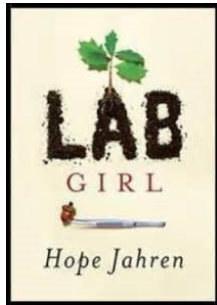




Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: Lab Girl

Author: Hope Jahren

Published: Knopf, 2016

Author Website: hopejahrensurecanwrite.com

Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. This book related the author's experience of being a scientist. Have you done scientific work? If so, how did her descriptions compare to your experiences? What did you think of her life work and how she described it?
3. Part of this book included her experiences in the scientific field, which is dominated by men. What were her experiences? Did they surprise you? Have you had similar experiences? If so, explain.
4. What did you learn about seeds, trees and nature in this book? What did the author write about climate change?
5. Consider Hope's relationships. Who were closest to her? Which relationships were difficult?
6. Hope wrote about her personal struggle with bipolar disorder. How well do you think she communicated this issue. Do you think this book could be helpful to others who have this disorder? Would it be helpful for their family and friends? Why or why not?
7. This memoir combined the author's personal and professional journeys in a creative way. If you wrote a memoir of your own life, what would be your focus?
8. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Meet Hope Jahren on YouTube...

"The secret life of plants — and 'Lab Girl' author Hope Jahren" (PBS Interview)

"Read Science! Lab Girl Edition with Hope Jahren"



NANCY: What a beautifully written book. Wow. Hope Jahren has woven her personal life into an explanation of her scientific work and the life of plants in such a powerful way. In reading this book, I learned so much about how scientists work. I enjoyed her inside look at the life of a seed, a tree, the soil; so many aspects of nature that I know very little about. The story was engaging, keeping me reading and learning and following her journey. I loved the way she honored her relationship with her long time lab partner, Bill, in the storytelling. Such a unique read, that I will remember for a very long time.



SALLIE: Childhood holds the key to our adult lives. Hope had a difficult relationship with her mother, but lived in the lab with her father, and that eventually became her life. The difficult relationship led to concerns that she might not be a good mother. But over time, she discovered she could be a good mother. I loved her descriptions of her son and their time going to the beach after school. A very loving person jumped out at me, from her heart.



ABIGAIL: As an environmentalist, I was very interested not only in her descriptions of nature, but also her references to carbon emissions and the changing climate. If you listen carefully, you'll hear her concern. I wish she would have gotten a little more specific about it. Instead, she whispers here and there about the problems. The sweet potatoes will get bigger and less nutritious. She describes the problem, certainly, but so quietly. Did you hear it?



MOLLY: Whew. I couldn't believe the problems she had with men in academia. I thought the 70s changed all that. She was born in 1969. So here she is, in university settings in the 90s still struggling as a female scientist? She's obviously forged her way to respect and recognition now, but that she had to fight so hard really floored me. I didn't think it was that bad for women these days. Have any of you had problems like that?



PRISCILLA: What a non-traditional woman. I wouldn't choose her life for a minute, but she seems to be doing very well. I looked her up on line and discovered she's a very beautiful woman. She's also a great writer. Did you see she has a blog—HopeJahrenSureCanWrite? But she isn't posting much.



KATHARINE: I have nothing but admiration for Hope Jahren. She's had an exemplary career, overcoming obstacles and working her heart out. And I will heartily recommend this book to our science professors to assign to their students. I have a feeling she'll be inspiring other female scientists for years to come. So glad we read this book. It's absolutely wonderful.



JANE: Yes, I agree with Katharine. What a woman! She's forging a path through the wilderness, literally and figuratively. And this book reads like an adventure novel as well! That wreck in Nevada took the cake. And with my love of spelunking, I couldn't help but admire Bill and his love of being underground. Way to go, Hope Jahren!