Yes, that’s me. William Dampier. Born 1651. Pirate, adventurer, explorer, and ghost since 1715.

Some ghosts choose to haunt castles, tombs, or ruined temples. But I decided to come here to haunt this white fortress high above the Pacific Ocean because there is treasure here. Vaults are filled with it right beneath your feet! It is the kind of treasure that feeds the hungry minds of ghost and man.

The quest for discovery never ends: things lost, forgotten, found again, and then shown to the world. These are magical things that tell stories, whispering with the voices of the dead. There are maps, compasses, and drawings of strange places and creatures. I would have killed for these things when I was alive and then kept them all for myself.

But every ghost seeks redemption for the deeds that bloodied hands and heart. So I have come here to be the guardian of the treasure hidden beneath the Santa Monica Mountains. I will use my sabre to cut through ignorance and stupidity.

Let us now begin our quest. Welcome to my Chambers of Wisdom! In the words of another famous thief:

Open Sesame!

Written by Cornelia Funke
Game of the French Empire—
The French Empire Race
Beware of these games! They want to sell you a certain idea of the world—to make you see it the way many did when the games were made. If you look closely, you’ll see the very ugly faces of colonialism: racism, arrogance, ignorance... and the insatiable hunger for what belonged to others.

Kangxi Rouleau-Form Vase
Here is some more magic: porcelain! The word porcelain is Italian, but the Chinese invented this type of pottery. A French monk brought the secret formula to Europe in 1712, when many artists in Europe were copying Asian designs. See if you can find the French corner cupboard with recycled Chinese panels.

Large Black Pearl Shell with Engraved Views of New Caledonia
I admit I would have killed for this beautiful shell. A French artist etched the plants and people of New Caledonia on it. France sent ships of “criminals”—including revolutionaries and anarchists, poets and artists—to this tropical island near Australia to die. I am very glad I never ended up there!

Layout of the Lands of the Globe
I owned many maps in my life. The good ones led me to treasures and harbors, but I lost my ship and my crew several times because of the bad ones. You’ll find some funny ideas on the maps in this room, including which places claimed to be the center of the world.

Portuguese Box Compass
Very helpful, this compass, and it was quite advanced for its time! There came a ghost with it—a dead Portuguese sailor. He still doesn’t quite understand how he ended up in a museum, but I think he quite likes it now.

Spanish Eight-Reale Silver Coin
This coin is from a ship filled with treasure. The Nuestra Señora de Atocha sank during a storm off the coast of Key West, and nearly the whole crew drowned. Their ghosts haunt the shipwreck. The sterncastle of the Atocha was filled with gold and very rare emeralds, but no one has been able to find it.

Vivant Denon Pointing at a Lithography Stone in His Cabinet and Mummified Heads from Thebes
Vivant Denon, the man in this print, traveled through Egypt with French general Napoleon Bonaparte’s army. See the stone he is pointing at? It’s a lithographer’s stone—the tool used to capture images before photography was invented. Can you find the drawings of a mummy’s head in the middle of the room? Vivant and Napoleon brought the head to Paris to have an artist draw it.

Castle at Tulúm
Many people used to think the Egyptians built these pyramids in Mexico. But Frederick Catherwood, the artist of this image, theorized that the pyramids were built by a lost civilization. The cultures of Mexico remain quite a mystery—maybe you can help unlock the secrets!

Man from the Wilds of Asia
I wasted months of my life searching for a real Belly Face Man thanks to a Venetian liar named Giovanni Botero. As it turns out, some early chroniclers never left their hometowns and just made up things about people, places, and creatures in far off lands! Maybe I would have been less trusting if I had known that Botero stole this image from al-Qazwini’s Book of Wonders and Oddities.

EXPLORATIONS AND EXPLORATION
ORIENTING THE WORLD
COMMUNICATION AND COLONIALISM
Finish your quest!