

In the field of geology, there isn't a scientist with more skill, determination or motivation than Dr. Isabel Rodriguez.	14
Dr. Rodriguez started her collection of rocks at an early age. When she was a child, she would take rocks home to her family's cattle ranch at the edge of the desert. As a grown woman, she turned her childhood interest into a career and now teaches geology to college students from the United States and other countries. As a college instructor, she trains young men and women to be skilled geologists. She shows them how to read maps of major landforms and how to tell the difference between a diamond and a lump of glass. She provides her students knowledge they can use while looking for rocks and fossils in the field. For example, her students learn that the Red Mountains in Colorado are tinted red because of iron compounds and that the best source for gems are rivers flowing from volcanoes.	19
One afternoon, as part of her lecture, Dr. Rodriguez held up her pencil. "The graphite in the lead of this pencil is chemically identical to diamonds," she said. "But because they have different crystal structures, they have very different physical properties. You can write with graphite in the pencil, but it is basically worthless. On the other hand, the diamond comes in a variety of colors and is priceless."	34
In the field, Dr. Rodriguez is a rock-finding whiz, amazing her students during their outings across the sun-baked desert. Although many fossils and semi-precious stones lie in plain view, they are clear only to her keen eyes.	50
"An opal has a blue-green glow," she tells her students as they walk across the desert. "When you find one, notice how it reflects sunlight."	64
Dr. Rodriguez is constantly digging up new treasures. Finding a million-year-old carbon imprint of a fern frond trapped in a sandstone wall is not unusual for Dr. Rodriguez. On outings with her students, she is frequently heard saying, "This stone is amazing. Students, come and look at this find!"	76
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