

Impact Statement

Sienna DePonte, Grade 10

Mary Ann Bickerdyke, 2025

Digital Art

Del Lago Academy, Escondido, CA

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Unsung Hero: Mary Ann Bickerdyke

The Unsung Hero I selected for my project is Mary Ann Bickerdyke. Mary was a Civil War nurse who revolutionized wartime medical care and built almost 300 field hospitals with the help of the U.S. Sanitary Commission agents. She aided the wounded on 19 different battlefields including the Battle of Shiloh and Sherman's March to the Sea. After the war, she helped secure federal pensions for numerous U.S. Army veterans and for more than 300 nurses who served in the Civil War. Her actions were brave, courageous, and took a great deal of determination. It was difficult to only choose one person from a list of so many heroic individuals, but I chose Mary because she inspires me in many different aspects. I connect to her personally because I have an interest in serving my country, as well as helping those in need. I realize that during her time, it wasn't common to see women in such fields, but she has proved that females are absolutely capable of anything. Her strong will and determination to make a difference brings me hope that anyone can help bring change to the world. Mary Ann Bickerdyke sets a good example for people even today as she shows them the power of believing.

Simply stating that Mary Ann Bickerdyke is a hero is an understatement. Mary's actions significantly changed many different realms not just during the civil war, but well into today's world. One way she impacted society was by breaking through barriers and proving stereotypes wrong. During the civil war, women were meant to stay home, clean, and care for their family. Many people looked down on women because they believed that they were weak and had an inability to do hard work. This didn't bother Mary, and she continued to work hard for what she believed in, which inspired many others to do the same. Not only that, but she significantly changed the way soldiers are treated in times of conflict. By inventing the idea of makeshift hospitals, soldiers didn't have to suffer and ultimately pass away. She saved the lives of thousands, and her ideas are still used today. Through Mary's efforts, provisions were made for frequent medical examinations and for transporting men who could no longer walk. Her dedication to changing the world does not go unheard as she continues to inspire and influence others well beyond her time.

Through my creative artwork, I express Mary's indescribable, heroic actions through many different techniques. In my comic, I wanted to go above and beyond, just as Mary did through her bravery and kindness. I wasn't interested in undermining her character

at all, so I made sure to be as detailed and extravagant as possible. As some may notice, the first few panels are very dull, lifeless, and gloomy. I made sure to include dark, saddening colors to set the tone of what war was like before Mary helped make such a significant change. As the story continues, it is evident that the vibrancy increases, and the tale becomes more alive. The mood changes from depressing and mysterious to cheerful and full of excitement. I did this intentionally as a means of representing Mary's actions, and the positive changes she brought to the world. Her actions brought hope in times of crisis. She brightened up a nation that many thought would be dark forever. Through the use of color, I was able to demonstrate the enlightening qualities of Mary Ann, and the incredible things she accomplished. To do this, I used a digital art app, procreate, which gave me access to a wide variety of tools and techniques. Some tools that I used most frequently were the fine pen, gradient tool, and different texture markers to make my artwork come to life and add extra detail. These implements along with my own personal ideas assisted me in conveying Mary's courageous story in a creative and accurate manner.

Mary Ann Bickerdyke's story will continue to inspire me along with many others, and shape my outlook on life in powerful ways. Her determination, compassion, and strong drive in the face of trouble serve to me as a reminder that it only takes one person to make a lasting impact on the world. I hope to carry on her journey by always doing what's needed to make a difference, whether it's through small acts of kindness, or by standing up for what I believe in. Mary's example has deepened my commitment to helping others and working towards positive change. I look forward to sharing my artwork with others as I believe it will not only educate them about my unsung hero but also encourage them to recognize their own potential to bring hope in challenging situations, just as Mary did. Through this project, my goal is to inspire others to follow in her footsteps and believe anything is possible with the power of determination and bravery.