

Impact Statement

Gage Pacetti, Grade 11.

The Apple Tree, 2017.

Colored pencil on paper, 24 x 18 Inches.

Delcambre High School, Delcambre, LA

Unsung Hero: Irena Sendler

As a child, you grow up without worry, if you are lucky. Most children never experience true terror, or fear of losing their lives and the lives of loved ones. As the story of Irena Sendler unfolded to me, I realize how lucky I am to live in a country where I have freedom to choose what I want in life and freedom to practice any religion. I found it heartbreaking that during WWII, children in concentration camps were being murdered just for being someone born into a religion or race that was fatally discriminated against. Never should any one person be killed because of a non-threatening choice of religion. There was no mercy for any Jew, not even for a child. Reading on about Irena Sendler, I realized that she would risk her life to save countless lives during a time of unrelenting violence.

During WWII, Irena Sendler saved the lives of 2,500 Jewish children. She placed these children in Polish-Catholic homes, orphanages and convents. She truly was the light for these children in a very dark time. Irena did what not many others would have the courage to do. I tried to represent this light in the bottom portion of artwork. Jars are rooted in a firm and strong way, showing how protected the children were from the danger above. Inside this safe place, the kids are experiencing wonderment and joy, what every child should have the basic right to do. My color choices represent the hues of a galaxy, referencing the vast expanse of space and freedom. The top half of my work depicts despair, sadness, and hopelessness. The dead, burned and scarred tree remind us of the thousands of innocent lives lost for a meaningless cause. I was hopeful while creating the bottom half, knowing that Irena would give these innocent souls a chance at life.

It is truly amazing that there are people like Irena, unsung heroes, who are regular, everyday people, fighting for the lives and rights of others who are not capable of defending themselves. This is really what struck me about this person. The amount of bravery and courage it took to save all of those lives is astounding. As I tried to put myself in her position, my mind was boggled. I would have an extremely hard time dealing with all the sorrow, grief and loss these people experienced throughout their lives. Who could say that they would put themselves in such a position or what a person would do in such a time of crisis. The spirit of aid and selflessness does not ever have a shelf life, it does not expire or have limits. People in everyday life could be half as concerned with their fellow man and our world would be better for it. The act of this extraordinary hero went unseen for many years, Irena Sendler was found much too late. This woman should have experienced fame, notoriety and praise much sooner than she did, but I am thankful she was able to be recognized and acknowledged before she passed away. Her story of basic human love and compassion is what inspired me to create. I am hopeful the viewer will be able to translate my feelings of respect and gratitude towards humanity that Irena Sendler helped me to feel while creating this artwork.