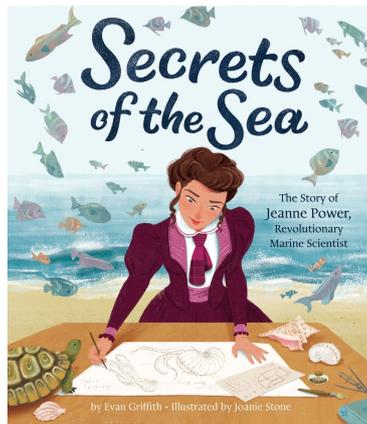


First Opinion: Sicily in the Aquarium: A Father, Daughter, and the Inspiring Story of Jeanne Power

Evan Griffith. *Secrets of the Sea: The Story of Jeanne Power, Revolutionary
Marine Scientist*. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 2021. Print.

Daehan Lee



As a biologist and a father, I have often sought ways to inspire my daughter's budding interest in the natural world. When I discovered 'Secrets of the Sea: The Story of Jeanne Power, Revolutionary Marine Scientist' by Evan Griffin and illustrated by Janie Stone, I knew I had found a powerful and engaging tool to help nurture her passion for the natural world.

The beautifully crafted picture book chronicles the life and work of a nineteenth-century dressmaker-turned-scientist who forever changed the way we study marine life. The story of Jeanne Power shows children that curiosity, determination, and resilience can lead to groundbreaking discoveries.

Sharing Jeanne Power's story with my daughter carried a deeply personal significance for us, as our family had previously vacationed in Sicily, the primary research field for Jeanne Power. From the awe-inspiring slopes of the active volcano Mount Etna to the striking beauty of Scala dei Turchi, a rocky cliff along the southern coast of Sicily, we explored the stunning natural wonders of the region together. Our connection to Sicily provided a unique context in which my daughter could more intimately relate to Jeanne's experiences, as we could vividly envision the landscape and seascape of this enchanting island.

We discussed the vibrant illustrations, delved into Jeanne's scientific discoveries and inventions, and pondered the challenges she faced in the male-dominated scientific community of her time. Through Jeanne's story, I hoped to demonstrate the importance of persistence, innovative thinking, and problem-solving skills in the scientific process. My daughter was especially fascinated by the paper nautilus and its unique shell. I encouraged her to guess which of the two competing hypotheses—whether the paper nautilus creates its own shell or steals it from other creatures—was correct. She made the right guess and was delighted with her success.

During our reading, I posed a question to my daughter, asking how she thought marine animals could be studied. With keen insight, she proposed constructing a fish tank. This idea aligned with Jeanne Power's groundbreaking scientific aquarium, which she utilized to investigate the paper nautilus. Through this fascinating narrative, my daughter gained exposure to the process and methodology of scientific discovery, which lies at the very heart of science. Furthermore, her exposure to various aquariums worldwide enabled her to grasp the importance of the world's first aquarium dedicated to scientific research. Also, she excitedly drew parallels between my work as a scientist in the lab, studying worms and flies, and Jeanne's trailblazing efforts with her scientific aquarium. This connection further

enriched our shared experience and fostered a sense of wonder and appreciation for the pursuit of knowledge.

While reading <Secrets of the Sea> with my daughter, I found myself reflecting on the portrayal of historical gender gaps and discrimination in science. As a male scientist, it was somewhat awkward for me to discuss with her the time when women were not welcomed in the scientific community. I surmised that this awkward feeling stemmed from my unpreparedness to explain why society was (and still is) patriarchal. I found myself grappling with questions like "Where to start?" and "How to explain an unfair world to a young female from a male perspective?" In the present context where women's contributions to science are increasingly appreciated, I pondered whether it might be more uplifting to primarily highlight the accomplishments of female scientists, rather than placing a strong emphasis on the challenges they faced in the past.

Nonetheless, I approach this opinion with caution, as I acknowledge that the historical experiences of women in science offer crucial insights into the resilience and determination exemplified by trailblazers like Jeanne Power. In sharing her story, my goal was to inspire my daughter by accentuating the accomplishments of female scientists, while still recognizing the obstacles they have triumphed over.

In conclusion, 'Secrets of the Sea: The Story of Jeanne Power, Revolutionary Marine Scientist' proved to be an invaluable resource in my quest to inspire my daughter's passion for the natural world. The captivating narrative and rich illustrations, combined with our personal connection to Sicily, created an unforgettable reading experience.

About the Author

Daehan Lee serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at

Sungkyunkwan University. Prior to this, he conducted postdoctoral research at Northwestern University and the University of Lausanne. His research focuses on the origin of animal nervous systems, neurodevelopmental remodeling, and ecological specialization. His work has been featured in prestigious journals such as <Nature Ecology and Evolution>. Additionally, he has authored two Korean science books: <The Recipe of Life> and <Mind of the Worm>, underscoring his dedication to science communication.