



Isabella Aiona Abbott

HIDDEN HERO OF HISTORY

Listen to the story: <https://jonincharacter.com/isabella-aiona-abbott/>

Isabella Aiona Abbott is the First Lady of Limu—the Hawaiian word for water plants. She was the leading expert on marine algae and seaweeds of the Pacific Ocean.

In the heart of Hawaii, on June 20, 1919, Isabella Aiona Abbott was born. Her mother introduced her to the native plants of the islands, including various edible Hawaiian seaweeds. These early lessons in native plants sowed the seeds of a lifelong passion.

Isabella's journey was one of pioneering achievements. In 1950, Ms. Abbott pursued and eventually graduated with a PhD in botany from the University of California Berkeley. A PhD is the highest degree you can earn in school. Ms. Abbott's PhD is for the scientific study of plants, or botany.

Ms. Abbott was the first Hawaiian woman to receive a PhD in science. Unfortunately, at the time she graduated, it was difficult for a woman to get a teaching job at a university. She spent her time diving deep into her studies of algae on the California coast. Her goal was to reintroduce seaweeds into everyday life. She wanted to reconnect people to the natural world and to her cultural traditions. She taught others how to use the plants that are all around us for food, and other important purposes. She even created recipes for pickling seaweed, baking it into cake and more.

Part of Isabella Aiona Abbott's legacy is bringing awareness to culturally important plants.

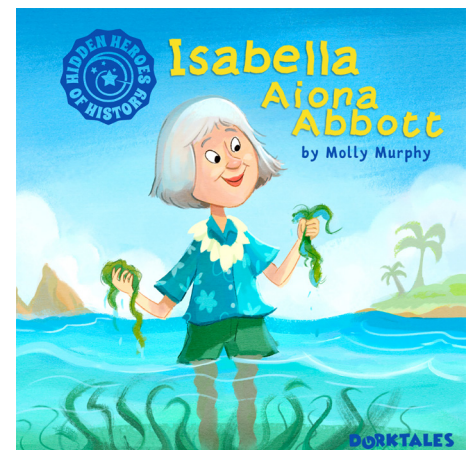
Ms. Abbott taught about historical uses for seaweed and marine algae through oral histories from past generations. Preserving Hawaiians' knowledge of the ocean was an important part of her work.

Her efforts led to the study of Hawaiian ocean knowledge at the college university level—which meant that these cultural traditions and knowledge would be preserved and passed on to new generations.

Ms. Abbott promoted Hawaiian stewardship practices when she was harvesting the limu, otherwise known as marine algae or water plants. She made sure that she didn't hurt ocean habitats while studying and learning more about what they had to offer.

Her path to becoming a Leading Expert in Limu.

Isabella Aiona Abbott's love for underwater flora inspired her to explore over 200 different species, ultimately earning her the title of the world's leading expert on algae in the Pacific Ocean.



In 1966, Ms. Abbott became a research associate and guest lecturer. And in 1972, Stanford University recognized her expertise and appointed her as a full professor of Biology, marking a historic moment as the first woman and the first person of color to hold this position. Isabella's influence continued to grow, leaving an indelible mark on the world.

In 1982, Ms. Abbott and her husband moved back to Hawaii where she taught ethnobotany at the University of Hawaii. Ethnobotany is the study of the interaction between humans and plants.

Isabella Aiona Abbott had an impact through teaching and beyond. She penned eight books, wrote over 150 academic articles, and received a plethora of honors and awards in her field. The University of Hawaii recognized her profound legacy by establishing a scholarship in her name, aimed at supporting students studying Hawaiian ethnobotany and marine botany.

Isabella Aiona Abbott's extraordinary journey continues to inspire others to this day, reminding us of the profound connection between humans and the natural world and the importance of preserving cultural knowledge.



Give it Some Thought

How do you think Isabella Aiona Abbott's early experiences and lessons with her mother influenced her passion for seaweeds and marine algae?

Why is it important to preserve cultural knowledge and traditions, like Ms. Abbott did with the knowledge Hawaiians have about the ocean?

How might Ms. Abbott's achievements inspire other people?

How does Ms. Abbott's story show the impact of one person's dedication to a field of study and their efforts to make the world a better place?

Glossary

Botany: The scientific study of plants, where scientists like Isabella Aiona Abbott learn about different kinds of plants and how they grow.

Algae: A type of tiny plant that can be found in water, like the ocean. Some algae can be eaten and are important for the environment.

Seaweed: Special plants that grow underwater, often found in the ocean. Seaweed can come in different shapes and colors and can be used in many ways.

Limu: A Hawaiian word that means water plants or seaweeds, like the ones Ms. Abbott studied.

Cultural Knowledge: The special things and information that people from a certain place or group know and pass down to others.

Ocean Stewardship: Taking good care of the ocean and the animals and plants that live there. Ms. Abbott made sure to protect the ocean while studying seaweeds.

Ethnobotany: The study of how people and plants are connected and how they interact with one another.

Sustainable: Doing things in a way that helps the environment and doesn't harm it. Ms. Abbott made sure her work with seaweeds was sustainable.

PhD: The highest degree you can achieve in school, becoming an expert in a subject. Ms. Abbott earned a PhD in botany.

Preserve: To keep something safe and protect it, just like Ms. Abbott preserved the knowledge about seaweeds and ocean plants.



Use Your Imagination

Inspired by Isabella Aiona Abbott's story, this project will help you explore and appreciate seaweeds, just like she did.

Materials Needed

- Books, articles, or videos about seaweeds and Isabella Aiona Abbott's life.
- Seaweed samples (you can often find dried seaweed at health food stores or online).
- Magnifying glasses.
- Art supplies like paper, colored pencils, and markers.
- Safety scissors and glue.
- Paper or journal to write down your thoughts and observations.
- Optional: small glass containers, water, and salt for rehydrating dried seaweed.

Activity Steps

Research and Discussion: Begin by listening to the Dorktales Hidden Hero of History episode on Isabella Aiona Abbott: <https://jonincharacter.com/isabella-aiona-abbott/>

Then read the books or articles you found to learn more about her her passion for seaweeds.

Seaweed Exploration: Using a magnifying glass, closely examine your seaweed sample's texture, color, and patterns. Write down what you observe.

Creative Expression: Create your own artistic representation of seaweeds on paper using colored pencils and markers. You can draw the seaweeds you observed and add details like shapes, colors, and patterns.

Seaweed Recipes: Explore how Isabella Aiona Abbott introduced seaweeds into everyday life by making them edible. You can experiment with rehydrating dried seaweed by placing it in a small glass container with water and salt (if needed). Observe how the seaweed changes when it absorbs water.

Seaweed Tasting: If you're comfortable, try tasting a small piece of rehydrated seaweed. Write down how it tastes and describe the texture. Compare it to other snacks or foods you eat.

Presentation: Share your artwork and observations about seaweeds, similar to how Isabella Aiona Abbott shared her knowledge. Talk about what you learned and why seaweeds are interesting.