

Impact Statement

Riley Samples, Grade 11.
Beneath Sylvia's Surface, 2023.
Digital art, 35 x 23.5 inches.
Sechinger High School, Buford, GA
Unsung Hero: Sylvia Earle

I was first introduced to Sylvia Earle through her Netflix Documentary, *Seaspiracy*, which is centered around exposing the detrimental environmental impact of the fishing industry. Immediately, I knew Sylvia was a powerful force in marine conservation. In turn, I chose her as my 2023 Unsung Hero. Sylvia's great passion and outstanding efforts throughout the entirety of her life have surely been appreciated by the spirit of the ocean itself. Through my art I seek to expand the depth of human appreciation towards that of the ocean.

As I began to dive into the grand life of Sylvia Earle, I was shocked by her range. Although Sylvia is known for her books and speeches, she doesn't just call others to action, but rather participates herself, making her truly an inspiration. She's written books, dove with dolphins, walked the depths in an atmospheric diving suit, and explored the deep as a crew member of mission aquarius. Her achievements are as vast as the ocean, and at 87, her journey hasn't stopped. I want to portray not only Sylvia's many achievements, but the great passion within her work.

My artwork seeks to highlight the dedication and drive of Sylvia, as well as the incredible amount of work that she puts into her conservation. Majority of people know Sylvia through her writing, such as *The World is Blue*. However, many of these people are unaware of the immense work put in by Earle throughout the process. My goal is to visualize Sylvia's efforts through my art piece, putting her incredible contribution into perspective. The top of the piece centers around Earle's books. As the piece progresses downwards, "beneath the surface", the efforts that build up to her publications are revealed. Her diving efforts, and work with dolphins. Her inspirational, but cautionary speeches. Her participation in Mission Aquarius and her exploration in an atmospheric diving suit. The structure of my piece, top to bottom, seeks to reveal deeper and deeper into who Sylvia Earle is, emphasizing her contributions to both marine biology and the environment.

Sylvia not only provides an outlook into the importance of marine conservation, but has ingenuity in her lifestyle. She's not just an inspiration because of her achievements, but also due to the process in which she achieves her goals. Sylvia dedicates her life to marine biology. She continues to, even now, at 87, to pursue her passion. Earle proves that through persistent effort, larger than life goals can be achieved. I seek to live by the same code as Sylvia, dedicating each day to furthering the causes I believe in. The joyful spirit of Sylvia Earle will be shared with my community, taking its first step at Seckinger High School's environmental club, where a day will be dedicated to her achievements. There, through discussion of her passionate lifestyle, Sylvia's legacy will continue as we begin a journey in marine conservation ourselves, learning about what steps each individual can take to protect the environment that Sylvia protects so strongly.