

Introduction

- Introduce Xuan Zang, a 7th-century Buddhist monk, and his historical pilgrimage to India.
- Introduce the 2016 film "Xuan Zang" as a realistic portrayal of his journey.

Thesis: The contrasting roles of fantasy in Buddhist storytelling and the utilization of emotions in the film "Xuan Zang" reveals how both approaches can illuminate different aspects of Buddhist history and philosophy.

I. The Effect of Fantasy in Representing Buddhist History

- **Body Paragraph 1: Mythologizing History**
 - Introduce the classic novel "Journey to the West" as a fantastical retelling of Xuan Zang's journey.
 - "*Journey to the West* is about a magnificent journey of a monk and his three companions to go from China to India to seek sacred scriptures."
 - Describe the elements like demons, mythical creatures, and magical feats.
 - "Not only will you see rivers of sand but there are invisible demons that follow people there, shadowing them."
 - Explain how these elements make the story more exciting and relatable to a wider audience.
 - "...you can look at it from the spiritual point of view, and you can draw all sorts of lessons about kind of living and our relationship to the temporal world from it. And then on the other side of the spectrum, it's a really good adventure story with a really fun main character."

- However, argue that these elements also obscure the historical context and hardships Xuan Zang likely faced.
- **Body Paragraph 2: Universal Themes through Fantasy**
 - Shift the focus to how fantasy can illuminate universal themes in Buddhism.
 - Use "Journey to the West" as an example, explaining how encounters with demons and monsters can represent overcoming temptations on the path to enlightenment.
 - Discuss how fantastical elements can make these themes more engaging and relatable, allowing viewers to connect them to their own struggles.

II. The Work of Emotion in the Film "Xuan Zang"

- **Body Paragraph 3: Desire as Fuel for the Journey**
 - Analyze Xuan Zang's portrayal in the film, focusing on his desire for knowledge.
 - "Knowledge is the only weapon that can conquer ignorance!"
 - Provide specific examples from the film that showcase how his desire drives him forward on his pilgrimage.
 - "You will debate scripture, not just for the glory of Nalanda, but the truth of Dharma."
 - "Master, do you know where India is?" "In my heart." "Except for the road ahead you know nothing and see nothing. Can you really find Buddha?"
 - "Taking vows seems to make a man...more at ease"
 - However, argue that the film also portrays how this desire can be a potential obstacle, potentially leading to impatience or attachment to a specific outcome.
 - Briefly connect this to Buddhist teachings on the Middle Way and avoiding attachment.
 - "Non-attachment helps to cultivate the mental discipline necessary to follow the middle way. By letting go of attachment, individuals can better avoid the extremes of indulgence and denial, which can lead to suffering."
- **Body Paragraph 4: Facing Fear on the Path**

- Talk about the scene where Xuan Zang is going through the desert and gets over his fear of dying with Buddhist scripture
 - When he's about to die of thirst in the Gobi his horse helps him get to an oasis because he gave it water when he didn't have any
 - Portrays Xuan Zang's fear by talking about invisible demons and the score
- Analyze how he overcomes this fear – through reason, faith, acceptance of his situation, or a combination of these.
- Explain how this portrayal aligns with Buddhist ideas of facing challenges with courage, maintaining faith, and accepting impermanence.

Conclusion

- Briefly summarize the key points about the contrasting roles of fantasy and emotions in representing Buddhist history and philosophy.
- Restate the thesis, emphasizing that both approaches offer valuable insights.
- Conclude by suggesting that a well-rounded understanding of Buddhist history can be achieved by appreciating both the fantastical stories and the realistic portrayals that capture the essence of Buddhist teachings and practices.