



Impact Statement

Joanna Ye, Grade 10

Bela's Letters, 2026

Graphite, colored pencil, pen, marker on paper, 11 x 14 inches

Jessie Art Studio, San Diego, CA

Unsung Hero: Bela Ya'ari Hazan

My Unsung Hero's name is Bela Ya'ari Hazan, a Jewish World War II hero, and she was born on December 22, 1922, and died on January 18, 2004. She was an incredible woman, growing up in a Jewish home with a great community in her local synagogue, she was a youth leader and even a fighting instructor. Later when the Germans invaded her home county, Poland, there was much danger since she was Jewish, but she was then able to obtain an ID from her friend, a Polish friend. Bella took this new alias and became Bronislawa Limanowski, a Christian polish woman, and took on her identity for the rest of the war, allowing her to work undercover more efficiently for the Allies. Hazan was able to work with what she had and make the best of it. She was able to fight and resist occupation by the Germans by translating for her fellow Jews, serving as a courier, smuggling weapons, and stealing documents. After the war, she was even able to get married, get settled in the new country for Jewish people (due to the Zionism movements), Israel, have a family in Tel Aviv, and live a happy ending.

Without her impact, there would've been a possibility that the war could've been lost, Germany would've expanded their empire in Europe and alter the world as we know it today. If Hazan, along with other women didn't stand up against the Nazis, then who knows what would've happened after? She, along with many other women and men, changed the future by choosing to resist opposition and power since they believed in something better, a better future for others, for us. Hazan chose dangerous work because of what's right, the Nazis were in the wrong here and she chose to help change that. She was able to beat the odds—a young girl with a fake name against a semi-global superpower; years of war and trauma and still leading a normal life after the war; this woman was truly a hero from history, truly her story should be told more often.

The vision behind my piece was that there aren't that many popular historical women figures so I chose a woman from the list. When I was reading the little intro at the beginning, I saw that she was a courier, meaning he brought letters and messages back and forth, and that gave me the idea to tell her story through letters, letters to the audience telling little bits of her life. She was placed under the Unsung Hero section for a reason, many people don't know who she is. But the whole point of the contest was to popularize historical figures that are Unsung Heroes, and Hazan was truly a hero, she deserves her story to be told. She worked with papers and letters mainly, smuggling and sending letters to and for people behind enemy lines, but those letters she carried had value, they had a purpose to be shown and told to the world. Hazan's story is remarkable, it's inspiring, it's truly just amazing. That's why I chose to draw letters, like the ones

she used to carry and deliver to others, with little bits of her life told. I chose colored pencil because she really should be the focus of the artwork, she was a remarkable person, she deserves to stand out more, to show how her life was so vibrant and inspiring. I chose marker on the bottom to signify and identity events that changed her life, and even the world.

I'm hoping to use my artwork to show the different ways a story can be told and how a legacy can live on: it could be from letters, letters like the ones Hazan used to work with. Her unique and special characters traits are beyond the charts and could hardly all be captured on paper. I chose to sketch her stories on the letters, to show that they have happened in the past, and most letters are black and white anyways. They are black and white since they are real history that happened to real people, not some random made-up fiction. Hazan is in color not only to stand out but because she's still a figure in the future, her legacy should always live on in our minds, books, and mouths.

I'm hoping that my artwork can inspire others to learn more about this incredible woman. I personally have been impacted in such an empowering way. I was overwhelmed by all her accomplishments and the fact that hardly anybody knows her story. And that made me more passionate about telling her story to others. Most people don't like learning about history because it feels boring or long, but if it's in a format that they're familiar with and enjoy, then maybe they'll start learning more about history. Putting her portrait into a somewhat modern art perspective would help people, especially young women to be empowered and inspired by this "random old lady." Sharing this artwork can encourage others to act, to fight against opposition like Bella Ya'ari Hazan did. Art empowers people for the better, and I hope my portrait can inspire others today.