

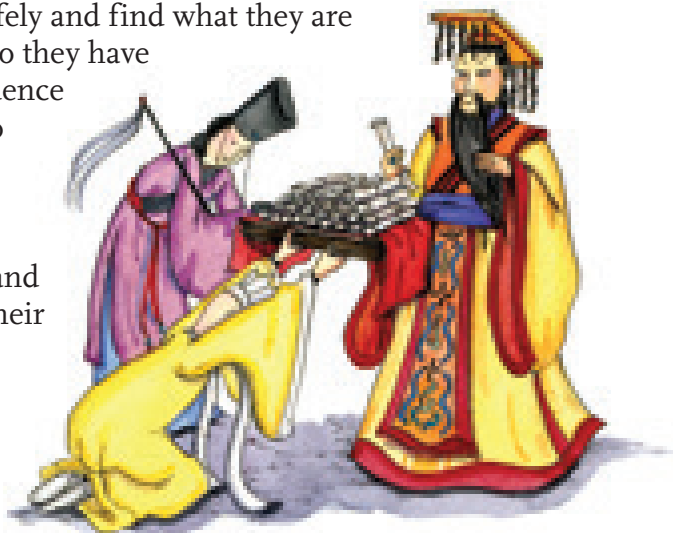
"Monkey is such a rascal! I don't know how he manages to keep getting away with such bad behaviour."
Shang-Yuan, 12



In ancient China a magical monkey appears, creating chaos everywhere he goes. The only way to put his tricks and talents to good use is to make him protector of Xuanzang, a young and handsome monk determined to travel from China to India in search of the precious scriptures.

Monkey and his fellow disciples, Piggy and Sandy, have to protect Xuanzang from monsters and demons who think they can live forever just by taking a bite out of the monk.

Can Xuanzang and his loyal disciples reach India safely and find what they are looking for? Do they have enough confidence and courage to conquer the demons, both those lurking around them and those within their own hearts?



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JOURNEY TO THE WEST Wu Cheng'en

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WU CHENG'EN



Retold by Christine Sun
Illustrated by Shirley Chiang



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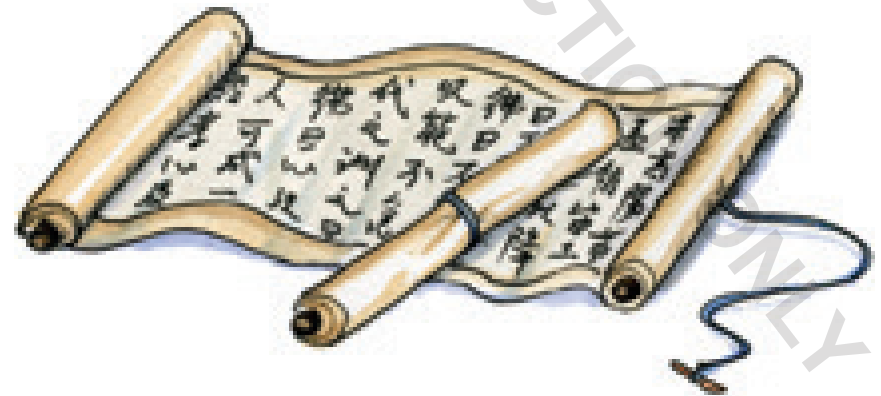


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THE CHARACTERS

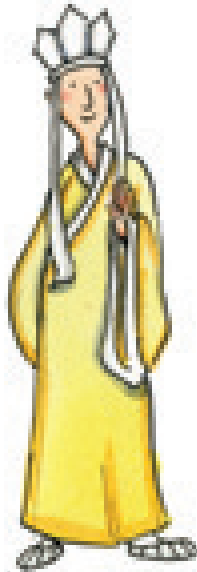


Monkey

Monkey is clever and courageous, but can he change his mischievous ways and become the loyal disciple of his master Xuanzang?

Xuanzang

Xuanzang is a handsome monk, travelling to India to find the precious scriptures. Will he survive the dangerous journey and the monsters who want to eat him?



Piggy

Piggy is a happy-go-lucky pig who enjoys drinking and pursuing beautiful women. Can he overcome these habits and look after his master Xuanzang?



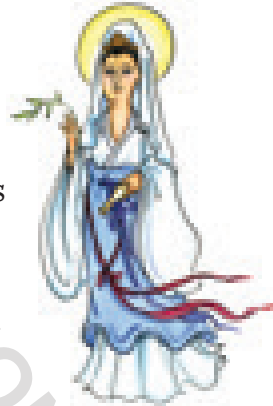
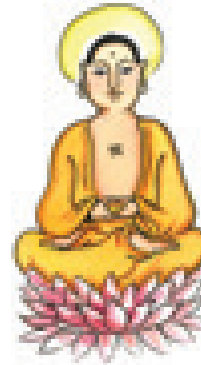
Sandy

Sandy is an ogre, but he is a talented fighter, especially underwater. Will he be able to handle the challenges that threaten to destroy his faith?



Buddha and Guanyin

Two of the many deities who watch over the world and guide those in need to their salvation. Can they help Xuanzang and his disciples find their way?



Buffalo King, Red Boy, and Princess Iron-Fan

Three of the many monsters and demons who try to eat Xuanzang on his journey. What are their cunning plans and secret magical weapons?





JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Bang!

A very special monkey was born from a magical rock on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. He was courageous and cunning, so the other monkeys honoured him as their king. Though he was superior to his peers, Monkey realised that one day he would die, just like any other mortal creature. Determined to overcome death, he travelled far and wide, searching for a way to live forever.

A spiritual master agreed to train him as a disciple. Monkey learned many magic arts, including cloud-travelling and seventy-two types of shape-shifting. He could transform the hairs of his body into objects or living beings, even into clones of himself. But Monkey became arrogant. He dived into the ocean and forced the Dragon King to hand over a fearsome weapon – a golden-banded fighting

staff that could change its size, multiply itself, and fight according to the whim of its master.

Thus armed, Monkey went to Hell and bullied the officials there to wipe his name from the Book of Life and Death. He was now truly immortal.



In an attempt to manage this wild creature, the Jade Emperor invited Monkey to Heaven and gave him a rank among the gods. However, when Monkey realised he had only been given the title of Head of the Heavenly Stables, he decided to rebel. In his fury, Monkey stole a range of heavenly treasures, including the Peaches of Immortality and the Pills of Longevity, and he drank the Jade Emperor's royal wine. Then he fled.



An army of a hundred thousand celestial warriors tried their best to arrest Monkey, but

he defeated them all. The ferocity of the battle shook the whole world, but no one was able to subdue Monkey until a three-eyed heavenly general arrived, who could see through all of his tricks. Desperate, Monkey transformed himself into a temple, with his eyes as windows and mouth as the door. Not sure what to do with his tail, he transformed it into a flagpole, but it was still recognisable.

‘Got you!’ the heavenly general laughed. His cover blown, Monkey was finally captured.

The gods tried to melt Monkey down in a heavenly furnace, but he escaped unharmed, though his eyes were reddened by the smoke. In revenge, Monkey transformed himself into a three-headed, six-armed monster and threatened to destroy the Heavenly Palace.



Luckily, the Buddha stepped in. ‘I bet you that you cannot travel beyond the limits of my hand,’ the Buddha proposed. ‘If you win,

Back in time

Wu Cheng'en wrote *Journey to the West* in the 1590s. The Chinese government at that time was not very efficient, unable to protect its citizens against natural disasters and widespread turmoil caused by rebels, bandits and pirates. It must have been a sad time to live in, especially for Wu, who failed the national examination and thus lost the opportunity to become a government official and look after his fellow people.

Wu based his book on the legends of a Chinese monk named Xuanzang who, in the seventh century, travelled to India and spent thirteen years studying Buddhism there. After returning to China, he dedicated his life to translating and teaching the Buddhist scriptures he had brought back.

Throughout Chinese history there have been many popular stories and folk tales about Xuanzang's achievement. During his writing of *Journey to the West*, Wu was heavily influenced by these stories and tales, which

have a strong background in Chinese folk beliefs, myths and value systems.

More importantly, the book was written in 'vernacular' Chinese, which is the language used by ordinary people in their daily lives, as opposed to the jargon and specialised terminology used by experts and academics. This is why *Journey to the West* is considered one of the most popular Chinese novels of all time – it contains a lot of humour, satire, emotional and physical conflicts, and symbols and allegories that are well known to ordinary Chinese readers.

Journey to the West is very much about the character Monkey and his transformation from a mischievous magical creature to a supernatural hero. Unlike Xuanzang, Piggy and Sandy, who have committed sins in their previous lives and are thus banished to the human world to redeem their faults, Monkey was born magically out of a rock and therefore has no previous life. His courage to accept and pay for the mistakes he has made, by devoting