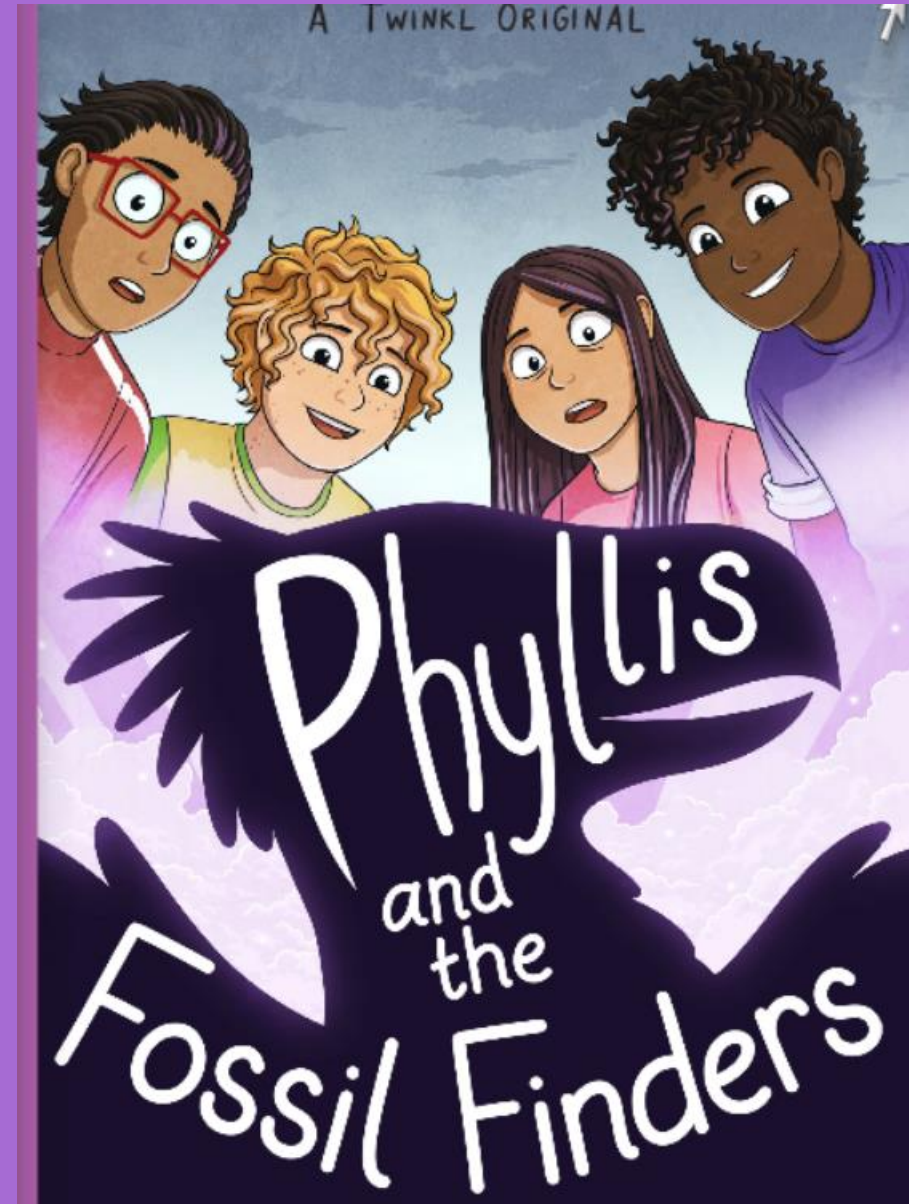


Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021  
Reciprocal Reading

## Phyllis and the Fossil Finders

L:O

I can read with fluency  
I can clarify any new vocabulary  
I can answer questions about the  
text.





## Chapter Ten

"Perhaps we should just let her go now, before they reach us," suggested Faizal.

Gabi was quickest to respond. "No! We can't! She can't fly properly. Even if she survived the tide coming in, then what? She'd be found by someone else. We need to get her somewhere further away – somewhere safe."

Phyllis cocked her head and looked at them. She stretched and lifted up her wings in what looked like a shrug.

"We might not have any choice, Gabs," said Nakeisha. As she spoke, she nodded out towards the sea. The others followed her gaze. They watched the swell of the water and, before long, a boat loomed into view. Almost immediately, it was within shouting distance of them, having come from just along the coast.

At the front of the boat, Jacob could clearly see Sam. Next to the boy was a man with a bushy beard wearing

a scruffy, green cap. There was no doubt that it was Mister Penniket.

Faizal stepped in front of Phyllis protectively, as the boat slowed a little way out from the shore.

"We can't come any closer because of the rocks," Sam shouted to them. "Can you wade into the water and we'll throw some life jackets and a rope for you to hold on to?"

Jacob glanced at Faizal, who was standing with his feet planted firmly on the ground and his arms crossed like a bodyguard. Nakeisha, who had just admitted her fear of the sea, seemed to wobble with a new wave of panic. Jacob looked across at Gabi, fearing the worst. Instead, he saw a fresh look of determination in her eyes.

"I'm ready," Gabi announced. "Keisha, you need to be brave. And Faiz, you need to be more trusting and less stubborn. Jacob, you're the one we look up to. You always know the right thing to do. We're following your lead. Whatever else is going to happen, we need to get on that boat, we need to take Phyllis and we need to stick together."

*They look up to me?* Jacob heard those words above all others repeating in his head. He wasn't prepared to let his friends down.

Gabi's rallying call had the desired effect. Jacob stood up taller, pulled on his rucksack, grabbed Phyllis' lead and stepped along the rocks into the water. He tied the end of the lead around his waist, then reached his arm out behind him and beckoned for Nakeisha to join him. Everyone's feet were already paddling; the sea had covered their patch of rock. The boulders to either side were just peaks, everything else under water.

"Grab hold of each other," he instructed. "I'll lead. Keisha, hold my arm. I won't let go of you."

Gabi shot him a smile. "Faizal, go next. Hold on to Nakeisha and I'm holding on behind you. We can do this!"

Under Jacob and Gabi's instructions, they filed into line and began to wade further into the sea, feeling their way cautiously with every step below the water. Phyllis flapped wildly on her lead at the front. She bobbed on the surface, took off for a second or two every now and then, and splashed down again.

Mister Penniket had not said a word yet – or taken his eyes off Phyllis. As the group got closer, he heaved a thick coil of rope into the air. It unfurled and landed on the surface, a few metres ahead of them. When Jacob was close enough, he grasped the rope with his free hand and instructed Nakeisha to kick while they pulled themselves along the rope to the side of the boat.

Jacob helped the others up and over the edge, one at a time. Miraculously, Phyllis got the idea and propelled herself out of the water and onto the boat, too. Sam and Faizal leaned over and helped to yank Jacob up last of all. Mister Penniket told them to lift the seats and put on the bright orange life jackets that were stored there. He passed them a blanket each, which they wrapped around themselves as they sat down. No one had yet said anything about the flapping creature that was attached to the lead.

Sam broke the silence. “Are you all OK? What is that creature, then?”

They each chipped in with details as they recounted the tale – from finding Phyllis as a fossil to seeing her come back to life before their eyes and everything that had happened leading up to this point.



Through it all, Mister Penniket stood and listened as the boat bobbed from side to side. Occasionally, he shook his head. Numerous times, his tiny eyes widened and seemed to pop out from underneath his bushy eyebrows. At one point, he took off his cap and scratched his head. Phyllis hopped from the seat to the floor to the side of the boat, looking at everyone in turn.

“So, you see, Sam,” Jacob finished off, “we just don’t want to see Phyllis end up in the museum or get poked and prodded by scientists or archaeologists. She’s real and she’s alive and we just want to set her free somewhere safe.”

Faizal chipped in. “Yeah, but obviously you’ve brought *him* from the museum for some reason,” he said angrily, motioning towards Mister Penniket, “so I guess that’s not going to happen now, is it?”

Sam looked at the man. “What do you think we should do, Uncle Alan?”

It took a moment to register with Jacob, then seemed to dawn one by one on the faces of them all.

“‘Uncle Alan’?” Nakeisha said. “You mean, Mister

Penniket is your uncle?"

"Yeah," said Sam. "I've lived with Uncle Alan since I was little. I never really knew my mum or dad."

"So, that's why you're always around the museum and the fossil tours," Faizal said, as though his brain were struggling to keep up properly with what he was hearing.

Phyllis seemed to sense that a decision was about to be made and let out a squawk. She wore her cutest expression and looked – as they all did – to Mister Penniket. Gabi gave her a reassuring stroke.

"Well, well, well." His deep voice rumbled as he rubbed his beard.

Gabi bowed her head and looked prepared for the worst.

"You kids have found yourselves something pretty special, by the looks of it. She's quite a beauty. I've never seen anything like it before. Sam showed me the rock with the fossilised impression but I certainly wasn't expecting this."

“Please, sir,” Nakeisha pleaded, “don’t put her in the museum.”

“Save your breath,” Faizal said to her.

“The museum?” asked Mister Penniket. “A museum is not a place for living creatures. I think you kids are absolutely right. I think she needs to be free.”

“What? Really?” Gabi’s eyes lit up.

“Of course,” he replied. “I don’t know how this thing here has come to be, but that’s not my business. I deal with fossils. I say let living creatures stay living in the present – even if this thing has come on a first-class ticket straight from the past.”

The friends leapt out of their dripping wet seats, cheering and hugging each other. Phyllis joined in with the excitement with some hopping and squawking of her own.

The activity made the boat rock wildly. Jacob quickly dropped to his seat and clung on to it so as not to fall overboard.

“As for that exquisite bit of rock along the beach, there,



with the skeletal impression... I've never seen anything like that in all my years of fossil-hunting. Now, that will be a major catch for the museum. It'll bring more people to our door – goodness knows we could use the attention. Maybe then, poor old Sam here won't have to stick around helping me so often."

There was a brief moment of quiet while everyone thought about the man's words. Jacob thought that he saw Faizal and Gabi glance at one another.

"In that case," he asked, "what *shall* we do with her?"

Mister Penniket rubbed his chin. "It seems to me that this little lady keeps looking out towards the sea. Maybe that's the direction she fancies."



“She does keep doing that,” Jacob added. “It’s like she’s catching a scent or sniffing for something.”

“Maybe she can sense freedom,” Gabi smiled.

Sam’s uncle tugged on the peak of his cap and then took to the wheel of the boat. “No time to waste, then, if we’re going on a mercy mission and then getting you kids all back onto dry land. Keep those blankets wrapped around you and hold on tight.”

“But where can we set her free?” Sam asked his uncle.

Mister Penniket smiled. “I know just the place.”

## Phyllis and the Fossil Finders

### GUIDED READING

#### **Predict**

Group read

Partners read

#### **Clarify**

#### **Question**

How?

What?

When

Why?

#### **Evaluate**

The author's use of words and phrases

#### **Summarise**

## Clarify

Scent, compromise, prodded

## Questions

1. What do they decide to do with Phyllis?
2. At the start of the chapter, how does Faizal show that he still doesn't trust Sam?
3. What compromise does Mister Penniket make with the group?