

Visual Impairment: Privileged Hands (Non-Fiction) Est. Time: 2 Weeks Reading/45 Minutes Class

Objective

Better understand some of the personal and professional challenges individuals who are blind may encounter.

Synopsis

Geerat Vermeij, a biologist and paleontologist, had a passion for shells. Because he was blind, Vermeij used his fingers instead of his eyes to “see” the shells. *Privileged Hands* gives a detailed account of Vermeij’s life and his rise as one of the leading authorities in his field.

Activity

Read the following book and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *Privileged Hands: A Remarkable Scientific Life* (1997)

Author: Geerat Vermeij

Publisher: W. H. Freeman and Company • New York

For Your Information

To learn more about visual impairments, visit:

- [Visual Impairment, Including Blindness](#) (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- [American Foundation for the Blind](#) (AFB)

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. How did Geerat Vermeij lose his sight?
2. What advice did Dr. Wave give to Geerat’s parents?
3. What was Geerat’s mother trying to teach him by sending him to the store alone?
4. What kind of services and supports did Geerat receive to help address his instructional needs?
5. The National Science Foundation (NSF) agreed to fund all of Geerat’s proposal except for the fieldwork portion.
 - a. Why did NSF reject the fieldwork portion?
 - b. How did he respond?
6. Do you think Geerat lived his life regarding his disability “as a nuisance”? If so, provide examples to support your opinion.