

## Interview Assessment #2

**Name:** Dr.Kathie Louise Thomas-Keprta

**Profession:** Astrobiology

**Location:** Johnson Space Center---Houston,TX

**Date:** September 27, 2016---10:45AM

Dr.Thomas-Keprta is one of the senior planetary scientists at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. Her work on Martian Meteorites and Lunar Samples have contributed greatly to NASA's understanding of astrobiology. With that said, I wanted to learn how I can be a successful planetary scientist, specifically at NASA, just like her.

I personally have found myself being more interested in the application of biology in our universe. I often find that astrobiology is overlooked by many individuals when it comes to astronomy. However, this field has proven often times that it is indeed very important in our ability to understand our universe better. On that note, Dr. Keprta and I spent a considerable time talking about the field and specifically the things that she discovered with her team. I was especially fascinated by the fact that she was part of the research team that discovered that there was even a biological aspect of to the study of astronomy. As a result of this discovery, she was on CNN and ABC News. This definitely blew me away. At that point, I was really excited and grateful that I was talking to an individual that had been part of this discovery because astrobiology changed the way of my thinking about our universe.

After this, we talked about the specific courses I should take throughout high school and college so I can be do research in this field. Dr.Keprta specifically emphasized on how astrobiology encompasses all the major sciences. For instance, she suggested that I take paleontology/ geology classes in college because it gives me a good base for planetary science. Additionally, she heavily stressed that I take AP Chemistry my senior year of high school because that is what is what is going to drive me in understanding this field. She also explained to me how I can major in various science fields instead of one specific degree. To make it more clear, I could get a major in Biochemistry and maybe do my PhD in astronomy or I could major in paleontology and get a PhD in Chemistry. From this, I understood that I have a considerable amount of freedom in what I wanted to study in college and still work in the career I want. On top of that, she recommended me some really good colleges for astrobiology. One great college recommendation she gave was University of Colorado.

Furthermore, we discussed the work environment at NASA. Ever since I was a little kid, I have always dreamed of working for NASA and when I talked to her, I wanted to learn how I can get a prestigious job position at NASA. I mainly learned this by listening to her experiences. She explained how she joined NASA shortly after she finished college and how she got that amazing opportunity. She explained to me that in order to get the job at NASA, you must do an interview just like everyone else in other fields. You also have to have show NASA that you have strong presentation skills and writing skills. This is because you will be going to major conferences around the world and also because of funding proposals that you must create. After this, Dr. Thomas-Keprta offered to show me some of NASA's Labs. I was definitely excited

because it was the first time I got to witness NASA's functional labs. It was amazing! I got to see one of their Electron Microscopes, which blew me away. Overall, the atmosphere NASA is one of teamwork and innovation.

This research interview with NASA was probably the most exciting and beneficial things I have ever done. Just within the few hours, I truly felt like I bonded with Dr. Keprta. She was so sweet and down to earth. Most importantly, I saw a strong passion for astrobiology in her and also her willingness to share it with me. Within a few hours of the interview, she sent me her most prestigious research papers so I can read through that. Meeting her was like meeting a long lost friend and I definitely learned a lot from her.