



Impact Statement

Atlas De Pasquale-Stern, Grade 10

Cliffs, 2026

Nickel, brass, copper, and leather sculpture, 5 x 9 x 1 inches

Harriton High School, Bryn Mawr, PA

Unsung Hero: Mary Anning

My unsung hero is Mary Anning. I chose her because I really admire her persistence and determination in the face of the biases and prejudices of her time. Mary Anning grew up poor in Dorset, and as a child she would help her father gather fossils on the beach to sell. During this time, she made many scientific discoveries that helped develop the modern theory of extinction and the modern idea of paleontology. While doing this to support her family, word of her discoveries reached the scientific community. Originally, many people thought that her findings were fake because she was a woman and it was thought that a woman would never be able to determine such things. With time though, many people saw that she truly made extremely important discoveries and she began to gain respect in the scientific community. I wanted to use this artwork to show both her achievements and the hardships that she had to go through to reach the level of respect she was ultimately able to achieve.

To represent the hardships she went through, I replicated the shape of the specific cliffs where she worked to show how much prejudice she had to climb over. To show the scientific achievements she made, I fabricated the skeleton of a plesiosaur in the center of the necklace, one of her most important discoveries. Despite the fact that the discovery was a prestigious find amongst paleontologists, Anning was not credited as its discoverer because she was a woman. One of the things I really wanted to explore in this project is texturing and etching. When I was making the cliffs on the sides of the necklace, I spent a lot of time trying to make a perfect rock texture in order to convey the image of a steep cliff. Also on the cliffs, I etched smaller fossils into them to show how Mary Anning used her talent of fossil finding to dig she and her family out of poverty.

I hope that this project helps share Mary Anning's story so that more people can learn about her. In my research, I was really inspired by her story and perseverance, and I hope that others are too. One of the things that I found most inspiring about her story is how she never gave up her passion even though doing something different would have made her life easier. Throughout her life, she was constantly encouraged to give up on paleontology by many people, who would take her work and never credit her for what she did to help find and prepare what they called their discoveries. I was really encouraged by this because, throughout my time in school, I have been repeatedly encouraged to give up taking the classes I want to take, like stacking multiple advanced science classes instead of taking an easier courseload, but reading about Anning encouraged me to continue to do the classes and activities that I want to do. Overall, I hope that others are inspired by this project and her life to push through adversities and other people's prejudices to achieve what they want to in life.