



Impact Statement

Vlada Stinerman, Grade 12

A Dive Through Reality, 2026

Ceramic cup, lid, saucer, 7.5 x 6 x 6 inches

Castro Valley High School, Castro Valley, CA

Unsung Hero: Dr. Sylvia Earle

I decided to choose Sylvia Earle who is a female marine biologist who really tried to influence and change the world. I chose her because I believe the environment is very important in the world and ocean life is often not cared about, which is what Sylvia wanted to communicate with people. So I think Sylvia is the best person for this project because of the many things she has achieved in her life trying to help and save the ocean. Sylvia was born with love and interest in nature. When she was 12, she moved to Florida where she started exploring salt marshes and seagrass beds. That's when Sylvia fell in love with the ocean. I admire how focused she was on what she loved. She focused fully on her studies and what she could accomplish to make the environment better. Her courage and perseverance inspire me and many others.

Sylvia graduated from Duke University learning mostly about marine algae and plants that thrive in the ocean. After graduating, she worked at a marine program at Harvard University where she led the first all-female team of "aquanats" during the Tektite II project. This group studied coral reefs and reviewed the effects of pollution on ocean life. Her goal was to help others understand why the ocean matters and why we should protect it. She did so many things to try to accomplish her goal. She worked with National Geographic to make books and films about the ocean. She helped companies design underwater vehicles and wanted to help them see parts of the ocean that have never been seen before. She wrote more than 100 scientific papers and several books trying to help the public understand the ocean how she does. She even created a documentary recording her diving into the water and showing people how ocean life is impacted by the world. She shared her knowledge hoping the world would see her hard work and how hard she is working to help ocean life.

I want to interpret her goal of showing how pollution impacts the ocean and ocean life. But I also want to show her love for ocean life. Her main study was on marine algae, so I wanted to use different algae plants surrounding the entire jar. I think it's important to show the beauty and the ugly of the ocean. I want to create a jar having 3 different parts to her story. Having the body of the jar shows the ocean in 2 parts. The polluted side and the healthy side. Using blue and black to represent the dark and bright side of the ocean blending together to show the reality of how pollution impacts the ocean. This really shows how she really admired the healthy and also unhealthy sides of the ocean. I definitely want to give this piece tons of texture expressing how the ocean isn't all pretty and aesthetic. For the saucer, I want to incorporate the idea of how Sylvia shared how people impact the ocean. She wrote books to share her ideas, so I want to incorporate a quote of hers in the saucer sharing these ideas. I will be using clay for this

project and this will also be my first time trying the sgraffito technique and I am scared yet really interested on how it will work out. I want to sgraffito wavy textures to represent the water and curvy rugged edges to create a sense of the pollution in the ocean. I think it will add tones of textures and make the piece very fun to look at. My main goal is to try and make the viewers seem like they are the “divers”, and that they are seeing and discovering how the ocean is impacted by the outside world.

Choosing Sylvia was a choice I made through her interesting story as well as some connections to my childhood. In the third grade, I had an assignment to research an animal, and I chose a sea turtle. I was fascinated by the ocean and ocean life at that age. I really found the ocean fascinating and really cool. While I researched sea turtles, I realized how much they are impacted by the outside world. Reading articles of baby turtles getting run over by cars and their environment being flooded with plastic was heartbreaking. After seeing Sylvia's goal of showing people how we impact the ocean, it reminded me of that project and now I feel a stronger connection between my art piece and her story. Another connection I have is growing up near nature. I was born in San Francisco, and every morning my mom would take me and my sisters to Pacifica walking along the coast of the ocean. I think that's also when I started to fantasize about the ocean. I feel like I can really showcase Sylvia's love and care for the ocean knowing I love and care for it as well.

Sylvia's story changed my outlook on the ocean and marine life overall. I never really used to be worried or concerned about the ocean and how it gets harmed. But after looking at Sylvia's story and her research, I will make sure to try to make the best decisions that affect the ocean. I will look at the environment in many new and different ways. I plan to show my artwork to students younger than me in hope they are inspired and learn how to protect the ocean. I hope while people see my art piece, they will understand Sylvia's goal and how much she went through to achieve that goal.