

## Impact Statement

Renna Hwang, Grade 9

***Until the voices mute the gunshot***, 2024.

Paper collage and oil on paper, 14.8 x 10.5 inches.

The Governor's Academy, Byfield, MA

Unsung Hero: Guy Gabaldon

When I first approached this competition, I focused on the phrase 'unsung hero'. As I was looking through the website, the phrase, "Superior officers would tell Guy to stay at his post, but he deliberately disobeyed.", instantly captured my attention, driving me to start the journey of looking through the life of Guy Gabaldon and his accomplishments. As I learned more about Guy Gabaldon, I realized that he was the hero I wanted to recognize with my art.

As a United States Marine during World War II, Guy Gabaldon saved more than 1,300 Japanese soldiers at the age of 18. The part that makes Guy Gabaldon a hero is the fact that he used his knowledge of the language of Japanese to persuade the Japanese soldiers to surrender, warning them of the danger they would face when they did not choose to. He also prevented Japanese soldiers and citizens from using suicide as a way of opposing surrendering. Even during one of the darkest periods in history, Guy Gabaldon managed to value peace over the use of violence to win the war. He used his ability to communicate with Japanese soldiers to fight through the war with peace and connections.

As I dipped my paintbrush into the paint, I tried to capture the courage, compassion, and resilience of Guy Gabaldon during his heroic times. While thinking about making the main object of the painting Guy Gabaldon, I decided to apply Guy Gabaldon's value of harmony to my painting by adding a Japanese soldier next to him. The two soldiers are facing each other, which emphasizes the peace Guy Gabaldon was using during the war. Above the two, I pasted texts onto the painting, both in Japanese and English words that highlight the acts of Guy Gabaldon. I used the contrast of the color to emphasize the impact of Guy Gabaldon's heroic actions in such a deadly and violent period. In the background, I painted the scene of the war Gabaldon was in, but in black and white to represent the fact that the dark moments of war did not turn Gabaldon down, as he still managed to perform acts of peace.

Gabaldon's courageous efforts to save countless lives during World War II were a powerful reminder that the goodness within humanity can make a difference in this world. By working on my painting that portrays Guy Gabaldon's heroic actions during the war, I could dive deeper into his other values that made a difference in how I view a real 'hero' of a battle. The title of this artwork "Until the voices mute the gunshot" was

inspired by the fact that Gabaldon used his multi-diverse background to go through smooth communications with Japanese soldiers, which ultimately saved more than a thousand lives. Finally, the hero, Guy Gabaldon's actions during World War II remind us of the importance of standing up for what is right and shows the impact of the potential an individual can have when they are guided with the right values, such as courage and compassion.