

The Ocean: Another World Beneath the Waves

A young girl walks across the exposed sandbar, the waves of the ocean lapping playfully about her ankles, the salty breeze blowing her blonde hair around her face. She stops beside the shallow edge of the island, studying the weeds and snails that adorn the rocks there. Suddenly something catches her eye, something sandy moving beneath the water. It was a skate! Excited, the young girl moves closer as others hear her exclamation and gather around. Transfixed by the beauty and mystery of the ocean-dwelling creature, like an alien from another world, the girl bends down and lightly strokes the back of the animal. It shifts slightly and then moves on to more secluded waters; a brief encounter for the skate, but a memorable and wonderful experience for the girl.

You may have guessed by now that the girl I have just told you about was me a few years ago, at the beach with my family, exploring the waters there as I had for years before, still entranced and excited by the mysterious creatures that inhabit the ocean. I have always loved the sea, and it has called to me; called me to explore, to learn, and to unravel the mysteries of that world that is so different than our own, and yet occupies the same space. Since I was young I knew I was interested in both science and the ocean and through trips to the beach and encouragement from my family, I eventually decided that I wished to explore the oceans through the science of marine biology.

An eager learner, it fascinates me to learn more about how the ocean world works and how it is different from our own world. I have a great respect for all living things, both terrestrial and aquatic, and that value I take with me in my work. My goal is to, through research, learn more about the organisms that inhabit the sea, especially the deeper, lesser known regions, and find out more about how they interact with one another and their environment. Through these discoveries, I hope to find insight into how our two worlds might be related and how processes and relationships might be similar between the two.

One thing that has always been close to my heart has been the fair treatment of animals and concern for their welfare. It is sad to see the careless destruction of organisms and organism habitat by humans. Some species that would add richness and excitement to this earth go extinct without it ever being acknowledged that they exist. I hope to defray that tragedy. By identifying and learning about new and different organisms I hope to add valuable information to the database of wondrous organisms that inhabit our world. Each organism has a certain value, not only to humans, but to the earth and to life as we know it, whether we realize what that contribution is or not. I hope to find and realize that value, and to alert others to it that unnecessary destruction of viable life can be held back and eventually stopped. Each creature has just as much right to live and share their legacy with the world as humans do, and I want to help them in realizing that potential.

The ocean itself also holds vast potential for insight into how we live on the land. Perhaps there is some chemical mechanism used by deep-water fishes that will someday lead to a more efficient source of energy for transportation or electric power on land, or maybe certain devices able to function in various zones of the ocean will one day be adapted to serve to further the space program. Perhaps a mode of communication used by bioluminescent organisms can be used for night communications for the military, and perhaps underneath all of the gestures and sounds that are made both above and below the water there is an underlying, universal language that can be used to bridge the gap between animals and humans, or even between different groups of humans. The potential gain of knowledge from the ocean is immeasurable, much as is the vastness of the ocean itself. I think that exploring that vastness of potential is very important in all aspects of marine sciences that the knowledge found there can be put to good use, not only through scientific advancement, but through educating the general populace in the beauty and value of the ocean and its creatures.

The ocean has inspired me in a very special way, and I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to have that experience. However, in order for this to be possible, the ocean and the life within it must be kept safe and in a healthy state. Therefore, education about the oceans and how to preserve them is very important. Whenever I am near the water and I smell that salty air and feel that refreshing spray I somehow feel an indescribable sense of peace. It is as though I have been set adrift within myself, and I am carried far away on the back of the wind to a place that one cannot reach among the clutter and bustle of everyday life. As such I feel good about dedicating my studies and career goals towards learning more and spreading awareness about the beautiful gift that is our world ocean.

The sun begins to set over the island for the day and the young girl walks back along the sandbar to the safety of the beach as the tide closes in behind her. For a few hours of that perfect day the tide of the ocean rolled away and revealed the wondrous world beneath for the girl to enjoy and explore. As she turns back towards the hotel, she thinks of what she will do tomorrow, and the next day, and of what wonders the ocean may uncover for her then. The ocean is in a constant state of ebb and flow, of time and tide, revealing its secrets and just as quickly hiding them away again. However, try as it might, the mighty ocean cannot hide its secrets forever, and as people like that girl continue to search for them, they will find new ways to uncover them and display them for all to see and benefit from. This is my hope, at least, for the future.

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