

## Excerpt from *Girls Who Looked Under Rocks*

by Jeannine Atkins

This excerpt focuses on the childhood of the famous naturalist, Jane Goodall.

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### **Jane Goodall**

The Dream

(1934 — )

- 1 Jane Goodall loved to watch spiders scramble, beetles scatter, and worms slither. At age five, she was used to hearing her mother call, "Jane! Where are you?" But the panic in her mother's eyes when she found her one day was unusual. "I was in the hen house," Jane said. She liked to sift through the straw for the warm, smooth eggs, then carry them home as carefully as if she held treasures. But that afternoon she hadn't been collecting eggs.
  - 2 "I was about to call the police!" her mother said. "What on earth were you doing?"
  - 3 "I wanted to see the hen lay an egg," Jane confessed.
  - 4 "But you were gone all afternoon!"
  - 5 Jane nodded. She knew chickens rushed off if followed, so she had hidden hours before and sat so quietly that she hadn't been spotted.
  - 6 "And you saw a hen lay an egg?" When Jane smiled, her mother smiled, too. She didn't scold Jane for making her worry. Instead, she pulled her close and said, "Tell me about it."
  - 7 With a knack for quiet, concentrated observation—and an understanding mother—five-year-old Jane was well on her way to a career as a naturalist. Her grandmother was a careful watcher, too. When she noticed how often Jane
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climbed a beech tree in her yard, she gave her the tree as her own. And seeing that Jane had checked a Doctor Doolittle book out of the library several times, her grandmother gave her the book for Christmas. Jane liked to wander through the meadows pretending that she, too, could talk to African animals. She carefully watched insects and squirrels, while dreaming that someday she, like Tarzan, would hear nothing but wind in the trees and animals calling to each other. Jane started a nature club with her younger sister and two friends. She named it the Alligator Club, even though she knew she wouldn't find alligators in England! The four girls started a magazine which included nature notes, sketches of insects, and quizzes. They set up a museum.

8 Jane made her little sister ask passersby to visit, then collected a donation to a society that protected old horses. The visitors admired the pressed flowers and bird eggs, held seashells to their ears, and petted the guinea pigs. The most famous exhibit was a human skeleton donated by Jane's uncle who had studied to be a doctor.

9 Jane did well enough in school, though her mother had to call her many times before she got out of bed (unlike on weekends, when Jane was up early to head outdoors). After graduating from high school, she trained as a secretary. She held jobs typing letters for doctors, filing papers at a university, then editing documentaries at a London film studio. When she was twenty-three, a friend invited her to visit her family's new farm in Kenya. Jane moved back home to save money, took a job as a waitress, learned to balance dozens of plates of food at once, and saved her tips. In 1957, she headed off to Africa.

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**Constructed-Response**  
**Reading: Non-fiction**

**Question 1**

1. How did Jane's family contribute to her career as a naturalist? Support your answer with details from the excerpt.

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