowadays, looking at the Belt and Road trains and ships in China, I always believe that the spirit of Zhang Qian, Aladdin, and the genie is still accompanying us. Silk Road is not only an itinerary of goods. It is also a road for friendship, dreams, and help. Perhaps one day I will have my own adventure on the Silk Road. This is my story—one thousand words of dreams, magic, and friendship, inspired by the Silk Road and Aladdin's lamp.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Chau Hoi Lam, Kylie – 9

I'd like to tell you a story about a highly brave man who was from ancient China. This is a thrilling, sometimes scary, and truly astonishing experience.

Zhang Qian was a remarkable explorer from ancient China. This was a long, long time ago—about 138 BCE. The Chinese Emperor had a big problem. This was because the Xiongnu Tribes kept attacking and making life difficult for the Chinese. The Emperor thought for a long time. Then he called Zhang Qian. "Please go and find some friends from other places, maybe from other countries. They will help us defeat the Xiongnu," the Emperor said. Zhang Qian was afraid but very courageous. "Goodbye, family! And goodbye, food and water! I am going," Zhang Qian said. Zhang Qian was not sure what would happen. But he was determined to help the Chinese.

Zhang Qian passed through many hard places. Sometimes he walked in the hot sun in the desert, and other times he climbed mountains in freezing-cold weather, and snow lay thick all around. The most frightening place for Zhang Qian was the Taklamakan Desert. There were sandstorms like having one hundred needles pricking his face! Also, he and his companions ran out of water, their lips parched and dry, but they did not lose hope. They were captured by the Xiongnu, and he was imprisoned for a long, long time. He felt very sad and homesick. However, Zhang Qian was very clever and resourceful. One night, when the guards were sleeping, he escaped. His heart beat rapidly with fear, but he ran and ran until he reached safety. This made him promise himself that he would never give up, whatever difficulties lay ahead.

During Zhang Qian's journey, he witnessed numerous amazing things and met people from other countries. He heard them talk and learned more words from them. There were times when he didn't understand what they said, but he tried his best to make friends with them by smiling at them and sharing food. He saw grapes hanging from a vine in a place. He ate them, and they were so sweet and juicy! He remembered his family members and how they liked grapes. He brought grape seeds home. Later on, grapes were grown in China because of his words. That's why grape juice and wine are available in China. Zhang Qian tried spices that tingled his tongue—pepper and cinnamon. He saw how Indians used them to cook. Indeed, their smells tempted him so much! He brought spices for the Emperor. He was so glad. He tried different kinds of bread and noodles. He was surprised when he learned that other countries eat something like Chinese noodles but with a slight variation. He swapped a piece of silk with a beautiful blue rock that shone under the sun. He noticed how they wore different clothes. Some wore large turbans on their heads, while others wore colored scarves. He felt a bit embarrassed at first since everything was so different from what he was used to at home. However, all of them were friendly to him, so he became enthusiastic to learn more.

But there was more. Zhang Qian saw a big market. There were lots of people. They were all yelling, selling, and laughing. There were colored clothes all about—red, gold, green, and blue. He touched the silk. Oh, it was so soft, like touching a cloud! He saw sparkling stones, gold coins, and paintings. He even tried a toy made out of wood and bells. He couldn't believe all these different things were found in one place. There was the smell of spices and baking bread. Zhang Qian understood now why the world was so large. The Silk Road had turned

out to be a busy road through which people carried goods, but also tales, songs, and ambitions. He was very happy to be a part of all this.

Currently, the Silk Road is very well known. The Silk Road was an extensive route of trade that reached from China to distant lands. It started from the ancient city of Xi'an and passed through the very challenging Taklamakan Desert and even the highest mountain ranges to Central Asia and then to the Mediterranean Sea and Europe and India and even Africa. There were travelers who reached as far as Turkey. Zhang Qian's expeditions made it possible to bring together people from different places to meet and talk and even become friends. They exchanged not only silk and gold and spices but even ideas and music and art too. Thanks to Zhang Qian's expeditions, people became able to trust each other even more. That's really cool to me.

Zhang Qian's journeys were not only about visiting other countries far, far away. They were also about people, food, and ideas. Zhang Qian proved to everyone that with courage and curiosity, we can learn a lot. At times, Zhang Qian felt afraid and lonely, but he never forgot why he was on a journey in the first place. Zhang Qian's adventures inspire me to be courageous as well and perhaps one day, I can visit other countries and find new friends. Because of Zhang Qian, other people were also able to travel along the Silk Road and bring both East and West together for a long, long time. Zhang Qian is a very significant explorer on the Silk Road. He laid a path for people to trade and share things, and for different people to be friends. I think he is a hero because he is very brave and kind to other people. I feel very proud to be a Chinese citizen because I am learning about a very brave Chinese explorer such as Zhang Qian, and I wish I can be brave just like him one day.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Cheung, Wai Shu Wilson – 9

This is my new tale about China's Silk Road, but it also feels like a story from *Prince of Persia*, with sand, travel, danger, and time.

A long, long ago, before my grandma's grandma was born, there was a road in China. This road was very long. It went over deserts, mountains, and towns. People called it the Silk Road. The road was not made of stone or cars. It was made by feet, horses, and camels. People walked for many days. They carried silk, food, and stories. This is what I learned from my reading

On the Silk Road, the ground sometimes looked shiny. My teacher said silk was very special. It was soft and smooth. People from far away wanted it very much. They came from other lands. They spoke different languages. They wore different clothes. But on the Silk Road, they met and shared things.

One day in my story, a young boy was walking on the Silk Road. His name was Jun. He walked with his family. They were tired, but curious. They saw a small booth near the road. A man was standing there. He had long clothes and kind eyes.

Jun's father said, "Hello, what are you selling?"

The man smiled and said, "I sell a sack made of special silk. Some people say it is magical. Inside, there is more than you can see."

Jun felt excited but also scared. He asked, "Why is it magical?"

The man said, "Because this road is magical. It changes people. Some say if you reach the end of the Silk Road, you can never go back home."

Jun's heart beat fast. He thought the story was scary but also cool. He looked at the desert and thought of adventure.

That night, Jun dreamed of a prince. The prince wore clothes from Persia. He ran across sand and old cities. He jumped over walls and fought evil. He could turn back time when he made a mistake. Jun did not know his

name, but he felt like the Prince of Persia from stories and movies. The prince told Jun, “The road is dangerous, but knowledge is power. Do not fear time or change.”

When Jun woke up, he felt brave. He knew the Silk Road was not only about silk. It was about learning and meeting others.

Many, many years passed.

About one hundred years later, people did not walk on the Silk Road anymore. Cars were fast. Trains were faster. Planes flew in the sky. The old road was quiet. The government wanted to build new roads. Some wanted to build right over the Silk Road. But some workers were smarter. They did not want to hurt history. So they built modern roads above it, not through it. The Silk Road stayed safe under the ground, like a sleeping dragon.

Then the world changed again.

There were wars far away. There was chaos. Many days passed. After the wars ended, China became peaceful again. The country grew modern. There were tall buildings, fast trains, and new ideas. People made technology called AI. AI could help humans. It could answer questions, build things, and even help make machines. This part was very hard for me to read, but I tried my best

People started to dream again, just like Jun did long ago. They dreamed of flying cars and smart cities. They wanted to connect the world again, like the Silk Road did before.

My teacher told us about something called the Belt and Road Initiative. It is like a new Silk Road. It is not only in China. It connects many countries. It builds roads, ports, and trade paths. It helps coastal places and inland places work together. This idea comes from old Chinese thinking about harmony and order, but it is also very modern

I imagine the Prince of Persia in this new time. He does not only run and fight. Now he travels by train and ship. He works with many countries. He protects history and helps the future. He still thinks about time. Time is important. The past teaches us. The future asks us questions.

In my story, Jun grows up. He becomes a builder. He helps with new roads, but he remembers the old Silk Road. He tells people, “We must not forget. The road is more than trade. It is about people.”

Sometimes, at night, Jun still dreams of the prince running in the sand. The prince smiles and says, “You did not turn back time, but you respected it.”

The Silk Road is old, but its spirit is still alive it shows how old and new can live together. Just like in *Prince of Persia*, where the past and time matter, China’s Silk Road teaches us to be careful, brave, and kind.

This is my new Tale of China’s Silk Road.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Chung, Yoyo Yue Yau – 10

Lucy was a panda who lived in a beautiful bamboo grove deep within the mountains. She enjoyed her mountain cabin residence a lot, but couldn’t shake off the desire to explore what existed beyond the mountain tops, beyond the trees and wind-swept mountain ridges. Her closest companion was a young and strong dragon named Levi. He had scales that sparkled like jade, and whereas other dragons breathed fire, Levi puffed steam that smelled like flowers, due to a super curiosity that overpowered his fear.

One day, there was a big caravan came to their valley, filled with people wearing colorful clothes and animals Lucy had never laid eyes on before. There were camels with special faces and humps that looked like tiny sand dunes. The caravan leader was an elderly woman with a highly creased smile from all her experiences. She talked about the Silk Road, an enchanted way that connected far-off lands. She told of deserts whose sand sang, cities adorned with golden spires, and seas as blue as the sky.

"We trade," she said proudly, showing them a bundle of cloth as smooth and flowing as water. "This is silk, and it comes from silkworms that eat mulberry leaves. We bring it to the west and come back with tales, songs, and friends."

The thought was the same in both Lucy's gaze on the fur of the caravan master, black and white, and Levi's on his own blue scales. "We want to come too! We have something to trade, as well."

Then there was Lucy's treasure: a basketful of the sweetest and best-formed bamboo shoots, raised in a secret grove deep in the forest. Levi's treasure included the best and brightest pebbles, polished to perfection in a mountain stream. Each one was a different color, a treasure in its own right. The caravan master's smile grew broader. "The best treasure to bring on a journey is a good heart and an inquiring mind."

And so their journey began. The Silk Road proved to be many paths, not one. They faced the Desert of Whispering Dunes, where the sun beat down fiercely and sand stretched endlessly. Lucy's fur heated uncomfortably as thirst closed in. Levi helped with cooling steam, but it evaporated quickly in the scorching heat. When Lucy felt she couldn't go further, she heard a low humming and pressed her hand to the warm sand. "The dunes are singing," she whispered, remembering the caravan master's advice to listen carefully. The wind's song led her to the next resting place. Lucy's oversized ears once an embarrassment now useful as she discovered secret waterways. She shared her bamboo with the tired camels, who became her best friends.

Then came the Staircase of the Clouds, a mountain so high its top brushed the sky. The wind howled, and the path was narrow and icy. Levi's scales let him glide through the air, but on ice-coated stones, he slipped. Lucy's bamboo forest paws gripped firmly, and she pulled him to safety. Then Levi had a plan. "I can't breathe fire, but I can release warm steam for the entire caravan." The caravan master was pleased. "See! Each of you has something good to offer!"

As they traveled, they began to trade bits of home for bits of the world. Lucy handed over a bamboo shoot to a glass blower in an active oasis city in exchange for a bright blue bead that shone like a piece of the sea. Levi gave a red pebble from the stream to a weaver, and she was so taken with its color that she wove a gold strand through Levi's mane. This trade did not involve money. Instead, they bartered bits of home for bits of the world.

But they encountered all sorts of very interesting people – there were shepherds playing flutes, cooks whose spices wafted the scent of flowers and smoke, and storytellers who spoke in languages they didn't know, but they comprehended the stories with the help of laughter and gesticulations.

The hardest test faced them in the Forest of Lost Things. The mist was so thick that the road was hidden from sight, and some feared that the forest would carry away what they valued most. Lucy clutched her blue bead. Levi touched his golden thread. They feared.

"We can't see the path," Lucy confessed in a small voice.

"Then we'll listen for it," Levi added. "And feel for it."

They relied on memories from their journey; Lucy recalled the desert's song, Levi the mountain's bite. Together, they found the way. Lucy listened for sounds hidden in the mist, perhaps a bird or river. Levi climbed to the treetops and spotted an opening through the leaves. They combined their talents and pushed through the fog. The forest couldn't take what mattered most, friendship and courage because those were already within them.

Finally, they came to a majestic city situated along the shores of the Middle Sea. Tall buildings loomed like clouds, and the water shone with vitality. The city was beyond any tales they had ever listened to before. In exchange for the last bamboo shoot and pebble they had with them, they got a tiny silver bell and a seashell that echoed the sound of the ocean.

Their return trip was equally fantastical, as they saw their familiar surroundings with new eyes. When they got back to their bamboo forest, they were no longer the same. Lucy had her blue bead strung around her neck, and

Levi had his golden thread sparkling in his mane. They had a sack of goodies that included the bell, the shell, some soft material, and aromatic wood.

And then, the best treasure of all was the story itself. It was on this night, when the moon was out, that all the animals met in the forest. Lucy and Levi told each other stories of singing sand, cloud stairs, kindness from strangers, and home-cooked meals with new friends. “So, the Silk Road isn’t really about silk at all,” Lucy blurted out, ending the story. Levi let out a contented, lilac-scented puff of steam. “No. It’s about connection. It’s the road that connects us, that connects here and there, me and you. And it’s built out of curiosity and kind acts to help each other on the way.” And from then on, they realized that they were a part of a bigger, more beautiful world... even in their own forest. They realized that the greatest adventures in life begin with one step, a special friend, and an open heart.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Hou, Zoe Lok Yi – 11

In ancient China, the city of Chang’an stood tall. Its towers swayed gently in the breeze, making the banners flutter. Emperor Zhao Lie looked out to the west, lost in thought.

Zhao Lie was not thinking about mountains or deserts. He imagined cooler, greener places with lively cities, fast horses carrying messages, and friends waiting for him. So, he chose a brave and smart man named Li Ming to travel to this faraway land.

Li Ming felt both excited and scared. He knew the journey would be hard. One morning, he and other students left Chang’an with a caravan of a hundred camels loaded with soft, beautiful silk.

At first, their journey went well. But soon, they reached a huge desert. The sun burned their feet, and sand scraped their skin. At night, strong winds brought sandstorms. They had little water and food.

Many travelers grew tired and worried. Chen Yu fell into the sand and cried. “I can’t go any farther! Let’s go home!” he yelled. Li Ming stayed calm. “This silk is for friends,” he said, showing it in the moonlight. The fibers sparkled as if touched by magic. “We walk to make friends,” Li Ming said.

Soon, they heard bells. Camels arrived, carrying people from the West. These travelers admired the silk, laughed, shared food, and danced around a small fire. They spoke different languages, but their laughter felt friendly and familiar.

Feeling renewed, they crossed the desert, climbed snowy mountains, and visited busy markets in small towns. They saw goats in green fields and animal paintings on cave walls. They tasted new fruits and shared ideas about farming and metalwork. Some planted trees, others left their marks on walls. They knew they were creating a new path.

The Silk Road stretched like a ribbon from Chang’an to Luoyang. Caravans traveled with horses, jewels, and spices. In Chang’an, the sound of weaving and spinning silk was always present. At Hangu Pass, tall walls stood over winding paths. Maybe you can still hear the footsteps there.

Many years later, in the Tang Dynasty, the Silk Road was busy and full of life. Four travelers went west: the wise monk Yuan Zheng, the clever Sun Wukong, the hungry pig Tao Cong, and the quiet Wu Ping. This time, they carried not silk, but religion, riding on a white dragon horse.

They faced many challenges. The Flaming Mountains were very hot, but Sun Wukong used magic fans to cool them. When they needed to cross a dangerous river, Wu Ping led the way. A king invited them to rest, but they politely said no and kept going.

On their journey, they met many people. Some had tanned skin and rough hands from farming. Others had bright eyes and loved to talk and trade. Barefoot children teased Sun Wukong's tail, while their grandparents shared stories of past travels.

Tao Cong grew fond of the villagers and happily accepted their food. "I smell bread and melons," he shouted with joy, and the villagers were glad to share. Sun Wukong quickly picked up new languages and understood people's gestures and smiles. Yuan Zheng talked with monks, teachers, and wise people about kindness, peace, and helping others.

Over time, many people faced problems. When rivers in the village dried up, Wu Ping helped dig wells. During floods, Sun Wukong made village walls stronger. In places with poor soil, Tao Cong offered comfort, even if it was just a sigh. Where robbers threatened, Sun Wukong kept watch at night. They received gifts of fruit, bread, and blankets as thanks. Finally, they reached India to find religious texts, then started their journey home. People along the way recognized them and waved. The road, now filled with silk, knowledge, kindness, and trust, left a lasting mark. Western cities grew because of Silk Road adventures. Years went by, and trains and ships replaced camels, but the spirit of the Silk Road stayed. Today, Chinatowns in the West are full of color, with red lanterns hanging from street lamps.

Chinese vendors sell noodles, dumplings, and tea. During Chinese New Year, people wear bright costumes, red shirts, and silk dragon robes. Children dress up as rabbits or tigers. Fireworks light up the sky, drums beat, and dragons dance. Friendships are made. Chinese technology is known around the world. Electric cars, quiet buses, and smart computers are built. Chinese phones, AI, and other inventions help doctors, teachers, and workers. AI makes translation easier and helps people talk to each other. Trains link China and Europe, carrying goods and dreams. Ships move food, equipment, and gifts. Companies from different countries work together on science and medicine. They also develop green technology and explore space. People and students travel and make new friends. Ideas and discoveries move along, just like the Silk Road.

Looking back, the Silk Road is more than a memory. It is a living thread that still connects people and nations. Its spirit is present in every cultural exchange and every time people share, learn, and grow together. The journey that started in ancient Chang'an now reaches far beyond deserts and mountains, linking classrooms, labs, cities, and hearts around the world. The Silk Road's legacy encourages us to keep building friendships and discovering new things, sharing not just silk and spices, but also ideas, kindness, and hope for the future.

The End

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Ng Tick Long, Nick – 9

The Past

A long, long time ago, in ancient China, people used to travel to other places with their bags on camels to reach far-off lands. Since camels were slow-moving animals, it took a long, long time to reach other countries. Even reaching a country close by would take several months. Besides, camels were not very good swimmers either, so it was not possible to reach any other country that was situated on the other side of a sea. They were costly animals too, so not all could afford to own a camel. That was the case with Tom and Emma's family. They did not have sufficient money to buy a camel. That is why they were not able to visit any other country that their friends had told them about. They lived mostly within their own country and were very sad because they had not been able to explore other lands and gain knowledge from them.

The Present

Currently, in 2026, traveling is also easy. Students can board trains and airplanes to travel to foreign countries, saving a lot of time. They can go to almost all destinations, whether it is close by or very far. Technological progress is vast, and Artificial Intelligence is well-developed and useful. AI can greatly assist students in their studies. If they have difficulties with homework, they can refer to AI for assistance. It can also produce pictures based on their concepts or teach them a new language, making AI highly useful.

Tom, aged 18, is a student, but he is also a robot constructor. He created a robot that can help him in various duties, such as picking up items. Emma, his friend, is also a robot enthusiast. They often share their ideas of upgrading their robots. They both like similar designs; in fact, Emma's robot is clad in stickers, just like Tom's. They both enjoy turning their ideas into new creations.

Tom and Emma, in their final year of secondary education, propose to employ AI to make a unique 'car' called 'Polly' as part of their project work. The 'car' would be driven by 'AI' with no human driver, and it would be able to move across the sea. These two innovative individuals think that this 'car' would save lots of time and make travel much easier for everyone. They hope that someday, as they 'sit inside' the 'car,' it would 'say,' 'Where do you want to go?' Emma would say, 'We want to go to Kowloon Block 11.' The 'car' would then 'drive' on its own to the destination in less than half an hour. However, their dreams are not possible with the level of technological advancement available to them in 2026.

The Future

Cars will be able to fly by the year 2050, causing no traffic jams since many cars can fit in the sky at the same time. Clean air will be used as fuel, thus there shall be no air pollution. Additionally, cars shall be affordable since the fuel is free. AI shall control the cars; later the need for human drivers will be eliminated. This will be taught in school; therefore students will learn how to construct cars. Tom and Emma shall learn how to construct a flying car by themselves too. They shall learn by watching online videos on how to construct a flying car and follow the instructions provided accordingly. Upon completing the task, Tom could say, "Emma, the car is great! I am glad about that." "How about we construct an even bigger one, perhaps a bus? Do you think that's too difficult?" "Not at all," Emma could respond, "We shall see many videos online and also ask AI for assistance." Within two days, they'll manage to get relevant videos to work on the construction of the flying bus, an activity that requires a month nearly to accomplish.

After the bus is ready, they test it. The flying bus can go over the sea, run alone with AI, and provide a new way to view the city. They'd love the beautiful city below them and then land in a hotel and go in. The hotel would feel very much in the future, with a restaurant, a gym, a pool, and eleven rooms, all controlled by robots. They'd have two robots to serve them, one dancing and the other helping out with different things. They'd ask the TV to be turned on, and the robot would turn it on. They'd ask the dancing robot to dance to its favorite song, and the robot would do so. Out their hotel window, they'd view flying cars, many AI robots, and sparkling buildings.

They would have dinner at 6:00 pm at the hotel restaurant. The plates would have AI labels, and the food would be very delectable. For dessert, they ordered a robot-shaped cake that tasted so delicious. The cost would be \$10, and they would be amazed at how cheap it was, considering the low cost of raw materials in 2050. However, when returning to their room, the door would open automatically, and they would be greeted by a robot, "Welcome back to your hotel room, Tom and Emma." Before they closed for the night, they would ask the robot to switch off the lights, and they would be wrapped in darkness. The next morning, at 7:00 am, they would go to the lobby for breakfast. While they eat, they would realize that artificial intelligence and robots assist people all over China.

New Tales of China's Silk Road

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Hok Shan School, Qazi, Saimuddin – 9

I want to tell you my favorite story. It is about China's Silk Road and the traveler Marco Polo. I learned about them in school, and I thought the Silk Road was magical, like a huge bridge between countries. My story is new because I tell it my own way, but it is also very old, like the road itself.

Long ago, before cars or airplanes, a path called the Silk Road stretched from China to distant lands. It crossed hot deserts and snowy mountains, passing through busy cities and quiet villages. People called it the Silk Road because traders carried silk, a shiny, soft cloth but they also transported spices, gold, and stories. Sometimes, I imagine walking that road, hearing different languages and camels making funny sounds.

The Silk Road began in Chang'an, a big Chinese city full of people and noise. Traders came from Persia, India, and even Europe. They brought things to sell, but also shared food, ideas, and their own languages. My teacher said the Silk Road helped people become friends and learn from each other. Sometimes, I wish I could taste the old food or hear the stories told so long ago. It was not just about selling things, but about making the world friendlier.

In my story, there is a boy named Amir. He is my age and lives in a small mountain town near the Silk Road. His house is made of mud bricks, and his mother grows vegetables in their garden. Amir is always curious, and every night after homework, he sits by the fire with his family. Sometimes, travelers stop in their town and tell stories. Amir listens with big, shiny eyes and dreams of far places.

One day, a traveler with a long beard and colorful clothes came to Amir's town. He wore a funny hat and animal skin shoes. All the children gathered to hear his stories about China. He talked about giant cities, soft silk, and kind people. Amir was so excited that he couldn't sit still. Then the traveler said, "Have you heard of Marco Polo?" Amir shook his head.

The traveler told them about Marco Polo, who was from Italy in Europe. Marco was young and traveled the Silk Road with his father and uncle. They went all the way to China, which was a long and dangerous trip. Marco Polo saw cities with golden roofs, beautiful palaces, and markets full of food and colors. He met the Chinese emperor, called the Khan, and stayed in China for many years. When he went home, Marco Polo told everyone about the wonderful things he had seen. Amir listened and imagined all those places.

That night, Amir dreamed he walked the Silk Road with Marco Polo. The sand was hot, the sky blue, his shadow long. "Come, Amir, I will show you the road," Marco said with a smile. They saw traders loading silk and spices onto camels. Amir touched silk that felt like clouds and saw Marco's compass and fireworks. "This road connects the world—it brings people, ideas, and dreams together," Marco said. Amir felt like he was learning secrets from the past.

When Amir woke up, he was excited and a little sad that the dream was over. He wanted to learn more and tell his friends about the Silk Road. He asked his teacher for more books about travelers and history.

Years went by in my story. People stopped using the Silk Road for walking or riding camels because new things were invented, like cars, trains, and ships. Some people forgot about the old road, but others wanted to protect its memory. My teacher says history is important because it reminds us who we are.

Then the world changed. China became peaceful and modern, with tall buildings, fast trains, and advanced technology. I learned about AI—artificial intelligence, a computer brain that helps solve problems. It's amazing how much China changed since the old Silk Road days.

China had a new idea called the Belt and Road Initiative. This is like a new Silk Road. China is building new roads, trains, and ports in many countries so people can trade, travel, and be friends. It helps cities far from the sea and cities near the sea grow together. My teacher says this helps countries work together, just like in the past. When I see big trains and ships on the news, I remember the old stories and think, “Wow, history is happening again!”

Amir grows up, too, and goes to a big school in the city. He loves reading about history and never forgets the traveler's stories or his dream with Marco Polo. Amir reads about Chinese traders and cities like Chang'an, and he learns the Silk Road was not just about money. It was about people sharing and learning. He tells his classmates, “History is not just old stories. It is about us and how we connect.”

One night, Amir dreams again. Marco Polo is older now, with a white beard. Amir sits with him under a tree and asks, “Why did you travel so far?” Marco Polo smiles and says, “The world is big, Amir, and there are so many people to meet and things to learn. When we travel, we become less afraid and make new friends.”

Amir thinks about this when he wakes up. He feels inspired and wants to tell his friends to be brave and learn from others. He wonders if he will travel far and tell his own stories.

Later, Amir hears about new roads and projects between countries, about ports and trains and trade routes. He thinks, “This is like the Silk Road coming back to life!” He feels proud because Pakistan is part of these new connections. He hopes that one day he can help build these new roads or be a traveler who tells stories like Marco Polo.

At school, Amir writes stories about the Silk Road. He writes about deserts, cities, silk, and spices. His teacher smiles and says, “You understand the heart of history.”

In the end, Amir learns that roads are not just for travel. They are for friendship. The Silk Road helped the world meet China long ago. The new Silk Road helps people meet again. This is my new tale of China's Silk Road. I hope you liked it. Maybe one day, we will all travel and make new friends, just like Marco Polo and Amir.