



***Curators: Behind the Scenes of Natural History Museums.*** By Lance Grande. 2017. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. (ISBN: 978-0-226-19275). Hardcover \$35.00.

Have you ever wondered how museum curators get into the business, what they do day to day, and how they manage such great collections of materials? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this is the book for you. Lance Grande takes us on his journey from humble beginnings to that fateful day when a friend gave him a preserved fish fossil that began his love of collections. That gift set him on a path even he likely could not have anticipated. Suddenly the curiosity that had been in him as a

child was reawakened, and he shifted majors to Geology. From that day forward he was hooked (so to speak) and began working at the Natural History Museum in Chicago as a part of his studies. He knew, after three years of working there, that his goal was to become curator of the museum. This book provides some autobiographical account of his pathway, historical telling of museum milestones, and a candid introduction to different types of people he has worked with over the years.

Although this book is an interesting read, and I would recommend for people interested in a behind-the-scenes telling of what it means to be a curator (from lawsuits of *T. Rex* skeletons to attending gem shows and carrying home four-pound gold nuggets), I believe the deeper connection comes from Lance Grande's personal narrative. His humble blue collar origins, which lead to his being a first-generation college student who worked to support his own education, can be an inspiration to students, if they are looking in the right place. In addition, he tells a story of his interest being sparked outside the classroom initially, and seeking out those who could help him identify that passion rather than waiting for someone to come to him. His ultimate career path was not even on his radar when he set out to go to college. Through self-determination, one fateful fish fossil, and a desire to know, he wound up in the Geology Department at the University of Chicago. It is a testament to finding new paths and new interests and seeking out those who can help rather than settling for the known.

Each chapter of the book could be taken separately as needed, as I think most of the information would be of little use to the high school

classroom per se. However, the read is quite informative, and the author goes into detail on background data on the many different facets of his job that would never occur to those without museum experience. I believe high school students would find the stories compelling as a part of required readings, but as chapters; as a whole, they may lose interest. College students in the fields of Biology, Natural History, Geology, and the like might find the stories more interesting on a broader level, and the information does lend itself more to the unseen side of museum curation.

Overall, I would recommend this book as a supplement to natural studies.



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