

Impact Statement

Amelia Watt, Grade 10.

Anna Smith Strong, 2019.

Acrylic, mixed media, 18 x 24 Inches.

Yarmouth High School, Yarmouth, ME

Unsung Hero: Anna Smith Strong

From a young age I've always had a fascination with spies. How they so seamlessly undertake perilous tasks, right under the noses of their enemies. When deciding who to portray as my Unsung Hero I discovered many inspiring stories. Yet, I always seemed to come back to Anna Smith-Strong's. She was a woman, who not only defied the British, but also broke social expectations along the way. She was the only female member of George Washington's Culper Spy Ring during the Revolutionary War and used her determination, strength, and quiet rebellion to fight for her country. Anna is a figure in history who remains virtually unknown. Her contributions to the war were invaluable and her willingness to risk her life time and time again to fight for a cause she believed in is beyond inspirational. Though most people would want recognition for changing the course of a war, Anna stayed quiet and kept her career in espionage a secret. I decided to interpret Anna's story by creating a painting of her staring out at the Long Island Sound, signaling Caleb Brewster's (another member of the Culper Ring) location. Anna's is facing away and around her shoulders is an American flag. I decided to conceal Anna's face as a tribute to her career is espionage and how she has remained hidden centuries. I made these artistic decisions based on the information I'd learned about Anna and the Culper Spy Ring's participation in the Revolutionary War.

I have expressed Anna's character through multiple details that pay homage to her career and personality. My painting is mixed media with cutouts of cloth included. Anna is looking out at the Long Island Sound on a partially cloudy day. The sky has areas of bright blue shining through the swathes of white. The clouds represent the confusion and uncertainty about America's future, while the bright blue sky represents the hope for prosperous times ahead. The ocean has slight waves upon it, representing the unstable and precarious nature of being a spy. The ocean can turn on you in a split second and that is very similar to being a spy. Espionage is a dangerous job and can go wrong very easily. Only Anna's back is visible and she has an American flag draped over her shoulders. The stripes and stars on the flag are created by writing in sharpie the names of casualties from the Revolutionary War. The American flag around Anna's shoulders represent the gravity of her role in the war and just how many lives depended on her. Anna's hair is done in double braids; a period-accurate style. Her dress is purple which universally represents secrecy. Beneath Anna's feet, are letters that represent those passed between Anna, Abraham Woodhull, and Caleb Brewster. Above Anna's head is a clothing line, with actual cloth to represent the handkerchiefs and petticoats used to signal Caleb Brewster's location.

When I look back on Anna's incredible story, I feel a sense of awe for this inspiring woman. She was a pillar of strength during this tumultuous time and never let her guard down. Anna Smith-Strong has inspired me to continue fighting for what I believe in, no matter how the odds look. If the Americans hadn't won the war, Anna could have been killed or imprisoned for the rest of her

life. Despite the danger, Anna never gave into fear and let the weight of thousands of lives rest on her shoulders. I will share my work with others by teaching them of Anna's contribution to the war. Additionally, I will continue to research the Revolutionary War and hopefully better my understanding of the Culper Spy Ring. There are many opportunities in school to research a historical figure, so I could continue researching Anna and spreading her story. Sharing my painting with others and encouraging them to find an unsung hero of their own, is another way I could share my experience. This project has given me a better understanding of the will of humans and how the world around us works: for that I am so thankful.