As a modern-day screenwriter and history fan, Philippa’s favorite topic to study is Richard III, one of the most famous kings in England’s history. This legendary king, who died over 500 years ago, had quite the bad reputation. After his brief two-year reign and death in 1485, he is remembered for being a cruel killer. William Shakespeare wrote a play about him in 1592 titled Richard III and described him as a cold-hearted, selfish villain. Paintings created after his death portray him with narrowed eyes, a hunched back, and even clawed fingers.
But Philippa knew that every story has two sides. Had Richard III really been the bad guy everyone said? Or did the following rulers of England just make him seem that way to make themselves look good? Could Philippa possibly find his missing remains and even clues about the king’s real personality so long after his death?

Many experts said that locating him would be impossible.

But Philippa had a dream—to find the long lost king.
Modern scientists can tell a lot about people who lived long ago by studying their remains. However, there was no body or skeleton of Richard III anywhere to be found. Some records said he was buried at the Greyfriars Church in Leicester, England, after he died at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. However, some said that his body was removed and thrown into the River Soar after King Henry VII tore down Greyfriars Church.

Philippa Langley is a member of The Richard III Society. This group studies everything about King Richard III. They believed he might still be buried at the site of that old church. But where exactly was that? If Philippa could locate where the church used to be, she could dig and hopefully locate his missing buried bones.
Philippa raised money and got a license to start an excavation to dig. She hired archaeologists and scientists who found an old map of Leicester. This map showed a possible location of the Greyfriars Church. They laid the old map on top of a current map of Leicester and discovered something. The old church used to sit in an area that was now a parking lot between two office buildings. Could the king still be there after all these years?

On September 8, 2012, Philippa and her team began digging to find out.
For four days, archaeologists dug two long trenches under the surface of the parking lot. Immediately, they found walls and floors of a building that may have once belonged to a monastery, a place where monks lived and prayed. This was exciting, since it was said that when Richard III died in battle, monks took his body away on a horse.

Philippa and her team grew more excited. Their next plan was to find the church inside of the friary, and after that, the choir within the church. If they could find the choir, they would look underneath it, where sources said the remains of the missing king might lay if he were still buried.

After only four days, one of the archaeologists found something else buried under the choir in an area called “the walking place.” Many years ago, it was tradition for important people to be buried under floor areas where many people walked, as a sign of respect. The archaeologist immediately called in more team members to look at it.

One of them, Jo Appleby, a bone expert, began removing dirt and made an amazing discovery—a human skeleton was under the floor. As she worked to uncover it, two things made her stare in disbelief. First, the size and shape of the bones. By looking at the shoulders and pelvis, she could see it once belonged to a human adult male. Even more amazing, its spine was curved in the shape of a “C” in the middle. Whoever the skeleton belonged to, his back was once deformed. Jo Appleby knew that Richard III was rumored to be a hunchback, so she called Philippa Langley to show her what she had found.
Philippa couldn’t believe it! It wasn’t certain proof that it was Richard III, but so far, this was great evidence. News got out that skeletal remains had been found under the parking lot. People from everywhere came to see the dig. Over the next few days, the team worked to uncover the fragile bones. Once removed, they were taken to a laboratory for study. In order to prove that these were really the long lost remains of King Richard III, many tests needed to be done. What no one could expect, however, was just how much the tests would reveal.
From the moment the skeleton was found, it began providing clues about the man it belonged to. First, scientists can tell how old a skeleton is by using a test called carbon dating. The carbon dating revealed that the person must have died between 1455 and 1540. King Richard III died in 1485. A match!

Secondly, closer study of the curved spine showed them that the man didn’t actually have a hunched back—he had suffered from scoliosis, a condition that causes a curved spine. One shoulder might lift higher than the other, making the person appear hunchbacked. Together with reports that Richard III was a hunchback, this was even more amazing evidence.
Next was the skull. There was much damage to it. A large hole in the back clearly had clean cuts around the edges, suggesting that the man had been hit in the head with a very sharp object. They found eight blows to the head, including a small, rectangular hole in the cheek caused by a dagger. Since Richard III died in battle, this would make sense. This also meant something else—either he lost his helmet in battle or he rode onto the battlefield wearing his crown instead, making him an easy target.

Another interesting fact was that his arm bones were slightly thinner than average for a man. Because some historical records say that the king was an excellent fighter despite his thin frame, this made the case even stronger. The skeleton also helped to put the rumor to rest that one of the king’s arms was shorter than the other, a monstrous depiction, thanks to Shakespeare’s play.

Probably the best piece of evidence, though, came with the help of genealogists, who study families, and forensic scientists, who use DNA to, among other things, match people to their ancestors. (DNA is a code of cells which makes up all living things.) Richard III’s ancestors were traced back over 17 generations to two descendants alive today in Canada. Scientists
were able to match cell samples taken from the skeleton with cell samples from the two family members. The two DNA strands matched. That proved it—the skeleton found was that of King Richard III of England!

Once the king’s identity was confirmed, one last specialist was called in. Caroline Wilkinson, an expert in facial reconstruction, uses computers to recreate what a dead person might have looked like when they were alive. After measuring the size and shape of the skull, eye sockets, jaw line, and cheekbones, Caroline was able to get a good idea of King Richard III’s appearance. Using this information, she was able to use computer technology to reconstruct his face. Everyone was astonished to find that he looked very similar to the paintings created of him with one exception—he would have appeared younger and kinder, not old and mean as the artists made him seem.
Soon afterwards, Philippa and her team ordered a model of the king’s head to be made for everyone to see. This will be on display at the Yorkshire Museum in England. There, visitors can gaze upon his face and wonder if the king was as youthful and handsome as his skull seemed to suggest, or if he indeed appeared as a deformed tyrant. Once all tests are over, the king’s remains will be buried in a new location where he can be properly remembered.

Philippa Langley could not be more pleased. She began her search with nothing but a dream and a slim chance of succeeding. But not only did she succeed in finding the monarch’s lost remains, she was also able to show how Richard III may not have been the horrible monster his successors made him out to be.

Does this prove that the 500-year-old king was not an evil tyrant? Not really. The truth is—we will never know. But thanks to archaeologists, scientists, and historical reports, we now have a clearer understanding of who King Richard III really was. So, the next time you are walking through a parking lot, stop, look down, and close your eyes. You never know what mysteries may lie beneath your feet, waiting to be discovered.
SPIDER

by Shel Silverstein

A spider lives inside my head
Who weaves a strange and wondrous web
Of silken threads and silver strings
To catch all sorts of flying things,
Like crumbs of thoughts and bits of smiles
And specks of dried-up tears,
And dust of dreams that catch and cling
For years and years and years. . . .

THE FROG

by Hilaire Belloc

Be kind and tender to the Frog,
And do not call him names,
As “Slimy-skin,” or “Polly-wog,”
Or likewise “Ugly James,”
Or “Gap-a-grin,” or “Toad-gone-wrong,”
Or “Bill Bandy-knees”:
The Frog is justly sensitive
To epithets like these.
No animal will more repay
A treatment kind and fair;
At least so lonely people say
Who keep a frog (and, by the way,
They are extremely rare).
Go Southward, Birds!

by Elizabeth Coatsworth

Clap hands! clap wings!
go southward, birds!
The winter’s near
with snow like curds,
and frost whose touch
is strange and light–
seek your hot suns
with wings and flight!

Clap hands! clap wings!
why linger here?
The snow will drift,
the winds blow drear.
Go! robin, bluebird,
wren and swallow!
Fly! fly ahead!
and we will follow!
by Jeff Moss

Said the clam to the pink jellyfish,
“You’re no more than a lump of wet squish!
You’ve no backbone or brain,
You’re too dull to explain,
When they look at you, people go ‘Ish’”

Said the jellyfish back to the clam,
“I may look like thin raspberry jam,
But you’re just a thick shell
And you don’t even jell,
So I’m happy to be what I am!”

Well, I say let’s give three big cheers
For these two and their lengthy careers.
Though they both may be dull,
With no spine and no skull,
Still they’ve lasted a half-billion years!
skeletons
by Valerie Worth

Is it the
Curve of their
Breezy ribs, the
Crook of their
Elegant fingers,

Their eyeless
Eyes, so wide
And wise,
Their silent
Ivory laughter,

The frisk and
Prance of their
Skittering dance
With never a
Pause for breath,

That fill us
With such
Delicious delight,
While scaring us
Half to death?
Hey there, Brontosaurus!
You were here so long before us
Your deeds can never bore us.
How were the good old days?

Did you really like to graze?
Did you often munch
With a prehistoric crunch
On a giant tree—or two—or three
For lunch?

As you went yon and hither
Were you ever in a dither
When your head and distant tail
Went different ways?

Did you shake the earth like thunder
With your roars and groans?
I wonder. . . . Say it’s hard
To have a conversation
With your bones.