

## Impact Statement

Vivien Vasquez, Grade 12

***Eugenie Clark***, 2025

Pencil and acrylic paint on paper, 14.5 x 11.75 inches

Teacher: E. Dominic Black, San Dimas High School, San Dimas, CA

Unsung Hero: Eugenie Clark

Eugenie Clark was a Pioneering American ichthyologist, marine biologist, and ocean conservationist. She studied marine life but mainly sharks and fish. She was born May 4th, 1922, and sadly passed away February 25th, 2015, from lung cancer. Eugenie Clark was widely known as “The Shark Lady”. She first started showing interest in sea life when she was just a little girl by frequently visiting the New York Aquarium and spending hours observing marine life, then later on fostering at the aquatic world. In college, Eugenie wanted to pursue her passion for ocean and marine biology, so she proceeded to earn a bachelor's degree in zoology from Hunter College in 1942. She continued her studies in New York University and later on earned another master's degree in arts in 1946 and a Ph.D in 1950. As you can tell, she was fully devoted to sea life. During Eugenie Clark's life, she discovered several different fish species, such as the Moses Sole fish, debunked many shark myths, and discovered that not all sharks need to swim to breathe when they sleep. She demonstrated that sharks can also be trained. Her contribution and impact on society are remarkable. Eugenie Clark's work advanced our understanding of sharks. She also played a crucial role in changing people's perceptions of sharks and promoting marine conservation. Her legacy will live on and continue to inspire scientists and ocean enthusiasts all around the world. I love her curiosity, lack of fear for sharks, and how determined she was to show the world her love for the ocean.

The reason I chose her for the Unsung Heroes project was because I was drawn to her love for the ocean, and I love how brave she was, and found it extraordinary how she spent her life swimming with sharks and studying their behavior. The reason I chose to illustrate the photo of her taken by David Doubilet, where she is inside the jaw of a shark, is that this photo perfectly represents her love for sharks. I love how the drawing has a little play on words and art that I feel shows a perfect representation of how Eugenie Clark was literally and figuratively being surrounded by sharks and marine life her entire life just like the drawing since she is being surrounded by a shark. The medium I chose for this project was pencil and charcoal. After I finished with the charcoal, I decided to use Black acrylic to paint the background to make Eugenie Clark's figure pop more, so she can really stand out. My biggest struggles with this piece were how often it would smudge and how messy my hands would get afterwards. I also struggled with how many times I had to erase and redraw several of her features in order to really capture her essence, beauty, and emotion. This piece roughly took me

around 3 weeks to fully complete since I only worked on it during art class for around 45 minutes a day.