

**Singapore HeritageFest 2009**  
**“Arte (factually) Speaking” Story-Writing Competition**  
**Shortlisted Entry (Lower Secondary Category)**



Contest ID: 194  
Name: Wong Hong Zhe, Gabriel  
Gender: Male  
Age: 13-year-old  
NRIC: SXXXX175C  
Nationality: Singaporean  
School: Raffles Institution

Artefact: The Sea  
Museum: Singapore Art Museum

The mud pool

It was a mere mud pool, teeming with crabs and small fishes, its quaint star-shape exposed by receding waters at low tide and its waters reflecting the clear blue sky. Most of the time, it remained unnoticed and undisturbed, like a lowly pebble in the granary of existence. Its iridescent inhabitants though, relished this reticent livelihood, occasionally casting the mud pool in a brilliant myriad of colours.

Such a lonely outcrop would have been bound for oblivion if not for the passing of a warlord, seeking his rivals south. The dust on the road, unstirred for so long, rose up in mighty clouds as the earth thundered with horses and chariots, obscuring the army like mist to a mighty forest.

There was a grinding of a horse at the head, a yell from the escort, and the army halted. The Commander, contemptuous and truculent, disembarked and swaggered on the sand like a lion in its den. He was about to order a carving naming the sea after his honoured ancestors, when he stumbled over the very mud pool. Quickly regaining his balance and dignity, he scorned, "Mud pool, how you dare to challenge my path? Don't you know that at the beckoning of my finger, one of those warriors will drink up your water and with a flash of an axe cease your miserable existence on these sands?"

The mud pool maintained its solemn silence, like a servile servant at the petulant whims of his master.

Heading to his carriage, visibly buoyed by his triumph over the mud pool, the Commander released a shout, and the army moved on.

But the mud pool remained, healthy and vibrant as ever, for another twenty years, to witness the return of the Commander who had threatened to obliterate it.

That day arrived without much pomp. A bedraggled band shuffled past the sea. The Commander, wizened and weary, and lacking of an eye, unhorsed, and stumbled across the sand. The puerile outbursts had long evanesced and so had his mighty army, depleted by one reckless assault after another. He gazed at the vast empty sand dunes searching for the last vestiges of sentiment regarding the army and youth he had squandered. His leg brushed

against the rough edges of a mud pool, jolting back into his consciousness the very mud pool he had cursed two decades ago.

He stared wistfully at the mud pool. "Oh noble pool, so you are still here, alive as ever, when all but a hundredth of my army has departed, their bleached bones long rotting in the battlefields and I am but a wreck of a man, soon to be consigned to the dark and dankly corridors of history. You are at peace though, whether rivers of blood gorge the very sanity of man or hideous, deathly screams, shaking the heavens and hearts of heroes. And you will continue in this state, whether Empires rise or fortunes fade."

Then, climbing on his horse, the Commander galloped off.

But the mud pool remained, glowing with creatures and life, against the travesty of time.  
(517 words)