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*Claire A. Nivola*

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Sylvia Earle first lost her heart to the ocean as a young girl when she discovered the wonders of the Gulf of Mexico in her backyard. As an adult, she dives even deeper. Whether she's designing submersibles, swimming with the whales, or taking deep-water walks, Sylvia Earle has dedicated her life to learning more about what she calls "the blue heart of the planet." With stunningly detailed pictures of the wonders of the sea, *Life in the Ocean* tells the story of Sylvia's growing passion and how her ocean exploration and advocacy have made her known around the world. This picture book biography also includes an informative author's note that will motivate young environmentalists.

*Life in the Ocean* is one of *The Washington Post's* Best Kids Books of 2012

## Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle Details

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Author : Claire A. Nivola

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# From Reader Review *Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle* for online ebook

## Elizabeth says

This picturebook is for older kids than the ones I've been reading recently.

The opening page is about the oceans generally and is maybe a bit of a dry introduction. Then we begin the biography proper -- which dwells mostly on experiences of wonder, which I think works well as a way to keep kids engaged and stir their own curiosity (and possibly love) for the underwater world.

The Author's Note talks about how "Sylvia was born in 1935. Most of the damage done to the ocean has taken place during her lifetime." Some of the stuff damage the note lists I knew, others I didn't or had forgotten -- like how "we have filled the the sea with new sounds, too---drilling, explosions, boat engines, sonar. For creatures like the whales in this story, exquisitely sensitive to sound waves, these human interferences can cause great suffering, disorientation, strandings, possibly even death."

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## Roberta Gibson says

*Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle* by author/illustrator Claire A. Nivola is a lovely new picture book biography of a pioneer of in the field of ocean studies.

If you have never heard of Sylvia Earle, she is a scientist and conservationist whose goals in life have been to delve deeply into the oceans and learn as much as she can, and then share her passion and knowledge with others. As Nivola quotes in her extensive Author's Note in the back matter, Earle realizes, "You can't care if you don't know."

As so appropriate for a children's book, after a brief introduction to the immenseness and importance of the ocean, Nivola describes Earle's childhood. Sylvia Earle spent her early years on a farm in New Jersey, where she began to study all the living things around her. If she had stayed there, things might have turned out very differently. Instead, when Sylvia and her family moved to Clearwater, Florida when she was twelve. Suddenly, she had a beautiful ocean to explore right in her own backyard. Her life was changed forever.

Nivola has allowed her subject to tell her own story without excessive crafting. Nivola's delicate and whimsical watercolors are lovely, and they rise to a new level in the underwater scenes, where Sylvia becomes a sea creature herself.

*Life in the Ocean* is will be a hit with children who are interested in oceans, in science, in history and/or in conservation. The incredible story of Sylvia Earle's life is sure to inspire future explorers.

See my full review at [Wrapped In Foil](#)

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## Destinee Sutton says

I think this book hits an awkward spot in terms of recommending it to kids. It doesn't have enough information to satisfy older readers, but the vocabulary and sentence structures would be really challenging for a younger reader. I suppose I'd put it in the 3rd to 5th grade range.

The story is a very basic outline of the life of oceanographer Sylvia Earle, covering briefly her childhood on a farm, her family's move to Florida near the ocean, her love of exploring ocean life, and some of her professional feats (mostly how deep she dove and how long she stayed underwater).

There's a lot more information in the Author's Note that follows the text. I wish more of it had been integrated into the story. There's a sad message in it, too, about how poorly humans treat the oceans: "...we have dumped lethal nuclear waste, industrial waste, pollutants from underwater mining, and just plain garbage... Are we thinking the sea is vast and deep enough to take all this and more?"

The real treat of this short biography is the art. Each page charmingly conveys the vastness of the oceans and the variety of life found there, as well as Earle's immersion (literally!) in her studies.

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### **Kori Morris says**

This is an jaw-droppingly beautiful book - the illustrations, the sentences, and the illustrations (yes I do think they're that good). I can't wait to share this book with my 3rd and 4th graders, I think during the week I'm covering women in science.

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### **Rebekah Craven says**

Biography

This book is the story of Sylvia Earle and her many accomplishments as one of the most famous women oceanographers. The story goes through Sylvia Earle's early childhood life and how she develops a passion for the wide open ocean and exploring the life that lies beneath the water. Claire A. Nivola does an excellent job of telling Sylvia's story, while also highlighting the excitement and beauty of the ocean and its life forms. In the author's note at the end of the book Nivola even goes into more depth about Sylvia's remarkable accomplishments and some incredible facts about our world's oceans and the sea creatures that inhabit them. This book would be appropriate for grades 2-5th and would be a great read aloud or book for the classroom library. This book would serve as a great tool for learning new science vocabulary like the words oceanographer, coral reefs, bioluminescent, expedition, algae, and many more content-specific vocabulary. It also paints a beautiful picture of life under water for students to see and be inspired to one day explore it for themselves. This book is a WOW book for me because I think it has a powerful message for young girls that have an interest in science, and can inspire them to chase their passions regardless of the obstacles. I also really love this woman's story and how incredible some of her accomplishments were for marine science, and think her story deserves to be shared more!

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### **Dain Frisby-Dart says**

This biography of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle was not only informative for me personally (I admit to never

having heard of her), but including lots of wonderful details about how amazing our oceans and seas are. Some of the text is a bit long and might be overreaching for young ones, but I think most 3rd-5th graders would find this book pretty fascinating. I think it can inspire further reading and research about how truly important oceans are to our planet. I also love that it highlights a woman's accomplishments, particularly when this was a field dominated by men. It's important for kids to read about that!

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### **Courtney Barter says**

I consider this book appropriate for 2nd grade. There is quite a bit of text throughout the book, but there are also a lot of illustrations. This book explains Sylvia Earle's life as a child and as an oceanographer. Very interesting and easy for children to understand! Biography.

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### **Melissa says**

This is an eye catching book about Sylvia Earle who feel in love with the world inside the ocean. This book seems to be engaging for the older reader, possible 3 grade up. The pictures are very well done and the simple text is great if trying to read it to the younger reader.

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### **Dolly says**

This is an intriguing biography of a woman who has spent much of her life in, around and under water. I love that the story depicts a strong, independent woman who is both passionate about her field of study, but also highly successful, too.

The narrative is just the right length to teach children about her accomplishments without being too detailed, boring, or overwhelming. The illustrations are wonderful, too, and we paused reading the story several times to allow our girls to pick out their favorite things.

I liked the author's note at the end, but I must say that the environmental message is a bit heavy-handed and preachy, almost to the point of detracting from the story.

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### **Lu Benke says**

I feel like I have just met the Rachel Carson of the latter part of the 20th century. Interesting format for a biography of Sylvia Earle with illustrations that seem like they are telling a picture book story rather than a life story. I remembering really enjoying Nivola's Orani: My Father's Village for that same sense that there is more story behind the pictures than the text can tell. As is becoming more typical, the Author's Note goes on to tell more about Earle's activism in speaking out for the protection of oceans. Those final two pages seemed aimed at an adult audience and were so full of problems that need to be addressed, that I felt like they deserved their own book.

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## **Stefanie Green says**

1. "These Seas Count" by Allison Formento & illustrated by Sarah Snow, 2013.
  2. I selected "These Seas Count" as my twin text because I thought it was a great example of action steps students could take after reading about Sylvia Earle's passion for the sea and sea creatures. After learning about Sylvia Earle's work, I know some students will be very excited and energetic about the topic of the ocean, and be curious about how this relates to them. Even though we don't live near an ocean, we do have many lakes, rivers, and streams in the area, so students could be encouraged to take steps to help our local bodies of water, just like the students in "These Seas Count" helped clean up their beach.
  3. The structure of this book would fall into the text pattern of description and chronological sequence. The life of Sylvia Earle is described with the help of beautiful imagery. The book begins with her as a young girl and continues into her adult life to highlight the miraculous adventures she went on through her work as a biologist and botanist. I believe webbing would be a great way to connect these two texts. Students could use both books to brainstorm and then create a web to show all of the ways the ocean and its creatures impact our lives everyday.
  4. (February 15, 2012). Booklist. <http://www.booksinprint.com.leo.lib.u...#>
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## **Barbara says**

In some respects this picture book biography of Sylvia Earle is as much the story of the ocean as it is a story about the groundbreaking scientist. The author takes readers through Sylvia's early years, growing up on a farm in New Jersey where she was fascinated by the natural world around her, especially in the nearby pond. When the family moved to Florida, she quickly fell in love with the ocean, a passion that provided her with a career and a lifelong focus. The story left me enraptured and saddened by the swiftness with which humans are plundering the ocean's resources and filling it with garbage. Back matter includes an author's note that describes Sylvia's concern that ignorance is at the root for our casual misuse of the ocean. I shut the book and reflected on how hard it is to inspire others to care about issues about which they know so little, and how perfectly this book provides reasons to care about the great blue seas that surround us. The illustrations are filled with blues and images of whales frolicking in the waters as well as the wonders found on the ocean floor. There is nary a scrap of trash, a floating island of plastic and garbage, or oil spills in these pages; instead, the illustrator has painted the ocean as it can be again if we stop treating it disrespectfully--healthy, brimming with life, and ever-fascinating.

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## **Christine Turner says**

Sylvia Earle first lost her heart to the ocean as a young girl when she discovered the wonders of the Gulf of Mexico in her backyard. As an adult, she dives even deeper. Whether she's designing submersibles, swimming with the whales, or taking deep-water walks, Sylvia Earle has dedicated her life to learning more about what she calls "the blue heart of the planet." With stunningly detailed pictures of the wonders of the sea, *Life in the Ocean* tells the story of Sylvia's growing passion and how her ocean exploration and

advocacy have made her known around the world. This picture book biography also includes an informative author's note that will motivate young environmentalists.

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### **Jim Erikson says**

When I was teaching 2nd-3rd grade with Marianne McWhirter, she read aloud from Eugenie Clark: Shark Lady. I always enjoyed how well-rounded that book was as a biography. Nivola's telling of Sylvia Earle's interest in the ocean provides a strong main character who is a woman scientist. Earle's interests and punctuated moments from her career provide the structure for the book, and go a long way toward humanizing the water so inhospitable to humans.

The painting style was enjoyable, with a breathtaking use of watercolor pointillism on some pages. Some of these pages are so filled with small animals and objects that it is easy to get lost in the frame and sit just looking. I wish she had carried this emphasis on the wide horizontal panorama through the entire book. When she switches to a new layout with the text down the vertical side, I think it cuts the proportions too closely and the images aren't as inviting. Out of the last three spreads, the two that get narrowed down are the ones I wish were panoramic, and the one that is panoramic isn't as interesting to look at.

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### **Darshana Khiani (Flowering Minds) says**

There are plenty of books on oceanography and explorers, but this book stole my heart with its soft-hued, detailed illustrations and easy-to-understand, inspiring text. Nivola documents Sylvia's early childhood from growing up on the Gulf Coast, where Sylvia fell in love with the water, to the historic walk along the ocean floor. This book will make you fall in love with the ocean and its beautiful creatures, and inspire kids to follow their passions.

I love Nivola's use of language. She just doesn't tell the reader that Nivola grew up on a farm but makes you feel like you were really there, taking in the sights and smells. Poetic.

Nivola also is able to explain scenes in a way that kids can understand and even find riveting.

I found it fascinating the way Nivola was able to incorporate phrases, that were quotations, into the text. Sometimes it seemed as if the quote may have been the inspiration for the paragraph and accompanying illustration.

[Click here for the original review and activity ideas at Flowering Minds.](#)

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