

Impact Statement

Kaitlin Madalone, Grade 11

WWII: Surviving Poland, 2025

Graphite, pen on matboard, 18 x 18 inches

Union High School, Tulsa, OK

Unsung Hero: Meva Mikusz

I chose my hero because I feel a strong personal connection to her story. She reminds me of myself in many ways. During World War II, she took care of a child who wasn't her own and raised her as if she were. That level of compassion and responsibility deeply resonates with me. After my parents divorced, I stepped into a similar role and helped raise my younger brothers. Her actions during such difficult times inspire me, and I admire her strength and dedication. It's comforting to see someone from history who dealt with hardship by showing love and courage, which are qualities I strive to live by every day.

My Unsung Hero made a significant impact by serving as a role model to those around her. Through her courageous and selfless actions, she demonstrated what it means to care for others even when it's not expected or easy. Her story sends a powerful message about resilience and kindness, especially in times of crisis like World War II. I believe her actions inspired others to step up and help where they can. Sharing her story can provoke an emotional response in readers and encourage them to reflect on the importance of compassion and taking care of one another.

For my project, I used pen and ink because it's the medium I feel most comfortable and expressive with. The precision and clarity that pen and ink offer allow me to create clean lines and provide a sharp contrast, which are essential to convey the emotion in the scene I want to portray. This medium enables me to capture the intensity and immediacy in the moment where she rescued the 2-year-old, highlighting her bravery and maternal instinct. I've dedicated some time into researching the uniforms and surroundings of that era to make sure my depiction is both accurate and respectful. By doing so, I aim to honor the historical context and originality of the event. This allows the viewers to fully immerse themselves into the story. This detail not only enhances the visual impact of the artwork, but also recognizes the real-life heroism that inspired it. Through this project, I hope to convey a powerful narrative that resonates with others and celebrates the courage and compassion within such powerful acts.

While I don't think my Unsung Hero's story has drastically changed my outlook—because I already relate to it so closely—it deepened my appreciation for the strength in my own experiences. By researching and understanding her story, I found parallels with my own journey which has reinforced my belief in courage and resilience. This piece

has become more than just artwork; it's a personal exploration that allows me to honor her bravery and my own. Through this process, I have gained a greater sense of appreciation in empathy and respect for those who quietly endure and overcome life's greatest challenges. Creating this artwork has given me a new way to express my journey and connect it with hers. I hope that by sharing my piece, others who have stepped into caretaking roles or overcome hardships can see their own strength reflected.