

## Impact Statement

Ridwana Khan, Grade 12.

***A Mother Through Medicine***, 2021.

Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 Inches.

Salem High School, Canton, MI

Unsung Hero: Mary Bickerdyke

To have a spirit that continues to radiate through continuous affliction is a trait that a majority of the human population does not possess. Mary Bickerdyke was an exception. Widowed two years before the war began, she supported herself and her two half-grown sons by practicing as a "botanic physician" in Galesburg, Illinois. When a young Union volunteer physician wrote home about the filthy, chaotic military hospitals at Cairo, Illinois, Galesburg's citizens collected \$500 worth of supplies and selected Bickerdyke to deliver them because she was the only one to step up, this resulted in her staying as an unofficial nurse in Cairo. She became the best known, most colorful, and probably most resourceful Civil War nurse. Mary Bickerdyke only saw the word possible in the word impossible. Through all her hardships she eased the pain in others, lifted their spirits, and brought back their smiles. Being able to not only do a difficult and stressful job properly but also with a smile on her face made her not only noble but a hero. Mary Bickerdyke inspires me to truly stand up and be the person to make the right choice even when the odds are against me. Her actions remind me of breaking the bystander effect. The bystander effect is the presence of others makes it less likely we will help someone in distress. The bystander effect includes the diffusion of responsibility where we believe the obligation to help is shared by onlookers. Her actions allowed the bystander effect to not have a role in the situation of the Cairo hospitals. Ms. Bickerdyke inspires me to not fall into the same trap and to realize that I cannot rely on other people to step up.

When I was creating this piece, I wanted to emphasize her hard work and the weight that she had on her shoulders after enduring multiple trials and tribulations. I was able to achieve this in my piece by limiting the amount of color I used and keeping the piece more neutral. I especially portrayed sorrow and fatigue on her face by creating a slight frown with downturned eyes, emphasized shadows, wrinkles, and glossy skin to represent sweat. I originally intended to keep a very minimalistic background but later decided to use it to show her story. The piece shows her story from top to bottom. The top of the piece shows a hospital in horrible condition with a limited amount of supplies which represents a military hospital in Cairo. The hospital on the right shows her efforts to better the conditions of Cairo hospitals and her heroic act in delivering them from Galesburg. Lastly, the faint brushstrokes of color and the American flag represent her becoming an unofficial nurse during the Civil War.

Social media is a daily part of the majority of our lives, especially in the communities I am a part of. I can learn about different aspects of people's lives and the numerous social injustices that take place in our world today. I decided to share Mary Bickerdyke's story on my Instagram page. By doing this I was able to educate members of my community and they were able to send my post to members of other communities in an easy way. By creating this piece, I was able to honor a hero in a way that would grab the attention of today's youth and brought recognition to her and her efforts.