

## Lab Girl Rhetorical Essay

### AP Language and Composition

Date: 3/16/2023

**This was a Rhetorical Essay completed as practice for the AP Language and Composition timed essays. We were given 40 minutes to complete the essay (so excuse minor spelling and grammar mistakes) and the maximum score was a 100. I scored a 98.**

In the prologue to her 2016 memoir *Lab Girl*, biologist Hope Jahren makes comparisons between ocean and land and man-made vs. natural objects, makes extensive use of facts, statistics, and data involving time, poses questions to the reader, and highlights details of wildlife in order to stress the importance of her work as a scientist in such an important field as wildlife, ultimately moving readers to not only understand the importance of scientists like Jahren, but also pursue and live as scientists in their own lives, posing their very own questions.

Jahren begins by making comparisons between life in the ocean and life in the land, which highlights the stark contrast between the two in regards to quantity and importance. Jahren states how in response to those asking her why she doesn't "study the ocean", she answers that "the ocean is a lonely, empty place" (Jahren). She then goes on to juxtapose the desolate ocean to land, utilizing statistics to claim how there is "six hundred times more life on land than there is in the ocean" (Jahren). In doing this, Jahren starts off by forming a counterargument against those reasoning how she should study the ocean while also beginning to form her argument, showcasing the importance of the land. Jahren continues this appeal to logic, this time providing ratios: she claims the ratio of plants to animals in the ocean "is close to four, while the ratio on land is closer to a thousand" (Jahren). Including these facts and statistics to contrast the ocean and land in her argument creates Jahren's argument of the importance of her work: showcasing the vastness and extensive behind life on land over that in the ocean. This then causes the audience to realize not only the significance of plants and animals on land but the work that Jahren does on these with said plants and animals. Ultimately, Jahren is able to convey to her readers background information about her work and why what she does is so important.

Jahren then shifts to a use of rhetorical questions posed directly to her audience, yet again showcasing the extensiveness of wildlife and her work. Jahren inquires her readers to "and look out [their] window," asking them "what did you see?" (Jahren). She reasons that they most likely saw man-made objects, cars, buildings, sidewalks, but then she asks them once more, "now look again," pondering if this time around they "[saw] something green?" (Jahren.) In posing these rhetorical questions, Jahren is able to once again make use of juxtaposition, comparing man-made objects to something man cannot make, wildlife. She also shows the readers how widespread wildlife is, being so prominent that they are able to see this work of nature with just the slight turn of a head. In doing this, she is again able to strengthen her argument, exemplifying both the significance of plants, something that is one of a kind, unique,

and not able to replicated, and the significance of her job working with plants. This conveys to her audience that Jahren, who works with these unique plants and wildlife, has a crucial position in the workforce and her work comes with great importance.

Finally, Jahren finishes by introducing details regarding wildlife, in this case, focusing on leaves in order to reveal the nature and importance behind scientists in our world. Jahren claims that in her work, she “look(s) at an awful lot of leaves” and “ask(s) questions,” regarding anything from their shade to their size to the amount of water she gets (Jahren). She introduces this microscopic viewpoint to emphasize the importance of nature; even a single leaf has value. Posing these questions about nature and taking each and every miniscule factor into consideration is what makes her a scientist. A scientist with great importance. Working with not only leaves, but wildlife as well bring value to her as a scientist. Posing these questions makes her a scientist. Jahren then directs us to ask a question as well, “Now you ask a question about your leaf,” in doing so we become scientists as well, just by posing a singular question. We don’t have to know math or physics or chemistry, just like Jahren, we must pose questions and be detailed. And as scientists, we bring value and importance. Directing this state of questioning onto her audience as well contextualizes Jahren’s argument to her readers, stressing onto them the importance of all scientists, especially those concerned with such a critical portion of life, plants and wildlife, and helps Jahren’s readers to realize the true significance of her work.

In conclusion, in order to move readers to not only understand the importance of scientists like Jahren, but also pursue and live as scientists in their own lives, posing their very own questions, biologist Hope Jahren makes comparisons between ocean and land and man-made vs. natural objects, makes extensive use of facts, statistics, and data involving time, poses questions to the reader, and highlights details of wildlife in order to stress the importance of her work as a scientist in such an important field as wildlife