

Winning Entries



HONG KONG YOUNG WRITER OF THE YEAR

Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

Sutra of the Heart

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Wong, Po Ying Emily - 10

After thirteen harsh, long years of searching for the holy scriptures, they had finally reached the Western Paradise. Before them stood a majestic temple of pure platinum that glittered as if it were made of all the stars in the sky. The travelers, Xuanzang, Monkey, Pigsy, and Sandy, gaped in wonder, eyes bulging out of their heads. They glanced at one another, each waiting for the others to say something.

"I will go and make sure it's safe for Master to go in." Monkey finally said, "And don't worry, I'll be fine....as always!"

Monkey strode confidently into the temple, lowering his head so he looked respectful, but his insides were screaming, "Look up!" At last, curiosity got the best of him. Monkey glanced up and gasped; the temple was magnificent! Flowing tapestries hung on the platinum walls; under his feet laid a bright red carpet. "For me?" Monkey thought. He walked down the aisle and up the flight of stairs. Then, right before his eyes was none other than the great Buddha himself.

"Great Buddha," Monkey kneeled and bowed, "I have come to collect the holy scriptures."

"O Great Sage of Heaven's Equal," Buddha had a look of gladness on his face as he said, "you are indeed the most eminent being in the world. I see you already know the Seventy-Two-Changes and the Ten-Thousand-Mile-Somersault. If it weren't for your slow companions, you could have made it here much sooner!"

"Oh, finally someone appreciates me!" Monkey grinned.

"Oh yes, you were so kind to escort Xuanzang here. They would never have made it here without you. As a reward, I am making you the next Jade Emperor. You seem capable enough!" Buddha said.

Monkey nodded eagerly in agreement. He was on cloud nine, floating away. "I've been waiting for that old dweeb to retire!" he added.

"Now you go along into the throne room. Your new throne is waiting for you." Buddha said.

Without much modesty, Monkey obliged. He stepped behind the door and a delighted chuckle was heard.

Meanwhile, the others were getting anxious. "Monkey has been inside for too long," Pigsy paced back and forth until he couldn't take it anymore. "I'll go see what's happening," as he trotted up and into the temple. Pigsy was amazed by its splendour. He could also smell some heavenly

food wisping from somewhere in the temple. He closed his eyes to take in the delicious aroma. As his stomach began to growl, he opened his eyes and there stood the Great Buddha.

“Ahh!” Pigsy screamed, and calmed down when he realized it was Buddha. “Sorry for that,” Pigsy mumbled sheepishly. “Great Buddha, I have come to collect the holy scriptures.”

“Oh, Pigsy,” Buddha said kindly, “you must be exhausted after such an arduous journey.”

“Oh yeah! My whole body is aching and my legs are wobbly as tofu.” Pigsy added.

Buddha replied with sympathy, “I have prepared a feast for you in the banquet room, with all kinds of heavenly food.”

“Yes, I could smell that!” Pigsy said greedily, grinning from ear to ear.

“After dinner, the servants will escort you to your resting chamber. While you have your beauty sleep, I shall speak to your master.”

At that point, Pigsy had forgotten all about Monkey and the scriptures. He could only follow the delectable aroma straight to the banquet room.

Outside, Sandy could wait no more and charged into the temple. He was in such a rage he did not notice the smell of food nor the splendor of the place.

Without any greetings, “Where are Pigsy and Monkey?” Sandy demanded when he saw Buddha.

“They are fine.” Buddha reassured Sandy.

Calmed by Buddha’s reply, Sandy continued, “I’ve come to collect the holy scriptures.”

Buddha smiled warmly, “I have always regarded you as the best of Xuanzang’s disciples! You are so earnest...”

Before he could finish, Sandy interrupted, “I always strive to be the best that I can be, always listening to Master’s teaching and trying to attain the highest virtues, always!”

“I know,” Buddha replied. “That’s why I have just the perfect reward for you. There is a sacred stream behind the temple. Its water flows from none but the Heaven Mountain itself. Bathe in it and you will cleanse not only your body but also your soul. And you shall become the purest monk of all, with the most superior of characters”.

Sandy’s eyes lit up, “That’s just what I’ve been striving for!” Without saying goodbye, he charged out to the stream the same way he charged in.

As none of his disciples were in sight, Xuanzang calmly decided to enter the temple himself. Though he noticed the decorations and the scent of delicious food, he was neither impressed nor distracted. Seeing Buddha, Xuanzang simply greeted, “Great Buddha.”

“Xuanzang, you have travelled tirelessly with your companions, enduring such hardship. You deserve the greatest rewards of all. You shall rule over the Jade Emperor. You shall have all the pleasures of the world. Moreover, I shall bless you with the highest of virtues.”

“I wish for neither power nor pleasure, and not even virtues.” Xuanzang replied calmly, “I seek only for the truth and to bring it back to my people.”

Upon these words, Buddha simply smiled. With a blinding flash, the temple faded away along with Buddha. Monkey, Pigsy, and Sandy reappeared, as if having just woken from a dream.

“What’s going on?” Pigsy said in a daze.

Before Xuanzang could response, a single voice came from the heavens, “I am pleased with you, Xuanzang. You have proven yourself to be worthy. The truth you seek is indeed in your heart.”

Upon that, Xuanzang smiled and prostrated, thanking Buddha for his affirmation.

“But what about the scriptures?” Monkey exclaimed.

“Scriptures are only words,” explained Xuanzang, “Words that tell stories to help us see the truth. But the truth is not in the scriptures. The truth is in our hearts.”

Fiction – Group 1

WINNER

Journey in Space

Korean International School, Chan, Lara - 7

“Let’s go for more adventures!” said the Monkey King after they delivered the Buddhist sacred books to the temple.

“Well, let’s take a rest by the river first!” said Xuanzang, the monk.

There was a gigantic shadow belonging to a bull approaching the team.

“Who’s that?” screamed Zhu Bajie, the talk-able pig, and Xuanzang fearfully.

“I’m Metagrallo!” boomed the mega bull.

The Monkey King smacked Metagrallo with his Ruyi Jingu Bang, the magic stick.

“Ouch!” yelled Metagrallo, but he was not hurt.

“Who can defeat him?” asked Sha Wujing, the friar.

Suddenly, there was a loud bang! Metagrallo fell on the ground dying. A football player bounced a football on Metagrallo.

“Thanks!” said Xuanzang happily.

“What’s your name?” grunted the Monkey King.

The football player’s name was Penniford. He had a special weapon called Qweart, which could take people anywhere they wished.

“Penniford, let’s have adventures!” asked Zhu Bajie.

“Could we take the Qweart?” asked Sha Wujing.

“Yes, but it may bring us to the wrong place.” responded Penniford.

The team boarded the Qweart and fell asleep during the trip. When they woke up, they had no clue where they were.

“I think we are travelling to a planet called Ballstak!” cried the Monkey King.

“Xuanzang, could you search about this planet?”

Xuanzang nodded.

Ballstak was a planet which revolved around the center star in Beckhamy’s belt. Ballstak was famous for its great goalkeepers in football. Their best goalkeeper was Synakick.

“Here we are!” screamed Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing fearfully.

“Hey! No intruders here! Into the jail!” yelled Zackory, the chief police of Ballstak.

“Oh no! We may need to score a goal, guarded by the famous Synakick.” thought the Monkey King.

The team spent a night in jail. On the next day, Zackory woke them up loudly and said, “If you are the first to score a goal, you will be allowed to stay or leave. You will be given a chest of opals and citrines which will give you luck in the future.”

Sha Wujing nodded.

Later, the team was standing by Synakick. Penniford said bravely, “I shall kick the ball. I am a football player after all.”

The team agreed and cheered up.

Penniford nervously took a deep breath and looked at Synakick, who had two hands flying around the goal. “Don’t let him shoot, Synakick!” yelled the cheerleaders.

“Let the game begins!” blared the loudspeaker.

Synakick was daydreaming. Penniford quickly kicked the ball into the goal. “Penniford wins!” blared the loudspeaker.

Zackory rushed in and said, “Here is your chest and you all are now free!”

“Surprise!” yelled Synakick and gave out a book. “A book to help your future.”

“Thank you!” said the Monkey King and yelled for his flying cloud. “Take us back home!” In a few seconds, they were back on the Earth.

Xuanzang gave the chest and the precious book to the temple. He joined the team by the river and everyone chorused, “Life’s beautiful!”

Fiction – Group 3

WINNER

The Second Journey

West Island School, Eyunni, Gayathri - 12

Chapter 1

I had always preferred night to day. Not for any specific reason. Maybe because I could look up at the sky, without the fear of burning my eyes with the blazing sun. Maybe because I could look up at my ceiling and find some life in the glow-in-the-dark stars I stuck up there. Maybe because I could hear silence, something which was quite rare in my area. Or because I could escape. Escape from reality and jump into a world of fantasy, where what I wanted was real and alive. Where I could escape from all the dark spirits like Jealousy and Hatred that lurked within our world, and go somewhere, far away, where the only existence was me and all of my thoughts. Even now, I still prefer the darkness. It protects me from the bright light, like a blanket covering one in the cold.

People have strange obsessions. Mine was an obsession with a story.

When I was younger, my grandmother would tell me a story most nights before I slept. These were stories that had been passed down generations; stories that are as old as time, or so I had been told. Stories that have become part of me, that I could hear again and again, but never get bored of, for each time I listened, I learned something new. I loved them all, but I had one favourite, 'The Journey to the West'. For long, I loved the story with all my heart, but I never knew why. Infact, I found it strange being obsessed with a story. With time, I realised that it was more than just liking the plot, or being able to relate to the characters, I started being part of the story.

But on my ninth birthday, something strange happened, drawing me to the story even more. I remember vividly. Father was on a trip to my uncle's place, so he left me a present near my bed. I remember how happy I was, not because of the present but because he had actually remembered my birthday. It was a gift from my father to me, and I opened it carefully. A part of me said that I should be happy with whatever I got, because I knew how busy he was. But another hoped that it was something different to the Red-bean and Green-tea sweets he usually gave me. I was pleasantly surprised and overjoyed when I saw the contents. Bubbling with excitement, I stared at them for a few, long seconds before carefully placing them in a small clay container near my window, something given to me by my grandmother many years ago, a place where I kept all that was special and important to me. Inside it, now sat four figurines; a monk, a monkey, a pig and a bull. All characters from my favourite story. My father must have overheard me speaking to my grandfather about how I loved those four characters, or perhaps seen me constantly gazing at them, shining majestically in their newly painted bodies. They were the newest addition to the shop, and I was the first child to receive them.

Chapter 2

Everyday one realises things, but it is rare to have a life-changing realisation.

And that is exactly what happened. That is a lot for just one week; one tiring, busy week. I knew it meant something. Something beyond the meaning I had perceived it to be till now.

I was always taught that magic was not real, but sometimes, what we think is fantasy is actually real.

That night, I had a dream. It was no surprise that my dream was about “The Journey to the West”. They had just finished their journey, and the story should have ended, but here, there was something that I hadn’t been told before. A new part of the story. The voices were draining out, but I was able to catch what they were saying. *“Go find....” the Monk begun, “bring it back...”*

“...lost... destroyed...” the Bull said, his image slowly fading.

“Beware.... jealousy.... regret...” I heard, not knowing who said it, though it might have been the Pig.

“Go to the... west...”

The voices were talking to me!

At that moment, I must have woken up. My head was dizzy! Rubbing my eyes, I glanced at my clock and could barely make out that it was midnight. That was the one occasion where I preferred daylight, because the figurines coming to life scared me.

I always wished, for night to last forever, but this night, I wanted it to end.

My head was throbbing and beads of sweat formed on my forehead. My heart was pounding against my chest and my breathing became short and hard. I fell back onto my pillow, too scared to blink, let alone close my eyes. Yet they drooped down, threateningly. It took me a minute to come back to my senses. Were they really talking to me? I thought about it for a few seconds, before turning my gaze to the figurines. I stared at them and thought that I must be hallucinating, but the more I looked at them, the more real it seemed. The figurines were glowing, shining, sending a dim light across my room. There was no moonlight outside, and the neighbors had all turned off their lights. There were no streetlights on my street. It was magic. Pure magic. What was more, each figurine seemed to be talking to me, to my mind. If I looked at the Monk, a voice in my head would say, “Go find it and bring it back.”

“Values are lost, heritage is destroyed.” the Bull would say, as if finishing what he had wanted to say in my dream.

“Beware of the demons, jealousy, rage and regret.” the Pig worded.

“Go to the West.” the Monkey said, in a voice full of worry.

Like the missing puzzle-piece, they were finishing what they had said in my dream.

I woke up that morning with a sore back and neck, but most of all, a thirst for more information from the figurines.

As much as I tried to speak to the figurines in the morning, they wouldn’t reply. It seemed like it was up to me now. At first, it didn’t seem to make any sense at all, but the more I thought about it, the more sense it started to make. I realised what was happening. I realised what the problem was. It was a war, a fight, between the east and the west. It seemed hard to believe, but it was true.

When it comes to taking sides, I am usually neutral. However, this time, I was on the East’s side.

It all seemed to make sense now. Globalisation. Modernisation. Words were flowing out

Fiction – Group 4

WINNER

Portraits

Yew Chung International School-Secondary, Lo, Wai Man Michelle - 14

“Patient Sun Wukong?”

Perched on a stool, the patient peered at the partially finished painting before him, his face half-buried in shadow. He stooped down toward the pots of vibrant paint scattered around his feet, the strings of his hospital gown rustling in a soft susurrous as he did so. Chipped at the edges and worn to their bases, the pots were arranged in a chaotic cacophony of fading colour, like an unruly bed of wilting wildflowers.

“Sorry.” He tapped his head with a finger. “Sun Wukong isn’t in right now.”

Dark eyes, like caverns hewn into stone, bore into mine. A blurry image of Patient Sun’s medical file flashed into my mind, with the words *Dissociative Identity Disorder* emblazoned across the header. I inhaled sharply. “In that case, who are you?”

His raspy voice was like a knife scraping against a whetstone. “I am the Monkey King.”

Laughter bubbled up in my throat at the irony of the situation. “My name is Xuanzang,” I said. “I’m your psychiatrist.”

The Monkey King curled his lip and stared up at me in displeasure, then turned back to his artwork. I edged closer, diffident, and watched as the canvas bloomed with colour beneath the strokes of his slim brush.

“What are you painting?”

“Myself, of course,” came the curt reply. His hands flowed across the painting as if he were a conductor, blending pale peaches and greys into a harmonious symphony. “I only ever paint self-portraits.”

He nodded around him at the many pictures that furnished the cracked and yellowing walls. Hundreds of faces, all with the same features, stared back at us, watching silently. Ice trickled down my spine – every portrait seemed familiar in a way that I couldn’t quite place.

I laughed, the sound strained. “Well, Sun Wukong – Monkey King... ah, is there anyone else in there?”

He rolled his eyes. “No, there are only two identities,” he said, sharply, and flicked his brush, sending crimson poppies blooming onto the white canvas.

“Sorry. Well, as I’m here to help you –” I laughed again and fidgeted.

The Monkey King bowed his head and began coaxing streaks of watercolour into features, eyes fixed upon his work. “I’m a painter, not an invalid. I don’t need your help.”

The laughter died in my throat. “I don’t think you understand...” I swallowed. “Are you aware of the effects of dissociative identity disorder?”

“Yes, I am,” he scoffed. “The real question is, are you?”

“What?”

“Never mind.” With an impetuous wave and a grim chuckle, he dismissed me. “I’m sure you’ll figure it out soon enough.”

“Why do you paint all your self-portraits as characters from *Journey to the West*?”

Sun Wukong – the real Sun Wukong – beamed at me. “It was my favourite folktale as a child,” he said. “Quite ironic, when you think about it!” His face was wreathed in a sunny smile – utterly different from the Monkey King’s cold, callous expressions.

Upon the easel, the canvas dripped with viscous oil paint. A pair of melancholy eyes, framed by wrinkles and strands of grey hair, glared out of the painting. The grimacing monkey that was portrayed bore a bronze circlet upon his head. Its spikes glittered with crimson beads and dug into his skull as if it were a crown of thorns.

The painting next to it, however, was completely different.

In bright watercolour, this canvas depicted the same monkey lounging in a river. There were the same empty eyes and the same hoary hair; but unlike before, his mouth was quirked in a merry smile and the gleaming circlet of gold sat on his head with a jaunty air.

My eyebrows knitted together. Both figures held the same features, but there was a strange disparity between them. One was grim, one was happy; one was angry, one was merry; one was alone, one was surrounded by friends.

How could one person be so different?

Oh.

“These are self-portraits of your *personalities*,” I mused aloud.

Sun Wukong clapped his hands in cheerful affirmation and gazed up at me with a bright smile. “Do you like them?”

Nodding in wonder, I gazed at the myriad of paintings around the cell. On one side there was the Monkey King, clapping his iron staff in clenched fists, soaring through the sky atop a misty cloud, fanning mountains consumed by flames; and then there was Sun Wukong, tumbling from the treetops, cracking jokes with joy and laughing raucously around a roaring campfire.

A soft sigh escaped me. Within those brushstrokes was his soul – framed against the wall, bared for all the world to see, but for none to understand.

Something glinted and caught my eye then – a flash of dull gold. I pointed at the lonely, unfamiliar portrait in the corner, brow furrowed. “Who’s that?”

Crouched inside the casing, a painted figure was hunched over in despair. His face was masked by a matted mop of hair. I hovered over the ancient ink illustration, faded to a dreary crimson brown from the old vivid red that shown through here and there in patches that had been protected from sunlight. Its frame was cracked and coated in dust. A strong sense of *deja-vu* stirred my memory.

“Do I know him?” I asked. That silver necklace was familiar somehow...

Sun Wukong gave me a long, searching look. Whatever he was looking for, he didn’t find it; after a brief pause, he slumped back and stared at the blank ceiling.

“He’s an old friend of yours,” he muttered. “An old friend of mine, too.”

I cocked my head. “What do you mean?”

“He’s the third personality.”

I froze, eyes narrowed in suspicion. “The Monkey King said that there were only two.”

Sun Wukong’s gaze dropped to his folded, shaking hands in a silent warning.

Sunlight streamed in through the blinds, illuminating tumbling motes of dust and casting dappled shadows upon the patient's latest work. I sat by the easel, fiddling with the worn silver chain of my necklace, and quivered at the gruesome depiction of the Monkey King in full battle armour.

"We need to talk," I gritted out. "You lied to me, Monkey King. You said there were only two personalities, when there are in fact three. Why did you say that?"

Standing at the back of the cell, the hollows of his cheeks were sketched out in the dim light and shadows draped eerily over his features. "Sorry," he said, shrugging with a practised carelessness. "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies."

My nails dug into my clammy palms. "I want to meet the third personality -"

"No," said the Monkey King, in a swift venomous tone that brooked no argument.

I wavered under his firm glare but went on. I had to help him recover, whether he wanted to or not. "Listen, I can help you out of this sanatorium, but first I need to understand who he is..."

He shook his head violently. I trailed off, frowning at his ashen pallor. A sense of foreboding settled over me. I noted the way his hands trembled, and I began to tremble too. Who was the third personality and what had he done?

"We don't talk about him," he growled finally. "He's the most delusional of all. You wouldn't want to meet him." He averted his gaze. I glanced back at the small, worn portrait propped up against the wall, and felt its silent, unblinking gaze on me.

I shuddered.

"Another Monkey King?" I lifted my gaze to the plethora of portraits staring down at me from all four walls. At twilight, the room was bathed in a purple hue, and a faint summer zephyr stirred the scattered brushes by the window. "How many will you make?"

Sun Wukong stiffened in his seat, mouth frozen into an unnatural smile. "This is the forty-second."

"Will you ever stop?"

His eyes lingered upon the many portraits adorning his cell, his gaze heavy with an emotion I could not identify. Was it grief? Anger? The hairs on my neck stood up. People often said that the eyes were the windows to the soul; but in that moment, Sun Wukong's eyes were dark. They reflected no light; they told no story.

"I don't think so," he said at last, brush poised over the canvas. "I'm not sure if I can."

"You should try, at least." My eyes darted meaningfully toward the small picture in the corner. "Painting might be a coping mechanism, but you can't paint away all the different personalities you have."

There was a faint crack as the brush snapped in his tightened grip. His knuckles glowed white. Eyes wide, I stared down into his tumultuous, conflicted gaze.

The room was silent.

"How ironic," he said, and swept his brush down, adding yet another layer to the canvas.

Rain trickled down the window panes, diffusing blurry beams of light against the cell walls. Once more, the Monkey King was sitting on his stool. His fingers flitted across the fabric of his painting, smoothing down the stretched cloth of his masterpiece as he steadily ignored my words.

“Enough is enough.” The words burst out of me. “I have to know about the third personality!”

The Monkey King’s mocking laughter greeted me. Dark amusement tugged his lips into a half-smile, yet his eyes flashed in fear. “Why should I tell you?”

I fumed and floundered. “You just have to. Otherwise, I can’t help you.”

“Help me?” The Monkey King snorted, acerbic. “Please. You’re so blinded by your own delusions of ‘helping others’ that you can’t even see all the damage you’re doing. Just leave me alone.”

“Delusions?” An abrupt, indignant fury swept over me like a blazing inferno and simmered in my veins. “You’re the one who can’t face reality. I’m simply asking you to stop hiding behind those portraits and enter the real world.”

He snarled, face suddenly contorted into grotesque anger. “I will not abandon my life’s work!”

“Is your art more important than your sanity?” I retorted. “Sun Wukong - the Monkey King - whoever this third personality is - you know all these characters belong to the same person, yet you still paint them as ‘different’ personalities. Can’t you see? These portraits are holding you back!”

“The only thing holding me back is you!” he shrieked. His nostrils flared with fury. Swept up in anger, the Monkey King whirled around and hurled his almost-complete illustration to the ground. I stumbled back as he lurched toward me.

“Are you happy now? What more do you want from me?”

“I want to know who the third personality is,” I insisted, eyes narrowed, mind whirling. “I want you to show me the truth.” The need to know had been itching at me for days. Why was this room so familiar? Why did all the portraits remind me of myself? Who was the third personality?

“You want to see the truth? Fine,” spat the Monkey King, trampling over strips of ripped canvas. He let out a bitter laugh. “Ignorance is bliss. Isn’t that what they say? When I show you the truth, I want to see you suffer.”

He painted as though he were possessed.

Under the flickering lamp, jars of water shattered and pigment splattered everywhere, spraying a kaleidoscope of colour across the floor; but the Monkey King paid no attention. While the moon rose to its zenith and the murmur of people outside faded into silence, he enthroned himself at the easel and smeared colour across the fabric at a ferocious speed, hands flying in a frenzied blur. The canvas groaned as he slashed at the picture with his brush.

In the darkened corner, I sagged against the padded wall, watching him fill his artwork with passion and fury, as if he were an avenging god, pouring anger and hatred into his Pandora’s box.

“Get up, Xuanzang.” The Monkey King’s voice, tremulous with gleeful virulence, stirred me awake. I found myself before the canvas, dazed.

“What -”

It was as though I were staring into a mirror. Resting upon the easel was a perfect replica of my own reflection. Familiar dark, empty eyes stared back at me, and the colourful oil paint reflected every wisp of my greying hair. Somehow, the Monkey King had captured my exact likeness in flawless detail.

“I don’t understand,” I said aloud. “This is a portrait of me. So what?”

His voice echoed around me. “I only do self-portraits.”

Wait.

Dread settled in my stomach and my fingers grew numb. The brush in my hand – when had that gotten there? – plummeted to the floor. I choked as realisation dawned on me.

Desperate, my gaze swept over the walls: past the portrait of the robed Sun Wukong, past the portrait of the armoured Monkey King, past the portrait mysteriously hidden in the corner, then back to the portrait in my arms that was of me, Xuanzang. Everywhere, I saw the same eyes, the same hair, the same nose, mouth, ears –

Every painting in this cell was of me.

I dropped the illustration. The crash echoed around the empty room. If the Monkey King, Sun Wukong and I were all portrayed in the same painting, but there was only one face in the frame, then that meant...

I clutched my head. Disjointed voices and memories called out, mocking me, taunting me –

The only thing holding me back is you -

Portraits, familiar in a way I couldn't quite place -

The most delusional of all -

The real question is, are you?

Blinded by your own delusions -

The same empty eyes and the same hoary hair -

That necklace was familiar somehow -

How ironic -

Third personality -

Dissociative Identity Disorder -

I stared down at my trembling, paint-stained hands, and clutched at the silver necklace around my dry throat. Faintly, the tears and laughter of Sun Wukong and the Monkey King reverberated through my mind.

“You wanted to know who the third personality was, didn’t you?”

Sobs echoed from behind the cell door. The nurse turned, unsure.

“Best not to go in now,” her colleague said, blankly. “That’s Patient Sun, at it again.”

“Again?” She cast her gaze down at the medical file in her hands. “Oh.”

Patient Sun Wukong.

Condition: dissociative identity disorder.

And then, below the header, in tiny print:

Suffers from delusions and depersonalisation (out-of-body experiences). Often converses with himself. Three known identities include the Monkey King, Sun Wukong and ‘Doctor’ Xuanzang.

of my mind like a river. The East and the West used to have their own ways of life, their own values, their own customs. But as the world started to grow, the west started to influence the whole world. The East tried to be more like the West. Unknowingly, it had begun a process, where it's own unique virtues and values were slowly being eaten up by the possessive and manipulating ways of the West. It was a group of people trying to be like another, who in their efforts and attempts, started to lose their identity and their personality; it was almost all gone.

The first Journey to the West was to bring back Buddhist scriptures from India, to the west of China. Now I had to go West, to bring back the East, to bring it back to its senses. I would have to propagate heritage, history, respect, truth, and everything that made us who we were. I was still troubled by the fact that I would have to beware the demons that would try to deter me, but I knew exactly how they would do it, and why. They were all part of one big demon, trying to eat me up, not physically, but eat up my spirit, transfer me to the dark side. Jealousy would make me feel that the West was better, but I knew, deep down, where nothing could harm me, that it wasn't. Rage would find what troubled me the most and bring it to me, such as not accomplishing a goal. It would light the fire of anger in my mind, like an obstacle in my way, or burn the hope in me. Regret would make me question everything. My aims, my steps, my intentions. It would be my largest obstacle, in the way of accomplishing my mission. But it wouldn't stop me. Passion, Hope and Commitment would save me. Each one with the strength of all the enemies put together.

“Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.” they said. But I thought differently. Slowly, but surely, I planned my Journey to the West.

Fiction – Group 5 WINNER

Secrets of the Wu Triplets

Buddhist Sin Tak College, Mok, Ka Hei - 17

The rain fell softly on the plants in the garden. The pitter-patter of the rain created a shield around Wu's family's triplets. Today was definitely not a good day for playing outside. The triplets were sitting in their study, doing their homework given by their father. The eldest brother, Kong, cupped his chin, watching the rainy garden. His homework was spread out on his table. None of it was done. The second eldest brother, Neng, was leaning on the table, sleeping. Only the little brother, Jing, was working hard, struggling to finish his homework.

'It's so boring! I don't want to do any homework anymore,' Kong suddenly yelled. His sound was so loud that it woke Neng up.

'Brother, I know you must have a plan to help us escape from this homework mischance,' Neng asked, rubbing his eyes. Kong didn't answer but stared at a room nearby. It was their father's study, a forbidden room for them. Knowing Kong's idea, Neng's eyes sparkled like stars, hoping to take action immediately.

Hearing his two brothers' words, Jing rolled his eyes and said, 'Don't be silly you two. Father will punish us if he knows we have sneaked into his room!'

Kong just giggled and tried to tempt his little brother, 'But Jing, don't you want to see what books are stored in dad's study? I know you have wanted to enter dad's room for a long time.' Jing only struggled for a few seconds and then put down his homework, looking at his eldest brother with expectancy. It seemed that he had succumbed to Kong's plan.

Kong opened the door slightly, looking around to make sure no one would notice them. They bent over, sneaking into their father's study one by one. They were so careful that not a single sound was made and no one knew that the triplets had left their own study.

Two huge bookshelves which were full of books were placed at the two sides of the room, and in the middle was a desk full of documents and papers. The triplets were extremely excited to enter this forbidden area. Jing was the most excited one. Once he entered the room, he picked a book, reading and wanting to absorb as much knowledge as he could. His two brothers were not as studious as Jing. They just walked around, looking for something interesting.

When Neng walked near the desk, he saw a book. It was covered with no title and its colour was fading. It must be a book written a long time ago. 'Maybe there are some secrets written in it,' Neng thought, thumbing through the pages. Yet, he couldn't understand it as the words were outdated and no longer in use.

Neng frowned and said, 'Kong, I found a novel, but I don't know what it says.'

Kong read the book for a while and scolded, 'Idiot. It's a dairy. Um, I think it's a dairy from the Tang Dynasty.'

'Tang Dynasty! Really? Let me have a look,' Jing shouted suddenly. He immediately put down the book he was reading and took the dairy. The more he read, the more excited he felt.

He raised his chin and was in pure glee. It was a diary about a monk called Zang going on a trip to the West for some Buddhist sacred texts. Yet, Zang wasn't the owner of this diary. It seemed that the owner of this diary was a servant or a follower of Zang.

'Hey guys, let's just read this diary to kill time. It should be interesting. I hope to know more about the monk,' Jing suggested. Kong and Neng looked at each other and nodded.

'It was a very hot day and ...'

It was a very hot day and the sun shone brightly, burning like a freshly lit fire. I felt I was going to melt. Sweat broke out all over my body and finally dropped to the ground.

It was 23 days since we started the journey and it was also the twenty-third time I wondered why Zang never sweat in his heavy monk robes. Luckily, we had arrived at a little village before noon. Looking at my sweating face, Zang decided to stay in this little village for a little while to avoid the burning sun. Oh! How kind Zang was, and again, I was glad that I had met him in my life.

Walking on the street, we were trying to find an inn, and I saw a girl coming to us. She had a slim body, as perfect as a master's sculpture. Black hair framed a heart-shaped face with a gentle smile and perfected placed dimples. Her skin was completely flawless. Everything part of her would have portrayed perfect--if she didn't stare at Zang in that way with her eyes, sparkling with love and passion.

I quite understood her feelings. Zang was a monk, but not a 'real' monk. I knew he chose to become a monk for some reasons, hiding a fact that would not be accepted by others. As a result, Zang didn't shave off all his hair. His worry was doomed to follow him his whole life. Not cutting his hair, Zang had an attractive appearance, letting you feel relieved, calm and safe. For me, he was a distant star that twinkled in the vast night sky, so far that he was sacred and out of reach. So I understood her feelings well.

The girl stood in front of Zang, staring at him as if she wanted to capture all the details of Zang. Then she asked softly, 'Master, are you finding an inn? I can help you.' Her voice was so "sweet" that it made me feel disgusted.

With the assistance of the girl, we found an inn and decided to take a rest there. The room was comfortable, with a large desk and two comfortable chairs. We still had time before having lunch.

After putting all luggage down, Zang pulled out a piece of paper, an ink stick and a writing brush. He held the writing brush with a slight tilt, while frowning to himself. After a few seconds, he finally put pen to paper, sketching. In the beginning, he hesitated. Then, he drew faster and faster. A smile grew slowly on his face and his eyes were as gentle as a silent lake. This scene calmed me and I hoped it would last forever.

The sound of someone knocking on the door broke the silence. It was that girl, holding a tray of food, all vegetables, of course. Oh! I couldn't stop rolling my eyes. Didn't she know that Zang didn't want to be disturbed when he was drawing? If Zang needed to have lunch, I would prepare it for him, not that girl.

'Be polite, Long,' Zang said, seeing me rolling my eyes. He put his palms together and thanked the girl. A faint pink flush coloured her cheeks immediately. She put down the tray and lowered her head to avoid eye contact with Zang. She stood a few steps away and seemed to want to say some words.

'What's the matter, lady?' I asked irritably.

She lowered her head more and asked with curiosity, 'Master, where are you going to?'

'Madam, we are going to the West for some Buddhist sacred texts,' Zang answered.

The girl was trying to say something but I chipped in, 'Please leave, lady. We want to enjoy the meal now.' After hearing my words, the girl started to walk out but turned back to look repeatedly. Before she closed the door, Zang looked into her eyes and she blushed again.

The door was closed completely and I was glared at by Zang. I would do anything for just a simple smile. After a while, he sighed and sat down, and started to have his lunch. To be honest, I didn't like the girl, especially when she was looking at Zang with extreme passion and love. It made me feel annoyed and jealous.

After the meal, it was time for us to continue our trip. Picking up all our luggage, we left the inn and this little village. Suddenly someone shouted, 'Please wait, master.' It was that girl, holding her own luggage. 'Please! Please let me go with you. I can do anything you want and take care of you during the journey,' the girl begged. I knew Zang would refuse.

Zang felt a bit embarrassed and said, 'I am sorry, madam, but it's not good for a girl to travel with two men.'

I thought to myself 'Yes, so just go back little girl, and never appear in front of Zang anymore. Even if you travel with us, he would never accept your love.'

'I don't care. I have considered that already. I...' the girl hesitated, 'I like you!'

Zang was so astonished that he couldn't say a word. The only thing he did was bow and apologize.

'But master!'

'I am sorry, lady. Don't you understand? Zang cannot accept your love.'

That was the breaking point of my patience. Anger boiled deep in my heart, as hot as lava. Although Zang had rejected her, the love and passion stored in her eyes rendered my inexplicable resentment and fury. If I could, I would conceal Zang, and not let anyone know of his existence. The pressure of the raging sea of anger forced me to do something crazy.

'Zang cannot accept your love,' I repeated my words, pulling Zang to my side and said, 'he is mine.' Not giving the girl or Zang the chance to say a word, I covered Zang's mouth with...

'Hey! Don't close the book, brother!' Neng yelled.

Jing's cheeks blushed of hot crimson and he couldn't stop thinking about the scene he had just read. Obviously, Kong understood the scene that Jing had just read and he stared at Jing with a smile. Jing said with embarrassment, 'I think the diary is quite boring. Maybe we can read other books.'

'No, I want to know what will happen to that beautiful girl,' Neng said, trying to grab the diary.

'I agree with Jing. This diary is boring. I was expecting an exciting journey, full of plight and danger,' Kong said, 'maybe we can rewrite the diary into an interesting story.'

'Imagine, a story of a monk going to the West, going through many dangers.'

Hearing Kong's suggestion, Neng couldn't wait to do so and suggested, 'Maybe we can add some new characters, like, hehe, many pretty girls.'

'I have already thought of three new characters,' Kong said proudly and pointed to himself, 'Wukong.'

Then he pointed to Neng, 'Wuneng.'

'Wujing,' Kong said, pointing to Jing. 'That's the name of the new characters.'

'Sorry for the interruption,' Jing said, frowning. 'I'm not joining you guys. I think it's time for us to go back to our study and finish our homework.' Then he walked to the door but was pulled by Kong, not letting him go.

‘My little brother, do you think you can run away? Since you agreed to come with us, you have already become an accomplice,’ Kong giggled and said. ‘You are good at drawing right? Just help us to draw the characters,’ Neng added.

‘Let’s start with the dairy we have just read. Just rewrite it as a story called “Monkey Subdues White-Skeleton Demon”.’

‘Good idea. Brother, draw the characters.’

‘Noooooo!’

The rain stopped and a rainbow climbed up to the blue sky. Streams of sunlight fell through the thick wall of trees in the garden, filling up every space between the leaves with warm, and sugary light. The rays tumbled down the strands of grass, which gleamed with the remaining raindrops. The sun went down slowly and hid under the horizon. The sky was dyed in scarlet red. The night was coming.

‘What are you three doing here, hm?’ It was a sound full of anger.

‘Oops,’ Kong said, turning around. Their father was standing outside the room. Fires of fury were smoldering in his eyes. ‘Haha. Dad, we are just trying to clean up your room,’ Kong answered with an embarrassing smile.

‘Nonsense! Get out and do your homework. Now!’ Their father roared.

‘Yes, father,’ the triplets lowered their heads and exited the room with disappointment. The room was a mess and full of papers on the ground. Father picked them up and had a look. There were some pictures, drawings of a monkey standing on a cloud. It was Jing’s drawing. There was also a novel, with 98 chapters, written on the paper. It was Kong’s writing. On the first page, there were four words --- Journey to the West.

Fiction – Group 6

WINNER

The Six Elemental Coins

Korean International Springboard, Wai, Kaden - 11

On September 21st, 1832 at 2:09pm, a monkey was born from a volcano called Kazuki near the Hawaiian Islands. The volcano, which was about the size of The Great Pyramid of Giza, suddenly split open and a baby monkey stretched and climbed out. The monkey's name was Sun WuKong.

Sun WuKong grew up in a little house in the Waterfall Cave on Razor Island. Over the next hundred years, he practiced and learned six different skills on his own. He could tell the future, light could shine through his eyes and hurt his enemies, he could fly, he could transform into different animals, and he had super strong strength like The Hulk. Every time he mastered a skill, he would gain an elemental coin, allowing him to use the skill with ease. Sun WuKong earned six elemental coins in total.

One day, Sun WuKong met Nicholas the gibbon. They became best friends right away. They played, ate, slept, swam, climbed, walked and lived together every day every year. Through time, Sun WuKong found out that Nicholas knew the same skills he did. Together they had 12 elemental coins.

Not far away, the diamond bandits called Jack and Puncher were watching. They wanted to have all of Sun WuKong and Nicholas' elemental coins. After watching them for almost a year, finally one day the diamond bandits tiptoed behind Sun WuKong and Nicholas and followed them to their house. Once they entered, large metal gates closed fast like a flash. The metal was so thick that Jack and Puncher couldn't open it no matter how hard they tried. So they gave up and decided to stay at the Waterfall Cave for the night.

The next morning, Sun WuKong and Nicholas went out to find some rocks to play Rukshuk. As soon as Jack and Puncher saw that Sun WuKong and Nicholas had left, they sneaked into the cave to search for the coins. They looked for more than two hours until they finally found all of them in Sun WuKong's bedroom. They took all 12 and ran out of sight. Jack quickly tried to use the "fly" coin to get away from the cave. But no matter how many times he tried, it didn't work and he couldn't understand why.

When Sun WuKong and Nicholas came back, they were furious that their elemental coins had gone without a trace. Sun WuKong and Nicholas muttered some magic words, and the coins suddenly appeared out of thin air and dropped into their hands. Little did Jack and Puncher know, that once the elemental coins are attached to an owner, the bond is exclusive and forever.

Fiction – Group 7 WINNER

Bang

King George V School, Hoeflich, Alex - 14

There was a loud noise
Two shots fired
My women on the ground
It felt like my heart was shattered. I knew the time was right
It was time to make my journey to the west, to tell them what carnage unraveled
When I arrived in the UK bombs was raining down like raindrops. I saw my brother
dripping with blood, it flowed so swiftly that it ended in a flood
I look everywhere for shelter but there was no place for me to enter
My life flashed before my eyes
There was nothing to live for, everything that I loved was gone
My tears were falling from my eyes
The allies came to save the day
How could we be saved? The allies went
We were swept away like a wave

Fiction – Group 7

WINNER

Almost a Greek Tragedy

Korean International Springboard, Lee, Joshua - 17

Once upon a time, Zeus wanted to steal Tripitaka he wanted to do this because he wanted Tripitaka's knowledge. Tripitaka, Sun Wukong, Piggy and Sandy were searching for the secret scriptures in Greece. When suddenly lightning flew down from the sky. Tripitaka's white horse threw him on the floor and a lightning bolt went around his body and captured him. When Sun Wukong tried to help he was struck by a lightning bolt and was unable to move. Zeus then sent a wind that made Tripitaka fly up to Mount Olympus. Zeus told Tripitaka that he would destroy him because he had too much knowledge. Tripitaka said "So be it, but first could you answer a question?"

Zeus started to laugh, "Okay! Ask me anything but it won't help you."

Tripitaka asked. "Are you the strongest God in all of the universe?"

Zeus answered, "Yes of course, my lightning is the strongest thing in the whole world. Nothing can beat it, except for me."

Tripitaka said "I don't believe it, if you wrap yourself in your lightning then I bet you can't escape."

Zeus laughed again. "Of course I can! Then he threw lightning bolts around himself." He couldn't move. As much as he tried, he was stuck. The Tripitaka summoned Sun Wukong's special cloud and he flew down to where Piggy and Sandy were trying to help Sun Wukong escape from the lightning bolts. Tripitaka, being very clever then told Sun Wukong to make himself very small so that the lightning bolts fell off. As for Zeus he had to wait until the power from his lightning bolts wore off. Then they continued their journey.

Non-Fiction – Group 1 WINNER

Journey to the West

Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Zhong, Yu – 8

The “Journey to the West” was written by Wu Chengen, who was a novelist in the Ming Dynasty. He was living in a very corrupted society. Also, the social system at that time was in a state of confusion.

The “Journey to the West” is mainly about stories of Sun Wukong, Pigsy, Friar Sand and the White Dragon Horse escorting Xuanzang to a journey to the West. What happened on the way to the West and how they saved Xuanzang repeatedly.

In my personal opinion, the five people in the “Journey to the West” represents five levels of Maslow’s needs. Sun Wukong’s need is to realize self value. Pigsy’s need is physiology. Friar Sand’s need is safety. Xuanzang’s need is honor and the White Dragon Horse’s need is a sense of belonging. Therefore, their pursuit of learning is not the same, the natural values are not the same either.

Sun Wukong

He was also called the Monkey King. I like him best. Because he had plenty of valuable fighting spirit. First, he defied the bigwigs to pursue freedom and was a symbol against theocracy. He still maintained a consistent style of wild and intractable traits, which embodied the spirit of the people. Second, he carried forward a strong will to fight and was full of enthusiasm to achieve the preset goal. Third, he had the courage to defy nature. The fighting spirit to conquer evil-doers, the true quality of a hero to stand up to the powerful and assist the weak.

Pigsy

Pigsy was a greedy, lusty and egoistic man. He had a stubborn conservative mentality, which embodied the wishes of the ordinary working people. It also reflected the characteristics of small producers and ordinary citizens.

Friar Sand

Friar Sand possessed the traditional virtues of the Chinese nature: diligent, loyal, hard-working, thoughtful but carefree. He also had the evil root of the people. But his existence is for reconciling internal contradictions.

The “Journey to the West” described in details the hard journey of Xuanzang and his apprentices pursuing an ideal and a goal. As far as I am concerned, in the process of realizing their lofty ideal, we are always full of contradictions and conflicts. Nevertheless, We should overcome all kinds of difficulties to realize our dream.

Non-Fiction – Group 2 WINNER

A Journey that Continues to Inspire

Kau Yan School, Gittings, Mark Daniel - 10

Why do so many people from all over the world want to follow in the footsteps of Xuanzang, the Buddhist monk who made a long and dangerous journey along the Silk Road from China to India more than 1,000 years ago?

For example, American journalist Richard Bernstein explains in his book “Ultimate Journey” how he was willing to risk arrest by Chinese police because he wanted to “get away from it all” by following the same 10,000 mile journey as Xuanzang. Then there is Chinese filmmaker Sun Shuyun, who describes in her book “Ten Thousand Miles” how frightened she sometimes felt as she travelled all alone through remote parts of China along the same route that Xuanzang took in the monk’s search for Buddhist scriptures from India. The more I read about Xuanzang’s journey, the more amazed I was about how it had inspired so many others to undertake risky journeys of their own.

I think one of the main reasons why so many people are inspired to follow in Xuanzang’s footsteps is because of the famous Chinese novel “Journey to the West”, which is loosely based on the monk’s travels. I was only five years old when my Mum first read a children’s version of the book to me and, even though I’m still too young to go travelling by myself, I can understand why such a colourful story might excite people older than me to set off on adventures of their own.

I’m not alone in being excited by “Journey to the West”. It’s a book that almost every Chinese child knows and, thanks to the popular English translation by British scholar Arthur Waley, it’s also a book that has been widely read in many countries around the world. “Journey to the West” has even been described as one of the three most famous novels in modern Chinese history by author Sally Wriggins, yet another person who took risks to retrace the monk’s route, in her book “The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang”.

But I think it’s too simple to say “Journey to the West” is the only reason why so many are inspired to follow in Xuanzang’s footsteps. For example, I read about a famous British archaeologist called Sir Alexander Cunningham who used the Chinese monk’s writings on his journey to write a book called “Ancient Geography of India”. Sir Alexander said he relied so heavily on Xuanzang’s work because it was more detailed than any other ancient records about India.

There are at least four different reasons why people choose to retrace the Buddhist monk’s route. In her book, Sally Wriggins calls them Xuanzang’s “four legacies”. One is the literary legacy of the novel “Journey to the West”. Another is the archaeological legacy that encouraged Sir Alexander. In addition to these two legacies, she also mentions the monk’s art and translation legacies.

Xuanzang’s art legacy has become more important as many of the monuments that he

wrote about have been damaged or even destroyed. This means that the monk's detailed descriptions of how these monuments used to look is now essential reading for art historians. For example, art historians often rely on Xuanzang's detailed description of the two enormous statues of Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan that were destroyed by the Taliban government in March 2001.

The translation legacy seems to be the one that was most important to Xuanzang. Although most people know about the Buddhist monk because of his 10,000 mile journey, his biographer Li Yongshi never mentioned this journey in his book about the monk called "The Life of Xuanzang". Xuanzang never mentioned his long journey either, when he dictated a list of his good deeds shortly before his death. Instead the monk listed his gifts to charity, making Buddhist statues and, especially, his translations of the Buddhist scriptures.

Xuanzang brought back 657 Sanskrit texts from India. Together with a translation team, he spent the rest of his life translating these Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. Since the original versions of some scriptures were later destroyed in India, because of Xuanzang's efforts China now has the only surviving copies of these scriptures in the whole world. Modern Buddhist scholar Dan Lusthaus calls Xuanzang the world's greatest Chinese translator of Indian Buddhist texts.

Today Xuanzang's fame has spread far beyond archaeologists, art historians, literary and translation experts. He has been featured prominently in many television shows about the Silk Road, and his name is even used as the logo for some travel agencies selling tours along the Silk Road. His name also appears in Buddhist centres all over the world, and on many Buddhist websites.

This growth in both Buddhism and tourism on the Silk Road helps explain why there is so much interest in Xuanzang today. But I don't think it's the only reason why so many people, such as Richard Bernstein and Sun Shuyun, decide to make sometimes risky journeys retracing his route, when they could just read about Xuanzang on the Internet instead. Just as I was excited from the moment when my Mum first read a children's version of "Journey to the West" to me, I think there is something about Xuanzang's story which excites a sense of adventure in many people all over the world. Perhaps Sally Wriggins is right when she compares Xuanzang to "a dead star that keeps releasing energy and light for thousands of years".

It was Xuanzang's idea to search for the truth about Buddhist scriptures that set him off on his long journey more than 1,000 years ago. Maybe the others who now follow in his footsteps are trying to seek out their own different kinds of truth as well.

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(990 words)

Non-Fiction – Group 3 WINNER

New Journeys to the West

Sha Tin College, Wong, Ivan - 13

Was it Morally Correct and just for a Buddhist Monk to Physically Punish the Monkey King? How does this Translate in a Children's Story?

Ever since the publication of *The Journey To The West*, it has become widely popular among audience of all ages. *Journey To The West*, a traditional ancient story in the Chinese culture, passed down through generations is about a monk, named Xuanzang, venturing to India along with three guardians, The Monkey King, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing. Xuanzang was not just any ordinary monk, people and demons believed the monk's flesh was healthy and spiritual. Hence, many would attempt to hunt him down as if he was a delicacy. On the other hand, the three guardians protected the monk, fending off these enemies and creatures. Majority of the story is about how the three battle against enemies and their carefully concocted plans to rescue Xuanzang. One interesting feature of the story was when Guanyin, the goddess of compassion, mercy and kindness placed the golden headband onto the Monkey King's head. It was not any ordinary headband, it was actually more of a torture device; tightened and unable to be removed whenever a specific hymn is chanted, causing aches and pains to the Monkey King. This hymn only worked when chanted by Xuanzang himself, he used it as a tool to gain the monkey's attention, enforcing obedience. Now, this begs the question, when the monk chanted the hymn meaning to inflict harm on the Monkey King, coming from a religious monk, was it against the views of Buddhism? Different versions of the story reflect different variations of the monk using the hymns to impose pain on the Monkey King, was it borderline torture? How do these actions and scenes affect the viewers, especially the younger audience?

The main values of Buddhism revolve around not harming any living creatures, in treating others well you will be treated well too. A collection of sayings in Buddhism *Dhammapada* 129 states, "All living things fear being beaten with clubs. All living things fear being put to death. Putting oneself in the place of the other, Let no one kill nor cause another to kill." This also explains their reasoning for being vegetarians, to not kill the living for sustenance. Another important value for Buddhists is to help those who are suffering, such as beggars. Ultimately, if one does not hold those values, there will be dire consequences. For any sort of harmful action, for instance stepping on a plant, asking people for money etc. An equal amount of unfortunate events will come back in your way. What goes around comes around, speak of which, Buddhists refer to this as Karma. Karma is a system in Buddhism where it is implied, if you do good you get good. In other words, if you carry out more good deeds than bad during your lifetime, you will be granted a promising rebirth in the next life. Conversely, if harm is caused and missions are broken, there would be consequences and a rather degrading reincarnation. This is a clear incentive as to why they are indirectly taught to be a model Buddhist.

In the story, the monk is portrayed as a calm and collected buddhist, loyal and religious.

Standing by the morals and standards of his religion. On the other hand, every time the Monkey King misbehaves or runs away, the monk would chant a hymn forcing the return of the Monkey King begging for the pain and torture to cease. Xuanzang has unquestionably done some actions that have shown to be entirely opposite to the values and missions of Buddhism. Chanting and inflicting pain upon the Monkey King being one of them. Clearly, Xuanzang does not seem to be playing by the rules of his beloved religion. As a matter of fact, torturing the Monkey King seems more of an easy way out of his problems rather than reasoning or consulting them.

The monk's actions shown in the story are in no way justified, he was more so simply abusing his power. While chanting the hymn, the Monkey King is put under immense pain and discomfort, hence he is forced to listen to the monk with no free will. Evidently, Xuanzang exploits his powers as he has no real authority to slave drive the Monkey King; leaving him no choice but to follow his demands. Not only are his behaviours unjust as a human but mostly definitely as a Buddhist monk. In addition, it is clear that the monk's action are not humane. As stated, monks strongly believed in not hurting living creatures in any way. Not to mention, not very grateful either since the Monkey King is basically his bodyguard.

This may be fictional and no one is actually being harmed, but how does all this abuse translate to its audience? Journey to the West is a widely translated story. Varying from movies to television shows and books, appealing mainly to the younger demographic with its mischievous fun loving character, the Monkey King. However, there are a number of scenes where the actions displayed are questionable as to whether they are suitable for the audience or not. In many situations the monk tortures the monkey, it is translated where the monk is superior and his actions are always justified since he is the leader of the group. In the story, it shows that the monkey king would misbehave or disobey the monk or at times even attempt to run free from the monk's control against his wishes. The monk would then be portrayed as a saint like character, chanting the hymn to inflict pain via the golden headband; giving him no choice but to obey. When shown such actions to children, it instantly influences them to result in turning to violence when challenged with their own difficulties. Dr Emma Raizman from Cleveland Clinic reports that over 80% of children imitate what is seen on television and media. Although they would not chant hymns, they would use their own methods of violence to force an individual's obedience. This is one major factor that should be.

Some may argue that these violent actions or imitations may only affect children at a younger age, would this behaviour diminish? Or would it become a part of their nurturing, instilled as part of their personality; who they are. Upon witnessing aggressive behaviour it may affect one's judgement or method in dealing with everyday situations. A research completed at Montclair State University explains that the more violent media children are exposed to, the more likely they are to having aggressive thoughts, behaviors and tendencies. It is no secret that children are easily influenced by role models and their environment, TV and books being no exceptions. When children witness how the monk causes pain to the Monkey King in the show, they would usually imitate as the character is portrayed as doing the 'right' thing. Witnessing the exchange between the two, children would be quick to consider it correct and ideal behaviour, with no consideration and remorse for the pain induced.

To conclude, the monk's cruel actions towards the Monkey King for one clearly is against the beliefs and values of Buddhism. Not only does the monk not rightfully illustrate the Buddhist religion; his character strongly portrays the message of "violence solves all problems". Nevertheless, it is not the ideal message to give the younger audience. When we think about the

story, the adventure of surviving through challenges, running through jungles, paddling across the ocean, it has great entertainment value engaging readers of all ages, especially children. However, there are parts where it undoubtedly becomes a negative influence. These scenes and actions should be viewed with caution and parental guidance. Children along with parents should reflect on the characters and their actions before deciding if it is acceptable behavior.

Non-Fiction – Group 4 WINNER

The Story of Hsüan Tsang

Island School, Daswani, Rohan - 15

Years ago, a mediocre, run-of-the-mill family from China was sent on a journey to fetch some scriptures. However, their mission was nothing near as bland. The mother, pregnant and father, deceased. Immediately after the boy was born, he was tied to a plank with a letter penned in blood and pushed into a river. Here is the story of that boy, “Hsüan Tsang.”

At that time, long ago, most monks usually looked very serious. But this boy grew up to be uniquely different, even though he was quite dignified, he always wore a little smile. No matter what happened, this young boy never lost this glimmer of inner happiness. And on happy occasions, he had the brightest smile and the warmest laughter of all.

His sixth birthday was the day he found out about his parents. His master sat him down and explained it to him. The boy understood, and a tear wept down his face; yet, he still retained his smile. He was thrilled to know the truth, and He was so happy for all that was terrible was left behind him.

Sometimes his friends asked him why he was so happy that he always smiled. He chuckled and said, “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you! And if you think I lied, it would be a dishonour to my master.” His wise old master knew that this glowing source of happiness could not be wiped from Hsüan Tsang’s face and so, he made the happiest monk his favourite assistant.

The summer after the boy turned seventeen, the wise old master and his followers went to the city. The king permitted them to live in his garden for the spring. As summertime approached, the monks were preparing to return to the forest. Considering the health of the old leader, the king went to him and said, “My friend, you are now very old. You are growing weaker. What good does it do to go on a treacherous walk back to the forest? Send your followers back, and you stay here.”

The master then called his assistant to him and said, “You are now the leader of the monks. I am too old and too weak. I will stay here with the king.” So, the monks returned home, and the master remained.

Hsüan Tsang continued his meditations in the forest. He attained so much peace and wisdom that he grew even happier than he was before. However, Hsüan missed his master; Hsüan wanted to share his new knowledge. So, he returned to the city for a visit.

He trekked back to his old place of solitude, with all of his belongings on his back, and when he arrived, he sat on a rug at the feet of his master. They didn’t speak very much, mainly because the old monk was sick. However, every so often the assistant would say, “Thank You, Thank you so much!”

The king then entered the room to pay his respects to the chief monk. However, the assistant just kept saying, “Thank You, Thank you so much!” He didn’t even stop to greet the

king and show his due respect. This lack of respect disturbed the king, and the king thought, “With all my concerns, looking after the kingdom, the citizens, I take my time out for a visit to a monk which I provide shelter for, and they don’t even respect me enough even to recognise me. How insulting!” He responded to the elder of the two monks, “Venerable chief, I think your friend must be lightheaded. Does he lie here so unacquainted all the time?”

The head monk replied, “O king, have patience, he is a far better man than what you see. He just has a few traumatic memories. Wait, and I shall tell you the source of his happiness.

“Oh, enough with this measling stories, I’ve had enough with it.” “All you peasants ever want is just rubbish for yourselves,” The king said.

“Please listen, not many know it. Immediately after the boy was born, he was tied to a plank with a letter written in blood and pushed into a river. After being driven into the river, Hsüan Tsang endured a treacherous life. Before I found him, he was held by a family of three; they raised him till he was five, but all they did was torment him. They laughed at him, tossed him around and treated him as a slave. When he was six, Hsüan Tsang ran away with a blood letter detailing what happened to his parents. That’s when I found him. After learning the tragic story of Hsüan Tsang’s parents from the blood letter. I took the boy under my care and raised him as a monk. Both of his parents must be deceased by now. A group of Mongols was hunting them. He used to be surrounded by fear, nobody stood up for him or protected him. But, now, alone in the tranquil forests, he does not need to fear anything. Unshackled from the burdens of fear, my friend advances through meditation to find such inner peace, that he cannot stop praising the Lord for freeing him from his troubles. Maybe you can find this inner peace too; you must have a lot of stress from being the King of this wonderful place. Let me teach you a few things...”

The king understood at once. The king stayed with the monks for a while to received advice before returning to his palace. After this day, the king started visiting the monks more frequently. The king even visited the monk’s’ village in the lovely forest to receive more advice, and the king eventually found his inner peace.

Later, Hsüan Tsang paid his respects to his master and returned home. The old monk lived out the remainder of his life, died, and was reborn in a high heaven world. But, the old monk had something left for his number one assistant, a blood letter, detailing a mysterious journey to the west...

Hsüan Tsang’s journey was not easy, he felt discombobulated with all the different rituals throughout Asia. Yet, he prevailed. His journey brought his life new meaning. His new friends helped him further pursue inner peace.

Non-Fiction – Group 5 WINNER

A Journey Beyond the West

St. Paul's Convent School (Secondary Section), Yiu, Verena - 16

*Yearning thudded against his chest
Dangers of the voyage bothered him the least
He said he would rather die going to the West
Than just live by staying in the East*

He is Xuanzang, Tripitaka, Tang Seng, a Buddhist monk from the Tang Dynasty. Many of us have probably heard about him in the popular Chinese classic “Journey to the West.” On that note, the tale “Journey to the West” speaks of is not a strict conveyer of historic facts and events; it is a playful and entertaining rationalization of what happened to Xuanzang on his voyage. The magical legend and the actual history converge on the same protagonist and his journey to the West, but diverge in many details as well. What intrigues me is this: How similar are the two tales? How different are the two tales?

On Xuanzang's Initiative

“Journey to the West” describes Xuanzang as young, naïve and exhibiting excessive, indiscriminate compassion to everyone. The novel had the young part right, but Xuanzang was already a wise and learned scholar by the time he embarked on his journey to the West. In fact, he gave lectures to monks in assemblies when he was 13 and was ordained as a bhiksu (full monk) when he was 20. As a Buddhist philosopher, Xuanzang realized that the more he studied, the more lacking the Buddhist texts were in China. Language barriers hindered accurate translation and one scripture could lead to different interpretations. Xuanzang yearned for spiritual enlightenment, and his pursuit for religious truth eventually prompted him to venture the West for the original Holy Scriptures. Contrary to “Journey to the West,” the real Xuanzang did not travel due to Tang Taizong's request to perform a so-called “Great Mass.” In fact, Tang China and the Göktürks were at war during the time he embarked on his journey and his crossing of the border was disapproved by the government. Xuanzang tried to apply for “guo shuo” (which referred to passports at that time) but was rejected. Determined to make it to the West, Xuanzang sneaked out of Chang An with the help of a Buddhist abbot.

On Xuanzang's Challenges

Supporters are vital because the journey to the west is unknown and precarious to Xuanzang. In the novel, Xuanzang had to battle with demons and defy supernatural forces. Monsters try to eat him because one bite of Tang Seng's flesh is rumored to give immortality. In reality, Xuanzang encountered a plethora of challenges that was nonetheless, life-threatening. First it was the weather: the vast Gobi Desert was scorching hot in the day and freezing cold at night. Then Xuanzang trespassed five sentry towers that were ordered to shoot and kill all travelers without “guo shuo”; Xuanzang was almost shot to death by arrows as he evaded

his enemies. Temptations were prevalent, too. Indian kings convinced Xuanzang to stay and contribute in Buddhist temples, supplying him with food and precious gifts. In the novel, Xuanzang received a marriage proposal from a beautiful queen, to rule a land inhabited only by women, and enjoyed riches for the rest of his life. In both the novel and history, Xuanzang refused all temptations for a comfortable life, and carried on with his voyage. Xuanzang's determination and tenacity are preserved in both contexts.

On Xuanzang's Supporters

Xuanzang had received support from Buddhist believers and guides commanded by Indian kings, but the novel perhaps has more interesting supporters to offer.

Magical companions are desirable in the novel because human species is alone. The lack creates them. In the novel, Xuanzang had three supernatural disciples on his journey to the West, namely, Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing. Sha Wujing is actually inspired by reality. In the "Biography of Master Tripitaka of the great Ci'en Monastery of the Great Tang Dynasty" written by Xuanzang's disciples, there was a night in the Gobi Desert when Xuanzang was physically drained and could only lay in the sand. In his dreams, a giant urged him to get up and keep going. The character Sha Wujing was modeled after the encouraging giant in Xuanzang's dream. For instance, Sun Wukong, the monkey king, was created to protect the naïve Tang Seng (Xuanzang) because he could see through demons that disguised themselves as innocent humans. It is also interesting to note that "Wukong" meant "Awakened to Emptiness." Sun Wukong is lacking in spiritual fulfilment and needs Tang Seng's support to achieve such. In the novel, magical companions and human species form bidirectional reliance on each other, bringing them together through the thick and thin. As readers, we feel much more assured that the lonely monk is well backed up by powerful companions. Yet we should never neglect the independence and courage that first ignited the real Xuanzang's travels.

On Xuanzang's Contribution

At the end of the novel, Xuanzang was appointed to be the "Buddha of Sandalwood Merit." The real Xuanzang cared less about recognition and power: he refused to become a court advisor on the western lands – he wanted to dedicate himself to translating the texts he brought back from India. Tang Gaozong built a stone infrastructure known as the "Big Wild Goose Pagoda" to house Xuanzang's collection of over 600 Buddhist scriptures and sutras. The Heart Sutra with its line that Xuanzang translated has been chanted throughout East Asia more than a thousand years. In addition to his monumental translation work of 74 texts in 19 years, Xuanzang wrote the book "Great Tang Records on the Western Region." It recorded his travels between 626 and 645, including meetings of kings from various kingdoms, contributes to the sugar-making technology in medieval China and India and is the earliest textual evidence for Buddhist sculptures in Bamiyan.

What the real Xuanzang has left behind, is much more than just a name and an inspiration for a classical novel. The journey to the West was not just any journey. It changed a monk's life. It changed a belief. It changed a nation.

Poetry – Group 1 WINNER

The Story of a King

St Stephen's College Preparatory School, Cheung, Charlianne - 6

What is his name, name, name? His name is Monkey King,
He flies on a cloud and wears a golden ring, ring, ring,
He travels with a master and becomes a great helper,
His magic golden staff protects them from demons and monsters.

Coming from humble beginnings,
Born from a fairy stone egg shining,
King of monkeys through a courage call,
First brave one to jump through the waterfall.

Ten years he travelled to find life everlasting,
Across oceans and lands determined never flinching,
Through an immortal teacher, seventy-two magic was his treasure,
Sun, Seeker of Secrets, the one true capture.

Proud and mighty monkey becomes a monkey bully,
One time, two time, three, Old Jade to make him happy,
Never seems enough, not even Great Sage Equal to Heaven,
Through face of greed and envy, he becomes Mr. Tantrum.

Enough is enough, mighty Buddha gives out a test,
Silly monkey fails, trapped for all the mess,
Sorry, sorry, sorry, monkey is very sorry,
Heading to the west, for a long meaningful journey.

Poetry – Group 2

WINNER

The Heroes' Expedition to the West

Diocesan Girls' Junior School, Ma, Luann - 10

The humble explorer of China sets off
 To the unknown Dahila Kingdom.
 With Guanyin guarding him from above the sky,
 Protection embraces him, as well as wisdom.
 Xuanzang, he's named, the devoted monk,
 His faith and determination have never sunk.

The mighty king of the Flower Fruit Mountain sets off
 To serve the faint-hearted Xuanzang.
 With his formidable Power Pole, he boasts,
 "Ha! I can defeat anyone," and sticks out his tongue!
 Sun Wukong, he's named, the ingenious monkey,
 Even faced with any peril, he's ever so lucky.

The lively follower of Xuanzang sets off
 While eating is definitely his whim!
 With his invincible Nine-tooth Iron Rake,
 He can turn any enemy's hope dim.
 Zhu Bajie, he's named, the ruthless pig,
 Will probably chop off any devil's leg.

The obedient supporter of Xuanzang sets off,
 Like the others, to make up for his sins.
 With his unbeatable Crescent Moon's Shovel,
 He can plop enemies into foul-smelling bins.
 Sha Wujing, he's named, the courteous disciple,
 Will stun every wicked kind of rival.

The courageous gang of voyagers sets off
 To complete a treacherous yet noble mission.
 With the three amusing and loyal companions,
 Future can surely be seen within Xuanzang's vision.
 The omnipotent party, the amazing discoverers,
 Can conquer every demon without any barriers.

Along the road, hideous monsters they encounter.
Yet with no hesitation they so chivalrously destroy.
With the three omnipotent weapons and the wit they possess,
They are faithful companions of Xuanzang indeed...oh boy!
Who won't shake with fear if he spots the group?
Whereas the group, ha, they'll simply gleefully troop.

The road is long, the risks are high,
But with no apprehension, towards the West they stride.
To help Xuanzang acquire the sacred texts,
With transformation skills which they perform with pride.
"Oh, come on," eagerly rapped all of them.
"Our tricks will prevent him to be eaten, again and again!"

Flaming mountains, raging rivers, monstrous spiders...a decade in time.
An unforgettable journey they've experienced and thereafter must miss.
The disciples' dedication has relieved them from their crime,
What is to follow, is the joy, the hope, the bliss.
At Vulture Peak, the priceless scriptures have been received.
What a phenomenal mission the heroes have achieved!

Poetry – Group 3

WINNER

New Journey to the West

King George V School, Jain, Mudita -12

Upon a mountain, hard to climb,
lay an ancient rock, as old as time.
With mother and father, earth and heaven,
came a stone egg, soon to leaven.

Nourished by the elements, if counted, five
wood, earth, water, metal and fire, to thrive.
With 72 transformations, Monkey grew,
dressed in armour, he flew.

Monkey set off, for scriptures so sacred,
to the land of India, where the words lay faded.
He continued his journey, foot after the other,
through the sun, through the rain, he battled any weather.

Then came Pigsy, who was satisfied with more,
rode on the clouds, half human and half boar.
With 36 transformations, no more and no less,
when near Monkey, he was often tempted to aggress.

Along with a monk, joined the journey, Sandy, who appeared like a demon,
once from the immortal world, he showed no signs to weaken.
Appears like a monster, because he broke a vase,
at no other location, but the Peach Banquet place!

Cracked under his feet, the autumn leaves,
brushed past the wind, on the winter's eve.
Came out the long, pale clouds, that covered the blue sky,
everything in sight appeared not wet, but dry.

A loud roar startled the 4 men,
they took out their weapons, ready to defend.
They saw a metal bird-like structure, soaring in the sky,
shocked, they stood there, wondering where it was going and why.

The last leaves fell and swirled to the ground,
snow drifted and settled all around.
Every breath was visible in the misty air,
they passed by the trees, which looked so bare.

Then from the corner of Monkey's eye,
he spots vivid colours, bursting in the sky.
Monkey turned to his companions, puzzled and confused,
but they just stared at it, bewildered and amused.

Night falls as they reach the peak,
they are amazed by the sight - unable to speak!
Shining are hundreds of lights,
why didn't they see them on all the other nights?

Cherry blossoms bloom, the flowers are full of colour,
the leaves reappear, this time brighter, not duller.
Once again, the sun shone,
once again, the wind had blown.

They pursued their journey, hot or cold,
they crowned a dead king, strong and bold.
Rescued a princess, who was trapped all alone,
returned to the palace, soon a heir to the throne.

Tucked in Monkey's ear, a weapon that could shrink or expand,
with no match for the enemy, this tool came in hand.
Monsters they fought, Bodhisattvas they met,
the journey was hard, but their mind was set.

The days grew longer, as the clouds rolled away,
the forests were lush - it was a perfect clear day.
The sun warmed their skin, as it rolled high above,
summer was a season everyone could love!

They were closer and closer, with every step they took,
chanting prayers from the Tripitaka book.
Studied at Nalanda, an university so ancient
they travelled through Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and the lands adjacent.

They were seeing the Earth develop, they were seeing it change,
what now seemed obvious had once felt strange.
They were in a modern era, and it had just begun,
to uncover its secrets and leave everyone stunned.

Poetry – Group 4

WINNER

White-boned Demon

St. Paul's Co-educational College, Lam, Chin Yau - 15

Ugly, repulsive, bony entity;
 how I abhor
 my traitorous body.
 Beauty.
 Beauty of pure, pale skin;
 delectable meat
 I must taste.

I want to taste this beauty;
 just as I wish
 to destroy this—
 my traitorous body;
 and replace it with yours;
 your beauty.
 I long for
 immortality.

I used to be
 flawless, like you;
 pure and pale and beautiful.
 But I quit a long time ago.
 Now I hate.
 I avenge my long-lost purity;
 purity stolen by beauty—
 beautiful bastardly men.

My dearest travellers;
 men who pass by my domain.
 Beware.
 Beware of the woman,
 once bitten and betrayed.

I am not shy.
 Prepare to perish.
 Men who bring immortality,
 do not fear me.
 For I am innocent and pure
 in my holograph body.

Do you see me now?
 White-boned and beautiful.

Poetry – Group 5 WINNER

Beyond the Rustling Grains?

German Swiss International School, Lai, Arista - 16

i. the plains

Throughout her life, the plains were all she knew.
Lines blurred, sun-soaked, the pastures were her world
They stretched and circled past her field of view
And twice each year the golden husks unfurled.
Clucking rousing village early mornings,
Rustling of grains herald a new day's start;
Flowing breezes carry their soft warnings
As humble farmers wake to do their part.
At noon a chatter rises off the plains
And children to their fathers call a pause.
"Let down your scythe, for sweat falls on our grains!"
The blinding Sun above their bowed heads draws.

Sometimes she wished they'd change their daily talk –
It seemed that all they cared about was rice.
The harvest and the weather were their walk;
To them, this wake-work-eat-sleep life was "nice".
And yes, the girl, she loved her no-name town,
Familiar nooks and crannies, ins and outs,
But stifling still with nothing else around –
Yet neither old nor young had voiced their doubts.

*"What lies beyond the rustling grains?" she asked,
"What's there to find that hasn't yet been seen?"
"There's nothing," Mother scoffed. "I thought at last
You'd grown enough to know that you're no queen!
We've made a life for us, and you'd do well
To thank us for the blood shed on our soil –"*
Her father shook his head. *"Come now, don't dwell.
You wonder why your future must be toil.
Dear girl, I will not force you into duty
That for a hardy son is better suited.
I wish – I wish – that you would see beauty
That in our simple life is deeply rooted."*

ii. the merchant

“Spices, spices!” the ringing call resounds,
 Diffusing undeterred to farmers’ ears.
 Towards the weather-beaten cart she bounds,
 Grinning as the merchant her way steers.
 “Good day!” he greets. His camel snorkels water.
“Hot enough to make a sand-horse dry.”
 She offers him the rice, and, *“How’s your daughter?
 And wife—it must be hard when you’re not by.”*

She’d grown to like the merchant over time.
 Though others stayed away from his brown skin,
 Kissed darker by the heat and journey’s grime,
 His sparkling eyes and sharp gaze held within
 A wisdom gained from besting life’s long trials.
 With spices gone, she helps him load the cart,
 Begging to hear recounts of many miles –
 Lands she’ll never touch but holds to heart.

*“When I was young like you, I lost it all –
 My parents drowning in a raging flood.
 How wrong it seemed that fishermen should fall
 Into their Mother Sea, entombed in mud.
 Too soft to sail alone, I heavily
 Relied on strangers’ kindness to survive.
 But soon they looked away, and readily
 I found a vendor who agreed to drive
 A desperate boy with nothing to his name.
 Lost in the city market I despaired;
 Sat hunched, glared down at my soft hands in shame.
 For I, though wide with hope, had not prepared
 To live without the comfort of the waves.
 Sudden, a man crouched down regarding me:
 ‘What fate befalls that shrouds your eyes in caves?’
 I told him how I feared I’d never see
 Again the sampans docked at shore, aflame
 Under the rising Sun of tranquil dawns.
 He seemed to understand. ‘So here you came...
 I say, I do respect a lad with brawns;
 Let’s have a chat over some crusty bread.
 For I’m a tradesman in lack of a son,
 Inviting you to follow in my stead –
 Our journey far to chase the setting Sun.’*

*He gave me all I have in seven years;
On camelback we scoured uncharted lands.
I pushed myself to go confront my fears,
And with each step surged further on the sands.
We triumphed snow-capped mountains, rolling streams,
A sea of clouds; I once stood on Earth's ledge!
Shook hands with cultures, traded friendly beams,
To know all human variants I pledged.*

*My eyes were wide to capture all this life,
'Til trade was swift, and hands and feet were sore.
A foreign state was where I met my wife;
That man gave me a chance, but so much more.
A merchant's kindness I will not forget,
Our years of struggle I will not regret."*

iii. the quandary

The merchant's words made echoes in her mind,
For searching souls entrapped do tortured feel.
To all the merchant's recounts she was blind,
And all his glory tales seemed so unreal.
And while she kept to heart this rare secret,
The truth unknown would not disrupt routine.
Their sight was clear, within their limits set:
In comfort, but with worlds beyond unseen.

She pulled at stubborn turnips in the ground,
White flesh like pearl: enchanting, how they *grew!*
If only she could find something profound,
Profound with meaning – bring back something new.
What if she could? What if it were her fate?
Since youth she wandered fields and wanted more.
His words had birthed conceits no farm could sate –
To carry on would shake her to the core.

I need to leave, she thought, or I'll begin
To hate the boundaries that rice plains draw –
To loathe the home that gave me life is sin.
"Naïve you are!" fell slack her mother's jaw,
"Ungrateful daughter, nothing know you yet
Of fears unspoken lying still in wait.
A girl of thirteen? Trap's already set –
Within the night you'll be a fox's bait."

"But what about the fires?" she longed to say,
Her father's hasty glare halted her tongue.

In truth, now not a thing could make her stay –
To dreams of journeys far her heart was flung.

iv. the pages

The village slept; and yet her mind ran wild.
Feet light, she rummaged high and low and lay
A sack on which her precious things were piled.
There was not much, she noticed in dismay:
There lacked for practicalities a tool.
This night would lift; her time was coming soon.
Her gaze procured an object on her stool –
Her father's knife reflecting back the moon.
At first she wondered if it were misplaced,
For nightly by its master's side it slept.
But doubt with surging warmth was soon replaced:
It showed her choice was one he could accept.

Internally she struggled, still untrained.
Her food would have to be just rice and grains,
Delicacies to salted meat constrained.
To cook: a piece of flint would soothe great pains,
But choice was not a luxury she had.
In truth, she cared about not what she ate,
Took pains instead to tuck away a pad
Of folded paper, yellowing of late.

The pages: they alone survived the flames.
The angry blaze she watched ignite the streets
Inferno rising to the skies untamed –
A fatal wall of fury, no retreat.
Three years, yet images still burned her mind.
Three sheets of gold once bound into a book,
A book once held in hands that underlined
Each spoken scrawl, deciphered with a look.
Alive he was the wisest man she'd met.
Bespectacled and looming tall and proud,
The Councilman was kind when plains were wet
And let her in to hear him read aloud
A tale of myths and legends, told in rhyme.
He'd gifted her the pages on the day
When ten she turned, and bowed to seize her time.
*"I promise you", he'd said, "that come what may,
I'll teach you how to read and write and see
The realms of wisdom in these words bestowed."*
With blackened body burnt this could not be,
This quest for learning now a lonely road.

v. the journey

But courage comes to those in need at last,
And now her hands found strength, her heart grew strong;
Her footsteps firm, her fears were in the past –
A journey called to which she must belong.

The shadows cast behind outreach her years,
As to the now set Sun she solely steers.

Poetry – Group 7 WINNER

Minotaur Madness

Korean International Springboard, Ching, Matthew - 16

Tripitaka is mighty and powerful.
In the knowledge of weapons, he is masterful.
With three friends embarking on a journey,
Learning new lessons like an attorney.

The Minotaur monster equally strong,
greedy for more of the power he longs.
attacking Tripitaka in an evil way,
fighting a war will not make him sway.

Tripitaka is defeated in this war,
The Minotaur monster has him on the floor.
Using the monk's knowledge to destroy the world,
Gets a nasty shock when something is hurled.

Out jump three heroes to save their friend,
Using humming music to bring about an end.
The mighty Minotaur defeated by sound,
Explodes in the air like a firework all-around.

The world is saved and back to the norm,
Four friends continue their journey on and on.