



Impact Statement

Kelly Hung, Grade 8

The Shark Lady, 2026

Oil on canvas board, 18 x 14 inches

Oak Valley Middle School, Sand Diego, CA

Unsung Hero: Dr. Eugenie Clark

The Unsung Hero's description that caught my eye was Dr. Eugenie Clark's. Also known as "The Shark Lady," Clark was an American marine biologist and ichthyologist who became famous for her groundbreaking research on sharks and other marine life. Her research also helped raise awareness about shark conservation.

Dr. Eugenie Clark also made important discoveries about fish behavior and inspired many people, specifically young women, to pursue careers in the scientific field. Furthermore, she combined science with adventure. Clark was among the few first scientists to regularly use scuba diving to study marine life up close in natural environments, which ultimately enabled more hands-on ocean life research. Through her books, lectures, and media appearances, she helped the public better understand these fascinating specimens during a time where sharks were viewed as dangerous, and malicious creatures. Throughout her childhood, she loved visiting the aquarium and this was where her interest in marine life bloomed. She was fascinated by all kinds of fish, and wasn't afraid of sharks like others, but curious about them. She challenged the stereotypes of sharks despite the bad reputation they held and was driven by a desire to understand and explore.

Dr. Eugenie Clark's career was inspirational and truly amazing. Early on, after earning a PhD in zoology from New York University, she conducted research in places like the South Pacific and the Red Sea, where she studied tropical fish and shark behavior. She became a professor at the University of Maryland, where she taught zoology and mentored students while continuing her research. Later, she even established the Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida, a major center for marine science, focusing on sharks, fish behavior, and ocean conservation.

Being one who also appreciates the beauty of ocean life, I was moved by her deep understanding and passion for marine biology, which is the reason why I chose to shine the spotlight on her in my artwork. My painting depicts Eugenie Clark in the center; her portrait framed with two delicate shark jaws. I hoped for them to symbolize her connection with sharks, and career in ichthyology. Scattered around the painting are four sharks, one of those specifically being a hammerhead shark, reflecting how Clark primarily focused on species like nurse sharks and hammerheads. which represents her involvement with research around creatures. The background is filled with a deep, rich blue and black, smaller fish also grouped up in schools, portraying the depths of the ocean environment, and Clark's interest in fish too. Located on the bottom right, Clark's figure scuba diving with a shark can be seen, a depiction of

her efforts to study ocean life in a way that many, during those times, did not. When designing the layout for this piece, I wanted the focus to be on Eugenie Clark, so I positioned her upfront. I specifically chose to render her with a red top to add a pleasing color contrast to the background blues. These small details are what hold the painting together, a harmony of hues blending perfectly into one another.

Ultimately, through this piece, I hope to bring more attention to Dr. Eugenie Clark's impactful legacy, her drive to learn and study the ever-wondrous, beautiful ocean life, and to uplift and inspire other young women such as I.