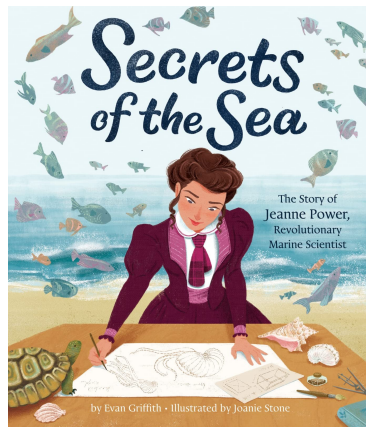


Second Reaction: Secrets of the Sea: The Story of Jeanne Power, Revolutionary Marine Scientist

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

Haley Keough



The children's book, *Secrets of the Sea: The Story of Jeanne Power, Revolutionary Marine Scientist* by Evan Griffith, is the compelling story of a nineteenth-century dressmaker turned marine scientist. This book celebrates one woman's persistence to prove her scientific findings in a male-dominated field. Jeanne's struggle to prove herself within a male-dominated field is articulated in a relatable and passionate manner. This story addresses nineteenth-century social issues and scientific processes and makes them accessible to young readers.

When reading this book with a class of 16 kindergarteners, I was unsure if the vocabulary and topics covered would be too challenging for them to grasp. However, the illustrations added a visual element to the story which really added to the overall understanding my students were able to achieve while we read. They kept my students' attention throughout the book, and helped them understand new vocabulary as they learned it. I also wanted them to tie their previous knowledge of the character traits we discuss during our social emotional lessons, so before I began reading, I prefaced the story by asking my students to think about the main character's feelings as we learned her story.

As we read, I encouraged my students to ask a variety of questions which would add to their overall understanding of the book. As I wanted them to think about Jeanne's feelings, many of the questions were brought on by putting themselves in her shoes. One of the questions I received was, "Why did she keep the animals in the tanks?" in reference to Jeanne's tank design on p. 12. During the discussion of why she may have kept the animals in the tanks, my students thought about how she would want to watch the animals growing and that she could see the animals any time she wanted. Another question I was asked was, "Why couldn't she be a scientist too?" in reference to p. 7. In this discussion, I shared how in the past, certain groups of people were not able to do or be whatever they wanted. They had a very hard time understanding why Jeanne was continually being told that she could not pursue what she was passionate about. Many students stated, "That's not fair!" or commented something similar while talking with their partners. They shared their own feelings on this discussion and the words that were discussed were: frustrated, disappointed, and angry. After reading, I was able to connect the feelings that they described to me to our knowledge of character traits, where they tied perseverance to

Jeanne's reaction to adversity. Some students were able to give examples of times where they had a similar experience to Jeanne and how they felt during that experience.

After reading this book, I thought of several extension activities teachers could do with their classes. Firstly, I believe that this book would be a great tool to highlight perseverance as a character trait. Whether a teacher is using a social emotional curriculum or not, perseverance is a useful trait they could emphasize within their classroom. To utilize this book as a tool to show perseverance, students can discuss how Jeanne showed perseverance, and then discuss how they have persevered in the past, or situations where they could show it in the future. Developing perseverance, especially within a school setting, can help students cope with testing anxiety, failure, and problem-solving.

Secondly, I believe several STEM activities could be developed using this book. One idea I had was that students could construct aquariums similar to Jeanne's, where they could design a tank environment to watch and observe. While a school may not be able to host fish, they may be able to grow plants. Students could make predictions as to how their plant will develop over time and watch and observe to see what progresses. If the experiment does not work at first, teachers could highlight perseverance once again by starting over and trying something new. There are many ways in which this story could lead to interesting and interactive activities.

What I love most about this story is that it features a woman in science who was continuously told that she was incapable of fulfilling her passion, and that she repeatedly proved her worth to the people telling her no. I will add this to my classroom read aloud library not only because it adds to the diverse selection I am building, but that it is so easily transferable between different subjects to be covered.

About the author

Haley Keough is a kindergarten classroom teacher in Conroe, TX. Her research interests include social emotional program application within primary school settings, and has previously worked as a Master's teaching assistant at Purdue University.