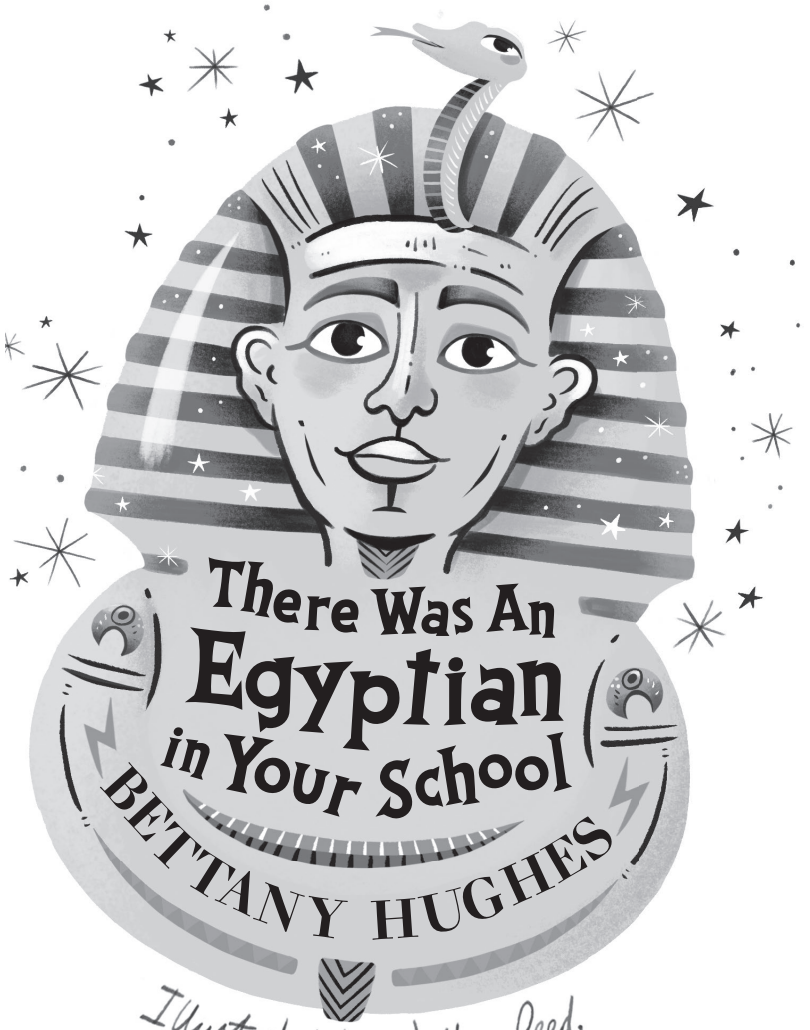
PUFFIN BOOKS

There Was An Egyptian in Your School


There Was An
Egyptian
in Your School
BETTANY HUGHES
Illustrated by Nathan Reed



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Penguin
Random House
UK

First published 2026

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Text design by Mandy Norman
Printed in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

The authorized representative in the EEA is Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-241-66217-5

All correspondence to:
Puffin Books
Penguin Random House Children's
One Embassy Gardens, 8 Viaduct Gardens, London SW11 7BW





For my own children, as always – Sorrel and May. For Grace Langford, who is now a brilliant ally of the ancients. For Shula and Rhys's future princess. And for all children through time who have been denied the joy of reading – we will always try to honour and serve you.



Contents

The Treasure Chest	1
Tutankhamun's Slippers	11
Duck Lunchbox	25
Queen Nefertiti's Family Portrait	33
Ancient Cheese	45
Scarab Chest Bling!	53
Make-up Box	63
Cleopatra's Coin	69
Mysterious Piece of Wood	79
Ancient Map	85
2,000-Year-Old Glass Cup	93
False Toe	101
Ancient Spells	109
Fishing Hook	115
Mummified Falcon	121



Ivory Figure 127

Underwater Mystery Writing 133

Protective Fish 139

King Tutankhamun's Board Game 145

Silver Mask 153

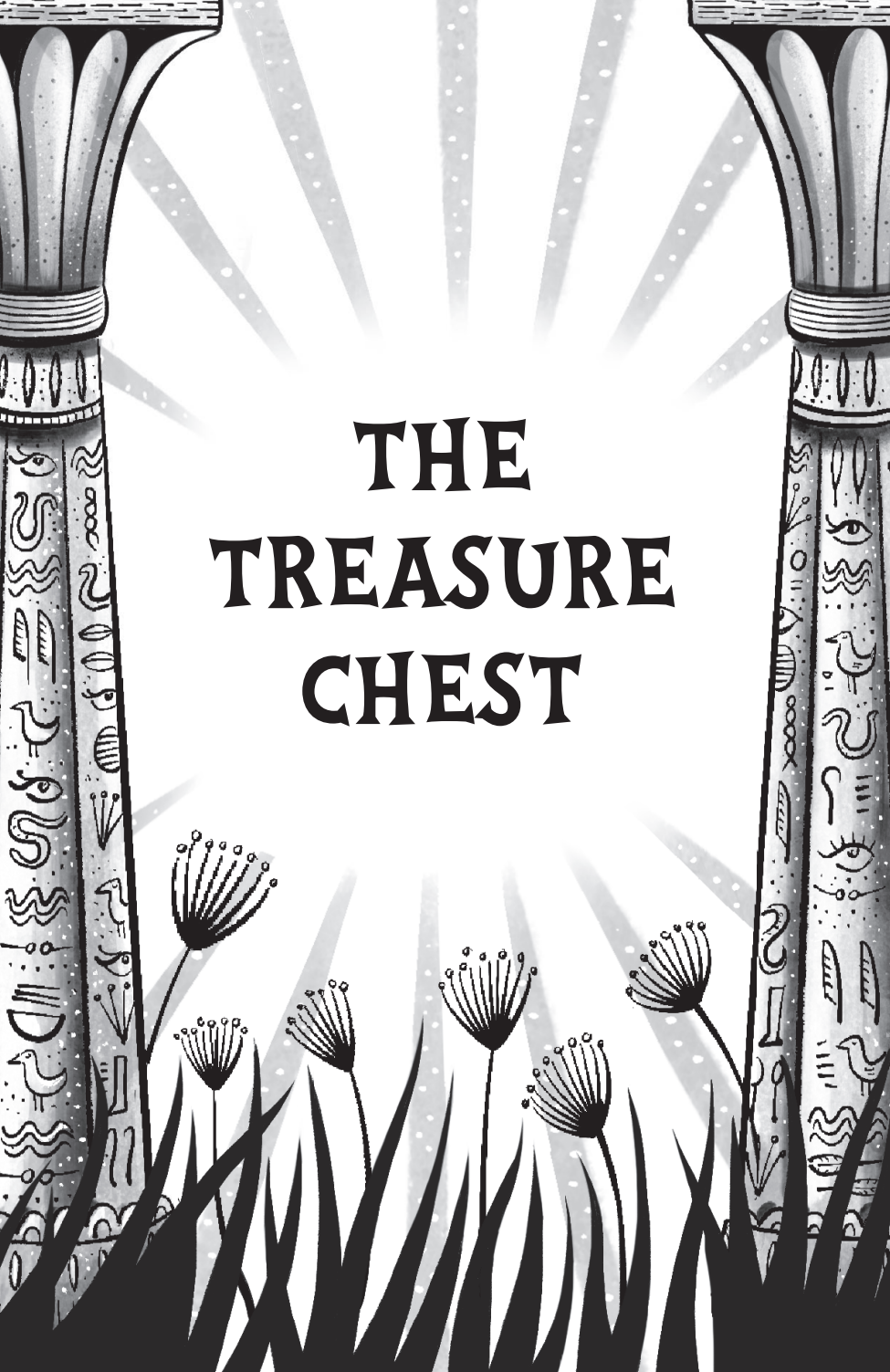
Cat Jewellery 159

What an Adventure! 167

The Hall of Fame 173

Hieroglyphs 189

Acknowledgements 195


THE
TREASURE
CHEST

Imagine you're waking up to go to school. It's a bright, sunny day and the sky is a beautiful blue. There are hawks soaring overhead, calling gently to each other. The soft sound of swishing reeds, swirling water and bells from a small herd of goats steals through your open window. It's early morning, but the air is gentle and warm – because today you've woken up next to the River Nile! Which means you're not going to your usual school in your own home town, but instead you'll be studying in a school in Egypt, close to where real ancient Egyptians lived!

How totally, fabulously exciting is THAT?!

And the excitement doesn't stop there, because something truly special and amazing has just happened . . .

Last night, a family of wild dogs (including some *gorgeous* puppies!) were scratching and scrabbling around in the playground of this Egyptian school, and they uncovered the top of a TREASURE CHEST, buried in the ground over 2,000 years ago. Yes, you heard me right!

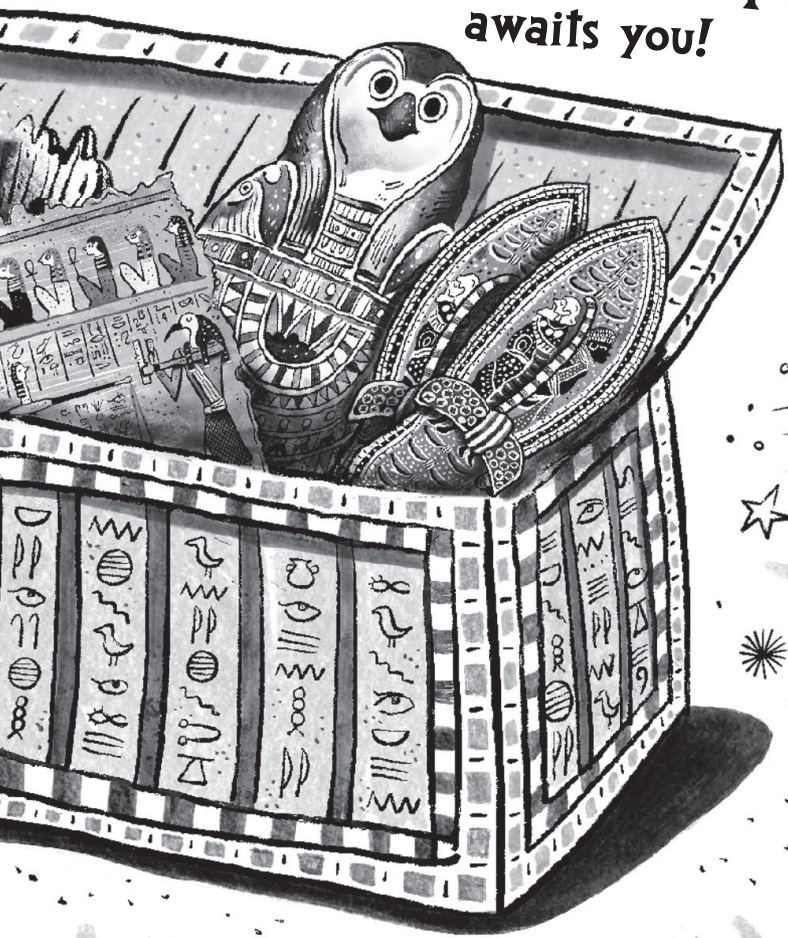
A real, full-to-bursting TREASURE CHEST!



It was filled up by someone about your age in ancient Egypt, then buried in the desert for safekeeping.

The last grains of sand are being brushed off the chest right now, so it's all ready for you to open the lid and take a peek at all the incredible objects inside.

I promise that an adventure of **discovery** and **surprise** awaits you!



My name is Bettany Hughes, and I'm a historian – which means I spend my time unravelling the mysteries of the past – and I'm beyond thrilled about this ancient Egyptian treasure chest turning up! I think ancient Egypt is one of the most spectacular civilizations in history. It began around 6,000 years ago, and during its long existence, it became incredibly wealthy, influential, inspirational and full of wonder.

For example, perhaps you've heard of a clever woman called Cleopatra? Cleopatra was the last of the all-powerful pharaohs. ('Pharaoh' is another word for ruler, and is a tricky word to spell – I've been writing about pharaohs all my life, and I still get the 'a' and the 'o' the wrong way round!) The amount of time between when Cleopatra was alive and when the Pyramids of Giza were built is around 2,500 years, which is longer than the time between Cleopatra's lifetime and yours or mine (around 2,000 years). That just shows how many thousands of years' worth of Egyptian history is waiting for us to explore.

I'm so delighted we're going on this ancient Egyptian detective adventure together!

So what was ancient Egypt like? Well, even though much of it was (and still is!) desert, it also had lots of fertile soil to grow crops in. That was thanks to the splendid River Nile – the longest river in the world – which runs

through the country. This natural abundance of water and, as a result, food meant that the ancient Egyptians didn't need to charge around trying to take over other peoples' territories all the time. Instead, they generally focused on the glorious territory they already had at the top of North Africa (although they did sometimes fight battles with other nations and cultures).



Originally, ancient Egypt was divided into 'Upper Egypt', which was in the south, near the nation now called Sudan, and 'Lower Egypt', which spread north to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The people who lived there were very spiritual. They believed in many thousands of gods, goddesses and spirits, who roamed the earth, sky, waterways and even underground. The Egyptians took great

care to worship and praise their goddesses and gods to keep them happy and ensure they didn't send storms, droughts or diseases as a punishment for bad human behaviour. The ancient Egyptians told stories about their deities too, and built fabulous temples for them to live in.

The ancient Egyptians actually loved building things. Between around 2600 to 1500 BCE they also constructed GIANT tombs, called pyramids. These were where pharaohs were buried, and are among the most incredible monuments ever created in the ancient world. The biggest of them all is the Great Pyramid of Giza, located near Egypt's capital city, Cairo, on a rocky plain called the Giza Plateau.

The Great Pyramid is mind-blowing. It's made from 2.3 million limestone blocks, many chiselled out from nearby quarries. It originally towered 140 metres tall, remains the heaviest building ever made, and used to be covered with a polished limestone casing that made it look like a kind of silver spaceship which had just landed in the desert. Inside are mysterious chambers and passages, with more definitely waiting to be discovered and explored. How cool is that?



We know the giant tomb was built for a pharaoh called Khufu (2609–2584 BCE), because workers scrawled his name in one of the chambers. Khufu himself was probably buried deep inside the Great Pyramid in a huge, red granite coffin. We've worked out that it took about 20,000 labourers working for around twenty-four years, heaving each limestone block (which weighed at least five tonnes each) into place every two minutes to complete the Great Pyramid.



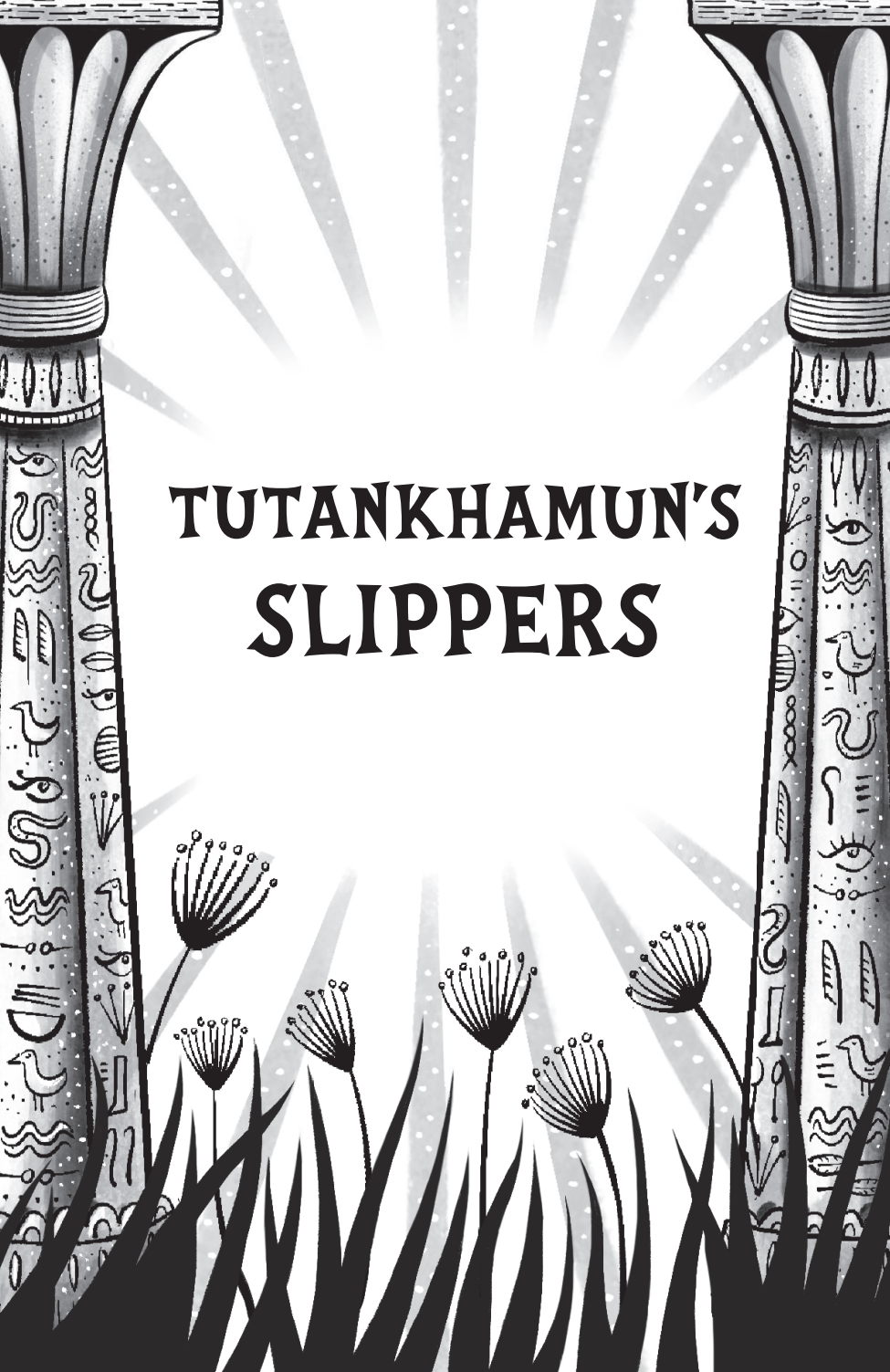
The ancient Egyptians also **LOVED** making **STUNNINGLY** beautiful personal possessions (including gold jewellery inlaid with precious gems, silver knives, bowls in the shape of lions' mouths, loads of cool toys – the list goes on and on!), which they often buried alongside a person when they were laid to rest in a grave or tomb. So that means that an awesome amount of treasures from Egypt have survived for us to discover and examine, with more still to be found.

The great thing about the treasure chest is that the child who filled it up with ancient treasures really wanted people in the future – that's you and me! – to understand more about their own life and to encourage us to care about them and their world. It's like they're sending you a postcard from the past!

So come on –
let's head over to that mysterious treasure chest and explore ancient history!

Right then – you go ahead and lift the lid . . . be very careful, you don't want to damage the wooden carvings or scrape off the gold paint. That's it . . . now let's unpack the treasures so you can become a real traveller in time!




TUTANKHAMUN'S
SLIPPERS



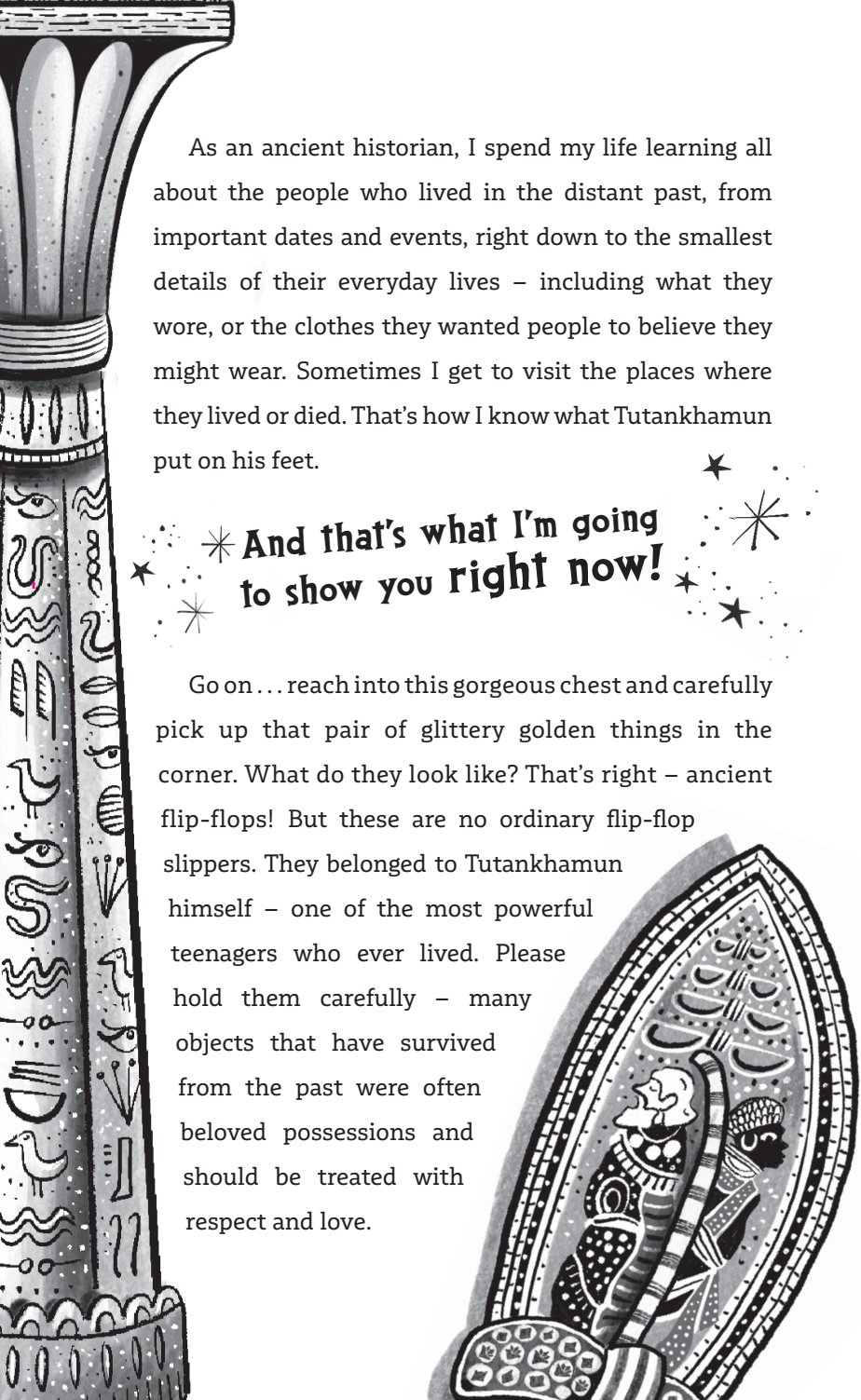
You know that feeling when you get out of bed, and you slip your feet into something really cosy and comfortable? Well, I can reliably inform you that this NEVER happened to the famous ancient Egyptian boy-pharaoh Tutankhamun, who lived almost 3,500 years ago, with these particular swanky slippers opposite, because they were all for show!

You might have heard of Tutankhamun. He came to the throne at the age of only eight or nine to rule Egypt – one of the ancient world's superpowers. His lands stretched from the River Euphrates in Mesopotamia (in what is now the country of Iraq), all the way down to what is now Sudan, in Africa. Just imagine the pressure he must have felt, making decisions that would affect so many people. After ruling for around nine years, he died and was buried in a tomb in 1323 BCE. There he remained, undisturbed, until he was rediscovered by local people and archaeologists in 1922 CE.

As an ancient historian, I spend my life learning all about the people who lived in the distant past, from important dates and events, right down to the smallest details of their everyday lives – including what they wore, or the clothes they wanted people to believe they might wear. Sometimes I get to visit the places where they lived or died. That's how I know what Tutankhamun put on his feet.

And that's what I'm going to show you right now!

Go on . . . reach into this gorgeous chest and carefully pick up that pair of glittery golden things in the corner. What do they look like? That's right – ancient flip-flops! But these are no ordinary flip-flop slippers. They belonged to Tutankhamun himself – one of the most powerful teenagers who ever lived. Please hold them carefully – many objects that have survived from the past were often beloved possessions and should be treated with respect and love.



These slippers weren't made for walking

Aren't they amazing? But do you know what? I don't think Tutankhamun wore these slippers just to flop around his palace in after he got out of bed. It's more likely that he had these beautifully ornamental pieces of footwear just slipped onto his feet when sitting on his throne, talking to his helpers and advisors (his palace courtiers), or to look super-smart in front of important visitors from foreign lands. I think this is because the slippers are so stiff they would have been almost impossible to walk in.

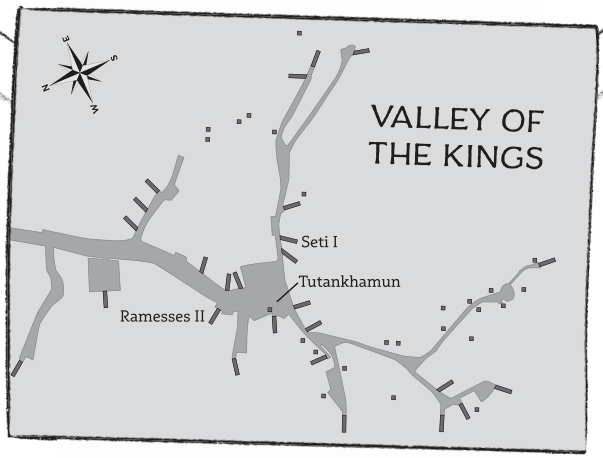


And can you see that they are slightly different from each other? Look closely, and you'll notice that they don't match exactly, like today's shoes would. In fact, in the ancient world, they often didn't even bother with shoes that were made for left or right feet. This is because Tutankhamun had a limp, possibly as a result of an injury after a hunting accident (he could have fallen out of a chariot, for instance), or from an injury sustained at birth, so he probably had special shoes

like these designed for him to stop his feet getting sore.

It's also possible that Tutankhamun never even touched these slippers – they may have been given as a special gift after he died. You see, the ancient Egyptians didn't believe life stopped when a person died. They believed that the person's body and soul were reunited in the afterlife. So this gift allowed Tutankhamun to show off his smartest slippers for eternity!

And think about this: the slippers you're holding are *3,350 years old*. It's almost a miracle how well preserved they are. Their remarkably good state is partly because these particular time-travelling clues were hidden deep inside Tutankhamun's tomb, which was located in the Valley of the Kings – an area in the desert near Luxor, where tombs were carved into the hills. There are at least sixty-three tombs, built in the period between 1539 and 1075 BCE, and many famous pharaohs including Ramesses II, Seti I and Tutankhamun are buried here.





You might be wondering how King Tutankhamun's tomb was rediscovered. Well, in 1922, a local Egyptian boy called Hussein Abdel Rasoul led a whole team of archaeologists to a staircase hidden in the sand after they'd spent years trying to locate the tomb. Hussein was only twelve and was working on the site carrying water. He showed the artist and archaeologist Howard Carter and his boss and funder, Lord Carnarvon, the entrance to Tutankhamun's long-lost tomb, which was easier to reach at that moment because the earth and rocks in the Valley of the Kings had slipped after heavy rains. There's even a photo of Hussein wearing a bit of Tutankhamun's jewellery!

The dry Egyptian climate also helped to preserve these slippers. Organic materials such as papyrus, linen and leather don't rot away or go mouldy in dry climates in the way they do in damper parts of the world. It's amazing to think how someone's personal possessions (even a royal ruler's) can survive for thousands of years.

By the way, papyrus is a reed that grows near rivers, including the Nile, and the ancient Egyptians used it to make a kind of paper by squashing it and drying it out.



FANCY FOOTWEAR

Now, these gorgeous slippers might be just bits of footwear, but like all treasures from history, however great or small, they tell us a huge amount about the time and place from where they came. For instance, there are turquoise decorations on the top which probably travelled all the way from mountain quarries in the Sinai Peninsula (where

turquoise was often mined), located between what is now Egypt and Saudi Arabia.



Those decorations are shaped like lotus flowers, which were popular in ancient Egypt. Lotuses were used to flavour food and drink, and smelled so good that they lifted people's mood. That's why Egyptians added lotus petals to their baths or burned them like incense. When lotus flowers grew alongside the River Nile and in its waters, resplendent with their blue petals and golden centres, it must have looked as if the sky had fallen into the river and spangled it with thousands of miniature suns.

The Egyptians also loved lotus flowers because they understood that humans should appreciate that we're a PART of nature, not separate from it, and we need to respect and understand the natural world if we are both to thrive and survive. The ancient Egyptians believed that the goddess Ma'at taught them that everything in the world around them had to exist in harmony and balance. When this balance was achieved, the gods were happy and life was good. But if humans upset this balance (by harming animals, birds or their natural habitats, for example), the gods would be angry and terrible things could happen.

So I'm not surprised the ancient Egyptians used images



of the beautiful lotus flower all over their temples and on their jewellery, furniture and drinking cups. In fact, another treasure stashed away in Tutankhamun's tomb was a beautiful lotus-shaped chalice (a type of drinking vessel) made of alabaster (a pale, translucent kind of stone), and it's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

There are also tiny beads decorating Tutankhamun's slippers too. They're made from copper, and look incredibly delicate, don't they? Copper would have come from the copper mines near what is now Israel and Jordan, or from the Sinai Peninsula on the eastern edge of Egypt or even from as far away as the place we now call Turkey! The tiny beads would have been threaded together to create the straps – imagine the time and care it must have taken to make them.

Treasures like these were placed with ancient Egyptians (particularly wealthy ones who could afford them) when they were buried. As we know, ancient Egyptians believed that a person's life did not end after they died. Instead, they had a chance to travel through the universe enjoying a second life. However, to ensure this happened, the burial had to be perfect.

HOW TO MAKE A MUMMY



First, the dead body had to be preserved using the process of mummification. The ancient Egyptians were *really* good at mummification. I've spent lots of time with archaeologists figuring out exactly how mummification worked in ancient Egypt, and it was an astonishingly tricky process.

The story of mummification all started about 6,000 years ago, when Egyptians buried dead people in the desert and noticed that the surrounding dry sand and air naturally preserved their bodies, eyelashes, hair and skin.

The ancient Egyptians used what they learned from this in their mummification technique. First, they had to dry out the skin and flesh, so that these didn't rot, by covering the body with a mineral called natron – a kind of salt found in many Egyptian lakes. They also removed the body's

organs and stored them in jars. (You might have heard that mummifiers removed the brain by pulling it out through the nose. Well, it's true – some really did do that!)



Then they heated a sticky substance called bitumen (a natural tar), mixed it with sweet-smelling things like incense and smeared the concoction all over the body. They then wrapped the body in about a mile of linen bandages, sometimes with protective amulets (a kind of good-luck charm) tucked into the folds. After this delicate lengthy process, the mummy was ready to be buried in its tomb.

All of this happened to Tutankhamun. After he'd been mummified, he was placed inside the smallest of a set of five – yes, five! – beautifully ornate coffins, which nestled one inside the other.

I've seen Tutankhamun's coffins being restored first-hand, and it was the most unforgettable experience. Can you imagine how careful modern-day restorers need to be while working on such ancient and precious objects? I remember watching an expert restorer called Ahmet holding his breath and focusing on piecing flecks of the original gold paint back onto Tutankhamun's coffins. He was so skilful it took my breath away!



ITEMS FOR THE AFTERLIFE

Do you remember how I said that Tutankhamun's shoes were a little bit different from each other, and that shows he walked with a limp? Because of this, the boy-king was buried with 129 walking sticks. I think the people who buried Tutankhamun didn't want him to run out of walking sticks in his second life. Very thoughtful! They even placed beds in his tomb in case he got tired and needed a rest.

It certainly seems that the people in charge of burying the young boy-king did their job with a lot of care and consideration. They surrounded Tutankhamun with all his favourite things that he really cared about and needed to ensure he had a comfortable time in the afterlife – including, as we shall now see, food!