



Impact Statement

Paige Aeilts, Grade 10

Photographs of Time, 2026

Graphite, watercolor on paper, 14 x 18 inches

Jefferson High School, Sioux Falls, SD

Unsung Hero: Margaret Bourke-White

My work of art highlights Margaret Bourke-White's characteristics of fearlessness and dedication to photography. The photos in the foreground and background of the piece were taken by my Unsung Hero, showing her experiences and journeys around the world in pursuit of documenting history and raising awareness of life-changing events such as the Dust Bowl and Gandhi's independence movement. She took photos of industrial buildings and machinery, of wars and conflicts, as well as challenging ideals. When choosing how to show Bourke-White's life and experiences, collaging her images proved to be the most accurate representation. The paper used is coffee and tea-stained to give the illusion that the paper has yellowed with time. By using graphite to display Margaret's photographs alongside a picture of herself not only shows the struggle of being a woman in a previously male-dominated field of work, but it also shows her love and dedication to photography. Furthermore, the slight pink watercolor highlighting emphasizes specifically her innovations in the field of photography, which drew people to her work and expanded the limits of what can be photographed. For example, she was the first person allowed to take photos in the Soviet Union, making history. Because I drew her while also displaying her personal work, we can imagine the dedication and ambition that drove her to all corners of the Earth and appreciate her efforts with newfound confidence and reverence.

This attitude and reaction were what I first experienced when I started researching and diving deeper into the life of Bourke-White. She has had an impact on my outlook about what is achievable in life and what heights I can strive for. She inspired me through her humble beginnings and helped me realize that you don't always have to know where the future takes you. Although she went to five different colleges and initially studied herpetology, she eventually found her way to photography. I can relate to this because I don't particularly know what to do with my future. I know I want to go to college, but I also don't want to fail or choose the wrong one. Margaret's actions and decisions regarding her college life reassure me that you don't always have to be in the right place; you just need a clear mind with openness to change. Living in the moment and pursuing what makes you happy, even when it is difficult, can be fulfilling and bring great happiness.

To share my artwork and inspiration with others and to spread awareness about the countless heroes that are left unsung, I will display my work of art in my school's hallway, allowing students of all grades to view my drawing and come to recognize Bouke-White. Along with this, I will display my work at my school's end-of-year art exhibition. Because multiple artists will be

attending, I can spread my knowledge of Bourke-White with my peers as well as tell them about the ARTEFFECT competition, with the hope that they will participate in future years. Similarly, I will also ask to display my Unsung Hero drawing at my Church. My Church is very open to the possibility of displaying artwork produced by its members, so I will take the initiative to display my work where more than an estimated 3,000 will visit at least once a week. I do this with the conviction that more people will be recognized for their contributions to our history, as well as their effect on our present day. Many people have yet to be celebrated, even though they shaped our humanity's future technologically, ideologically, and culturally. The key to the development of society doesn't always rest in the arms of well-known people. Sometimes, the unrecognized people of our community contribute the most valuable and life-changing innovations that can stick with us for a lifetime, just as Margaret Bourke-White shaped the photography industry with her ambition and lifetime dedication.