

## Alachua County Public Schools

<b>Title:</b> Animal Observations with “Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles” by Patricia Valdez and Illustrated by Felicita Sala	
<b>Writer:</b> Carla Ruffer	<b>Grade Level:</b> 1
<b>School:</b>	<b>Subject Area(s):</b> Science & Language Arts
	<b>Time:</b>

### Objectives/ Essential Questions:

Who is Joan Procter, and what did she contribute to zoology? What can we observe and learn about animals like Dr. Procter?

### Standards/ Benchmarks:

**SC.1.L.14.1** – Make observations of living things and their environment using the five senses.

**SC.1.N.1.1** – Raise questions about the natural world, investigate them in teams through free exploration, and generate appropriate explanations based on those explorations.

**SC.1.N.1.2** – Using the five senses as tools, make careful observations, describe objects in terms of number, shape, texture, size, weight, color, and motion, and compare their observations with others.

**SC.1.N.1.3** – Keep records as appropriate - such as pictorial and written records - of investigations conducted.

**SC.1.N.1.4** – Ask "how do you know?" in appropriate situations.

**LAFS.1.L.3.6** – Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships

**LAFS.1.RI.1.2** – Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

**LAFS.1.RI.2.4** – Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

**LAFS.1.W.3.8** – With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

### Cultural Context/Background:

“Joan Beauchamp Procter always had a fascination with reptiles. She was born in England in 1897

and grew up in a time when women were seen as dainty, and reptiles were considered exotic and dangerous. Joan's chronic ill health kept her from going to a university, but it didn't keep her from studying the animals she loved.

Joan kept snakes, frogs, and even a crocodile as pets. She used her animals to present a paper to the Zoological Society of London when she was only 19. In 1917, she started officially working at the British Museum as an assistant to George Albert Boulenger, keeper of the reptile and fishes. In 1923, she became the London Zoo's curator of reptiles and discovered a brand-new species from Australia called the Peninsula Dragon Lizard.

The newspapers went crazy for this small blond woman handling huge pythons and lizards. To the public it was very odd to see a woman to work with such creatures! She became famous, at first for the novelty, but soon the world saw her genius. She worked closely with architects to design the zoo's reptile house, which was built in 1926 and is still used today. It was the first of its kind built specifically for the reptiles' comfort.

Joan was recognized as an expert in herpetology and published many papers on this science. Joan revealed that 'the secret of a zoo is to make the animals feel at home.' She used her artistic talents to make the environment look and feel like their natural habitat. On-the-job training and her special relationship with the animals made her an excellent veterinarian.

Under her care, reptiles were living longer than ever before in captivity. Her love and understanding of these reptiles led her to get to know each animal as an individual. She even kept a tame Komodo dragon as a pet.

Her chronic ill health eventually caught up with her. She would still come to work when she could, making her rounds in a wheelchair with her Komodo dragon on a leash. She died at the age of 34 in 1931, but her legacy lives on at the London Zoo." Page 49

### **Reference**

Ignatofsky, Rachel. (2016). *Women in Science; 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World*. Speed Press.

### **Key Terminology:**

Zoology – the study of animals

Habitat – natural home or environment of an animal or plant

Komodo dragon – species of lizard from Indonesia

Herpetologist – a scientist who studies reptiles and amphibians

### **Activities:**

Read aloud of "Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor" by Patricia Valdez

Define terms from the book

- Zoologist
- Herpetologist
- Habitat

- Komodo dragon

Teacher prompted discussion of the book and its themes

- What are some things you remember about the story? – prompting discussion about Joan choosing a different path from her peers (i.e. reptiles instead of dolls and the Natural History Museum instead of parties) – it was unusual for a woman to work at the Natural History Museum much less run it – Joan wasn't afraid of the Komodo dragons – designing habitats in zoos for the way animals lived in the wild was new
- How did Joan learn about reptiles? – prompting discussion on observation of animals (i.e. she started learning by watching her pet crocodile)

Students in pairs choose an animal they have seen in person (in their home, on a farm, or in a zoo) and write or draw their observations. What does the animal look like? What does the animal do? Where does the animal live? What sounds does the animal make? What does the animal smell like?

Student pairs present their observations to the class.

Teacher prompted class discussion after each student presentation

- What did you learn about this animal? Does anyone have additional observations about this animal from their own experience?

Assessments/ Assessment Grading Criteria (please attach copies of any assessment handouts to the end):

The teacher will use a proficiency scale to grade the animal observations and reporting out.

4	The student asked questions or responded to questions about the text. The student pair compiled a description and drawing of their observed animal using all 5 senses in the description. The student included the animal's habitat in the description. The student pair reported out to the class in a cohesive and clear manner.
3	The student asked questions or responded to questions about the text. The student pair compiled a description and/or drawing of their observed animal using most of the 5 senses in the description. The student pair reported out to the class.
2	The student compiled a description and/or drawing of their observed animal using some of the 5 senses in the description. The student pair reported out to the class.
1	The student compiled a description and/or drawing of their observed animal using some of the 5 senses in the description.

**Materials (please attach copies of any handouts to the end of the lesson):**

“Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles” by Patricia Valdez and illustrated by

Felicita Sala

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Attachments: