

## Impact Statement

Evie Pyeun, Grade 9

***The Resistance's Heroine***, 2025

Digital art, 14 x 11 inches

Mercer Island High School, Mercer Island, WA

Unsung Hero: Andree de Jongh

It is in human nature to give in to fear. It is because of this innate cowardice that I find mankind's greatest struggle to be steadfast resilience. I chose Andrée de Jongh because she challenged my own beliefs. I couldn't understand how someone could be so strong in the face of danger. During the Nazi occupation of Belgium, Jongh played a critical role as the leader of the Comet Line, which was an escape line that assisted Allied airmen in evading Nazi capture and returning back to Britain. The Resistance saved over 700 men, making it one of the most successful escape lines during the Nazi occupation. When Jongh was captured by the Nazis, she was interrogated and only admitted that she was the head of the organization to protect her father, who was under suspicion. This was the only piece of information she revealed, and it was to protect another life. Despite her brave confession, the Nazis did not believe her and sent her to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp. Jongh spent the rest of her life in the camp until she was liberated by the Allied Nations, and by then her health had severely deteriorated in the camp. She suffered from health problems for the rest of her life.

Jongh was a hero because of her unwavering bravery. Even in the face of danger, she risked her safety for the lives of others and never submitted to fear. Her perseverance and sacrifice for the vulnerable were remarkable characteristics that not just anybody could adopt. I admired her willpower and heroism and found inspiration in the ways she defied the Nazis. In my artwork dedicated to Andrée de Jongh, I drew inspiration from when she was interrogated for the focus of my art. I wanted to highlight Jongh's tenacity, how she refused to submit to torture, and the struggle she faced. My research found that she was interrogated 20 different times. To depict this scene, I drew Jongh bound to a chair tightly, her face cast in shadows without any sign of fear. My portrayal of her represents how steadfast she was in everything, even while enduring hardships and pain. I used harsh lighting on Jongh, who was the center of my art piece. Her figure is cast in shadows, the colors contrast jarringly, emphasizing the daunting atmosphere and grim situation. I approached the background by creating a collage of different scenes, including: a map showcasing the escape routes of the Comet Line, the house used by Jongh to house airmen, various airmen walking away from the crash of a British plane, and a newspaper clipping. I use these various elements to not only reveal more about Jongh's contributions, but to also set a chaotic scene that juxtaposes with Jongh's isolated figure.

Throughout the process of creating my artwork and researching Andrée de Jongh, my understanding of resilience changed. I had always given up on trying to be brave because I thought it was only natural to submit to fear. Uncovering Andrée de Jongh's story and an understanding of who she was transformed this perception; I admired her ability to keep going, and I started to wish I could be a bit more like her in my own life. Her acts of heroism have encouraged me to be more resilient, I want to be steady, want to be able to stand against my own struggles instead of succumbing to my fear. By showcasing my art publicly, I hope I can inspire my community to take a step forward and be resilient, just as Jongh inspired me. In a world where the urge for selflessness and courageous individuals grows stronger, I hope that, through this art piece, my art acts as a link for Andrée de Jongh's legacy to continuously impact our community.