



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

American Heroes Student Art Contest

Awards Ceremony

July 8, 2026





Elementary State Winners





Emma Grace Hjelm

Alabama, Elementary

Hero: Jesse Owens

Oakville's Hero, Acrylic on paper

Jesse Owens was born in my neighboring community. It inspires me that a person from a small town like mine could achieve such greatness. He set his goal and won, even though some did not believe he could.

I like graphic novels and reading. Some of the artwork in the old comics looks like pop art. That is why I chose that style for my picture. I think Jesse was like the heroes in my favorite graphic novels. Jesse Owens was a real-life hero. Just like in some of my favorite books, he came out on top. If I work hard and believe in myself like he did, I can win, too.



Hulda Elisabeth Cox

Alaska, Elementary

Hero: Harriet Tubman

Freedom at Last, Watercolor on paper

My American Hero is Harriet Tubman. She was a remarkable woman and helped slaves escape. My drawing is inspired by the Hudson River School and shows the beautiful land of America. Not only did Harriet help slaves escape but she also helped them realize they are beautiful and part of God's creation. Harriet was a generous person because when she found out black people were safer in the New England states, she did not keep that to herself. She took many dangerous risks to save other slaves. Harriet shows us an example to stand up for ourselves and others when we are not being treated just.



Quinn Thyfault

Arizona, Elementary

Hero: Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong, Acrylic on canvas

My American hero is Louis Armstrong, who is famous for his jazz music and unique voice. He was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 4, 1901. He grew up in a very poor area called the battlefield. When he was young, he did odd jobs for different families. One of the families helped him buy a cornet from a pawn shop. Louis Armstrong was about 10 or 11 when he got in trouble and was sent to the colored waif's home. There he learned to play the cornet properly and even lead the band. He is a hero, because he made music for the whole world to hear.

My art shows him on a stage playing his trumpet in Bourbon Street. I used vivid colors like bright pink, blue, red and many more colors. My art was inspired by the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was started in the late 1910s, the time African American artists, musicians and writers shared their culture in powerful ways. The style shows movement, rhythm and emotion just like jazz music. The shapes and colors feel bold and alive. He came from nothing then loved by everyone all from his jazz music.



Bailey Pacheco

Arkansas, Elementary

Hero: William Bradford

The Journey, Collage on canvas

Here are a couple reasons I chose William Bradford, our second governor. First, I wanted to learn more about the Mayflower, the boat that him and the pilgrims used to cross the ocean to The New World. They journeyed for months on the ocean. It was a rough and scary ride. Also, I have wanted to learn about the Mayflower Compact and how it helped the pilgrims stick together. These were some of the first rules that made our country. One thing that was important to him was believing in Christ. He was always positive and brave in everything. When he was a child, he walked miles away to pray in a different church. Everyone told him he had to stay in their church, but he still went to the one he liked. Next, when he grew up, he had to leave his child to go on their journey. It was a sad moment. One cool fact, is that he was related to me! That was another reason I wanted to learn about him. William Bradford was important because his integrity, bravery and faith in himself and God encouraged people to sail across the sea and start a new colony. Without my great grandfather our country may not have been here today.

My picture was based off of the contemporary art style. For the water I used rushing water to show the how the journey wasn't safe. I also wanted to show how William Bradford was a leader for that voyage and the colony he found. This style is detailed with different textures I used. As you can see, I used lots of different pieces of pictures to create my art.

Roy Kim

California, Elementary

Hero: Benjamin Franklin

The Spark of Ideas, Mixed media on board

I drew Benjamin Franklin because I watched a TV show called Oddballs where a character named James acts as Benjamin Franklin. At first, I thought Benjamin was just one of the important people, but after I researched him, I learned that he discovered electricity, invented bifocal glasses and did many other amazing things. Benjamin Franklin discovered that lightning is electricity by flying a kite with a key hanging on the kite. I found this fact fascinating because electricity helps me everyday by making things easier, like typing on a computer and reading a book at night with a lamp. More importantly, Benjamin Franklin and I have some things in common because we both like reading books and drawing. I thought that “Join or Die” poster looked fascinating because it is not only a good picture, but also it delivers a strong message. To show Benjamin Franklin’s creative mind, I used a thin tracing paper and placed a light behind it. The glowing light represents a spark of many ideas from his mind. His ideas helped many people, and he helped America grow into a country where my family and I can live with freedom, hope, and opportunities for the future.





Deborah Reifschneider

Colorado, Elementary

Hero: Desmond Doss

Desmond Doss at Hacksaw Ridge, Watercolor on paper

I chose the hero Desmond Doss, an American hero, to draw because he is a military hero and my brother is in the Marines. I chose to use a contemporary art style, using different media and drawing anime which is popular today. I painted with watercolor the Hacksaw Ridge with the netting to show where Desmond Doss saved the 75 soldiers without a weapon. I used pencils to draw Desmond Doss in his uniform. He was a medic and he was very brave and his belief in God helped him save those men. He said “Please, Lord, help me get one more” and that shows his strength in his belief in God. As a Christian that is important to me, to see how this one man made a huge difference with the help of God. It is important to our nation and community to remember Desmond Doss’ bravery, because it shows that one man can make a difference in this world. I hope people are encouraged by this man.



Mika Amzallag-Yeger

Connecticut, Elementary

Hero: Jeannette Rankin

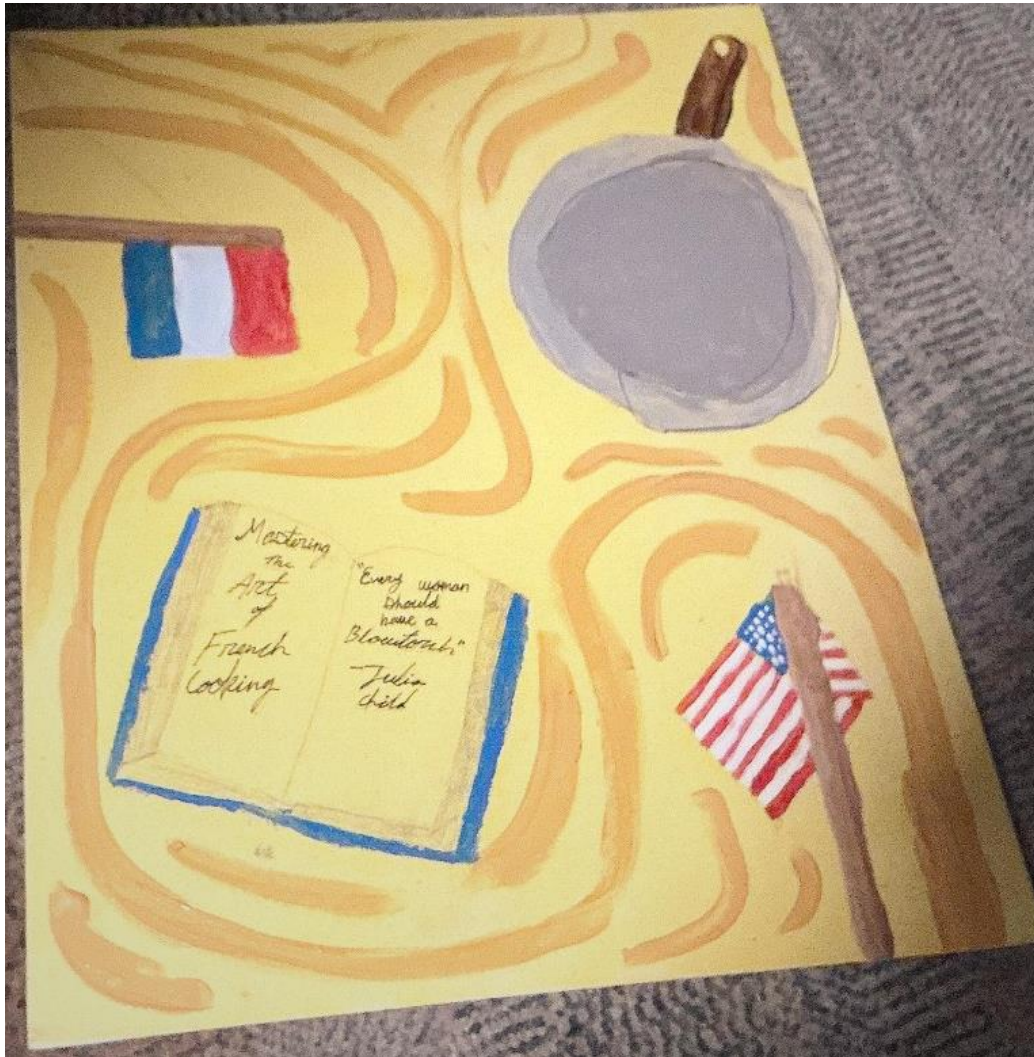
***Peaceful and Hopeful Heroine*, Mixed media on canvas**

Jeannette Rankin was a really special person in history. She was the first woman ever elected to the U.S.A. Congress in 1916, which was before women could vote! Can you believe it?

As a girl who lives now, 110 years later, I am fortunate to be living in our country and have a hero like Jeannette! She voted for peace, which is something our world will always need.

That is why I chose to draw her proud, looking to the sky, the flag behind her, looking at a white dove and a special feather in her hat. Hope was always in her heart and actions.

I love Jeannette Rankin and I am proud and love to be an American!



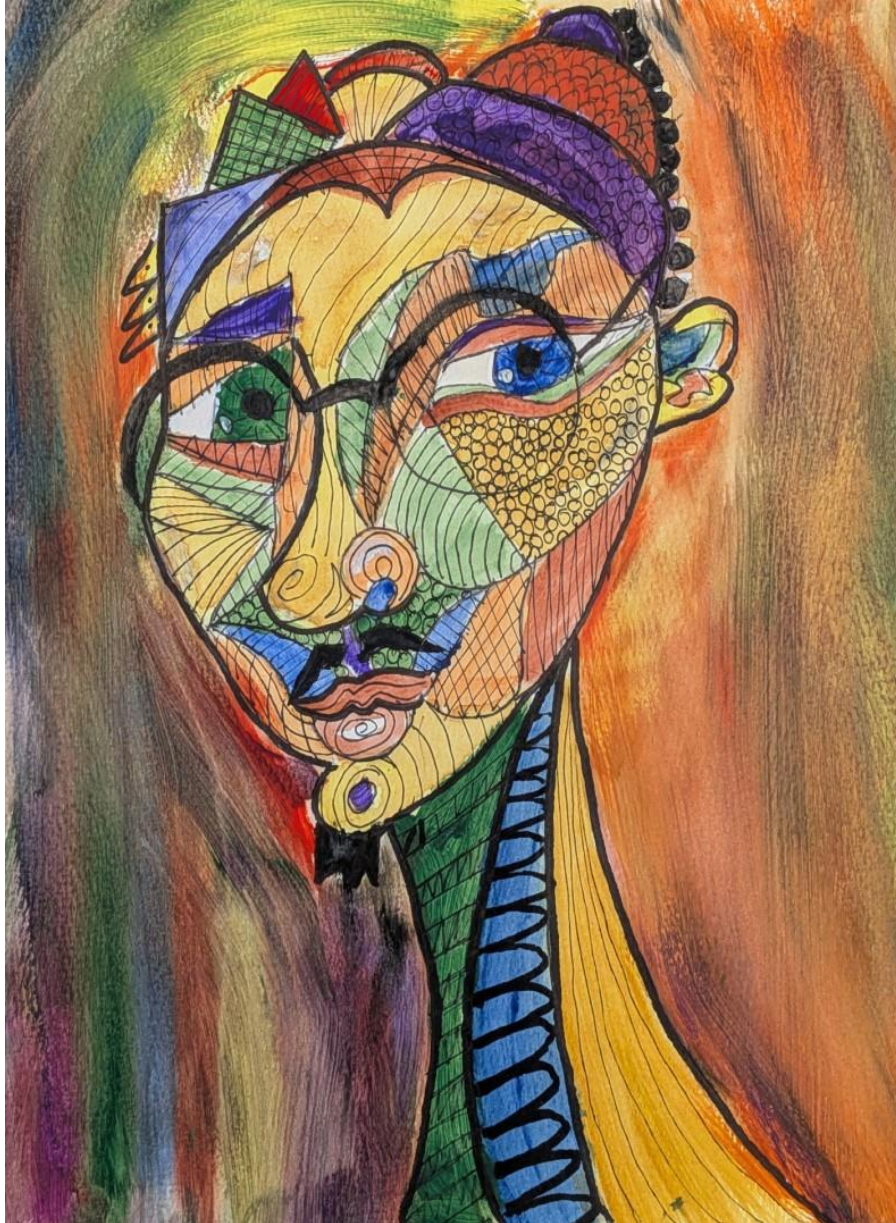
Claire Henger

District of Columbia, Elementary

Hero: Julia Child

Culture and Cuisine, Acrylic on paper

My artwork is about Julia Child, a famous chef who helped Americans learn to cook French food. I painted a French flag, an American flag, her most famous cookbook, a quote, and cooking tools to show how she connected the two countries through food. Julia Child inspired many people to try new recipes, build confidence in the kitchen, and enjoy cooking. I chose her because she was creative, hardworking, and made learning about food fun and exciting. I also love to bake, and she has inspired me. My artwork celebrates her life and lasting impact across America for generations ahead.



Sophia Vanlandingham

Florida, Elementary

Hero: Nikola Tesla

The Man Who Lit America, Gouache on paper

I chose Nikola Tesla because he was very smart and created inventions that changed the world. He worked with electricity and new ideas that people still use today. I think he was a hero because he never gave up, even when life was difficult. I also love that he came to America and helped make the country stronger with his inventions. I love America because people from many places can come here and share their talents and ideas to help others.

My artwork was inspired by Abstract Expressionism. I used bright colors, shapes, and patterns to make the picture feel energetic, like electricity moving around Nikola Tesla. I made the face look unusual and artistic instead of realistic to show his imagination.

I think Nikola Tesla teaches us to keep learning and believing in ourselves. I want people to feel proud of America and the people who helped make life better for everyone.



Vedika Patel

Georgia, Elementary

Hero: Neil Armstrong

First Footprints on the Moon, Watercolor and acrylic on canvas

My artwork, First Footprints on the Moon, is about the first moon landing. I chose Neil Armstrong because he was very brave and was the first person to walk on the Moon. He traveled on the Apollo 11 rocket and made history when he took his first step.

I used the Hudson River School art style because it shows big landscapes and makes people look small compared to nature. I wanted the Moon to look huge and powerful. I also added Earth in the background to show how far the astronauts traveled from home.

This moment was important because it showed that people can do big things if they are brave and don't give up.



Josie Starr

Idaho, Elementary

Hero: Katherine Johnson

***Beyond the Stars*, Mixed media on paper**

The American Hero I picked is Katherine Johnson because she made a pretty big difference in history and I think she was a very important person in the space race. A big reason why my artwork represents Katherine is because I used a lot of bright and bold colors in my drawing and she is also a bright and bold person. For example, in the definition I'm using, bright means super smart or intelligent, and Katherine was very intelligent. She was known as a human computer and wrote the equations and calculations for the space race. John Glenn refused to go to space until Katherine double checked the math. She was also a very bold person. When she worked at NASA there was segregation at the time which means that black and white people were separated, they had to use different bathrooms, drinking fountains, and went to different schools. She was treated like less than a human because of the color of her skin and had to bravely stand up and fight for herself, which is a very bold thing to do. As another example, when she worked at NASA only male engineers could attend meetings and Katherine questioned this rule and asked if there was a law that said women couldn't attend. There was no reason, so they let Katherine attend meetings; and that showed her boldness and bravery. The artworks message is important because it shows that Katherine had a very hard life, but she worked hard and never gave up and the arts message shows that no matter how hard things get you should always work hard and never give up.



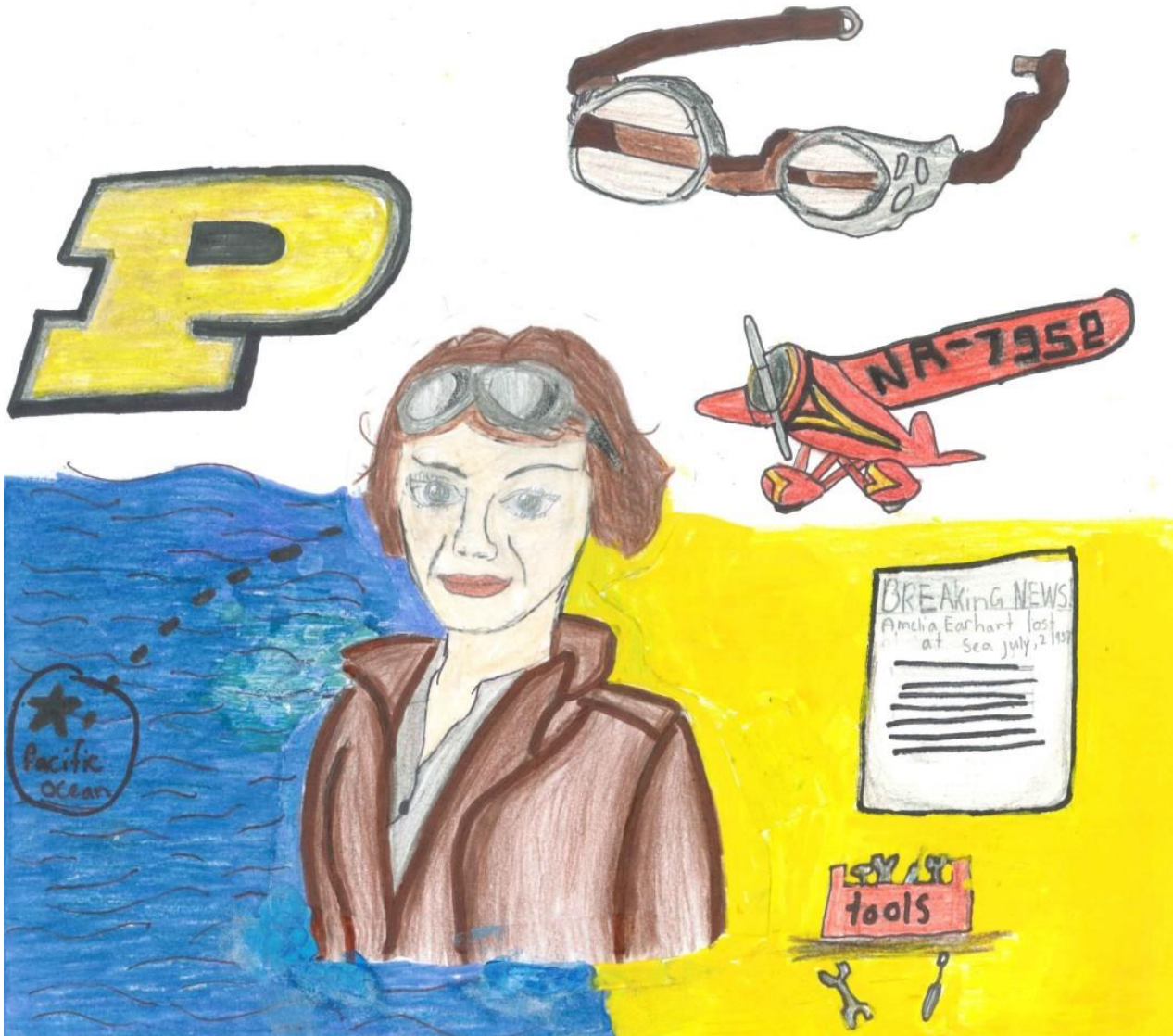
Faustina Irene Lasnoski

Illinois, Elementary

Hero: Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

Birthday Celebration, Watercolor and pen on paper

My art depicts a bird carrying a huge birthday cake for the nation with 250 candles. The hero I chose to highlight is Theodor Seuss Geisel, also lovingly known to my family and so many other families as Dr. Seuss. My art is done in the style of Dr. Seuss. I suppose my style would also be described as Contemporary Art because it incorporates my personal expression and memory of Dr. Seuss' many stories I have read throughout my childhood. Dr. Seuss is a hero to me because his stories have taught me that every person matters and that honesty, kindness, and silliness are all important. He also helped me, as he probably has for many other Americans, learn to read because his stories were fun and amusing beginner books. In my art, I chose to make a silly bird and another unique creature, much like Dr. Seuss does in his books. I also used just a few basic, bold colors, like Dr. Seuss. Dr. Seuss is a hero in our nation because he helps children enjoy reading through his fun rhymes and creative pictures. His books and characters are shared memories for so many Americans.



Cecilia Chrisman

Indiana, Elementary

Hero: Amelia Earhart

Amelia Earhart, Colored pencil on paper

I chose to draw Amelia Earhart in the Regionalism art movement. My drawing fits this movement because it depicts an American hero who spent a lot of time in the Midwest and who was hard working and inspiring.

I chose to draw her because she taught at Purdue University which is in my home state of Indiana. Purdue is important to me because my family including my mom, grandparents, and great grandpa all went there for college. I visit there often and have visited a dorm named for Amelia Earhart.

In my drawing I drew different themes that have meaning in her life: a plane, goggles, a toolbox, Purdue logo, and a newspaper that talks about her disappearance. In the background I drew sand and the Pacific Ocean, where they think Amelia Earhart disappeared.

Amelia Earhart was important because she was the first woman to make many international and solo flights in a time when women weren't normally pilots. She taught and inspired other women to become pilots and other jobs in science and still inspires women today. It makes me realize that I can achieve my own goals in STEM. She also teaches us about living heroically because she tried new things, overcame challenges and died while trying to do even more.



Shambhavi Singh

Iowa, Elementary

Hero: Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman- Leader of Freedom, Mixed media on paper

My hero is Harriet Tubman. I chose her because she has always helped hundreds of people everyday! She also gave people freedom! She inspired me because she treats everyone how she wants to be treated and shows leadership in her personality. I drew her leading people to freedom on Underground Railroad. She is holding a lantern that symbolize light and hope for enslaved people. During the civil war, she served as a scout, nurse, cook, and military leader. She teaches us that living heroically means being brave, caring for others helping people even when it is difficult.

My artwork is realism, because I used fine details to show that you are actually visualizing that time in your mind. I also put details on her face to show her struggle, bravery and determination. All the background features help tell the real story of Underground Railroad.



Isabelle Menard

Kansas, Elementary

Hero: John Chapman, “Johnny Appleseed”

Johnny Appleseed, Mixed media on board

The subject of my art is John Chapman, who became known to Americans as Johnny Appleseed. I chose him because even though he started out with barely anything, he gave everything he had to help America grow. His time, his seeds, his faith, and his gentleness and kindness. He not only sowed apple seeds but also moral values by sharing the Gospel with those he met. At a time when America was expanding westward, Johnny walked thousands of miles distributing seeds and trees to early farm families. He could have made a fortune, but instead he often gave away his seeds to those in need.

My artwork is inspired by American Regionalism which is known for telling the story of early rural America. I painted the portrait of Johnny Appleseed against the background of an American traditional patchwork quilt, because quilting brings people and stories together. Johnny Appleseed brought people together through his stories, too.

The legend of Johnny Appleseed highlights the pioneering spirit of the early American settlers. Today, America continues to be a Pioneer on the world stage. I hope my artwork depicting Johnny Appleseed will inspire Americans to continue to be leaders and legends, just like Johnny Appleseed.



Jackson Wheeler

Kentucky, Elementary

Hero: Edwin Hubble

Edwin Hubble, Mixed media on paper

I chose to paint about Edwin Hubble by creating a picture of a nebula in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe. Edwin Hubble was the first scientist to prove that there are other galaxies outside of ours. This was a very important discovery because it gave us a better understanding of our universe and who we are. The Hubble Space Telescope was named after him to honor his mission. I chose Georgia O'Keeffe and the American Modernism art style because it is optimistic and experimental, like Edwin Hubble. Georgia O'Keeffe and Edwin Hubble were both great in their own fields and helped people to see the world differently.



Lilah Olivia Covher

Louisiana Elementary

Hero: John James Audubon

Red, Flight, and Flew, Acrylic and marker on canvas

I chose to paint American Hero John James Audubon because we both love birds and my home state of Louisiana. My painting includes twenty species of birds that are special to both Audubon and me. I can name them all. My painting is a folk art celebration of his life's work. He drew more birds for his famous book "Birds of America" in Louisiana than anywhere else because it was his happy place. He spent a lot of time at Oakley Plantation, and I spend a lot of time at Melrose Plantation. That is where I learned about folk artist Clementine Hunter. I used bright colors like red, white, and blue like she did. When doing research, I found a book at home and three at the public library. People started bringing me books when they found out about my painting. The portrait part of my painting is inspired by the cover of "Audubon, On The Wings Of The World" by Fabien Grolleau and Jérémie Royer. My favorite was the complete works of Audubon that Paul Keyser lent me. I feel blessed to be born in the United States of America. Audubon said, "The State of Louisiana has always been my favorite part of the union," and I agree. He wasn't afraid to think big and take risks. He bravely went into the wilderness to find the birds he needed for his book. I took risks in my painting to show that strength.



Odin S. Labonte

Maine, Elementary

Hero: Ronald Reagan

The American Man, Mixed media on paper

The American hero I chose was President Ronald Reagan, and I have several reasons to why I chose him. First, he showed great respect to foreign leaders such as Queen Elizabeth II, who once rode on horseback with President Reagan on his California ranch. Also, Mikhail Gorbachev, Premier of the U.S.S.R. The two sides once held a summit and were able to skillfully cooperate to solve each other's problems. President Reagan said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall!" referring to the Berlin Wall. Another reason why I chose him is that he was very American and did what was best for his country including, cutting taxes for the working person, and fixed the immediate political and security crisis in Grenada through the 1983 military intervention.

For my artwork I drew President Reagan within the background of the American flag, which represents part of how much he was into American morals, so I consider President Reagan vital for American success in 250 years of independence and his hard work.



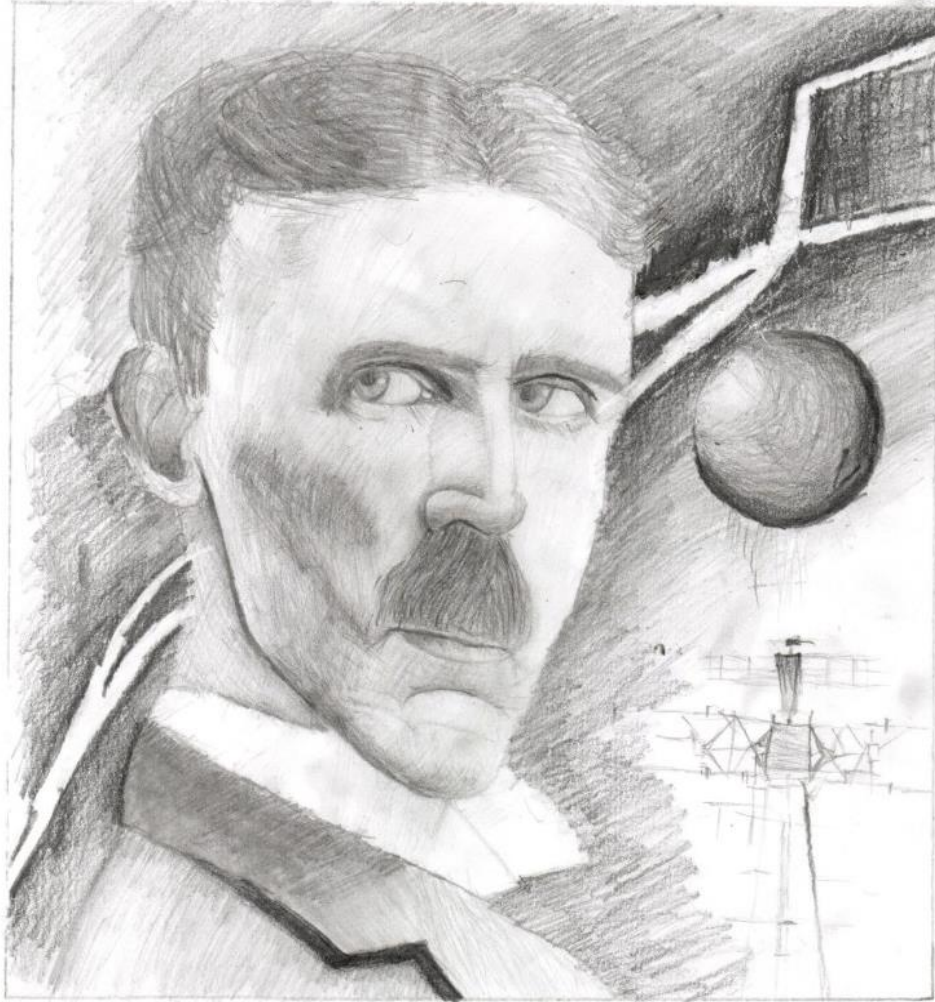
Ruthie Deininger

Maryland, Elementary

Hero: Louis Armstrong

Jazz at Camp, Acrylic on canvas

I chose Louis Armstrong for my historical figure. My artwork represents how he went to play at military camps with his beloved trumpet. Never doing it for money but instead for the serving members of the military. I chose him because of his kindness and love of music. He also contributed to the jazz musical genre, changing it and making better. He teaches us to find joy and resiliency. Despite facing racism, he always found a way to find happiness. He used the American Impressionist style. I think this style fits my hero because he has a soft and kind face. I wanted people to see the compassion and consideration for others.



yunqi Cai

Yunqi Cai

Massachusetts, Elementary

Hero: Nikola Tesla

Chasing the Light – Tesla, Pencil on paper

Through my charcoal pencils, Nikola Tesla gazes deeply into the future. For centuries, countless dreamers like him have crossed the oceans to America, weaving their wisdom and courage into the fabric of this land. In the background, I captured his visionary wireless tower and pulsating bolts of lightning—they did more than just banish the darkness; they symbolize the eternal spark of American innovation. Happy 250th Birthday, America! May we all share Tesla's relentless curiosity and march boldly into the unknown.



Elise Cook

Michigan, Elementary

Hero: Betsy Ross

The Ross Home on a Summer Day, Watercolor on paper

My painting depicts the home of American heroine Betsey Ross. American impressionism deeply inspires me for the way all the colors work together to make one big beautiful picture. While this style of art gives the impression of what is happening in the painting, it also allows you to imagine you are actually in the scene. I chose Betsy Ross as my American hero because she was a very skilled craftswomen who made the very first American flag that we still use as our symbol today! I have painted the home where Betsey probably made the flag as well as raised her seven children!

Betsy Ross was a very important woman to our nation, if she were not here, we probably would not have the stars and stripes that we have today! She was also invaluable to our nation during the revolutionary war, making tents, blankets, and even mending soldier's uniforms! Despite having her home occupied by British soldiers, and having to suffer the loss of two husbands, she still continued to produce war materials with her upholstery business. She is an inspiration to me because, despite all the adversity she suffered, she always put God, her family, and her country first.



Annie McCoy

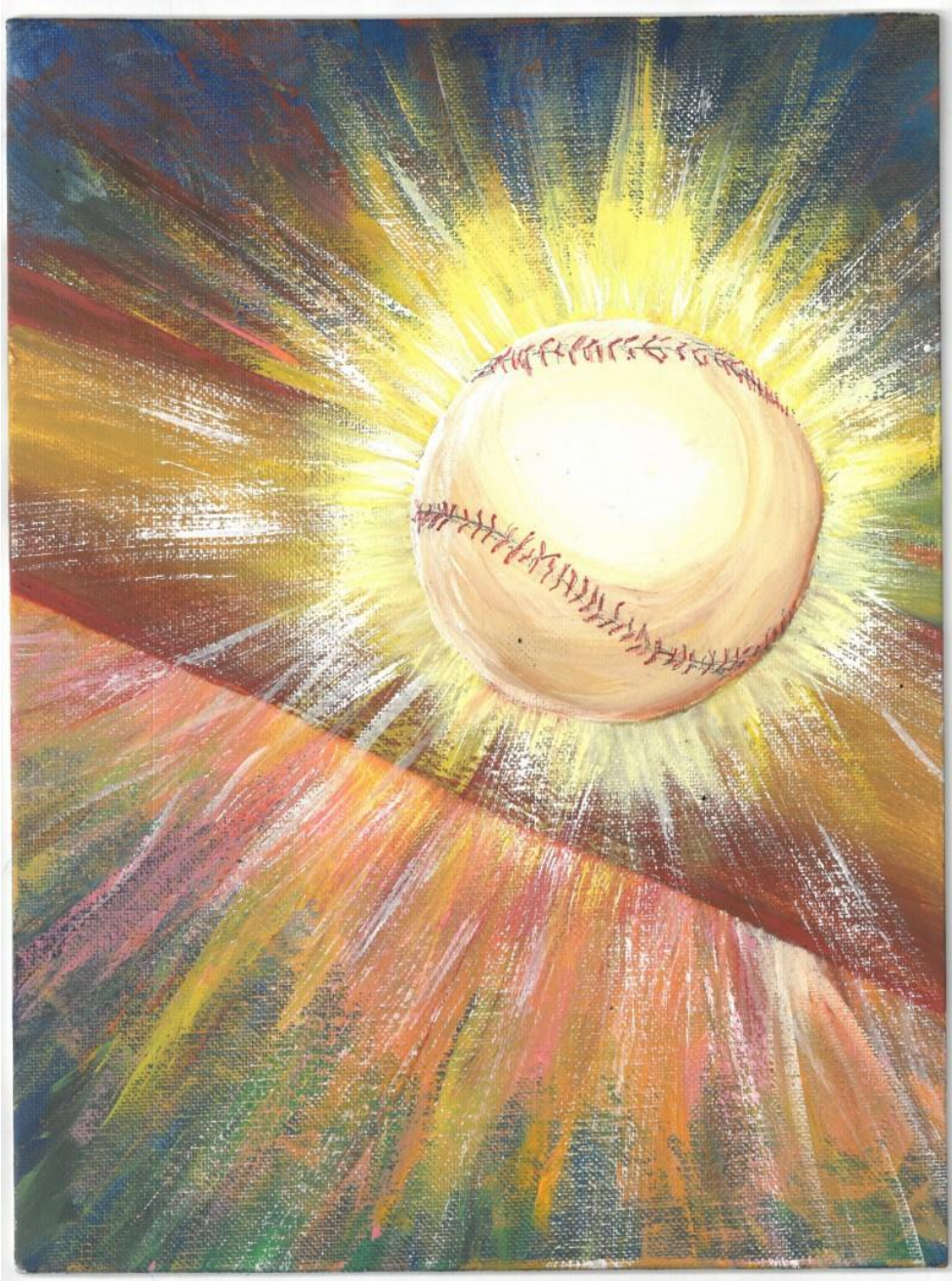
Mississippi, Elementary

Hero: Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth, Acrylic on canvas

My portrait of Sojourner Truth was inspired by Mary Cassatt and other American Impressionists. I chose American Impressionism because it represents a style of freedom and expression embodying the spirit of Sojourner Truth. Sojourner Truth made a tremendous impact in American History. She was an active part of the abolition of slavery and later joined the Women's Rights Movement. She was a tall, strong, and kind woman. She overcame many obstacles and hardships in her life but did not allow her difficulties to define her.

She paved a way against all odds for the rights and freedoms for all Americans. She inspired many to stand up for what they believed in and fight for justice for all people. America was founded almost 250 years ago on the premise that all men were created equal and Sojourner Truth fought for the Declaration of Independence to apply to all people regardless of race or gender. She embodied the spirit of the United States of America and is a hero that forever shaped the history of our nation. I was honored to paint a portrait of her in bright colors that represented the hope and light she brought to America during her lifetime and the legacy of her resilience that continues to shape young women like me.



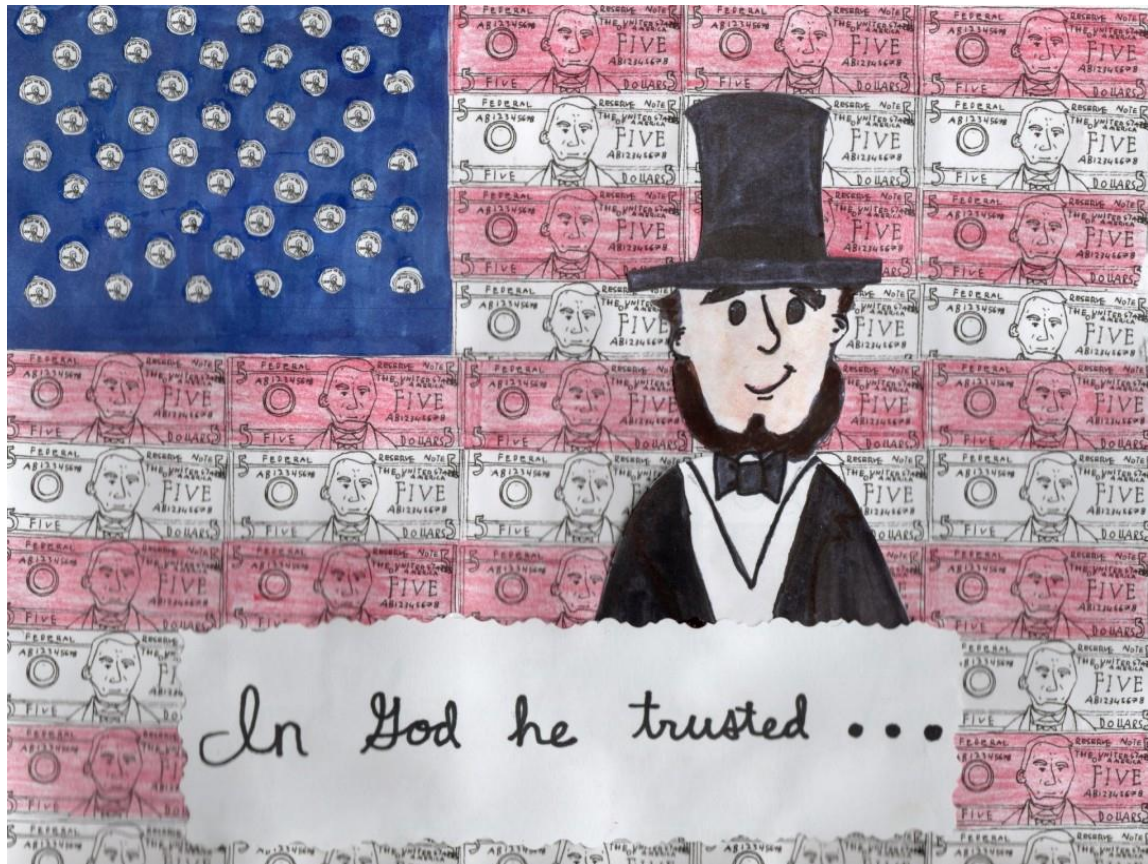
Daniel Fronick

Missouri, Elementary

Hero: Babe Ruth

***Hit it Hard!*, Acrylic and colored pencil on canvas**

Babe Ruth's legendary confidence, raw power, and profound wisdom inspire me as a baseball player. He changed baseball forever by setting records in both home runs and strikeouts. He famously said, "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." This applies to everything in life. We can learn from his resilience—"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run," and determination—"It's hard to beat a person who never gives up!" I chose to represent the blast of this baseball in the Neo-expressionism artistic style because it emphasizes movement, expressive brushwork and the raw emotion of excitement! To give a variety of textures, I used mixed media (graphite, acrylic paint and colored pencil) and my fingers to blend the ball and bat.



Mya Schatzel

Montana, Elementary

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln's Legacy, Mixed media on paper

I chose Abraham Lincoln as the hero and subject of my artwork. The five-dollar bills, and pennies that show Abraham Lincoln, are represented in the flag I created. I was also trying to commemorate the penny that has been retired, though my flag is not quite to scale.

Both the five-dollar bill and the penny say, "In God We Trust." Lincoln once said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to men. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book." It was evident in this, and in other quotes of his, that President Lincoln trusted in God. He was an upright and moral man, who used his God-given wisdom to lead our country during the Civil War, and to bring freedom from slavery to many. This is similar to how God gives to each of us freedom from sin through Christ Jesus. President Lincoln was a definite hero in the eyes of many.

My art style is Conceptual Art. This style fits my hero, because Conceptual Art is more than art; it makes you think. Abraham Lincoln was a deep thinker. He had many famous quotes that made people stop and think. I love cats. Here is a quote that I like by President Lincoln: "No matter how much cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens." I like his sense of humor.



Clara Fehringer

Nebraska, Elementary

Hero: Harriet Tubman

Light Through the Darkness, Colored pencil on paper

My artwork shows Harriet Tubman walking at night with a lantern through trees. I chose to show her guiding the way because she helped lead enslaved people to freedom on the Underground Railroad. The moon and stars light her path, showing hope and bravery even in darkness.

Harriet Tubman is important because she risked her life to help others and never gave up. She teaches us to be courageous and to stand up for what is right, even when it is dangerous.

My artwork was inspired by realism, using natural colors and details to make the scene feel true and powerful.



Annabelle Pennington

Nevada, Elementary

Hero: Sacagawea

Sacagawea's View, Colored pencil on paper

The person I chose to draw was Sacagawea, because she was a young girl like me. She was only a teenager when she went on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, helping them map out the new land. She was also a young mother of a little boy whose name was Jean Baptiste. Sacagawea and her husband both traveled along with Lewis and Clark, but while they were traveling her husband passed away. Sacagawea was very brave and smart. She guided and interpreted for Lewis and Clark. She was a young Shoshone girl who was captured by the Hidatsa people and was sold too be married to a French-Canadian trapper. In her young life she endured so many hard things, yet she was able to make the best of each situation and knew how to handle things. I chose the Hudson River School movement to showcase Sacagawea. My drawing shows her pointing out to Lewis where different lands are. I show some of the mountains and rivers of the new land. Sacagawea is one of my heroes and I even had the chance to represent her at my school's spirit week. I am glad she is one of the American heroes that we are celebrating on the 250th Anniversary of America.



Tucker Knightly

New Hampshire, Elementary

Hero: Harriet Tubman

Underground Captains Meet, Marker on paper

Harriet Tubman was a captain of The Underground Railroad. Her many, many heroic migrations saved the lives of approximately 70 slaves over 13 missions. In the picture I drew, she is meeting with Conductor Frederick Douglass. In my picture, she was with eleven escaped slaves, which was the most Frederick Douglass had ever seen in one mission.

When she got her traumatic skull injury, she got visions that led her to safety and would fall asleep at random times.



Sophia Heeyoung Lim

New Jersey, Elementary

Hero: Rosa Parks

***A Seat of Courage*, Watercolor on paper**

For this contest, I chose Rosa Parks because she showed bravery during a time of unfair segregation. In my painting, Rosa Parks is sitting comfortably in the front seat of a bright yellow bus holding flowers with a gentle smile. Warm sunlight around her creates a peaceful and hopeful feeling. I used bright colors and soft brushstrokes to show her quiet courage and kindness. The flowers represent peace and hope because Rosa Parks changed history in a calm but powerful way. Rosa Parks inspired the Montgomery Bus Boycott and helped people fight for equality and civil rights in America. She teaches us that even one person can make a difference by standing up for what is right.



Mila Enrico

New Mexico, Elementary, Bureau of Indian Education

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Peace and Slavery, Acrylic and fabric on canvas

Back in 1619, slavery started affecting America, making freedom hard for African Americans. Before Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president, there was a hard battle over the role of Abolition Slavery. Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin on February twelfth, 1809, in Kentucky. He was self-educated (independent). His schoolteacher taught him how to read but not write. [1] He earned his Presidential election on February twelfth, 1861. He led the United States during the Civil War. [2] At the age of 56, as president, he arrived at Washington, D.C., on February 23rd, 1865

In my artwork, I show Abram Lincoln giving a speech. There are a lot of signs about people who want slavery to stop. On the other hand, women also have signs, so they have their own equal rights. In this picture, Abraham Lincoln is ending his speech with "We are not enemies, but friends," as he once said in one of his speeches on August 6th, 1861. On April 14th, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was shot at Ford's Theatre by an American. I was surprised learning that he was killed.

This matters to me because it shows that he is the 16th president, and he wanted to stop slavery. He was a hero because he wanted to stop slavery in America. It also teaches us that history Abraham Lincoln and now we all have equal rights and the right to vote.



Raeanna Smith

New York, Elementary

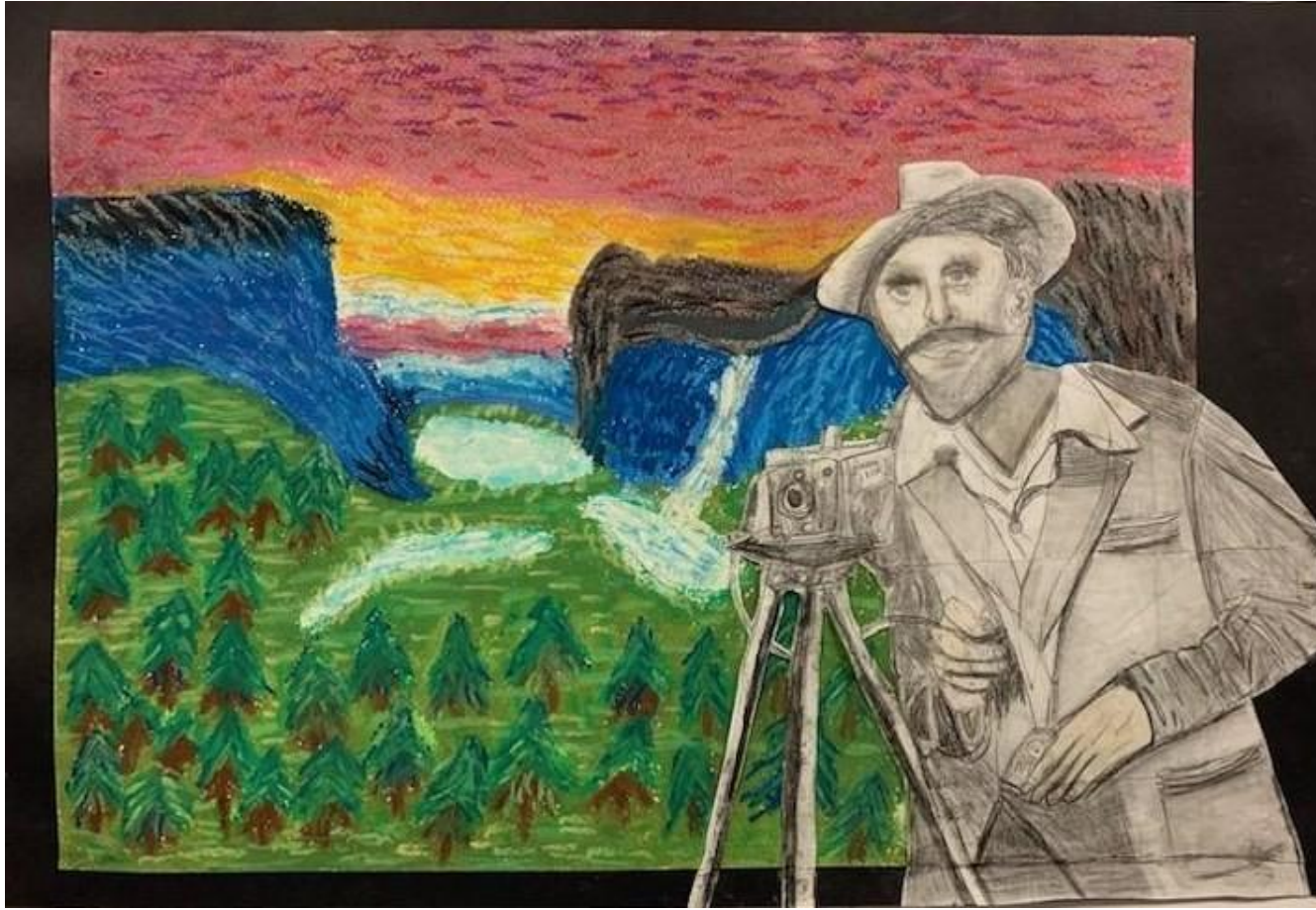
Hero: Sitting Bull

The Holy Man, Acrylic marker on paper

Sitting Bull, or Tȟatȟánka Íyotake, born into the Hunkpapa Lakota tribe led the resistance against the United States and defeated Lieutenant Colonel Custer in the battle of Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. His story is important to me because it inspires me to be brave and stand up for what's right. He teaches us that it's important to be good to each other and treat everyone with respect and kindness. Especially people who cannot speak up for themselves. My favorite quote by Sitting Bull is

“The warrior is not someone who fights because no one has the right to take another life. The warrior for us is one who sacrifices themselves for the good of others. His task is to take care of the elderly, the defenseless, those who cannot provide for themselves and above all, the children, the future of humanity.”

My artwork is influenced by Steven Lang's art. When I saw his art for the first time his art made me feel calm; it made me feel as if I was there with those people in the painting. His art inspired me to add Sitting bull in a plains setting. He also influenced my style of art, realism.



Gracy Dudding

North Carolina, Elementary

Hero: Ansel Adams

Ansel Adams' Impressions, Pencil and pastel on paper

I chose Ansel Adams because he was an artist like me. He photographed the national parks like Yosemite to bring attention to nature so people would take care of it. He is an American hero because if you could not go there, you could still see how beautiful nature was in his pictures. He created a new way of taking pictures by making the shadows very dark and the light very light. He liked to show the difference between the beautiful colors of real nature and his black and white photos. That's why I put Mr. Adams in black and white. His photos make you feel like the mountains and trees could pop off the page. I chose the American Impressionism style of art because when you look at these paintings closely you can see the marks that the artist made but from far away all the colors blend together to make one beautiful picture. Ansel Adams' photos made his mark on America history. His photos made people get up close to nature themselves and that inspired them to take better of it for future Americans like me. I want to see Yosemite park myself someday like Ansel Adams.



Madalyn Gould

Ohio, Elementary

Hero: William Clark

William Clark, Acrylic on canvas

I chose William Clark because he inspires me. He traveled so many miles. He done so much for our country. William Clark led the ascent up the Missouri River beginning May 14, 1804, from camp Dubas. William Clark was crucial for navigating the river's snags and rapids. He drew detailed maps, classified 53 Native American tribes, and described natural resources. He mapped the uncharted river, recorded extensive journals with unique spelling, and managed day by day navigation of the keelboat and pirogues against strong currents. The expedition departed Camp Dubas on May 14, 1804. Willam Clark led the party up the Missouri River though areas that are now Kansas City and Omaha. Willam Clark was big for journal entries. He had detailing of the landscape, including identifying the Missouri River breaks and managed the navigation of challenging areas like the Dauphin Rapids. As they traveled there was only one death and that was on the expedition, Sergeant Charles Floyd, who was buried at a bluff near Sioux City, Iowa, named after him by Clark. Following the journey, Clark's 1816 map was needed for the development of Missouri and the westward expansion along the river, although his later surveys were associated with great land from Native American tribes. William Clark also served as the governor of the Missouri Territory from 1813 to 1820. In St. Louis, he served as a principal U.S. Indian agent and later Superintendent from 1822 until his death in 1838. He acted as a key government figure in negotiations with Native American nations. My painting is the Missouri River that William Clark traveled to do all the amazing things he was able to do for us and our history in the world.



Jana Sparks

Oklahoma, Elementary

Hero: John James Audubon

The Bird Collage, Mixed media on wood

John James Audubon is my American Hero because I like birds and observing them in their natural habitats.

Audubon created lifelike pictures of all the birds of North America. His study of birds & their habitats continue to inspire bird conservation today. My backyard is a natural habitat for many birds. I enjoy looking for birds in their natural habitat when I ride to school.

My mixed media collage is Abstract Expressionism style, which is very different from Audubon's style. I chose a bird as the subject to represent Audubon, and this abstract style makes it more current. The collage combines many small parts together to make a whole, abstract design. Audubon's influence continues to shape how we see the natural world even in abstract ways.



Mika Sameroff

Pennsylvania, Elementary

Hero: Betsy Ross

American Hero: Betsy Ross, Mixed media on paper

I drew a picture of Betsy Ross because she is an important part of American History through creating the first American flag in 1776. The picture that I drew is Betsy Ross sewing the flag by hand. She did that in Philadelphia which is the city where I am from and live. She is an inspiring woman hero of history.

My artistic style is inspired by American Pop Art in the bright colors that I use.



Lucy Agresti

Rhode Island, Elementary

Hero: Amelia Earhart

***The Sky is Not the Limit*, Mixed media on canvas**

My artwork represents Amelia Earhart because it shows when she flew solo across the Atlantic Ocean in her bright red plane. Amelia Earhart is inspiring to me because she was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. The saying is 'the sky is the limit', but not to Amelia because she believes you can go beyond the sky. Now, because of her, I believe it too. Even as a kid, Amelia was unstoppable, she believed she could do anything, and that carried on into her adulthood. Amelia Earhart inspires everyone, she believes that you can do anything, and to never give up. And don't forget, go beyond!



Theodore Brown

South Carolina, Elementary

Hero: Jimmy Doolittle

Doolittle's Daring Attack, Marker on paper

My drawing is of Jimmy Doolittle, taking off from the USS Hornet to attack Japan during the daring Doolittle raid during World War II. That was a very secret plan that basically no one knew about; a lot of the crew didn't even know about it until they were halfway to Japan. General Doolittle trained the crew, in very hard conditions, including here in Columbia, South Carolina, my hometown. If it wasn't for Doolittle's Raid, World War II may have taken even longer to end. It struck fear into the hearts of the Japanese and took a lot of bravery because they didn't know if they'd ever come home. And that is why the subject of my artwork, General Jimmy Doolittle, taking off in his B-25 Mitchell bomber, is an American Hero.



Roselle Hollie Grabitske

South Dakota, Elementary

Hero: Louis Armstrong

The Trumpet of Louis Armstrong, Colored pencil on paper

Louis Armstrong is a famous jazz player. He grew up in New Orleans. At age twelve he went to jail, where he learned how to play the coronet. (A trumpet with more tubing) Eventually he switched to trumpet which is the subject of my drawing!

I chose to draw a trumpet because that's what Louis Armstrong played in his jazz band. I chose him because he played the trumpet just like I do! I did Pop Art as my art movement influence because I knew I couldn't make it look like a real trumpet.

It was really fun to draw the trumpet. (It was based off my own!) I think the onomatopoeia is really funny, and the bright colors just make it pop out. I chose the bright colors because it's jazzy.



Brendan Hennessey

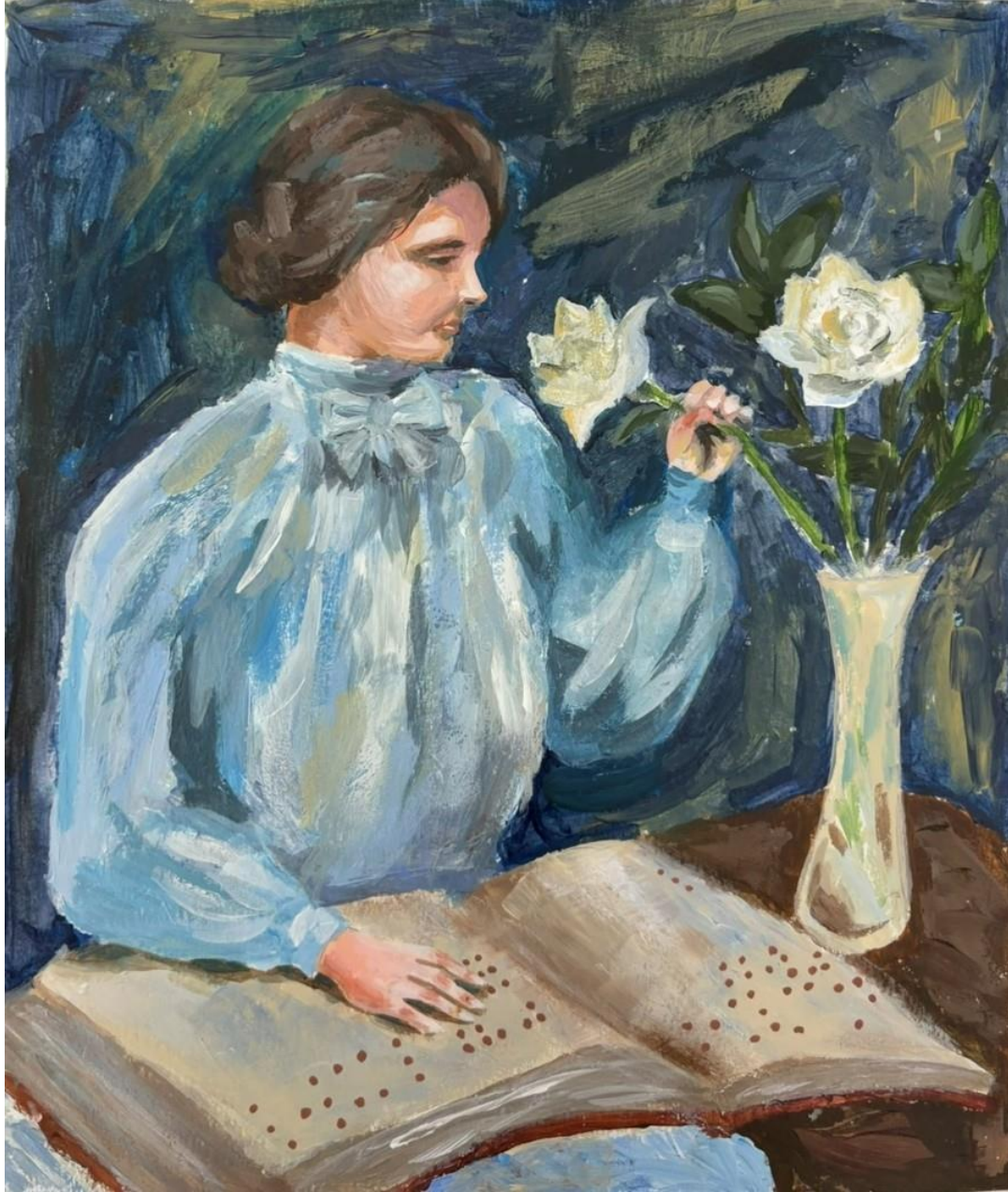
Tennessee, Elementary

Hero: Jackie Robinson

Strike Out Racism: Jackie Robinson, Colored pencil and marker on paper

I love baseball and have played for six years! I show up at my local recreational league tryouts, give my best performance, and am placed on a team. The American Hero that I am showcasing did not have the same experience with baseball. Jackie Robinson showed incredible bravery in the face of taunting fans, unfair calls, and unkind treatment from players not only on the opposing teams but also on his own. He showed the world that his measure as a baseball player was based on his ability to play ball, not the color of his skin. Jackie Robinson played second base, just like me!

For my portrait of Jackie, I chose to depict him in the Pop Art style. I feature All-American colors, emphasizing that the sport is America's pastime. Jackie's number 42 featured on the front of his jersey is my nod to irony as often used in this art style. When Jackie played, his number was on the back of his jersey and was in blue. I'm featuring the now-retired number in red on the front to remind us of our shared humanity. Regardless of what we look like on the outside, we all bleed red.



Jiyun Kim

Texas, Elementary

Hero: Helen Keller

Her World Beyond Sight and Sound, Acrylic on canvas

I chose Helen Keller because I think her story is really inspiring. Even though she could not see or hear, she still learned how to communicate and understand the world in her own way. She shows that people can achieve great things even with difficulties. In my artwork, I showed her touching braille and holding a flower. The braille represents how she learned to read and connect with others, and the flower shows that she could still experience beauty through touch and smell. I used soft colors and visible brushstrokes to make the painting feel calm and thoughtful. I painted this too show that even in silence and darkness, there is still beauty, strength, and meaning. It reminds us that everyone experiences the world in their own unique and meaningful way.

Elizabeth Black

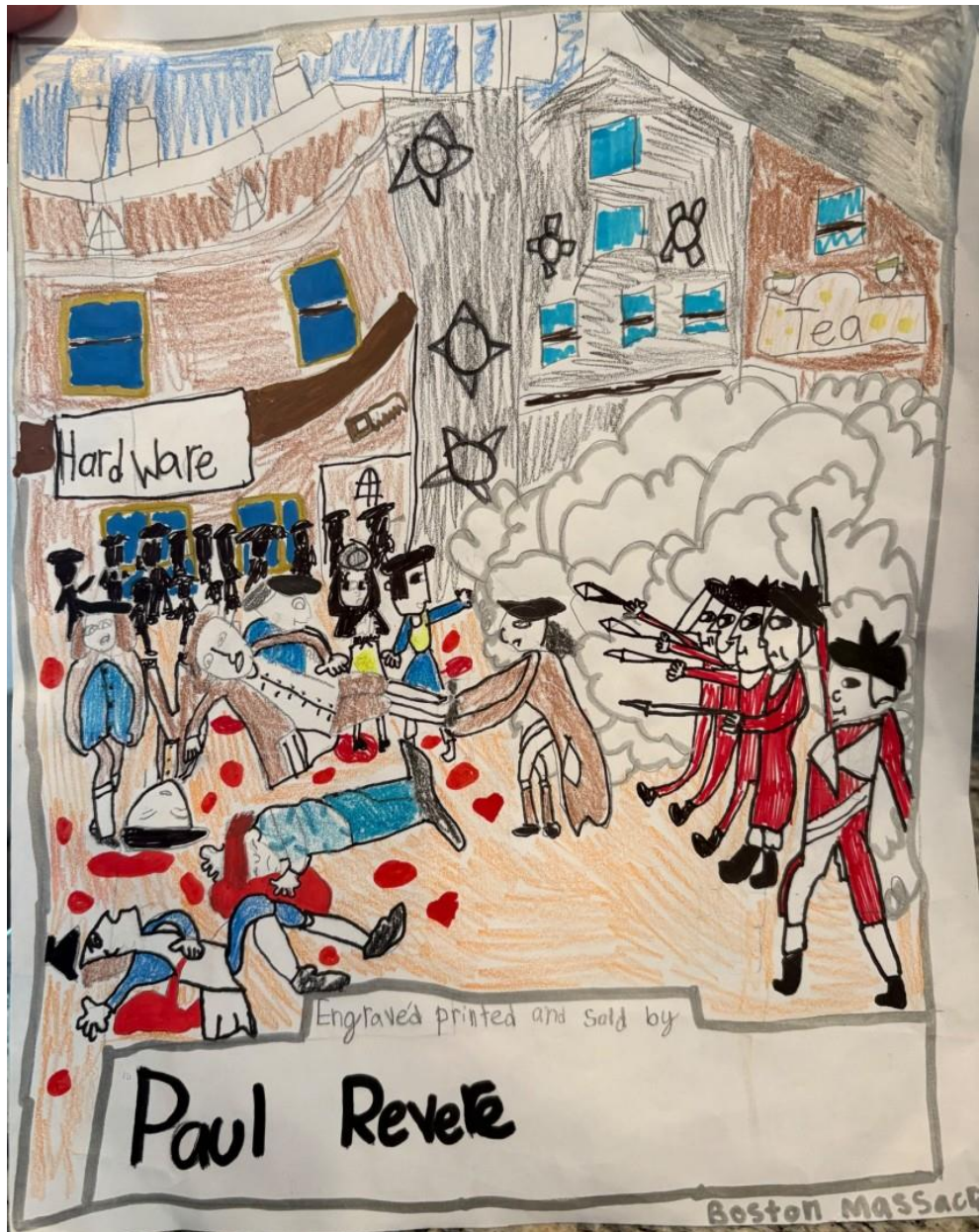
Utah, Elementary

Hero: Paul Revere

Boston Massacre Recreated, Mixed media on paper

I chose to do my artwork about Paul Revere. I am in 4th grade and we are learning about the Revolutionary War, and this was interesting to me. My teacher showed us a picture of an engraving he made, I really like the picture and tried to recreate it. The picture is of the Boston Massacre where British soldiers shot into a crowd of people and killed five people. It represents the time when Paul Revere was alive and what was going in in our country. I chose to focus on Paul Revere because he is important in history because of his bravery and dedication to America. His famous Midnight Ride is still talked about, and we are learning it in class still. It was a night where the rode through the town on a horse and warned people the British were coming.

Paul Revere's contribution to America matters to our nation. He did what was right to help others and fight for our freedom against the British. This is a good example to us today to stand up for our country and help others in our city and community. I hope this helps others want to learn about Paul Revere and our American History so this massacre will never happen again.





Cora Mier

Vermont, Elementary

Hero: Sacagawea

Sacagawea's Glow, Acrylic on canvas

I chose Sacagawea as my American Hero because if it wasn't for her, Lewis and Clark may have never made it to the Pacific Ocean on their expedition. Sacagawea guided Lewis and Clark on the expedition as a young girl and even had an infant with her. This shows that despite age, race, culture, or gender, anyone can lend a helping hand.

My painting is of the Pacific Ocean at twilight with a waning crescent moon. It is painted in Luminescent art style, as Sacagawea was Lewis and Clark's light, guiding the way to the Pacific. It shows their view overlooking the Pacific. I chose a waning crescent moon because it was the phase the moon was in on the night they arrived. The water is calm, like Sacagawea's mood and personality. The colors from the light of the moon reflecting on the water are the same as Sacagawea's beaded belt that Lewis and Clark traded for a fur coat which was given to President Thomas Jefferson.

Sacagawea was a great American Hero and proved her worth by peacefully leading the way into the new world.



Sheyda Webster

Virginia, Elementary

Hero: John Adams

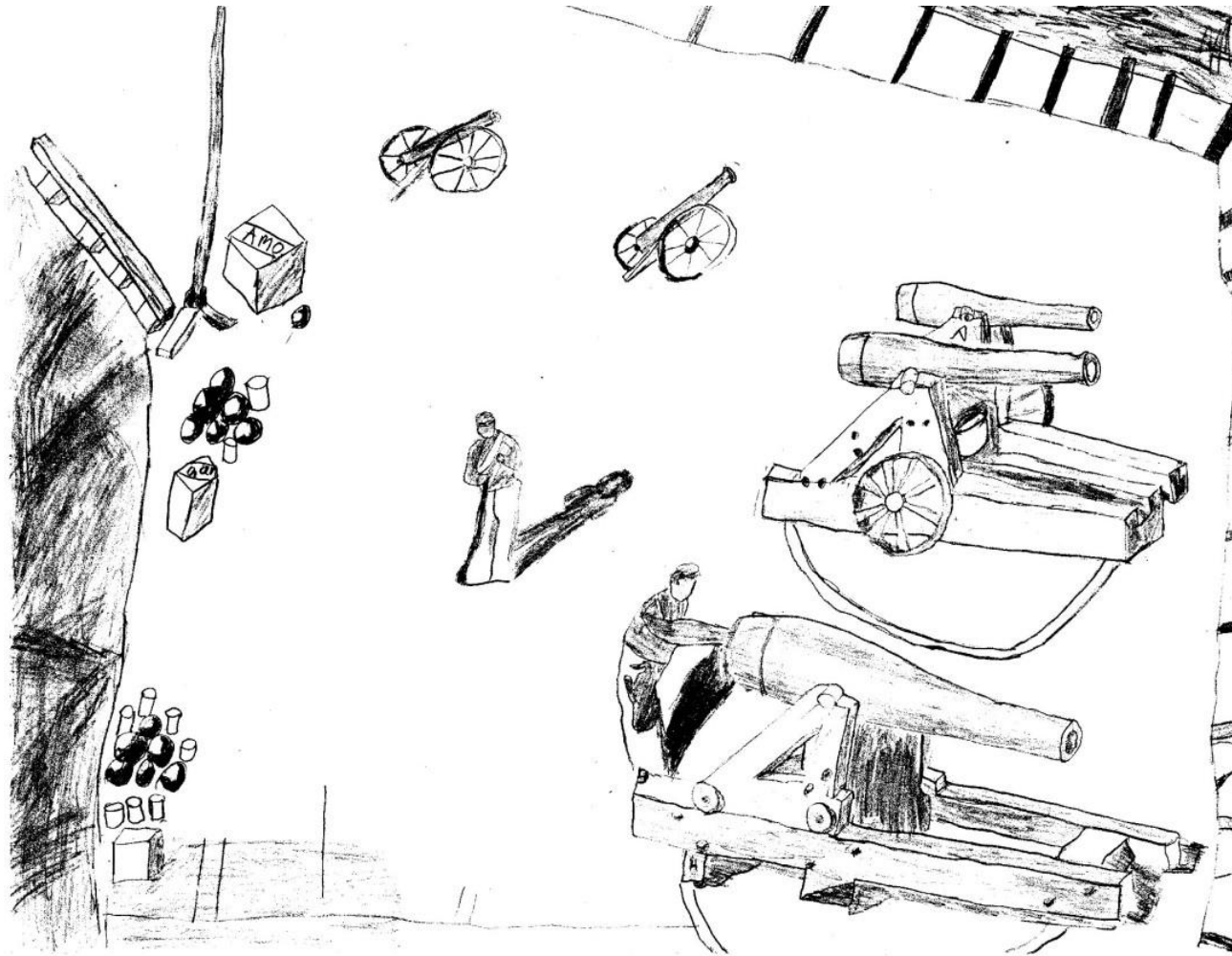
Remember the Ladies, Acrylic on canvas

For my painting I chose John Adams. He was an amazing person and helped make America what it is today! In this essay I will be talking about John Adams and what he did. I will also be talking about my painting. I hope you enjoy it!

John Adams was born on October 30, 1735, and died on July 4, 1826. He was a founding father, the first Vice President, and second President of the United States. He married Abigail Adams and she gave him ideas like giving women rights, so he held a debate to give women rights. It matters because it is a big deal, especially back then.

My painting is a recreation of the American Gothic. It is in the Regionalism category. I chose this because I felt like it represents John Adams and Abigail Adams, Abigail Adams is giving him ideas. I think the category fits John Adams because it expresses emotion. My painting is named "Remember the Ladies."

Thank you for reading my essay! I hope you enjoyed it and my painting! Did you learn something new about John Adams?



Arliss Clack

Washington, Elementary

Hero: Ulysses S. Grant

Siege of Vicksburg, Pencil on paper

I chose Ulysses S. Grant, because he was a good leader. He became a hero at Vicksburg because he had an awesome victory there. Capturing Vicksburg blocked supplies coming from Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, which was a major supply route for the Confederate Army. His victory at Vicksburg, also lead to Abraham Lincoln promoting him to General of all Union Armies later.

The United States of America would not be the same if Grant did not defeat Robert E. Lee, which basically ended the U.S. Civil War. Grant can teach us to live heroically, because he had to make a lot of hard decisions. Sometimes his ideas worked out, but others did not. However, he did not let that stop him, because he loved our country.



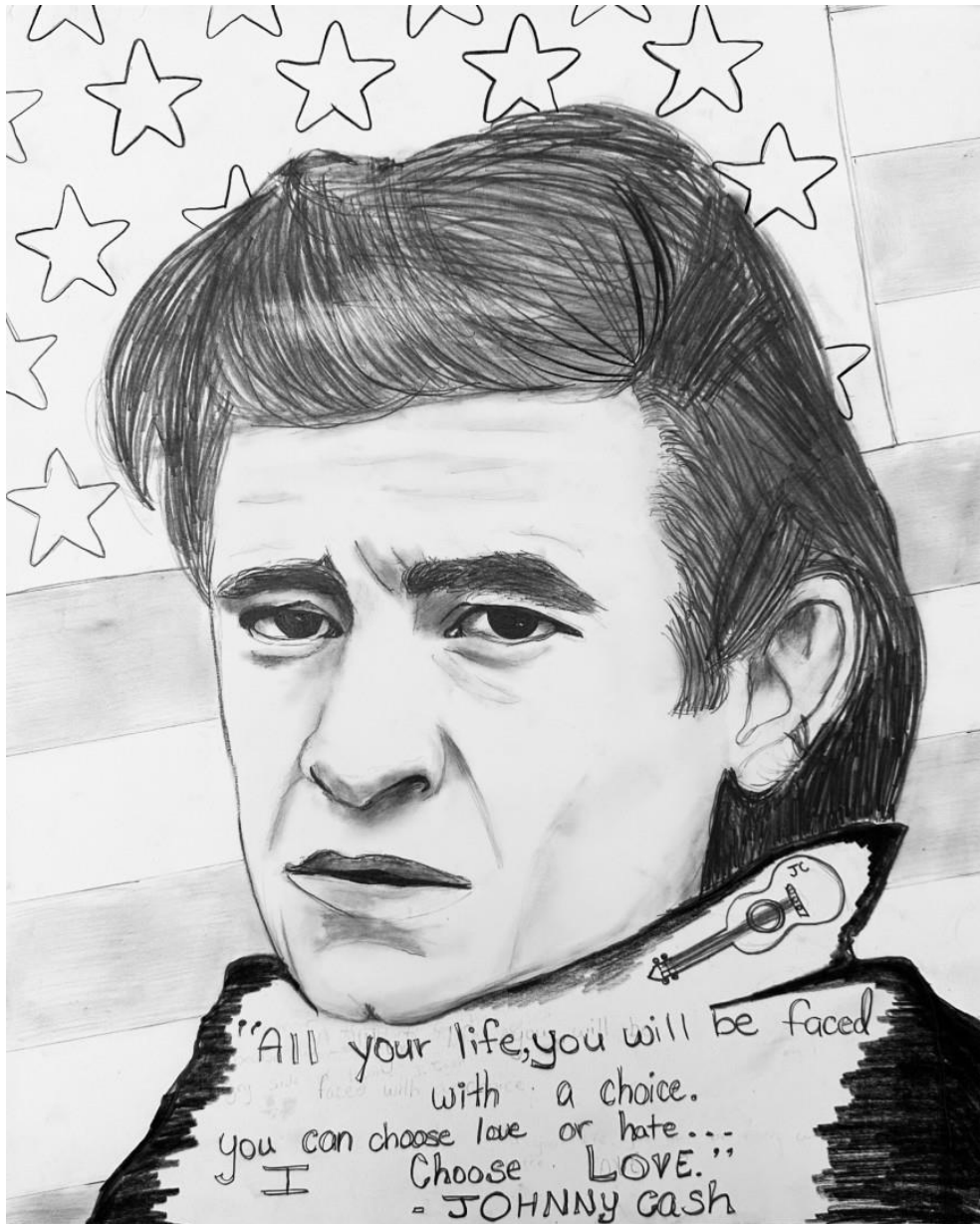
Ezra VanScoy

West Virginia, Elementary

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

***250 Lincolns*, Mixed media on board**

I choose Abe Lincoln because he is an important part of American history because he freed the slaves. This piece is made with 250 Pennies and is inspired by American pop art.



Mila Kavelaris

Wisconsin, Elementary

Hero: Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash - Man in Black, Pencil on paper

Johnny Cash (1932-2003) is my American Hero. His story was inspiring because he was a famous American musician who stood up for those less fortunate and used his career to inspire others. This was a great quote of his: "I wear black for the poor and the beaten down, livin' in the hopeless, hungry side of town." He also sang faith songs towards the end of his life, which truly inspired me.

I chose the style of Chuck Close (1960's) and Photorealism for my drawing. The reason I chose this style is because of the dramatic effect, strong contrast it creates and the boldness of it. Also, ironically, Cash was known for wearing black outfits and Close was known for drawing in black and white.

My method of drawing was to use different shades of pencils, a kneadable eraser, and q-tips to blend. To make the stars, I even used a glow-in-the-dark star, that I peeled from the ceiling in my bedroom. Johnny Cash was a great part of our history!!!! Thank you for your time and consideration!



Middle School State Winners





Leighton Medlin

Alabama, Middle School

Hero: Frank Sinatra

***Good Ole Blue Eyes*, Pencil and marker on paper**

My American hero of choice would be Frank Sinatra. He was not only a great actor, but also a famous singer from the 40's and 50's - one of the greatest musical artists of the twentieth century. I chose him because of the impact he had in his time and more importantly, in the life of my great grandfather. My great grandfather, Lawrence J. Comoglio (a former Air Force veteran), was born in 1938 and grew up listening to Frank Sinatra's ballads. My grandfather is currently battling Alzheimer's and listening to Frank Sinatra helps him remember a piece of himself that he often forgets. Frank Sinatra through his music portrayed the American dream of finding a place in the world and the satisfaction found when you find it your own way. I drew Frank Sinatra in the photo realism style because I wanted to portray him in the famous black and white era. I highlighted his eyes to be the only point of color, blue, because it is a nod to his known nickname of "good ole blue eyes".



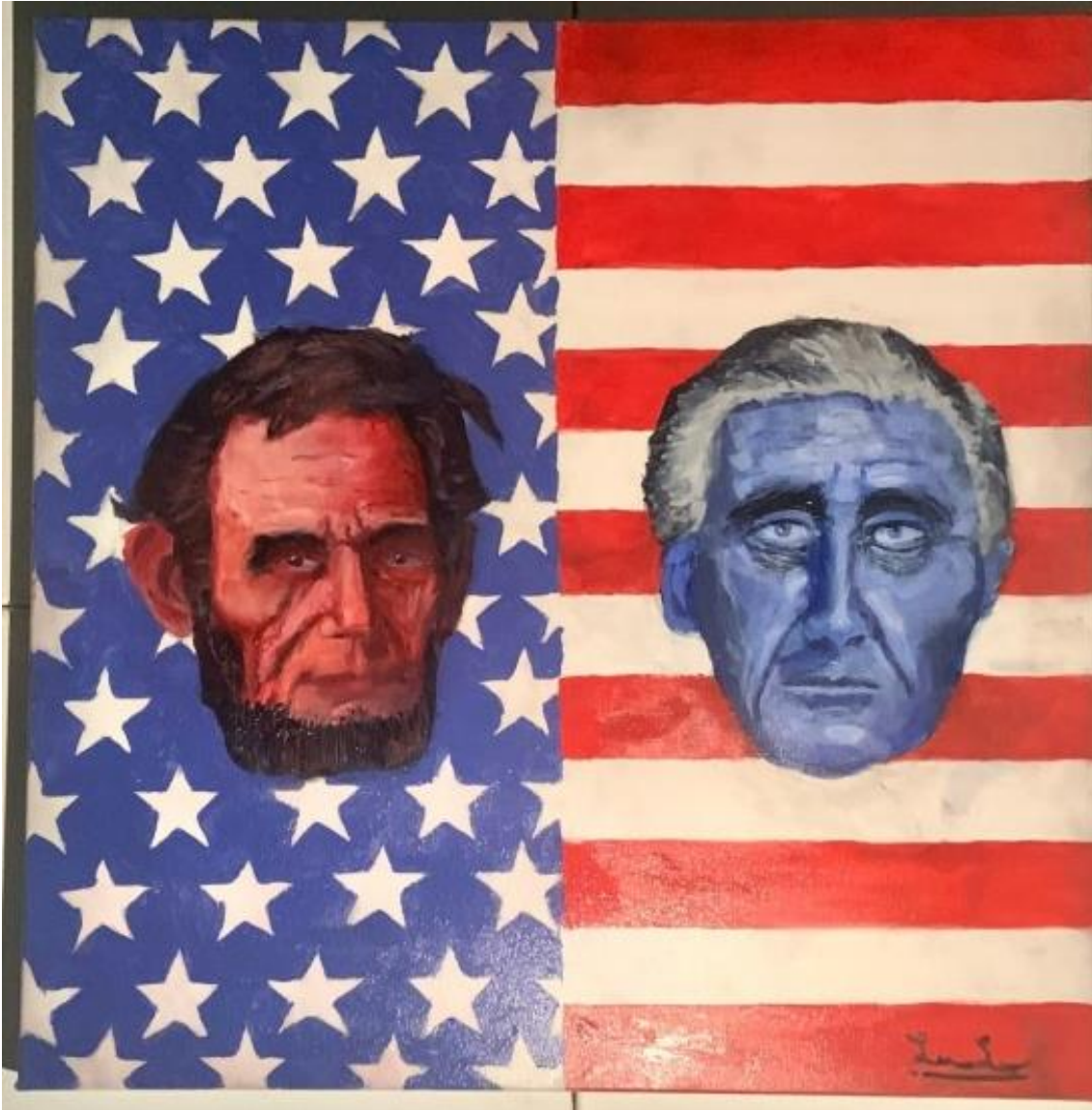
Konnor J. Kiddle

Alaska, Middle School

Hero: Neil Armstrong

Neil's View, Acrylic and beads on paper

I chose Neil Armstrong's view from the moon, because he became one of my heroes from a young age. When my mom first read me his story, I imagined what it would have felt like to represent all mankind in landing on the moon. My imagination grew in learning about Mr. Armstrong and how he performed a once in a lifetime act for all of us. We were the first country to get to the moon. We only knew so much about space and yet astronauts were willing to risk their lives to take mankind where it had never been before. Neil and Buzz only had a 50% chance of making it back home, I hope I would be willing to take risks when I get older for my country.



Lucas Lobo

Arkansas, Middle School

Hero: Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt

United Heroes, Acrylic on canvas

My artwork displays two great American heroes Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt in front of the American flag. I chose both presidents due to their leadership through difficult and divided times for America. President Lincoln helped lead the country through the Civil War, and strove to unify America, while Roosevelt led the country through the Great Depression and World War II. The color of Lincoln is shown in reds, and Roosevelt is shown in blues to represent political parties in America. Despite the dividing color between them, both stand united by the backdrop of the American flag in the style of pop art, reminding the viewer that both stood to serve one country and that even though our country is divided by political parties we are still ultimately United.

I was drawn to contemporary art for this piece in order to put emphasis on the facial expression to convey the seriousness, strength, and determination these men must have had. Bold brush strokes and shading are used to convey the burden carried on the leaders during times of turmoil. I did this so the viewer would see that great leaders are not perfect humans but instead those who see others through the struggle and push through it.



Aadya Janesh

California, Middle School

Hero: Amelia Earhart

Her Sky, Her Story, Mixed media on paper

Growing up, I have always been inspired by women in history who didn't let limits define them, and Amelia Earhart is one of the strongest examples for me. When I learned about her story, I didn't just see a famous pilot...I saw a brave woman who believed in herself even when others doubted her. She showed me that being different or facing challenges doesn't mean you stop; it means you keep going.

In my artwork, I was inspired greatly by colonial art, and I wanted to show Amelia Earhart as a symbol of courage and equality. Her airplane and goggles represent her achievements in aviation but also remind us that women can reach places that once felt impossible. The globe shows how her impact reached the whole world and continues to inspire people today. I used a warm evening sky to show hope and new beginnings, and I added birds to represent freedom- the idea that no girl should feel held back from her dreams.

Most of all, this piece is personal to me, because I hope to grow up to be a woman like Amelia Earhart, someone who is brave, independent, and determined, and who shows other girls that we all deserve equal chances to dream and succeed.



Seaton Wood

Colorado, Middle School

Hero: Walt Disney

Walt and Mickey Go for a Ride, Pencil on paper

Hello, my name is Seaton Wood. In this piece, I depicted Walt Disney on a ride with Mickey Mouse through Disneyland. I chose Walt Disney because I admire him, as well as everything he's created. I also admire his wisdom in general.

I wouldn't actually say my artwork was influenced by one single art movement. If it was, it was probably a contemporary/semi realism. I created the image to look slightly hazy which fits that nostalgic vibe I was going for.

Walt Disney made a beautiful contribution to our nation in the stories he told, and in the family and friends he brought together. He teaches us to live heroically by valuing our God-given creativity rather than the money we can get from our ideas. I strive to be like Walt Disney. May he rest in peace. Thank you.

"I neither wish nor intend to amass a personal fortune. Money may worry me, but it does not excite me. My ideas excite me." -Walt Disney



Emma Marzullo

Connecticut Middle School

Hero: Laura Ingalls Wilder

Freedom Calling, Collage

My artwork, Freedom Calling, represents my chosen American hero, Laura Ingalls Wilder. I admire Laura's faith, endurance, perseverance during hard times, and how she was hard working and would see things through to the end. I chose the artist Linda Stephan for her unique style, collages, and use of prairie scenes to create my piece. I'm stepping out of my comfort zone to try this style for the first time.

My artwork represents Laura's freedom and her choice to have the hard life as a farmer's wife. She didn't have the luxuries of a shopkeeper's wife, but she was free to help Almanzo around the farm with things that would have been considered improper for a woman without worrying about social rules. She chose the life on the farm surrounded by open prairies instead of the suffocating town.

I think Americans can learn endurance and hard work from Laura. Many Americans don't get to feel the warm embrace of accomplishment; it may be hard work but after your done it will give you something to be proud and happy about. Everyone has a purpose, we just have to work hard, be positive, and remember that life is a beautiful gift.



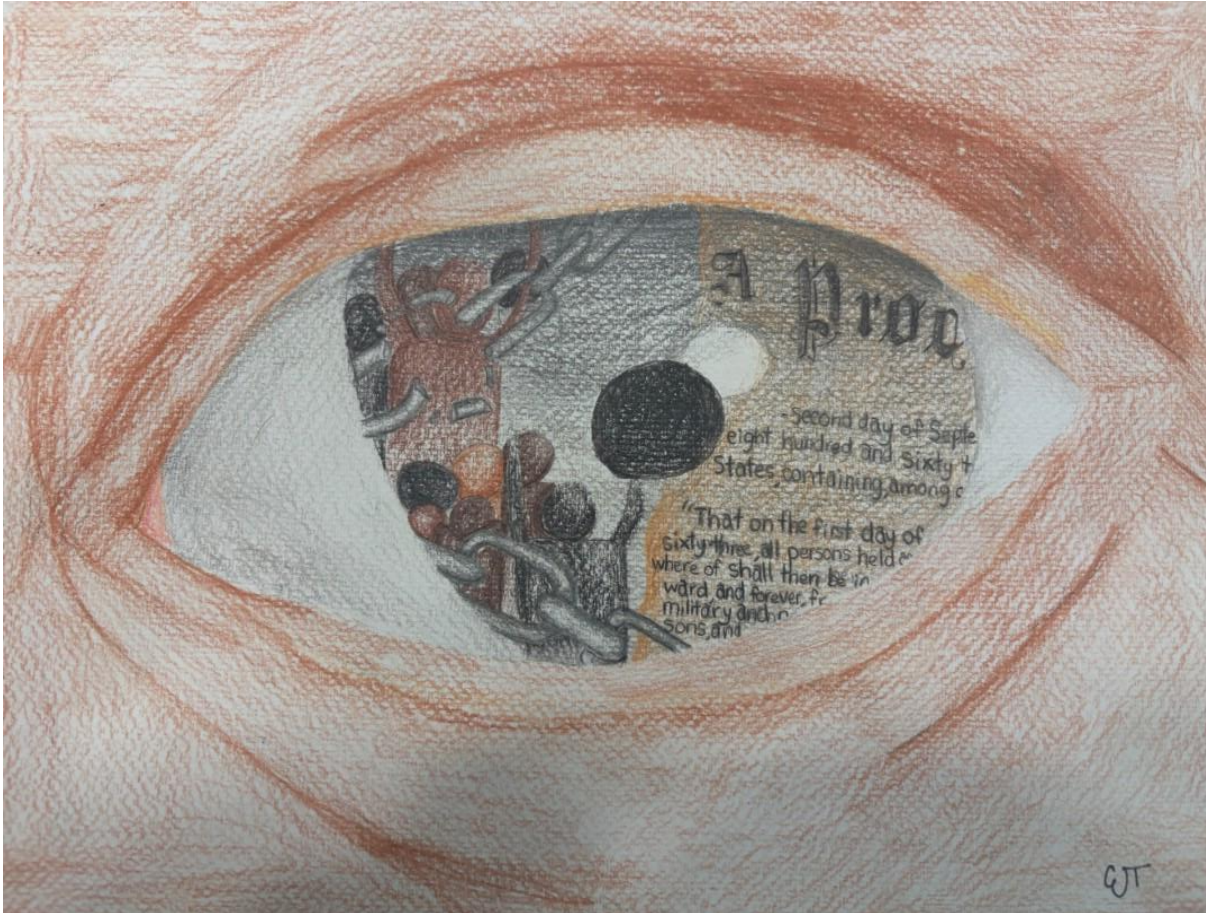
Lexi Weaver

Florida, Middle School

Hero: Paul Revere

Midnight Ride, Gouache on paper

This artwork depicts a scene of Paul Revere's midnight ride. The dark yet hopeful mood and visible strokes show the intensity and importance of this moment in history. Similar to *Starry Night* by Van Gogh, this artwork focuses on impressionism, capturing the fleeting moment of Paul Revere. It focuses on light and atmosphere, mainly onto the horse. In the center, a great stallion is shown on its hind legs, with the rider alerting the militia that British troops were marching to arrest leaders and seize weapons. The bright moonlight and dull glow of the lamps shine upon the path. To the left is a dark, gloomy background. I chose Paul Revere for his courage. He showed independence and leadership. The subject represents the power and courage of an individual citizen. He inspires us to do what we believe is right. Even regular people can make a difference. According to this artwork, living historically means having the courage to stand up and adapt when the world around you shifts. Some of the brushstrokes are blended. The movement of the horse and rider makes the scene feel dramatic and urgent. The houses, road, and sky have a little texture to create a somewhat realistic yet loose and mainly impressionist setting to the viewer.



Ellen Templeton

Georgia, Middle School

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

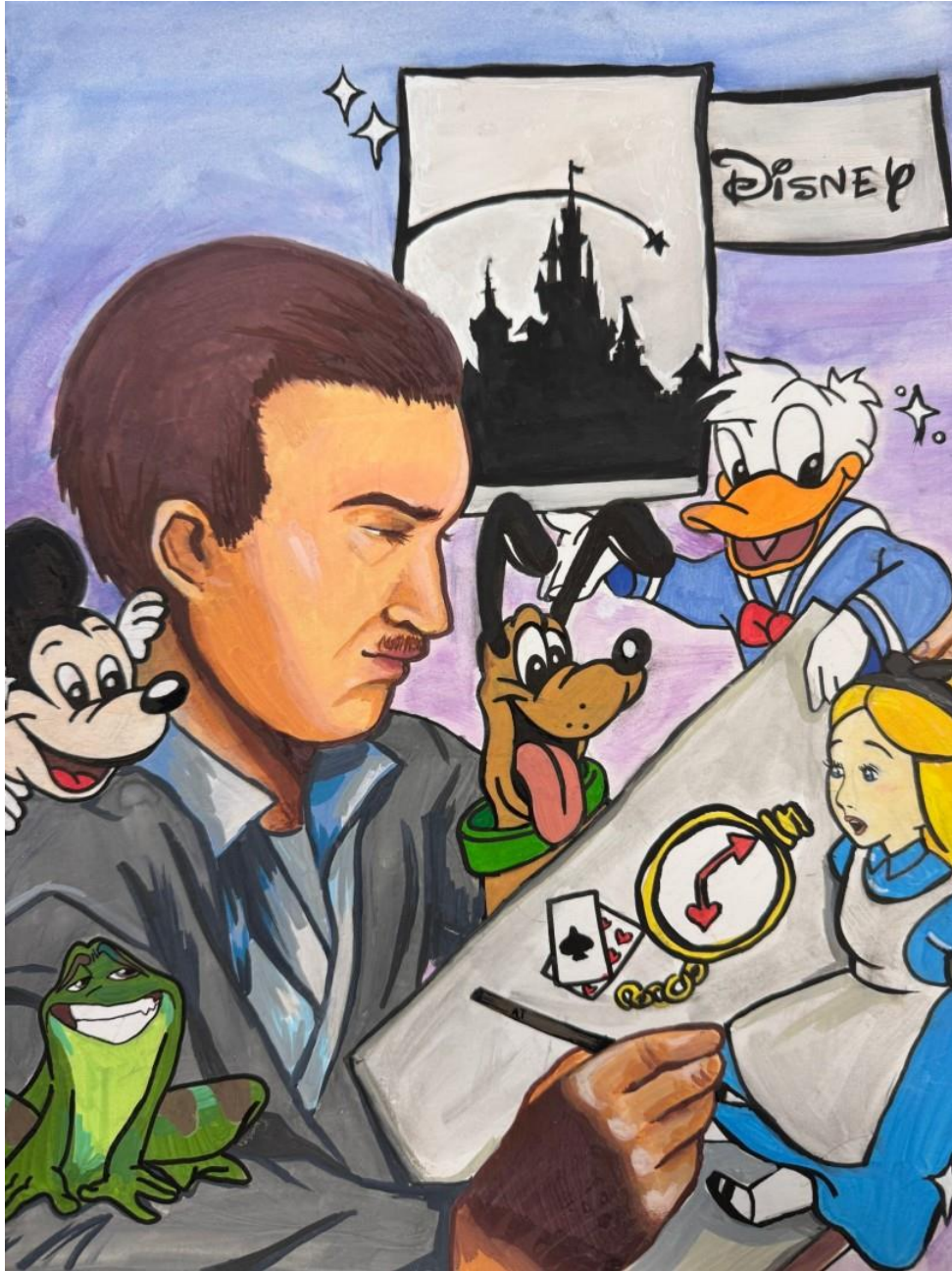
Freedom in His Sight, Colored pencil on paper

My art piece, “Freedom in His Sight”, represents the achievements that Abraham Lincoln made during his presidency. It shows Lincoln’s perspective by reflecting his accomplishments in the eye, including freeing enslaved people and issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. By placing these images inside the eye, I wanted to show how these moments were always in his vision and guided his leadership.

My artwork was influenced by realism because it highlights a tragic and important time in our nation’s history. This piece matters for several reasons. One reason is to show a lasting stain on our country’s past and acknowledge the pain that many people endured. Another is to remind us that while history cannot be changed or erased, the future can be shaped by the choices we make today.

This message is not only important for leaders, but for every person who lives in this country. Personally, I would not be who I am today if I had lived in a segregated nation. I believe the United States would not be what it is today if people were still separated.

Abraham Lincoln is one of the many heroes who helped move our nation forward. His actions continue to inspire us to treat others equally, no matter their race, ethnicity, or gender, and to stand up for what is right.



Adrianna Tran

Hawaii, Middle School

Hero: Walt Disney

Walt Disney, Marker and watercolor on paper

I chose Walt Disney as my famous American hero. I really don't know how to describe my art style. I try to draw as realistically as I can, and I add shading and layering by using my favorite media which is acrylic markers. My teacher told me to write down contemporary art as my style. Walt Disney was born in 1901 in Chicago. Although he did not graduate from high school Walt was an artist and animator that created the first animation with sound. He created the character of Mickey Mouse and produced the first full animated movie Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. He later created Disneyland and Disney World. Walt Disney won numerous awards throughout his life and is one of the most famous people in the world. Walt Disney is an American hero because he became famous and successful even though he did not go to college or graduate from high school. He took what he was good at and made a living by doing what he enjoyed most. I hope to do that one day as well. Even though I enjoy drawing traditionally, I much prefer drawing digitally on my Ipad. I like using programs like Procreate as I can create my own characters like how Walt Disney did. As an artist and entrepreneur, Walt brought joy to his community by bring animated movies and theme parks where everyone could bring their families and enjoy his creations. I have been to Disneyland, and it is a place everyone should go if they haven't been there before. In my artwork, I drew Walt Disney drawing Alice in Wonderland on a sketchpad. I also drew Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Pluto around Walt watching him create his artwork. I used watercolors for the background and kept the colors muted so that it does not compete with my drawing of Walt Disney. I hope you like it.



Jimmy Chen

Idaho, Middle School

Hero: Neil Armstrong

Neil Armstrong: Small Step, Large Leap, Mixed media on paper

I chose Neil Armstrong as my Freedom 250 art hero. My artwork is influenced by the contemporary realism movement, which emphasizes accurate, lifelike representation. Like artists in this movement, I used a variety of materials, including oil pastels, pencils, colored pencils, and artist-quality permanent markers. My artwork focuses on realism and three-dimensional form, capturing Neil Armstrong's first step on the Moon with the Earth visible in the background. It highlights one of the most iconic moments in human history—Armstrong stepping onto the lunar surface after descending from the ladder of the lunar module. This scene represents not only a personal achievement but also a defining moment for the United States and the whole world. The Moon landing opened the door to future space exploration and demonstrated America's technological capabilities on a global stage. NASA's Apollo missions also returned valuable lunar rock samples and data, which expanded our understanding of the Moon and the solar system. Neil Armstrong's legacy teaches the importance of composure under pressure, humility, and dedication to a greater purpose. He showed that it is possible to achieve extraordinary success while remaining grounded, dignified, and modest.



Ziyang Ma

Illinois, Middle School

Hero: John James Audubon

Honoring Audubon, Acrylic on canvas

I chose John James Audubon as my American hero for my artwork. Audubon was a great scientist and an artist. I chose this person because he helped inspire people to appreciate and protect the beauty of wildlife.

Audubon's contribution is very important to our nation because he helped protect many different birds because of the paintings that he created. He created his book *Birds Of America*. He spent his entire life studying every bird he sees and drawing them. His name is known for environmental conservation and studying different bird species.

My artwork shows a great blue heron that is ready to fly out of the window. Next to it is Audubon's book *Birds In America* with the illustrated version of the bird drawn on it. Next to the book, there is a feather pen and ink bottle inside to represent the time period of my painting and what tools people were using. The real bird being next to the painted bird shows how Audubon protected many different birds and how we should care for wildlife.

I used American Impressionism because I wanted to capture the feeling of movement, energy, and life of the bird. I used mostly bright in my painting to make it peaceful and warm. My artwork feels like a calming and hopeful moment.



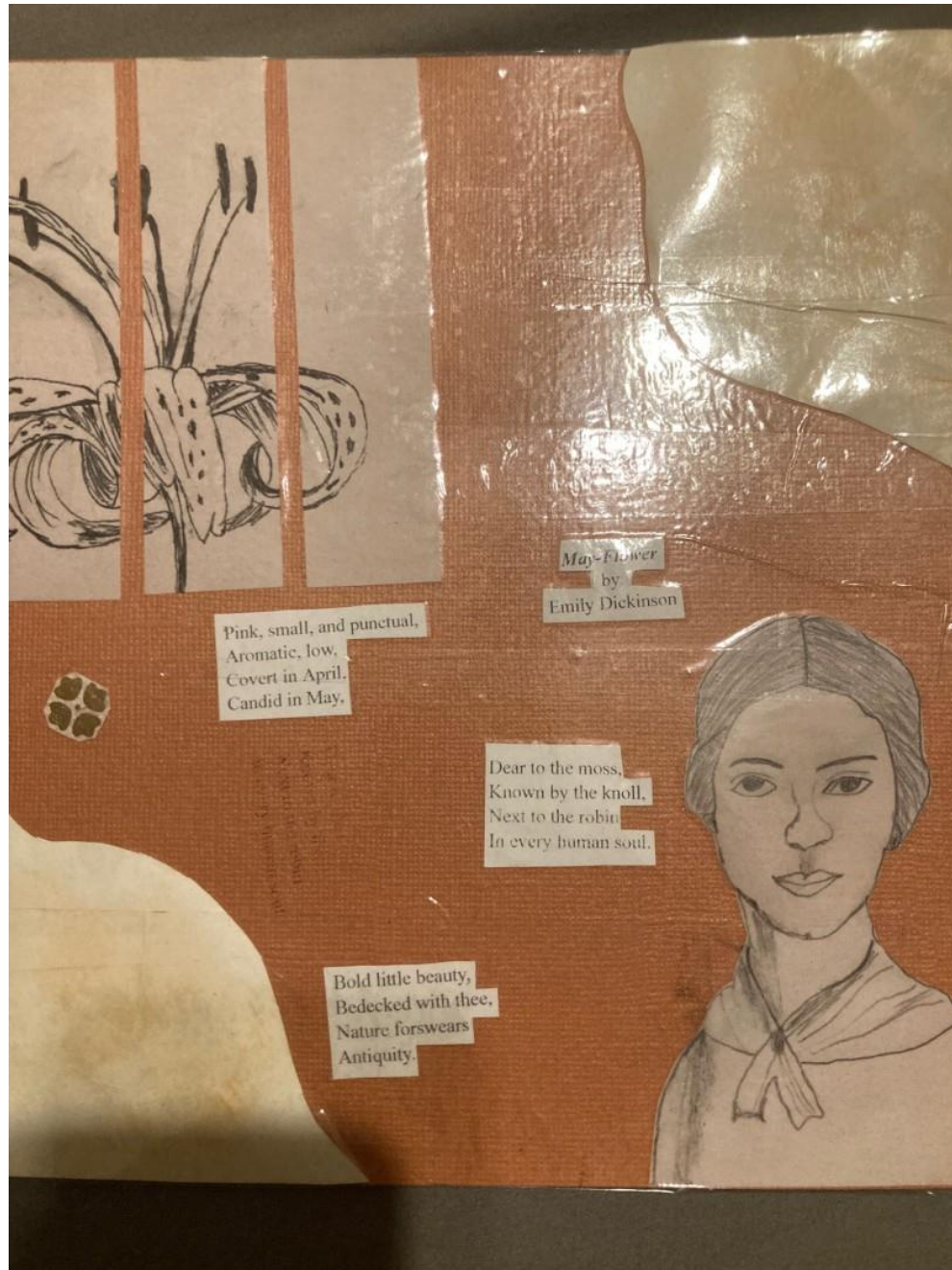
Mya Jones

Indiana, Middle School

Hero: George S. Patton

True American Hero, Oil pastel on paper

George S. Patton was a tanker in WW1 and a general in WW2 and was known for his brutal and aggressive military strategies. Throughout his military experience he had made many sacrifices that could have cost his life, and he did it all for the future success of our country. My artwork demonstrates this past by having the tank below him and shadows away from where he is looking. The light is coming from the direction he is looking in to represent the bright future of America that he contributed to. George S. Patton was also known as an abrasive person and was known as “Old blood and guts”. Because of his personality he made a very good general. To demonstrate his abrasive personality, I had added sharper lines for the shadows. He had also been known as a strict and straightforward person. Because of this I had made my artwork in the style of colonialism because it has more guidelines and strict rules. My artwork demonstrates his complex character and the sacrifices he made for our country. George S. Patton had put everything on the line for our country, and I am very inspired by his actions and bravery.



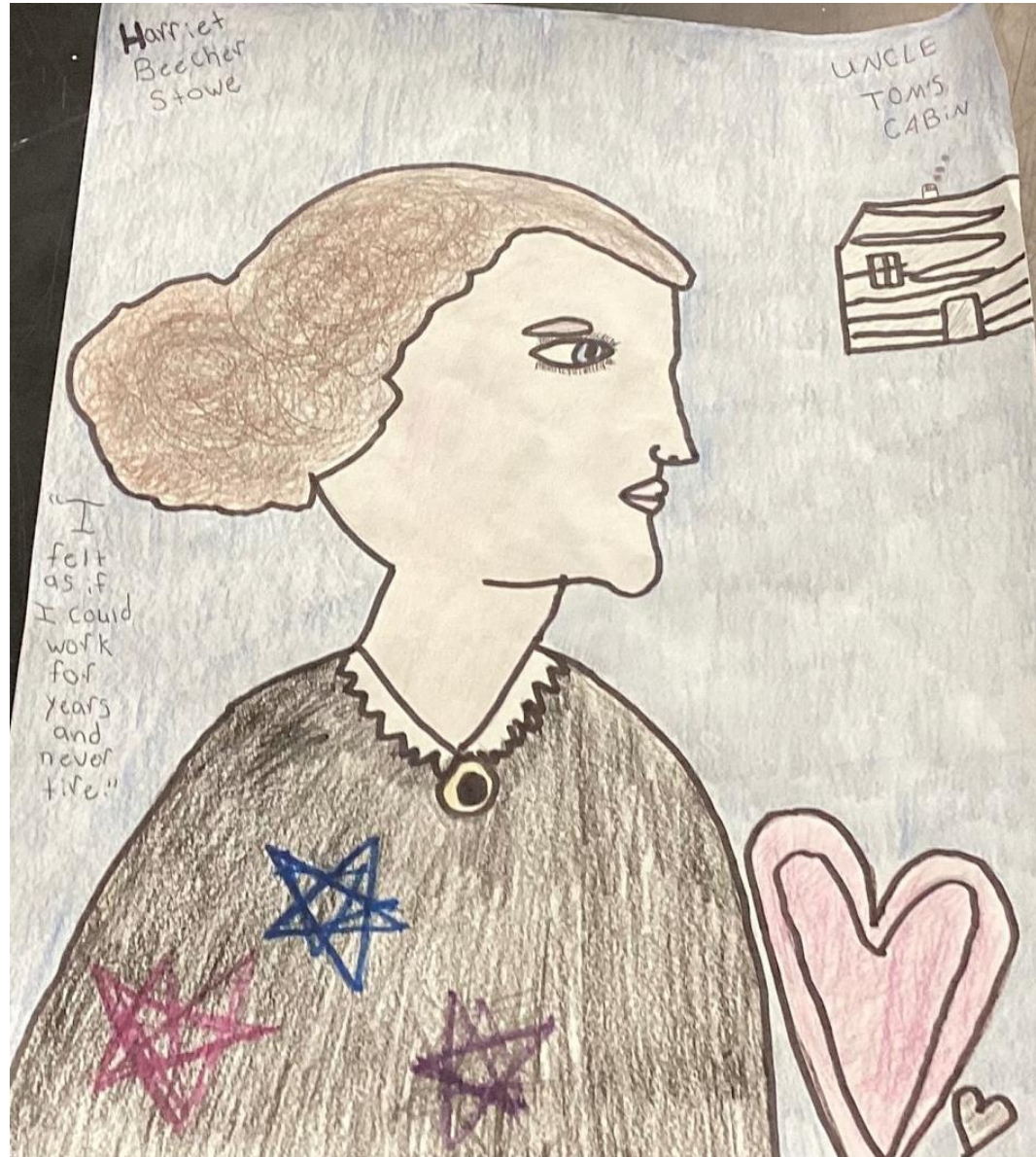
Annalee E. Kos

Iowa, Middle School

Hero: Emily Dickinson

***May-Flower*, Mixed media on paper**

Today is the first day of May and like Emily, I feel like I have been a recluse all winter. The middle stanza of her poem “May-flower” really speaks to me right now. It makes me want to tear all of my friends away from their video games and dig our fingers into moss, roll down hills, chase birds and reclaim our souls.



Austyn Hall

Kansas, Middle School

Hero: Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mixed media on paper

I chose Harriet Beecher Stowe as my hero because she used her writing to help change the world. She was a brave author who spoke out against slavery at a time when many people were afraid to do so. Her most famous book, Uncle Tom's Cabin, showed readers the cruelty of slavery and inspired many people to support the fight for freedom.

Amber Bernard

Kentucky, Middle School

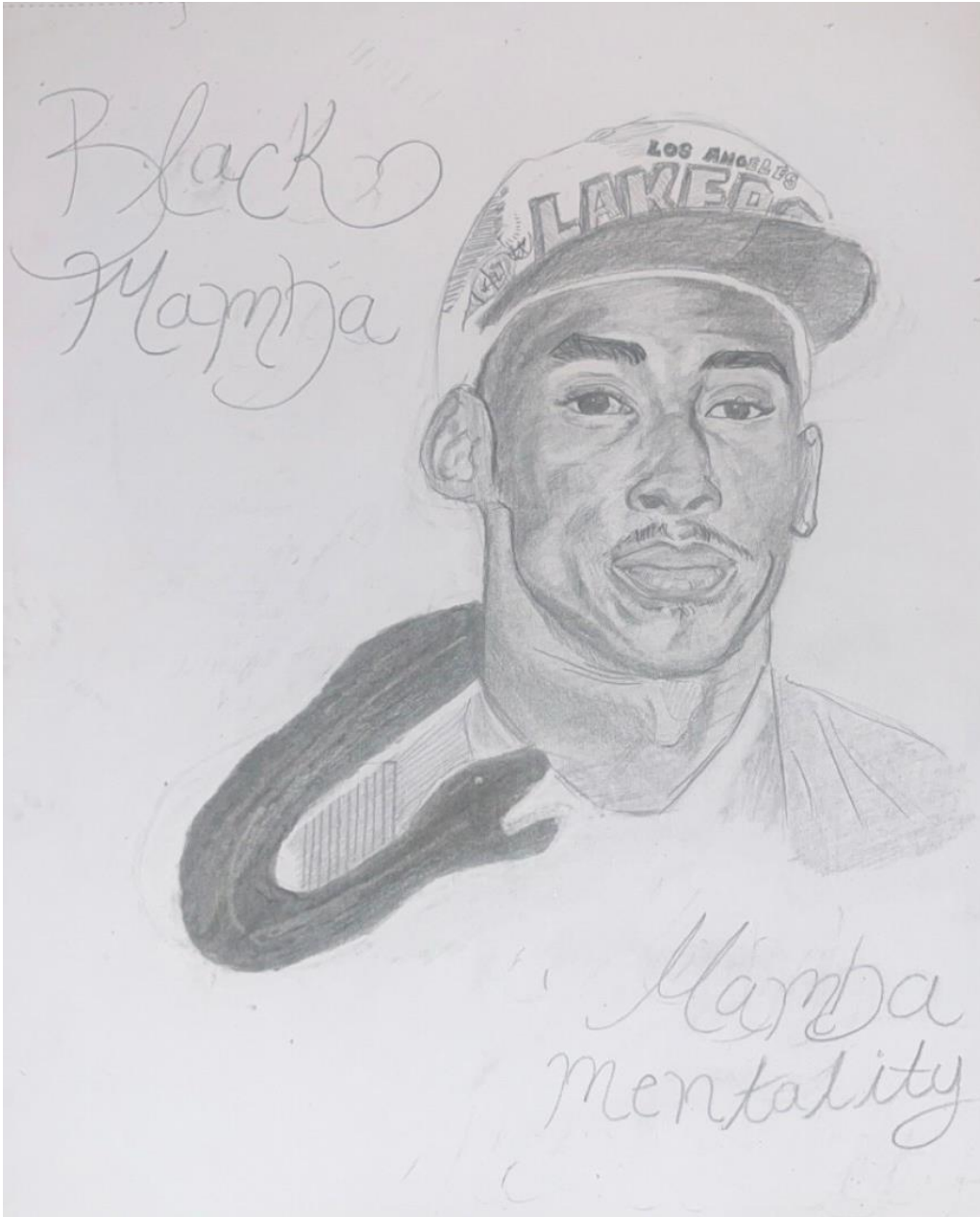
Hero: Kobe Bryant

Kobe Bryant Looking Toward, Pencil on paper

For my American hero, I chose Kobe Bryant. The type of drawing I decided to make was a portrait of him. When I started initially, it was looking pretty nice. I finished, and I hated it. I was feeling discouraged, I was doubting my ability to not only complete it, but to even make it look nice. Then, I thought of who I was really drawing and trying to portray in my art. What he stood for and how he handled situations with the presence of hard feelings made a way to me.

I picked up my pencil and tried again. As I was starting to wrap up my drawing, I saw how much better this was. I had spent less time on this, but it showed me that the strive to finish what was started in a short amount of time was definitely possible because I did it. A quote from Kobe states, "Once you know what failure feels like, determination chases success." This quote explains exactly my situation when I was trying to create him. Taking inspiration from Kobe helped me do what I longed to do.

The characteristics "determination" and "dedication" are two qualities that he had and pushed out to his fans and others. As a community whether it's my family, your family, or our nation, we can take these two traits and get to our greatest potential.





Bailey Allison

Louisiana, Middle School

Hero: Amelia Earhart

Lady Lindy, Pencil on paper

Amelia Earhart is remembered as one of America's greatest heroes because of her courage, determination and willingness to chase her dreams. Born on July 24, 1897, in Atchison, Kansas, Amelia grew up with a strong sense of adventure. At a time when many people believed women should not fly airplanes. She refused to let those expectations stop her from chasing her dreams.

Amelia became fascinated with air travel after seeing airplanes and eventually took flying lessons. Through hard work and perseverance, she earned her pilot's license and began breaking records in 1932. She became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, a remarkable achievement that inspired people around the world. Her success showed young women that they could also accomplish great things no matter what obstacles stood in their way.

What makes Amelia Earhart a true American hero is not just her accomplishments, but her bravery. She constantly pushed boundaries and encouraged others to follow their own dreams. In 1937, while attempting to fly around the world, she disappeared over the Pacific Ocean. Although her fate remains a mystery, her legacy lives on.

Today, Amelia Earhart continues to inspire millions, including me. Her story reminds us that courage, perseverance, and belief in ourselves can help us achieve the impossible.



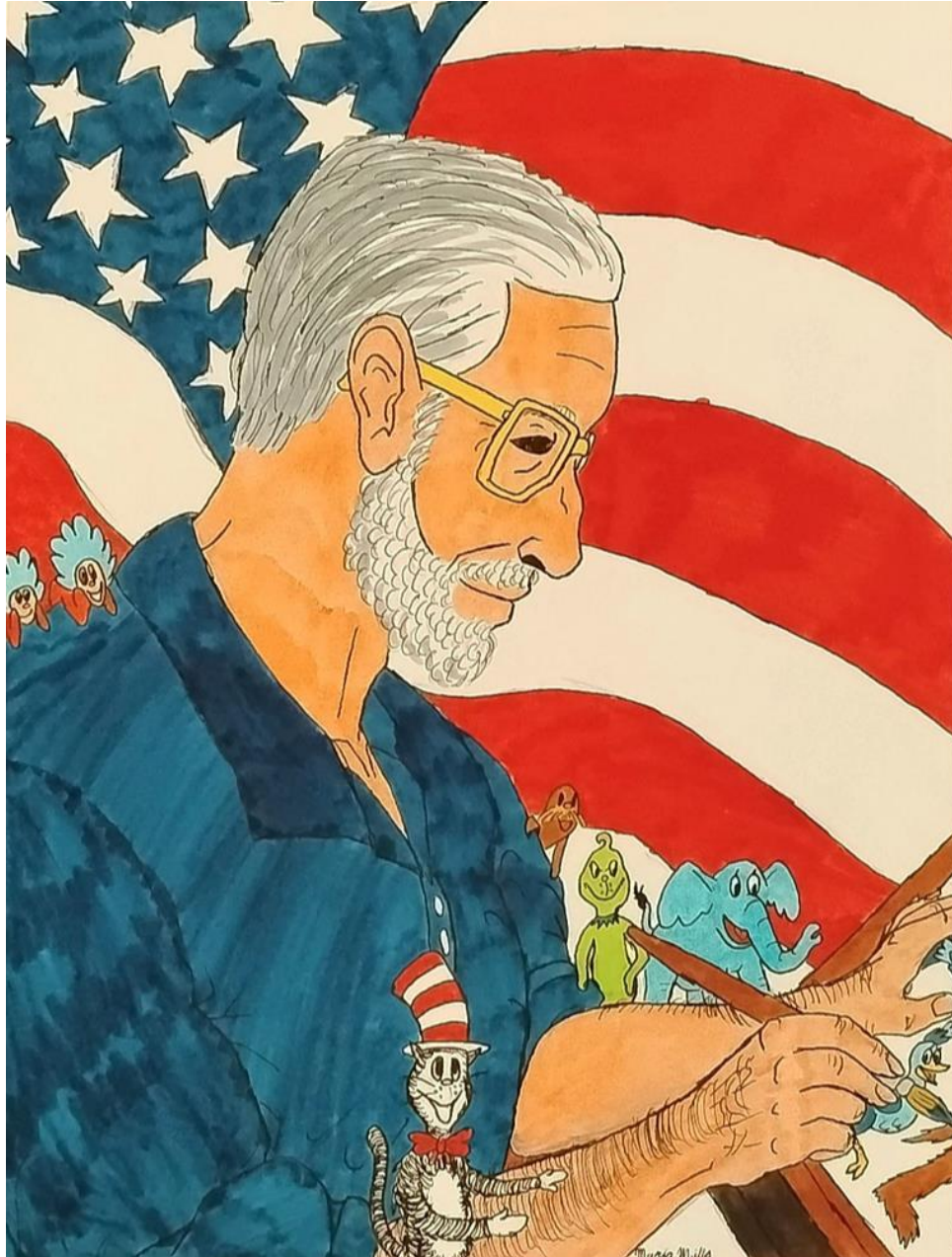
Luke Lord

Maine, Middle School

Hero: Albert Einstein

Trust Your Intuition, Mixed media on paper

Albert Einstein was probably one of the greatest scientists to ever walk the Earth. He was an inspiring creative thinker who used visual images and not just mathematical equations to solve complex problems. I don't really understand how he developed his famous equation $E=MC^2$, but he must have used an incredible amount of creativity and imagination. It is one of the most famous equations in science and is super important for us to better understand how the universe works and what the theory of relativity is all about. Even though Albert Einstein faced challenges and sometimes people didn't believe his ideas at first, he kept working hard and never gave up and his creative ideas made him like a superhero to scientists everywhere. I love science, that's why I chose Albert Einstein as my hero, but if I'm really honest, I wanted to draw his big awesome mustache too! Since I love comic books, I chose Pop Art as my Art Movement Style. Watching his dad bod morph into a buff superhero torso was actually pretty fun! His hair always looked messy like he had never combed it in a hundred years. The purple streaks in his hair along with the harsh black shadows and lines drawn across his face, gives the impression, I hope, that he is deep in thought. I believe a lot of kids, myself included, look up to Albert Einstein and want to be as smart and as creative as he was, hoping to contribute something meaningful to America like he did.



Maria Mills

Maryland, Middle School

Hero: Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

Dr. Seuss, Mixed media on paper

I chose to illustrate Dr. Seuss because he dedicated his life to writing for emerging readers. Without his work, children who struggle with reading wouldn't try to study harder. With his books, kids create a love of reading in their hearts early so that they can read throughout their lives. I put in some of his most famous characters, because they were the keystone that made his work fun to read. Note their excitement in sharing Theodore's work, as they seem to want to share their joy with the viewer. The Cat in the Hat represents this enthusiasm to share delight. The picture is illustrated in the bright, bold fashion of the pop art style, because the colors represent the rainbow he mixed into his. The bold lines also show his venture into the realm of writing for the youngest of children. Theodore is drawn more realistically than his characters to show their importance in the hearts of kids. He is pictured in his eighties to remind us that his work will last for centuries. Lastly, in the background, I drew an American flag, to celebrate our 250th anniversary, and also to remind us about how his work influenced our nation.



Iris Zhuo-Li

Massachusetts, Middle School

Hero: Phillis Wheatley

In the Reflection, Pencil on paper

My graphite drawing depicts Phillis Wheatley, one of the most prominent Black authors, in a vulnerable point in her life — she had to singlehandedly support her whole family. Though she was a celebrated writer, Wheatley spent the last years of her life as a scullery maid, as she lived in poverty. When she was emancipated in 1773 by her previous owners, she was unable to pursue her dream of being a writer, instead working tirelessly at a boarding house in Boston.

My realistic graphite artwork was heavily inspired by Genre Painting, and I was influenced by the realistic paintings of everyday life for laborers. Instead of creating a standard portrait, I wanted to show a glimpse of Wheatley's day to day life. Instead of portraying her sitting at her desk, I chose to draw her scrubbing the boarding house floors, showing the crushing burden of her life. I chose not to depict Wheatley's exact reflection, to show that when she was writing, she was a whole different person. However, the reflection, the most important part of the drawing, showed Wheatley's true self — a talented and gifted writer determined to not be defined by the cruelty of life.



Olivia Carol Heiler

Michigan, Middle School

Hero: Sally Ride

Sally Ride, Mixed media on paper

My artwork represents Sally Ride, the first American woman in space. I chose her because she showed courage and determination while breaking barriers for women in science and space exploration. My artwork includes Sally Ride, the space shuttle, and a sky inspired by outer space to represent her achievements and connection to NASA.

I used a contemporary art style because I wanted to combine different materials and techniques to create a modern and creative piece. I first sketched the artwork in pencil, used acrylic paint for details, and watercolor for the sky to create a softer background. I also mixed glue with black paint to create raised outlines that look like stained glass. I added beads in the sky to spell “NASA” for a special effect.

Sally Ride’s story matters because she inspired people to believe they can achieve difficult goals. She teaches us that living heroically means working hard, believing in yourself, and helping open doors for others.



Tate Kramer

Minnesota, Middle School

Hero: Benjamin Franklin

The Inventions of Benjamin Franklin, Colored pencil on paper

My picture is of Benjamin Franklin. The reason I chose him is because he was one of the founding fathers of the United States of America and was a brilliant inventor. My picture style is cartoon, it represents all his inventions and achievements. The fire helmet stands for the first American fire station. The Red Cross badge stands for the first American Hospital. The books by his recliner represent America's first Library. The plant represents Ben Franklin's leaf print money, and the newspaper on the floor is the Pennsylvania Gazette—Ben Franklin's newspaper company. My picture shows some of his inventions, including the Franklin stove, the generator, lampposts, the rocking chair, swimming flippers, the lightning Rod, and bifocals (glasses). My picture also shows the kite and the key that he used to conduct his famous electricity experiment. And lastly, on the floor is his book, Poor Richard's Almanac.



Truenne Speck

Mississippi, Middle School

Hero: Clara Barton

Service to My Country, Collage

My name is Truenne Speck. I'm not exactly what you call an artist, but someone who draws every time I get a burst of inspiration. My technique is my own. I haven't taken many art classes, but the ones I did take, I enjoyed!! I chose Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross organization in 1881, for my American Hero. I created the name "Service to My Country" to title my mixed media artwork. I chose American Impressionism to represent a few of the tools and banners she used and respected as an aspect of Clara Barton's life. I felt that the vintage style the magazines emanate best represent what I am hoping to produce. I selected American Impressionism because it was an art style Clara would have been familiar with as it was developed during her lifetime. The reason I chose Clara Barton as my hero is because she founded something that is essential for our country. If we didn't have the Red Cross today, what would we do? She didn't only provide medical care for wounded soldiers, but she provided medical assistance for national/weather emergencies. . . I wouldn't have the guts to go onto a battlefield and help bloodied soldiers. Clara Barton was, and still is, a hero that began something that has impacted many generations.



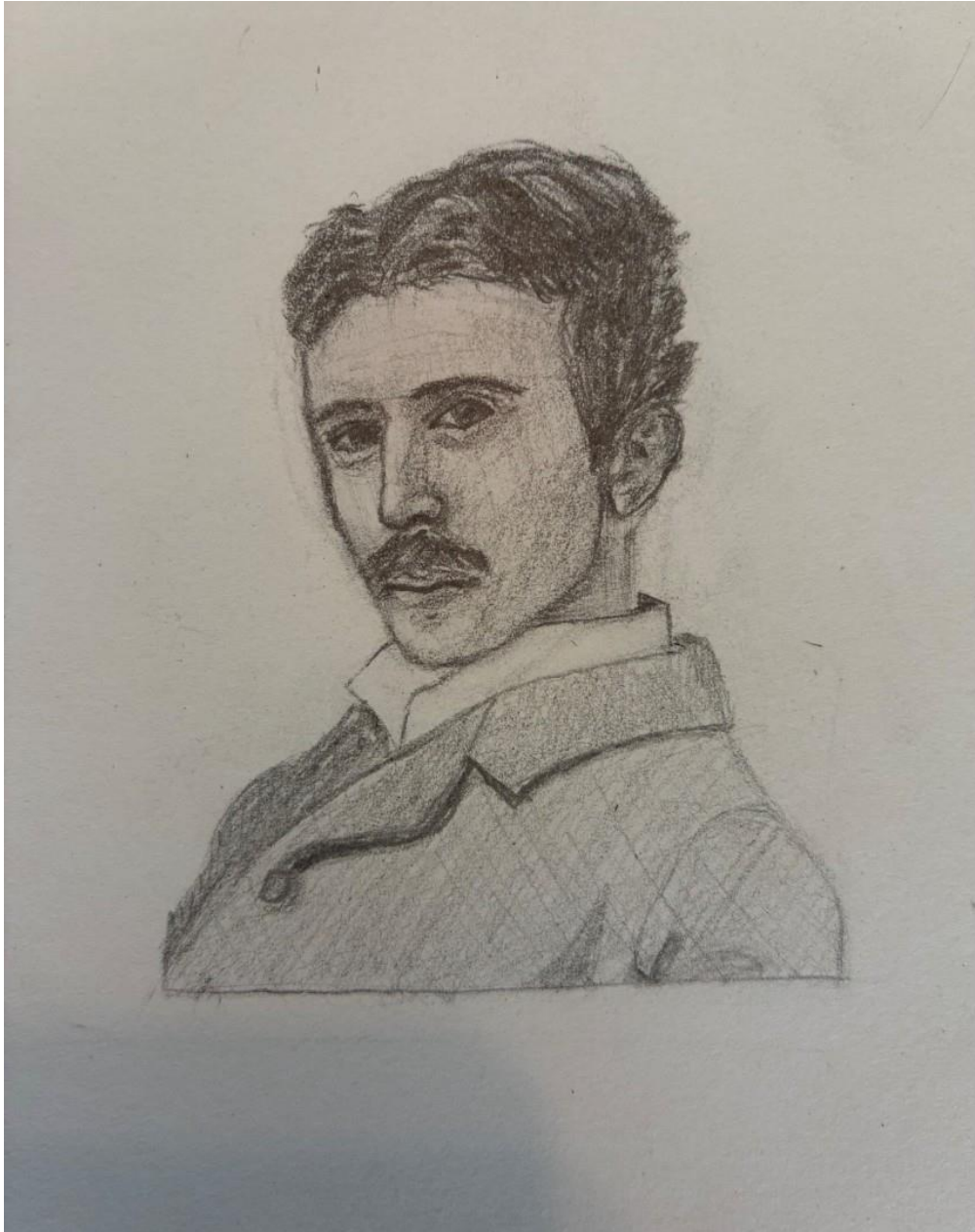
Liliana Esparza

Missouri, Middle School

Hero: Paul Revere

Midnight Pop, Mixed media on paper

For my hero I chose Paul Revere. I wanted to recreate the historical story of Paul Revere's midnight ride but give it a fresh twist using Pop Art. Usually, history drawings look really old, dark, and boring. I decided to change that by using bright, bold colors and thick black outlines like a comic book, my favorite style. A big part of my focus was on color theory and how colors work together to tell a story. I used a mostly blue color palette for Paul Revere and his horse so they would look like they are moving fast through the dark, cold night. Then, to make the artwork pop, I used a lot of complementary colors. I wanted to overlap the lantern over the moon. This contrast makes your eyes look straight at the lantern, which is the most important part of his warning. I used acrylic paint for the main shades of color because it makes it pop. Then, I went over everything with black Sharpie markers to get those stylized outlines that define the Pop Art look. By combining Paul Revere with energetic colors and markers, I hope my artwork inspires people such as he inspired me.



Emery Penner

Montana, Middle School

Hero: Nikola Tesla

Nikola Tesla, Pencil on paper

The hero I chose was Nikola Tesla, and my artwork is a portrait of him. I chose him because of his brilliance and the sadness that tinged his life since he died alone and poor, while big corporations made billions from his patterns. He was an extremely intelligent inventor and electrical genius, and we can thank him for the United States position as global leader in technology. Nikola Tesla invented the alternating current (AC) system, which still gives us power today. We make use of his discoveries all the time, every day, without even thinking about it. My portrait of him is modeled after a photo of him. In this portrait, he looks straight at the watcher. His lips aren't curled in a smile, but there seems to be a warmth in his eyes, and at the corners there are lines from which we can deduce that he liked to smile. Tesla can teach us that we don't need to come from greatness to make an impact on the world. He shows us that we should use our minds to the best of our ability and think about what we can do for our country. He was truly a hero.



Violet Crowder

Nebraska, Middle School

Hero: John Glenn

A First Glimpse, Embroidery thread on felt

My artwork, titled "A First Glimpse," honors the American Hero John Glenn, shown through embroidery. He did many notable things in his life, but the reason I chose him is our shared love of outer space. He was the first American to orbit the earth, and solidified America's footing in the space race. He was also the first person to take a handheld photo of the earth from space. Using a minimized, handheld drugstore camera, he took a picture to share with the world, which inspired my title A First Glimpse. My art depicts his capsule, Friendship 7, and the earth and moon in the background. I centered the globe so you can clearly see the USA and depicted an open capsule so you can see the intricacy inside. Glenn was a great example of a public servant, as a senator and astronaut. My art shows the beauty of what he shared with the world. He truly was a hero.

My art was influenced by American embroidery. Early American women used embroidery to tell a story, or stories, and record history, which is what I've done here. The story is of a fighter pilot, who went on to join the Mercury 7, and pilot a historic flight. I used the beauty of the thread to make the capsule feel 3D, the earth's water moving. This style helps the story come to life.



Sophia Skeehan

Nevada, Middle School

Hero: Elizabeth Ann Seton

Elizabeth's Death, Acrylic on paper

I drew this picture of my hero, Elizabeth Ann Seton. I call this drawing Elizabeth's death, because I drew this picture of her during the last hours of her life, as she struggled with tuberculosis. I drew Elizabeth Ann Seton in the art style of realism. I felt like this style really caught the pain and suffering she was going through. After losing those who were closest to her, Elizabeth Ann Seton just picked herself right back up and kept heroically serving and inspiring others, in spite of her own pain. She founded schools and served orphans and the poor in America - fighting tirelessly for those who didn't have anyone else to fight for them. Elizabeth Ann Seton inspires me because throughout her life she lost many of her loved ones, and I've lost someone in my life and that's been really hard. Looking at her life and knowing that she went through the same thing but worse, it's very inspiring to me. She is holding a crucifix, and when I lost my baby brother I liked to hold on to my necklace with a crucifix on it and that really comforted me, so I put a crucifix in there to relate to my life and make it unique to me.



Sarang Lee

New Jersey, Middle School

Hero: Louis Armstrong

The Sound That Became America, Charcoal and pastel on paper

Have you ever imagined a world painted by music, where sound turns into color? I chose Louis Armstrong because he is not only a famous musician but also represents the spirit of America. Among the heroes, I was drawn to him because his music feels powerful and brings people together. Although our nation is made up of many different cultures and backgrounds, I believe these differences create a beautiful harmony.

In my artwork, Armstrong is shown in black and white charcoal. From his trumpet, music spreads and fills the world with vivid color using pastels. Buildings, people, lights, and the American flag all become part of this joyful melody. What a wonderful world!

This spring, I visited the Whitney Museum and saw contemporary American artworks. I loved Andy Warhol's *Ethel Scull 36 Times*. I noticed how he used contrast between figures and bold colorful backgrounds. I learned that color could express emotion and meaning. That inspired me to place Armstrong in black and white while surrounding him with a world of color created by music.

Armstrong brought hope and strength to people through music, shaping American culture. Through my artwork, I wanted to show that America is not only history, but also a living story still being written. I hope viewers can almost hear the music and imagine America becoming brighter, more colorful, and united.



Ysobella G. Depala

New Mexico, Middle School

Hero: George Washington

The Future of History, Acrylic on canvas

My painting, *The Future of History*, explores how a messy, bloody past shapes our present. George Washington built a nation from the gravel of war, yet history often overlooks the carnage. In my center, Washington stands scathed but proud, holding his flag. The background brushstrokes depict explosions and gray smoke. Below, faceless soldiers blur into the soil they fought and died for. Though he could not stop his army for proper burials, Washington's bold leadership set a monumental global standard for everyone. A tear in the top right reveals Mount Rushmore, where faces blur to represent how human memories decay and are distorted by others' depictions. Ultimately, we rely on journalists and historians to set legacies in stone, as humanity thrives only through others. The bright blue background behind this tear contrasts with the gloomy battlefield, symbolizing how Washington's sacrifices altered the trajectory of the U.S. toward a bright future. Finally, a bottom-left tear features Donald De Lue's statue of Washington. By stripping away hyper-realism, my expressive, unembellished strokes of varying shapes and colors project a raw, emotional view of history and its ongoing footprints.

Amber Wang

New York, Middle School

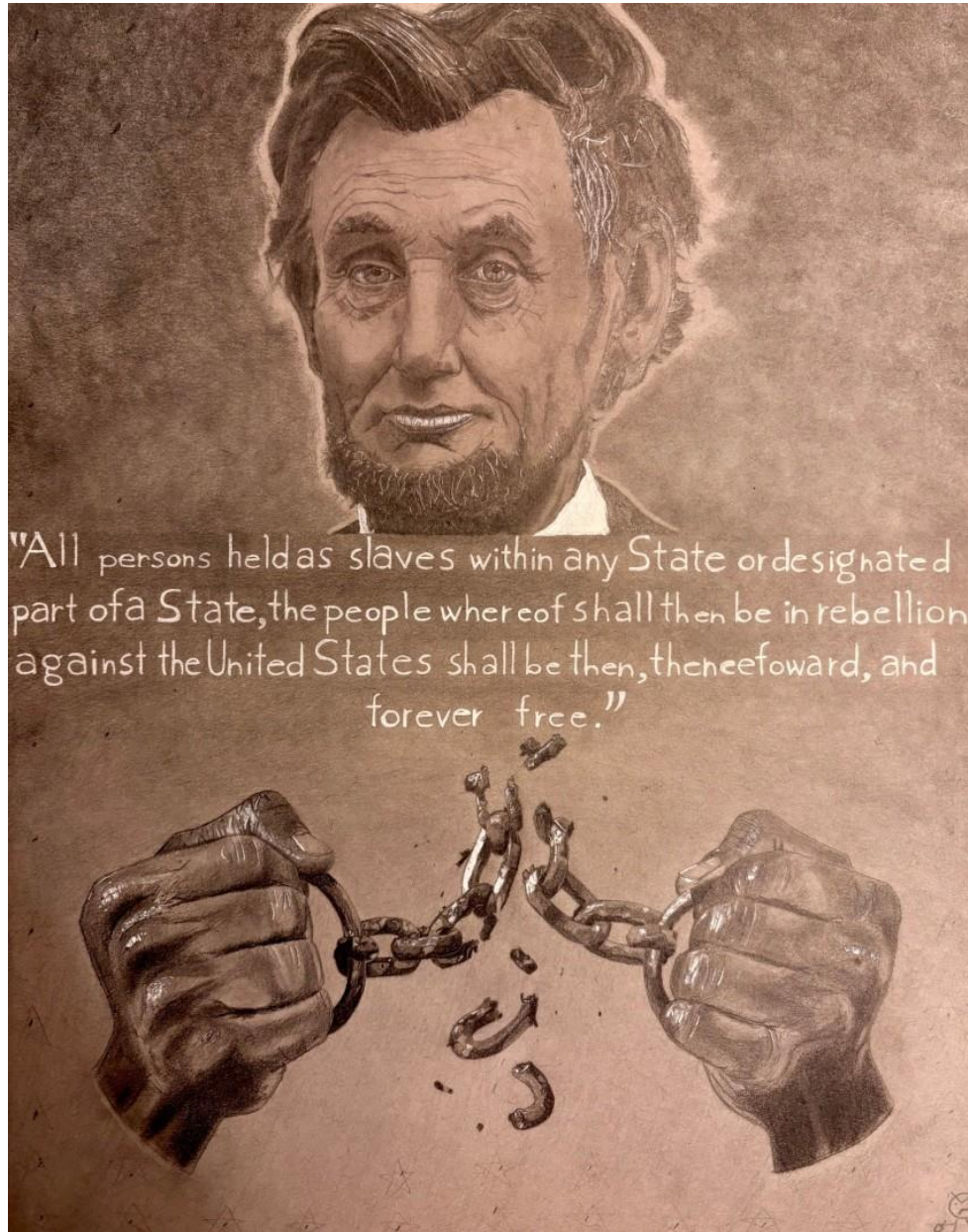
Hero: Desmond Doss

Please Lord, Help Me Get One More, Watercolor on paper

For my artwork, I decided to choose Desmond Doss— a combat medic known for his refusal to carry a weapon. He was a Seventh Day Adventist and stayed loyal to his faith despite the hellish environment of war. Since he was best known for his service during the Battle of Okinawa, I have painted him carrying the wounded on Hacksaw Ridge.

Our nation frequently values destruction of their “enemies”, promoting that as true patriotism, but Desmond Doss shows us that patriotism isn’t solely rooted in the will to kill for one’s country, but in the will to serve it. He shows us that even in lawless places of war, it is still possible to keep humanity. His actions help us understand that unwavering devotion to one’s country defines patriotism, not violence. Indeed, Desmond Doss has affected me as well. As a child, I was fascinated by war. I’ve read the tales of brave heroes taking down dozens of enemies, or inventors developing killing machines, but Desmond Doss was different. His heroic deeds weren’t rooted in bloodshed or carnage, but in healing. Doss charged straight into the hellfire without a single weapon, and yet he emerged with the lives of 75 without having to even take one. It teaches us that compassion and empathy are not weaknesses, but the bedrock of heroism.





Solomon Brulet

North Carolina, Middle School

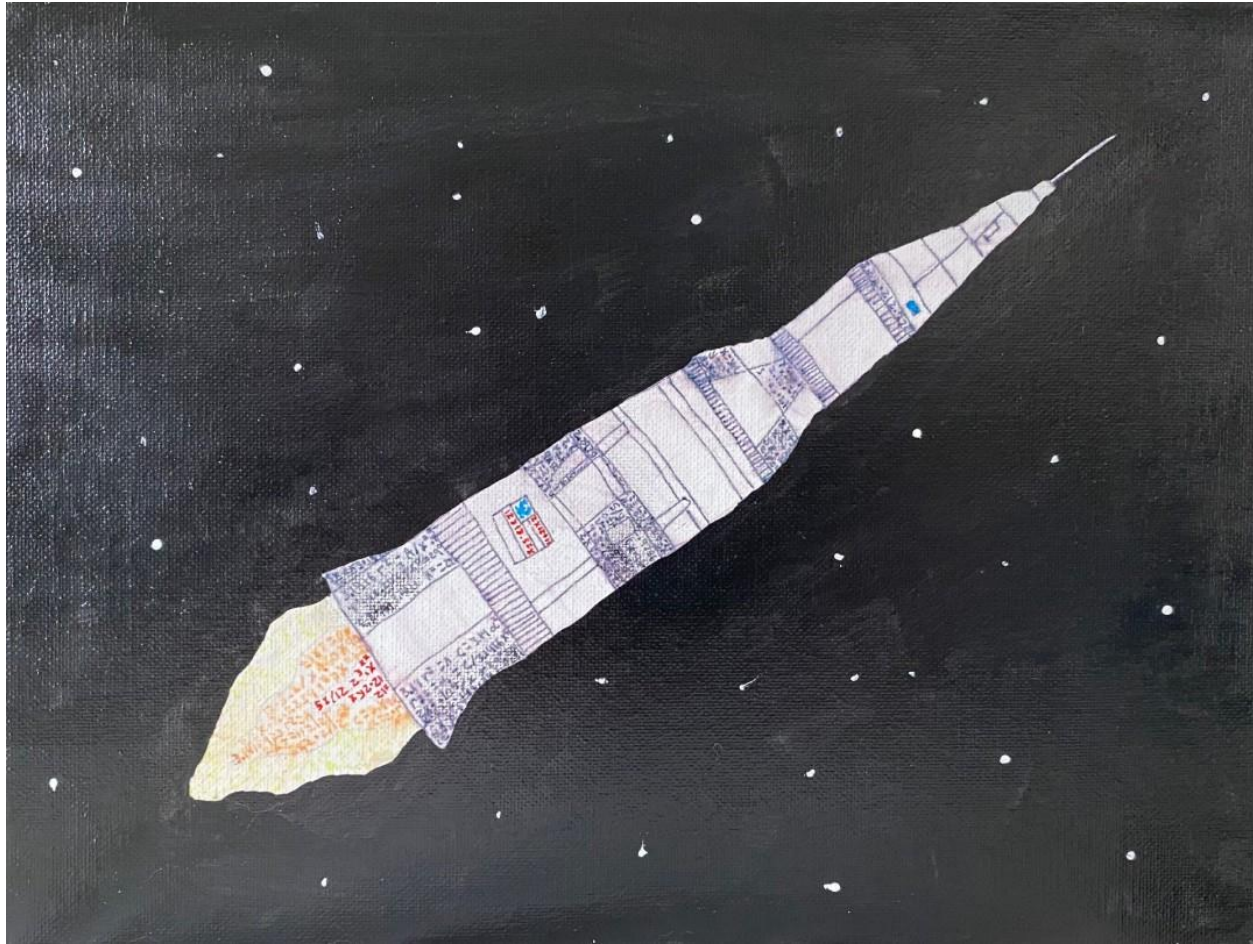
Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Through Darkness Comes Freedom, Pencil on toned paper

For this art piece I chose Abraham Lincoln because he was important to me and important to the whole nation. My picture tells a story. At the top is Abe Lincoln who gave freedom to slaves, and at the middle is a quote from the Emancipation Proclamation, and at the bottom symbolizes black hands breaking through the torment and into the freedom Abe gave them.

I Used Contemporary Art as it gave me the freedom to express ideas of what Abe meant to me freely, to tell a story without limits. I went for a realistic look that made Abe look tired yet authoritative, showing the struggles he dealt with during his time in presidency while staying determined.

Abe matters to me because he united the people I know together, he brought everyone together. We can be united once and for all and join into one nation. Without his contribution to society in the U.S. we know nothing would be the same. He shows us that we need to stand up for ourselves and for others even when sometimes that can be very hard for us to do. He was different and he proved that rightfully.



Eva Szklarski

North Dakota, Middle School

Katherine Johnson

Math to the Moon, Acrylic on canvas

Katherine Johnson was a mathematician who helped send the first people to the moon. She was born on August 26th, 1918, in West Virginia, she started working at the Langley research center in 1953 where she was hired to work out complicated math problems. Katherine worked out the trajectory that sent Alan Shepard into space in 1961. She continued to work out the calculations even after NASA started using electronic computers, and in 1969 she carried out the calculations that sent the first people to the moon. Katherine worked hard to help America win the space race even though she was not given good working conditions. Because Katherine was black, she had to walk all the way across campus to use a bathroom. This took up lots of time she could have used for working. Despite this, she still worked hard to help her country win the space race.

My painting shows the rocket that took Michael Collins, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin into space and to the moon on July 20, 1969. Instead of shading in the colored areas of the rocket, I filled them in with tiny math equations because they never could have gone to the moon without mathematicians like Katherine Johnson.



Nandita Seshadri

Ohio, Middle School

Hero: Amelia Earhart

***Amelia Earhart*, Oil and acrylic on canvas**

I chose to do a contemporary style, oil on canvas portrait of young Amelia Earhart. As a young girl living in Dayton, Ohio (the birthplace of aviation), I have always been inspired by her courage. In the background of the portrait, I included the names of Jacqueline Cochran, Bessie Coleman and Sally Ride in the stars. These women have made extraordinary achievements in aviation. Amelia Earhart did not only do the unthinkable achievement of her times but also lead the way for all these other women. She flew so they could soar and become stars. She shattered the gender barriers and made it possible for girls across the United States of America to fulfill their dreams. She will always be remembered as the courageous trailblazer.



Gordon Bryan

Oklahoma, Middle School

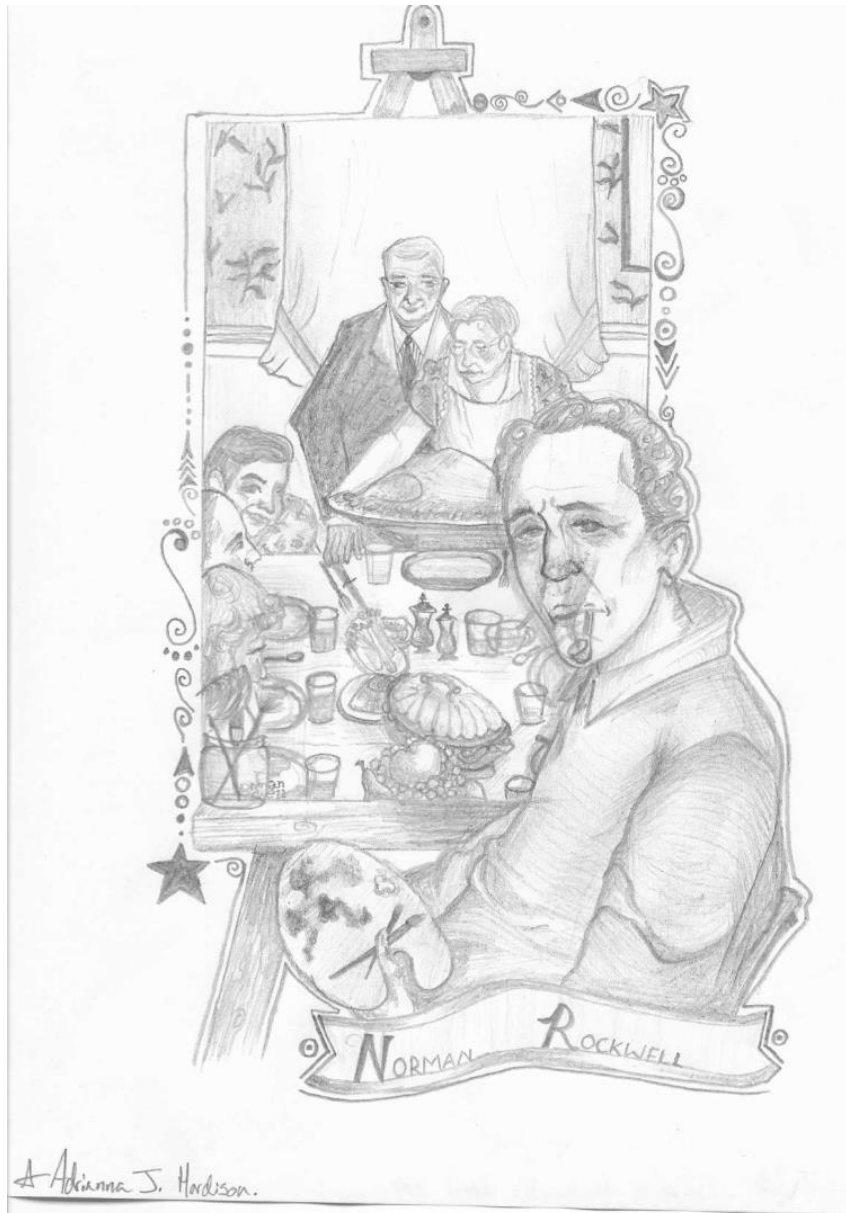
Hero: John Wayne

John Wayne, Pencil on paper

My drawing is a realistic depiction of John Wayne, who starred and directed in the movie, “The Green Berets.” Artistic Realism is a form of art that captures the moment accurately without trying to make it look “good.” Edward Hopper, Andrew Wyeth, and George Bellows are a few well-known American realism artists.

In the film, Wayne portrays Colonel Mike Kirby, who was sent on a special mission to capture a high-level Viet Cong officer. Released in 1968, this controversial movie came out during the Vietnam War. The movie was pro-war and anti-communist, which not everyone agreed with. Almost 60 years later, Americans still debate these issues.

John Wayne, born in 1907, starred in over 140 films during his 50-year career. His characters were often rugged, courageous, and patriotic. His friends, such as Ronald Reagan, Bob Hope, and Kirk Douglas, called him “Duke.” Both my Dad and my Grandma love his movies, and that’s how I first heard of him. I’ve not yet watched any of his movies all the way through, but plan to do so in the near future. In 1969 John Wayne won the Academy Award for best actor for his performance in “True Grit.” Maybe I’ll start with that one.



Adrianna Jane Hardison

Pennsylvania, Middle School

Hero: Norman Rockwell

Painting The Dream, Pencil on paper

Norman Rockwell was an American painter and illustrator, renowned for his depictions of everyday life and his ability to capture the essence of American spirit. His work often featured heartwarming and sometimes humorous scenes that resonated with a wide audience. In my art, *Painting the Dream*, I tried best to capture the original, wholesome, the "Freedom from Want", while also to depict Rockwell's weary, yet determined expression as he illustrates what everyone wants: a sound, connected, and happy family. Norman Rockwell is particularly important and special because, while other artists or art pieces, that label what you're supposed to feel about it, you can view his paintings and immediately think, this is exactly what I want or, I am so thankful that I have this in my own life. The relatable charm of Rockwell's work bridges the gap between the canvas and reality. By mirroring his own focus on genuine connection, I hope to honor the enduring beauty of the American family, and the simple profound gratitude found in our everyday lives.



Penny Lattimore

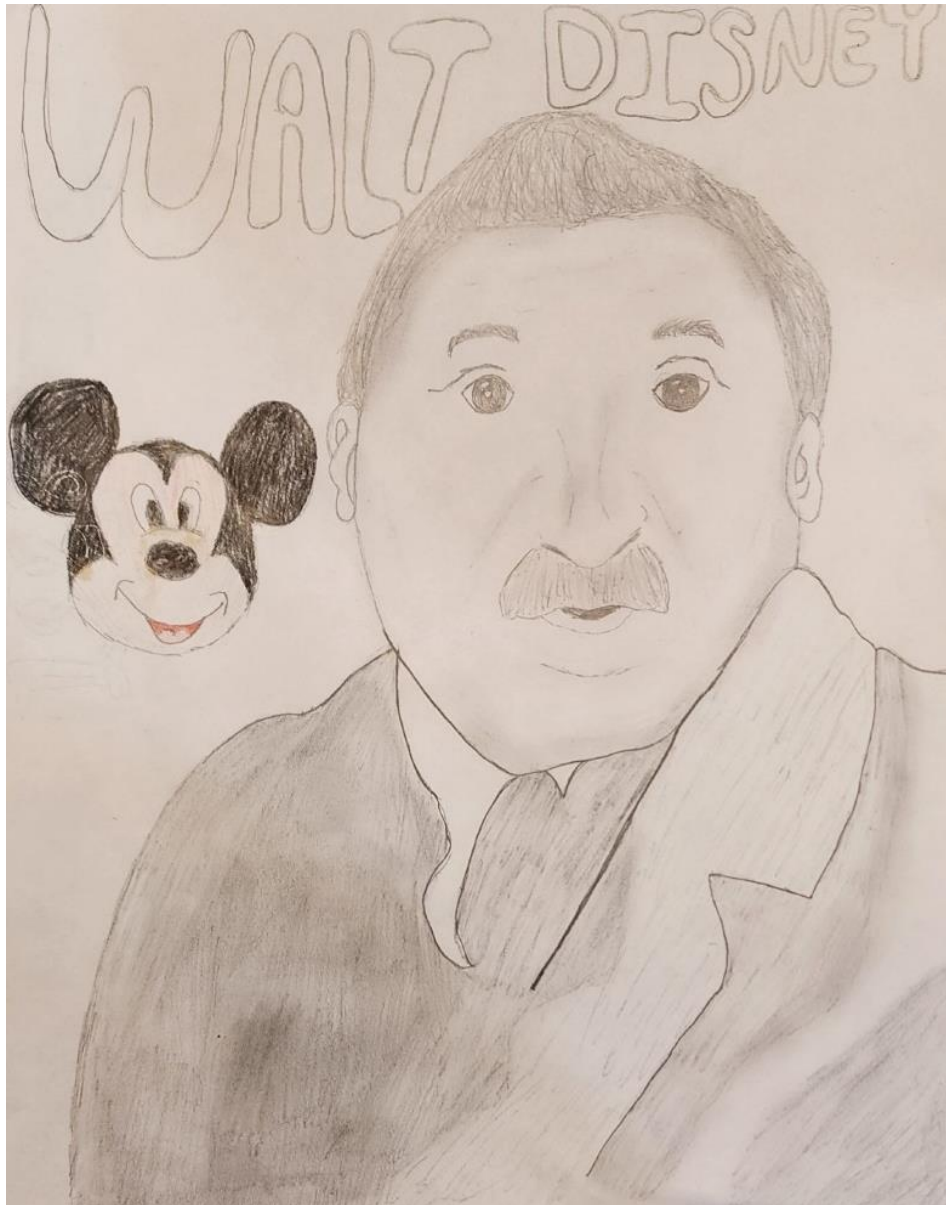
South Carolina, Middle School

Hero: Desmond Doss

Our Faithful Hero, Marker and colored pencil on paper

I chose Desmond Doss. My artwork represents him, because it shows who he was as a person. I believe he should be well remembered and honored for his courage. I chose neoclassicism because it helps show him as a historic hero, who deserves honor for his faith in God and what he did as a hero. My artwork's message matters because he was able to save our men from dying. It also matters to me because if it wasn't for him, most of the men who fought in that war would have lost their lives. I originally chose him because he was a marine like my dad was. What he did in World War II was incredible.

The strokes, colors, and positioning are meant to show loyalty, humbleness, righteousness, and shows that there is hope. The smoke on the red side with fire, is meant to show the destruction behind war. On the blue side, it's meant to show what impact Desmond Doss had, letting us know that there is hope, as long as we trust God. The ground where it goes from brown to green is to show if we didn't have Desmond Doss, we wouldn't have our beautiful home where we thrive.



Jessa Van Zee

South Dakota, Middle School

Hero: Walt Disney

Walt Disney, Colored pencil on paper

My American hero I choose to draw is Walt Disney. My artwork matters to me because without him creating all the Disney characters my childhood probably would not have been as happy and amazing without it. When I was little, I always watched Mickey mouse and other Disney shows. He impacted every kid back when he first made the characters and still today. He helped everyone have an amazing childhood and learn things at a young age. His shows often taught life lessons and taught us stuff we need to learn. Without the life lessons he taught through the shows I probably would not be who I am today. Walt Disney taught us that no matter what other people think you should always follow your dreams because people often doubted that he could do what he wanted. My artwork shows what he looked like when he was creating the Disney characters and has the most iconic character he ever made. Without him we would not have the fun and popular attraction of Disneyland today. Walt Disney raised most of us with his shows and was a huge part of a lot of adult and children's childhood. He always reminded us that no matter how old you are you still are a child at heart.



Minchan Kang

Tennessee, Middle School

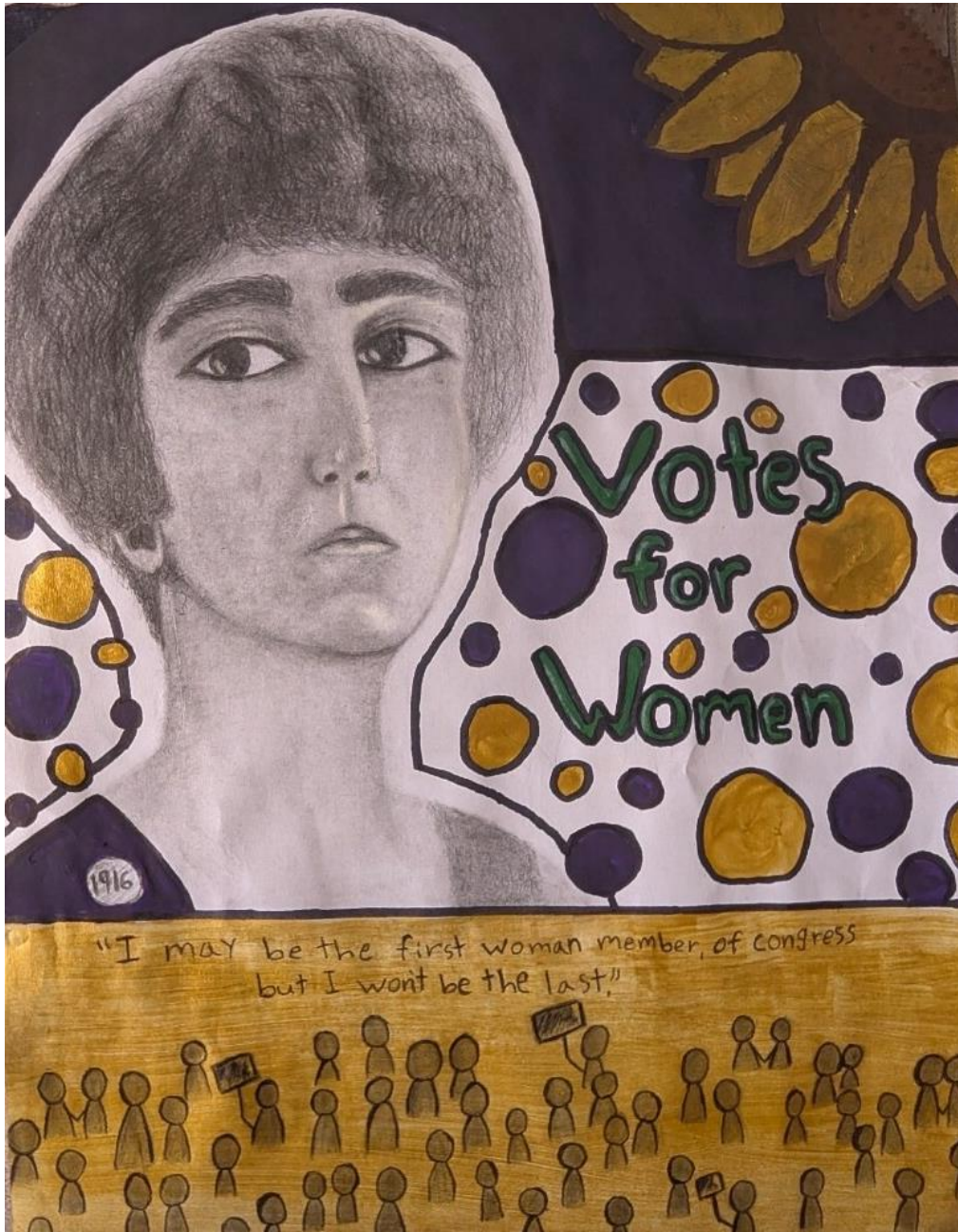
Hero: David Farragut

Battle of Mobile Bay: David Farragut, Acrylic on canvas

In my painting, I showed Admiral David Farragut in front of the Battle of Mobile Bay to connect the person with the important moment he was part of. I chose Farragut because I think he shows courage and strong leadership during the Civil War. His famous quote, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead," stood out to me because it shows how he stayed brave even when things were really dangerous.

I made Farragut bigger and put him in the front so he would be the main focus. In the background, I painted the battle with ships, smoke, and a fort to show how intense everything was. I wanted to show a difference between how calm and focused he looks and how chaotic the battle is behind him. I also used warmer colors on his face and darker colors on his uniform, so he stands out more.

This painting is connected to American Realism because it shows a real event in a simple and honest way. My goal was to honor Farragut and show how one person's leadership can make a big difference. I hope people who see my painting can feel the action of the battle and understand his strength as a leader.



Amelia Rose Frizzell

Texas, Middle School

Hero: Jeannette Rankin

The Voice for New Beginnings, Mixed media on paper

I chose Jeannette Rankin for my hero because she was a strong woman that helped advocate for women's rights to vote and helped give a voice to women like me around the world. She was the backbone in women's history. She has impacted our world and helped women gain the right to vote in Montana in 1914, and 2 years later she was elected to the House of Representatives. She helped women understand that their voice matters and can make a difference. After her term ended in 1917 later in 1940, she was reelected to the House of Representatives, and after she completed her terms, she still went on to advocate for women's rights and equality for women all around the world. I want my art to portray her long-living legacy and her impact on the world. The colors in my artwork are the colors used in the suffrage movement that were purple, white, and yellow/gold. The meaning of the colors are purple and signifies loyalty. White is the emblem of purity. Yellow/gold represents a light and life guiding supporters through the cause. They used purple, white, and yellow/gold mainly in America; while in the UK they used purple/violet, white, and green. The meanings of the UK colors were a little different than the American suffrage colors, but they still have deep symbolic meanings like purple/violet represents royalty, dignity, and the instinct for freedom. White represents purity in both private life and the political arena. Green symbolizes hope, growth, and new beginnings. Jeannette Rankin was the first congresswoman and started a new beginning, now there have been hundreds of congresswomen around the world that impact and shape our world to this day. Inspired by her achievements I worked extremely hard on this drawing that the paper started to disintegrate because I wanted to capture all her beauty. After I read about her, I learned that she was a truly amazing woman and she deserves to be drawn in a way that doesn't just capture her face but captures all the big aspects in her life that made her a long living legacy that still impacts this world today. "I may be the first woman member of Congress, but I won't be the last"



Liam Gustavson

Utah, Middle School

Hero: Frank Lloyd Wright

He's Got the Wright Stuff, Colored pencil on paper

I chose Frank Lloyd Wright as my American Hero. I really enjoy his buildings and legacy throughout all of American history, and my family goes back architecturally. My great grandpa was a very famous architect, Dean Gustavson. Dean's building style has many parallels with Wright's, all the way down to the straight lines and industrial, modern structures. I picked Fallingwater and Precisionism as my drawing subject and art style. Why? Wright's modern buildings add a new layer of detail to Precisionism's industrial and geometrical style with the natural element.



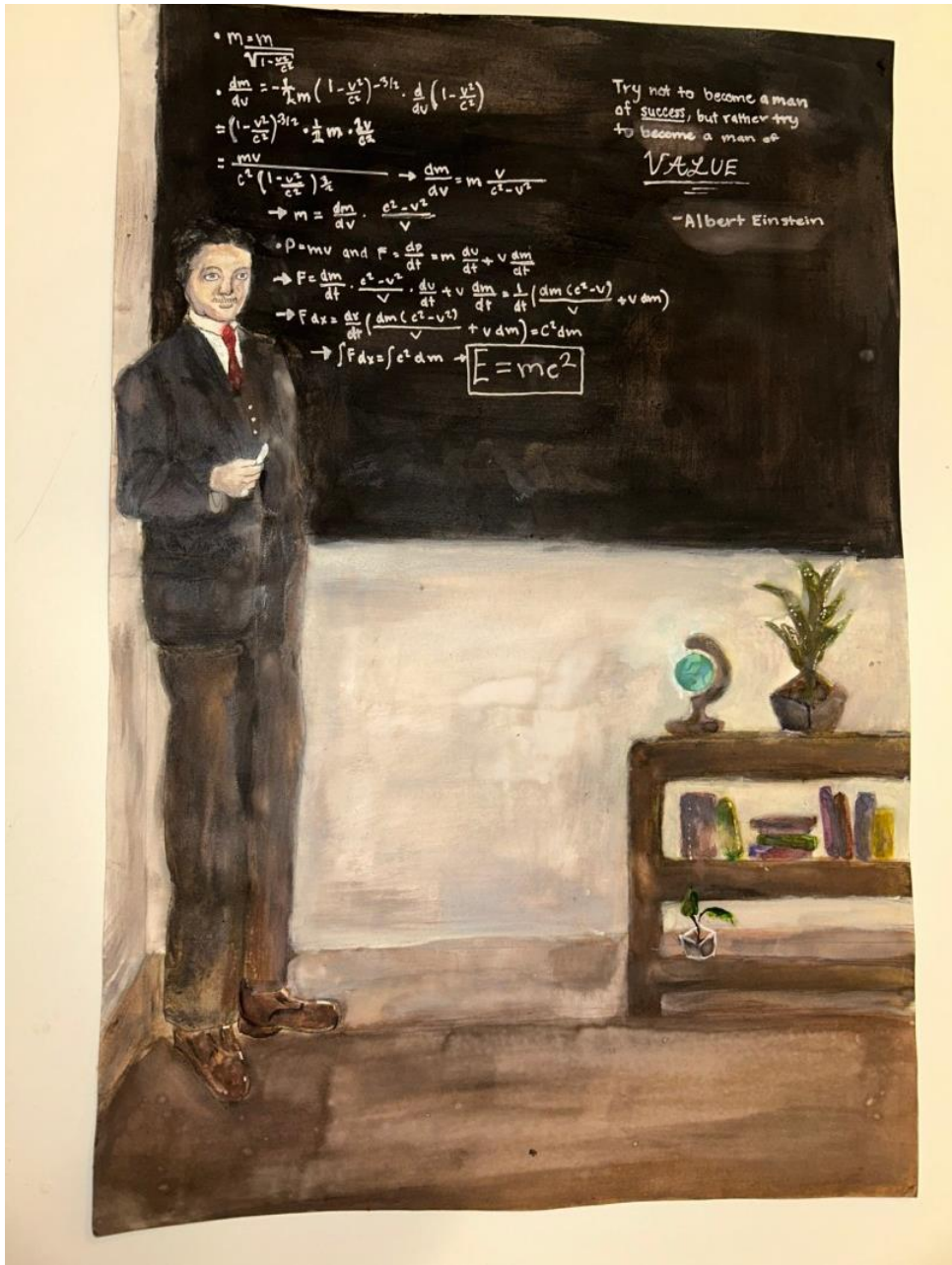
Laurie Ma

Virginia, Middle School

Hero: Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

Dr. Seuss, Mixed media on paper

For my artwork, I chose Dr. Seuss, whose real name was Theodor Seuss Geisel. When I was little, one of the first books I remember reading was *Green Eggs and Ham*. I laughed at the funny rhymes and strange food, and I really liked reading the words out loud. At first, I thought it was just a silly story, but later I understood that Dr. Seuss was teaching kids to be curious and open-minded. In my artwork, I wanted to show Dr. Seuss as a person full of imagination and creativity. His books are filled with unusual characters, playful words, and worlds that could never exist in real life, but they still teach real lessons to kids around the world. I strived to use lively lines and create a cheerful feeling because his stories make reading feel exciting. Dr. Seuss matters to me because he inspired children to love books and believe in their ideas. He showed that creativity can make people laugh, think, and feel brave. To me, living heroically can mean using imagination to encourage others and help them see the world in a brighter way. I decided to execute my artwork in the Contemporary Art style, to reflect the innovative nature of Dr. Seuss and show that he was ahead of his time. I tried to combine careful details with simple illustrations, referencing contemporary artists like Amy Cutler and Kara Walker.



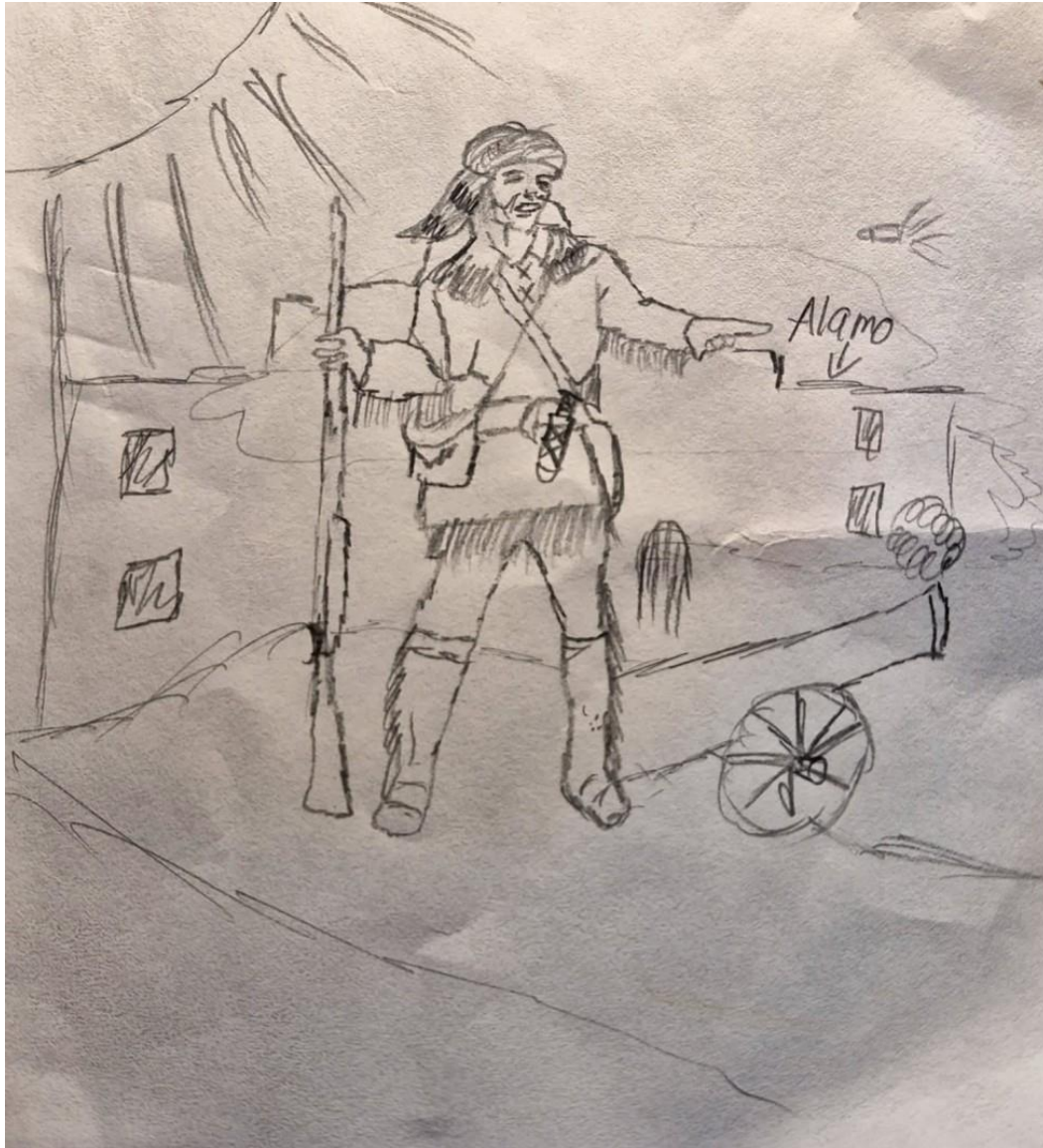
Catherine Li

Washington, Middle School

Hero: Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein, Watercolor on paper

In this artwork, I choose Albert Einstein as a heroic historical figure since he gives us deeper understanding and knowledge of space, time, physics, and technology. My artwork also represents Albert Einstein's iconic equation $E=mc^2$. It contributes to the discovery of nuclear technology that powers our everyday life with clean energy. Einstein's Theory of Relativity matters a lot to humanity because it is the basic understanding of the universe and it shapes the foundations of modern physics, especially the knowledge of space and time, that space and time are interconnected. Albert Einstein also taught nations throughout the world that man's point of life isn't just success, but his contributions and value. Albert Einstein's work impacts not just the world but also me, because knowing without his knowledge or the use of photoelectric effect, I would never be able to take photos in this generation of America. One point we should be inspired by Albert Einstein includes the way he studies, understands, and sees what others might not notice. While looking at Albert Einstein's example as an American hero, the most valuable way we honor Einstein is by studying the works he left behind for our generation and making our time count.



Izabella King

West Virginia, Middle School

Hero: Davey Crockett

Davey Crockett, Pencil on paper

I chose Davey Crockett because I just learned about him in history class. Born on August 17th, 1786, in eastern Tennessee, Davey Crockett was an American folk hero, soldier, and politician. A frontiersman known for wearing a coon skin cap and wrestling a grizzly bear, he is commonly referred to as “King of the Wild Frontier”. Legend has it that he was the best hunter in Tennessee and that he never missed a shot. My artwork represents Davey Crockett during his courageous defense of the Alamo against the Mexican army in the Texas Revolution. Crockett fought bravely but he died at the Alamo on March 6th, 1836, at the age of 49. Texas then went on to win their independence from Mexico in 1836 and then, in 1845 Texas became the 28th state in the United States. He teaches us to be brave, courageous, and to do what is right. Crockett lived with the motto “Be always sure you’re right-then go ahead!” I took inspiration from multiple artists and sketches that other people made and added them all together. I drew the Alamo in the background of Davey Crockett fighting at the Alamo to free Texas from Mexico.



Hosanna Peterson

Wisconsin, Middle School

Hero: Francis S. “Gabby” Gabreski

Gabby Gabreski: Ace of the Skies, Pencil on paper

Francis S. “Gabby” Gabreski, an ace pilot, flew for the United States Airforce in both World War II and the Korean War with excellence, perseverance and courage. Over his 27 years of devoted service to our country, during wartime and peace, he modeled steadfast patriotism.

Using photorealism with stark contrast of black and white, I sought to cause Gabby, himself, to strikingly stand out as a hero. I honor Gabby Gabreski for his courageous service to our nation, and I also have a personal connection with his story. My great-grandfather likewise served during WWII, and like Gabby, he was shot down behind enemy lines. Gabby Gabreski survived and flew once more, unfailing in his commitment to protect our nation.

Looking at my drawing, Gabby’s heroism can clearly be seen through his confident stance and resolute gaze. Though strong, his face reflects his warm and humble personality. The background displays a F-86A Sabrejet, one of the many types of aircraft Gabby flew as a legendary ace pilot. Gabby looks to the horizon, representing his admirable and lifelong commitment to defend and preserve the United States of America. My art honors Gabby Gabreski’s heroic, loyal devotion to our country.



Faith R. Gomez

Wyoming, Middle School

Hero: Elizabeth Ann Seton

A Brave Educator, Marker on paper

Elizabeth Ann Seton (born 1774, died 1821) was hard-working, hopeful, charitable, and a brave woman. She was bold in her faith and stepped out of the traditional role of a woman in that era, following God publicly outside of the home, she stepped further out the line by advocating for education among females, and outside the box for her humanitarian work with her communities. All this plus her charity and faith lead to her becoming the first American born canonized saint in the Catholic Church.

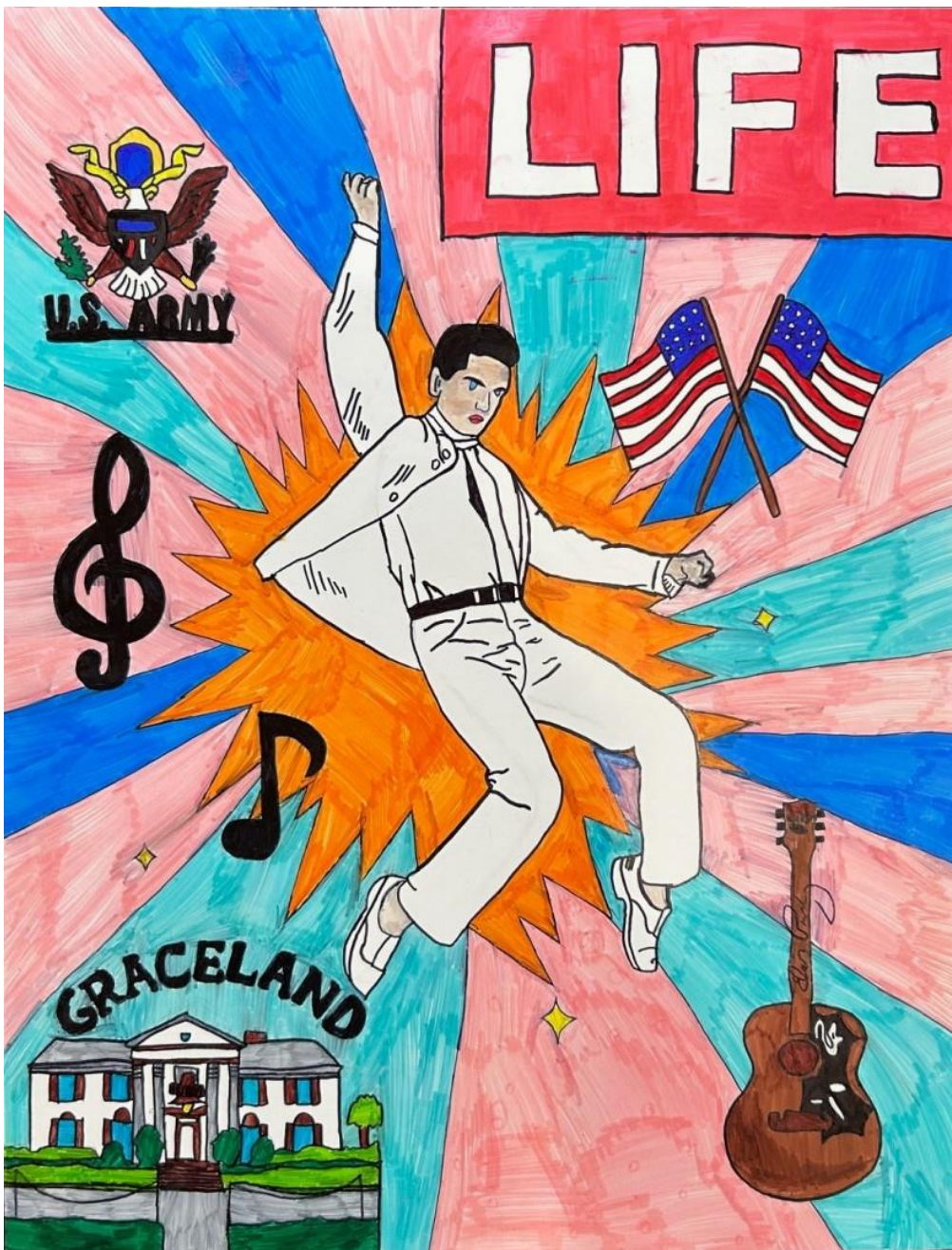
Elizabeth is important to our country because she laid the groundwork for the current parochial school system. Boldly modeling her faith, freely helping educate young women and giving herself to charity. Her actions were heroically empowered those without a voice or means. Elizabeth didn't compete for a man's role, she carved a parallel path helping women become equally essential to lead their family in faith, education, and charity.

The art style I chose was Pop art because of the bold lines and the bright contrasting colors. The bold lines represent education of women, the bright contrasting colors represent her charity, faith and perseverance represent her because she was not afraid to step outside the lines.



High School State Winners





Aspyn Speake

Alabama, High School

Hero: Elvis Presley

Elvis Presley: The Patriotic King, Pencil and marker on board

I chose to sketch Elvis Presley on the cover of LIFE magazine. I chose bright colors and a Pop Art style to make the image stand out and feel energetic, just like Elvis' music. Elvis Presley is still known as the "King of Rock and Roll" and the sketch of him dancing highlights his influence on music and culture.

In my sketch, I included the American flag and an Army symbol to show Elvis's patriotism and his service in the United States Army. I also drew Graceland to represent his family ties and lasting impact on music traditions, as it is now a National Historic Landmark and museum. His guitar is another important element. It was more than just a prop; it helped shape his early sound and recognizable image. All of these images highlight Elvis' achievements.

"Elvis Presley: The Patriotic King" represents what a true American patriot can be. Even at the height of his fame, he chose to serve his country. This stands out to me because it shows how a celebrity can lead by example in a meaningful way. Elvis continues to represent the values of the United States. His legacy shows how serving your nation and community while setting a positive example can inspire future generations.



Hannah Lofgren

Arizona, High School

Hero: William Mayo

Mayo Family Legacy, Pencil on paper

My name is Hannah Lofgren. The title of my artwork is Mayo Family Legacy. The American heroes I chose were Dr. William W. Mayo and his two sons Dr. Charles H. Mayo and Dr. William J. Mayo. Their vision helped build one of the world's greatest medical institutions and they were among the most successful doctors in America. Because of them, countless lives have been saved - including my dad's. He needed a kidney transplant and was able to get this done one year ago. I am grateful he is here with us today, being a blessing for our family and bringing us joyful and happy days. This piece, Mayo Family Legacy, bridges the past and present. It depicts the family based on a historical photograph, set against the backdrop of the modern architecture of today's Phoenix Mayo Clinic, honoring the location of my father's surgery and showing what their vision became. I am so incredibly blessed that the Mayo Clinic expanded its world-class care from Minnesota to Phoenix, right near our home. I want to honor their vision, dedication, and the countless lives they continue to save. The Mayo family serves as an inspiration to others who aspire to follow in their footsteps. Their remarkable journey from small town doctors to the well-known hospital system that it is today, demonstrates how a "can-do" attitude motivates those around them to dream bigger and act boldly.



Madeline Phillips

Arkansas, High School

Hero: Sally Ride

Ride, Sally Ride, Oil on canvas

Space seems like a dark, black abyss, but I just needed a different lens to see the colors that now inspire me. Sally Ride saw this darkness, feared it, faced it, and became the first American woman in space. The women who make these big achievements open my eyes to the colors of my future in science. Sally Ride, Christina Koch, Mae Jemison, and so many more women that work behind the scenes towards space exploration handed me the lens to engineer my own destiny. “The stars don’t look bigger, but they do look brighter.” - Sally Ride

Sally Ride proves that these stars shining above me are the very sparks igniting my path toward engineering. The visor that reflects these light stars shows how women inspire each other to do greater things by sharing and pursuing their own dreams.



Alyssa Liu

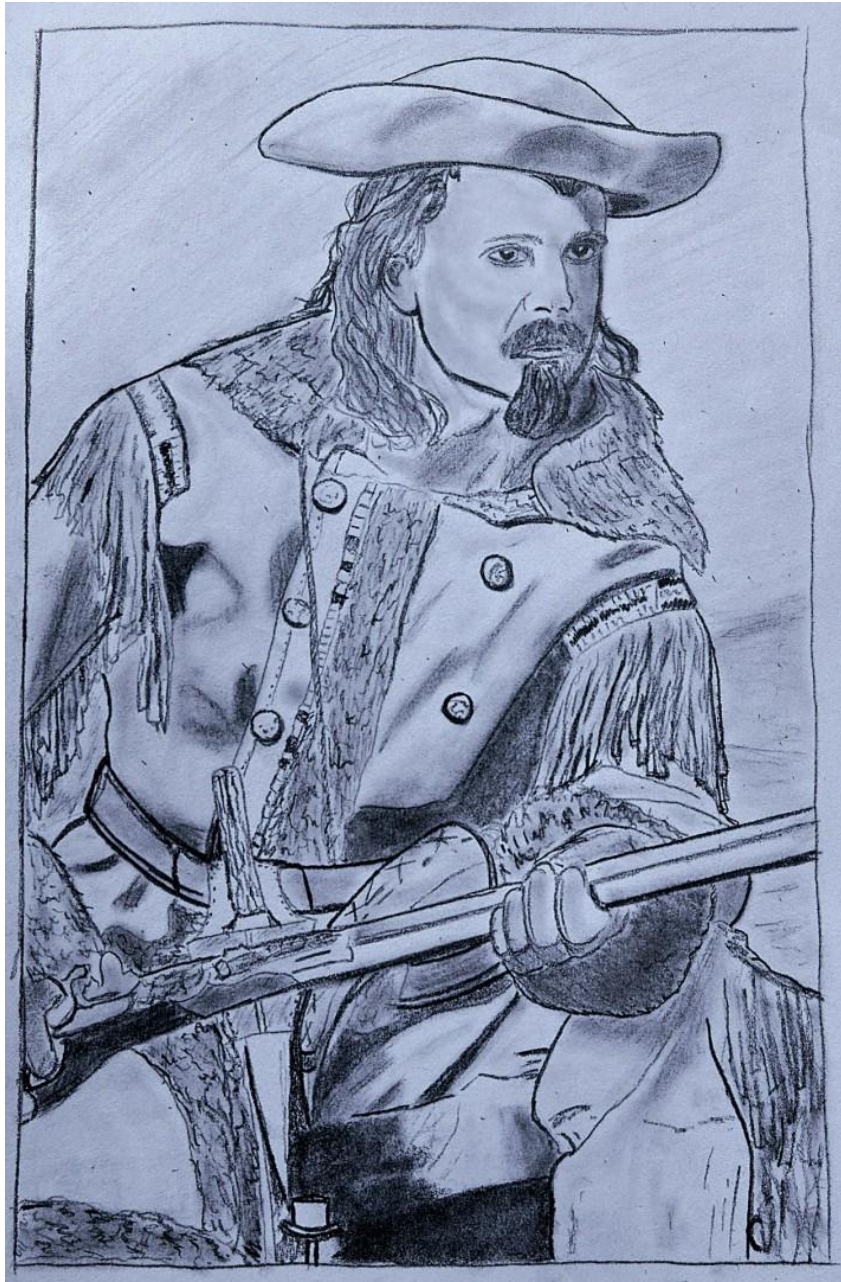
California, High School

Hero: Clara Barton

Clara Barton, Oil on canvas

Growing up, my grandmother would often tell me stories about her experience as a nurse. She described the exhaustion of working through the middle of the night and the urgency of trying to save someone whose life was slipping away. She also said that one of the hardest parts of the job was the heartbreak that remained when, despite doing everything possible, a patient could not be saved. Hearing her experiences made me realize how often nurses stand beside people during the hardest moments of their lives while receiving far less recognition than they deserve.

Because of this, I developed a deep admiration for those nurses who dedicate themselves to caring for others, including Clara Barton. For my piece, I chose to portray her in her younger years and emphasize the red crosses on her nurse's veil and shoulder as symbols of her service and sacrifice. Clara Barton also went on to found the American Red Cross, creating an organization that would continue helping people long after her own lifetime. To me, she represents a kind of heroism that is often overlooked: not dramatic acts of glory, but the decision to keep showing up for others even when the work is exhausting and painful. Her legacy matters not only through the lasting impact of the Red Cross, but also through showing the significance of caring for strangers in moments of crisis. Clara Barton reminds us that heroism is not always loud. Sometimes heroism means staying awake through the night, holding someone's hand when there are no guarantees.



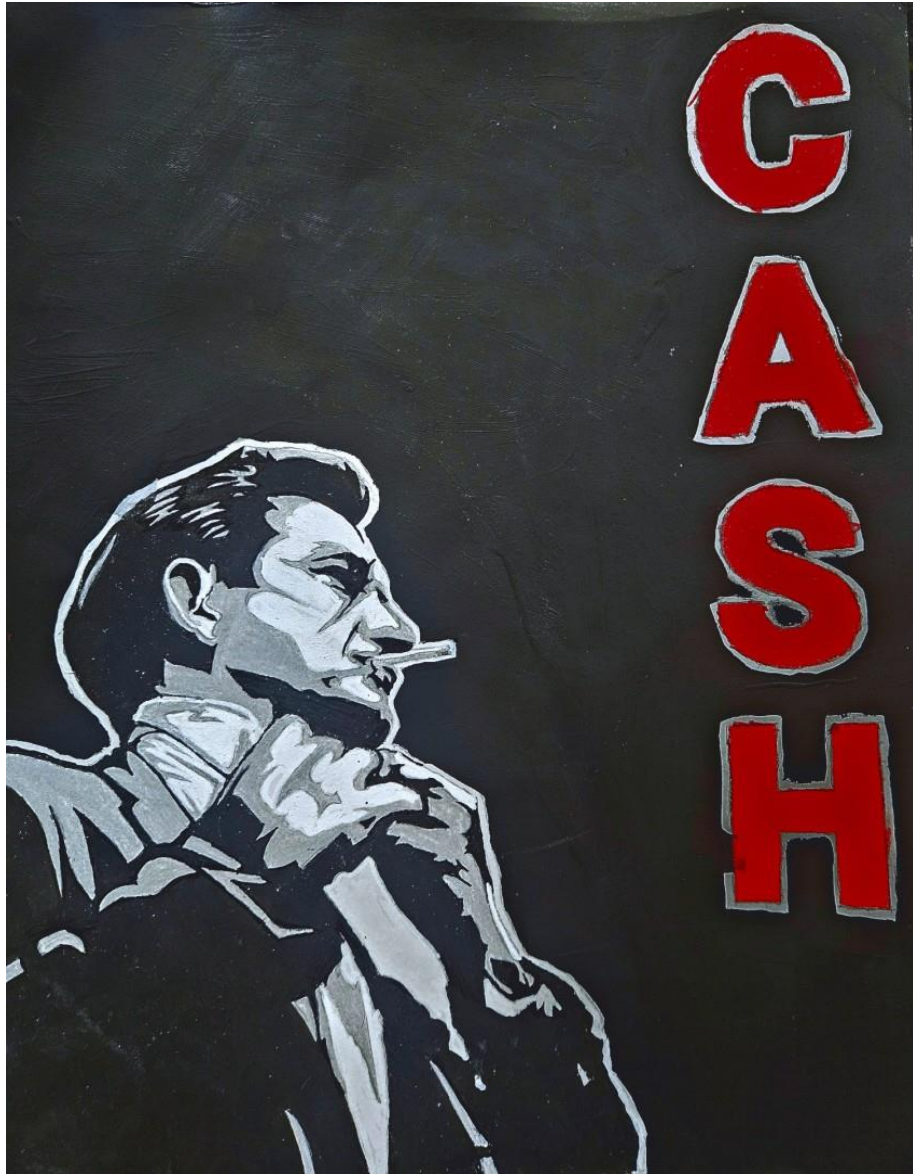
Charlize K. Wardle

Colorado, High School

Hero: William Fredrick "Buffalo Bill" Cody

Buffalo Bill - The Face of the Frontier, Pencil on paper

I chose William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody. I have always been fascinated by the Wild West. What better way to capture that than a portrait of Buffalo Bill. He lived and grew up on the American Frontier and watched as it was fenced off and made accessible by railroads. He created his Wild West show, which immortalized the era of free roaming cowboys and rough riders. Without Buffalo Bill, the Frontier could have been another forgotten story. Today, we have dozens of movies about this time, and everyone romanticizes about gunslingers, Indians, cowboys, and the pioneer spirit. This portrait of Buffalo Bill is based on one of his younger photographs. I tried to depict him in a realistic light. I used graphite because it has the same color scale as older photos. He represents the American Frontier and its opportunity as well as showmanship and ingenuity. Buffalo Bill was an awesome example of the American dream. Buffalo Bill was raised as a simple farmer, but was a buffalo hunter, U.S. army scout, Pony Express rider, tradesman, showman, and actor. Buffalo Bill’s exciting and varied life shows that, if you have the determination to try, you will succeed. Buffalo Bill is definitely worth admiring as an American hero.



Halana Ann Crowley

Connecticut, High School

Hero: Johnny Cash

Man In Black, Mixed media on canvas

Rising from poverty in Dyess, Arkansas, to becoming one of the world's most renowned country musicians, Johnny Cash is a prime example of the American Dream. I chose to focus my artwork on him because of this, as he helped shape America's culture significantly through music, defining the grit of America. In my artwork, I specifically wanted to showcase why he earned the nickname "The Man In Black". I chose to use the Pop Art style while incorporating a bit of minimalism for the background, because this style was most prevalent during the peak of his career. I emphasized his black attire by keeping the entire art piece black and white, except for his last name, Cash. I did this to reflect the distinct outlaw spirit in his music. I made his last name red to give the piece a pop of color and contrast to the black and white scene. I chose red because, in the American flag, the color represents valor and hardiness. Johnny Cash displayed these qualities throughout his lifetime and career. Whether facing extreme poverty or battling addiction. Ultimately, this display of hardiness and perseverance is why I chose the color red for his last name.



Abigail M. Lyons

Delaware, High School

Hero: Nellie Gray

Signs of life, Acrylic on canvas

For my artwork I chose an American hero who's brave enough to speak up for those who don't have a voice. Her name is Nellie Gray. She started the nationwide March call "march for life" which is an Anti-abortion protest. I believe life starts at conception but in the 21st century people believe that it's their right to decide to kill an innocent baby like it is nothing. Just because they don't have a voice doesn't mean they don't deserve a chance at life. When a baby is in the womb the grow over time at six week you can hear a heartbeat at 6 weeks the baby will have grown all their limbs and from there, they grow until they are fully ready to come into this world. When the inhuman act of an abortion is performed, they literally take apart the baby in the womb a scrape at the uterus until it's empty. We are killing innocent baby stripping them from their home before they could even come into this world. If the baby had already been born no one would question whether they deserve a life. Why is it different when the baby isn't born yet?



Britian Major

Florida, High School

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Unite Them, Oil on canvas

My painting of Abraham Lincoln displays the moral and psychological weight of leading a nation in fall out during the civil war. Lincoln was chosen as my hero because he uniquely carried the responsibility of preserving the union through its sole civil war, the burden is often overshadowed. This work draws from neoclassical traditions through its use of symbolism, allegory, and a moral narrative all while empathizing emotional realism. Symbolism throughout the painting is seen in the Emancipation Proclamation as a symbol of national rupture and moral progress, behind Lincoln is smoke and a battlefield reinforcing that his decisions are inseparable from violence, at his feet lies a worn American flag that represents a fractured country while a sword and wreath rest beside him suggesting tension between war and honor. A biblical allegory is seen in the angel standing behind Lincoln with a face covered by her wing symbolizing grief that cannot be fully expressed. She serves as a silent witness to the historical and emotional burden he carries. My intent was to remind people that true leadership often involves carrying immense invisible weight while still moving forward.



Mia Elizabeth Cossick

Georgia, High School

Hero: Desmond Doss

***One More*, Oil and modeling paste on wood panel**

Bullets whizzed by like angry hornets, acrid gun smoke stinging his eyes. Desmond Doss belly-crawled to a wounded man, strapping him to a makeshift stretcher and lowering him to safety. Then he went back for another, ignoring orders to retreat. "Lord," he prayed, "help me get just one more."

May 5, 1944 -- the Battle of Hacksaw Ridge on Okinawa -- was one of the bloodiest days in World War II. Rather than retreat, Doss stayed atop the ridge and rescued over 75 wounded men, even treating some Japanese soldiers. Remarkably, he did this without touching a weapon. A devout Christian, Doss served as a medic, saving lives, not taking them. Ridiculed at first, his courage ultimately earned everyone's respect and the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Doss's story speaks to me because I believe convictions are worth standing up for, even under persecution. My generation needs this message: standing for your country and for your values is not always popular, but Desmond Doss proved that you can be a hero without compromising your beliefs. He shone with the light of his faith, even on one of the darkest days in human history.

To capture the struggle of war, I painted in the Realism tradition using oil on an 18"x24" birch wood panel with heavily textured modeling paste ground symbolizing the grit of battle. Black and white honors the era and shows how war drains life from a landscape. Doss wears his medic's pack, his hand reaching out to save "just one more."



Lilia Gregg

Illinois, High School

Hero: Harriet Tubman

***The Conductor*, Oil on canvas**

"The Conductor" is a portrait oil painting of Harriet Tubman I created to celebrate Tubman's incredible and restless work in the history of civil rights in the United States. Influenced by Grant Wood, American Gothic (1930), oil on board, Art Institute of Chicago, my portrait of Tubman's striking composure and wisdom-filled eyes is surrounded by the complex forests of Maryland at night, the North star, a young Freedom seeker Tubman leads, and a torch held by a possible pursuer of runaway slaves, important aspects of her story. I chose to frame this painting as a snapshot of a moment in time for Tubman as she navigated these complex woods. My choice for this immersive background gives viewers a chance to feel as though they are there in this moment of time and feel the intensity of these historical voyages.

The young Freedom Seeker, who is an aspect that frames Tubman's portrait, is not fully shown here; reminding us that Tubman impacted the lives of so many. The number of people she directly and indirectly freed from the physical and mental chains of slavery was tremendous and cannot be illustrated by one full face, that is why I leave it up to be completed.

An analogy I included is a modern light that reflects on Tubman and the young Freedom Seeker's face. There is an aspect of interaction between Tubman in the painting and the viewer, creating fluidity in time. Our light is cast on Tubman's face, and her eyes are looking at us. We can interact with her possible thoughts and actions in the present moment. This allows for Tubman herself to be included as part of our conversations today.

My artwork represents an older image of Tubman; her skin is worn to display her deeply influential experiences. She lived by the words, "freedom or die." She moved ahead in freeing people as quickly as possible; not waiting for legislation. She is an important figure to look to for passion and grit—which are really what is needed to stand for what you believe in and make positive change.



Liberty McDowell

Indiana, High School

Hero: George Washington

This Union Shall Endure, Colored pencil on paper

I chose George Washington as the American Hero for my work of art. I depict the moment this noble and great leader humbly knelt in the snow of Valley Forge, imploring the Heavens for direction and aid at a decisive moment in our nation's struggle for independence. Washington's supplication represents a hinge-point in the American Revolution and embodies a dependency on God that remains vital to our nation's future hope for success.

I believe there has never been a more critical time for our nation to remember the illustrious legacies of our heroes throughout history. By depicting familiar images of sacrifice and triumph over tragedy, I want to highlight defining moments, demonstrating how each event—spanning the decades—influenced those that followed.

By presenting Washington in the center, in his posture of prayer, I want to convey the necessity of a national return to this state of humility and an acknowledgement of our dependence upon God as the solution to the problems we face in our day, just as it was in Washington's.

I drew inspiration from artist Arnold Friberg's "Prayer at Valley Forge," though I chose to depict Washington facing east—toward the future. I also learned that Friberg created his iconic work to commemorate America's 200th anniversary, just as I honor our nation's 250th through my own contribution.



Bryson Andrew Snawder

Kentucky, High School

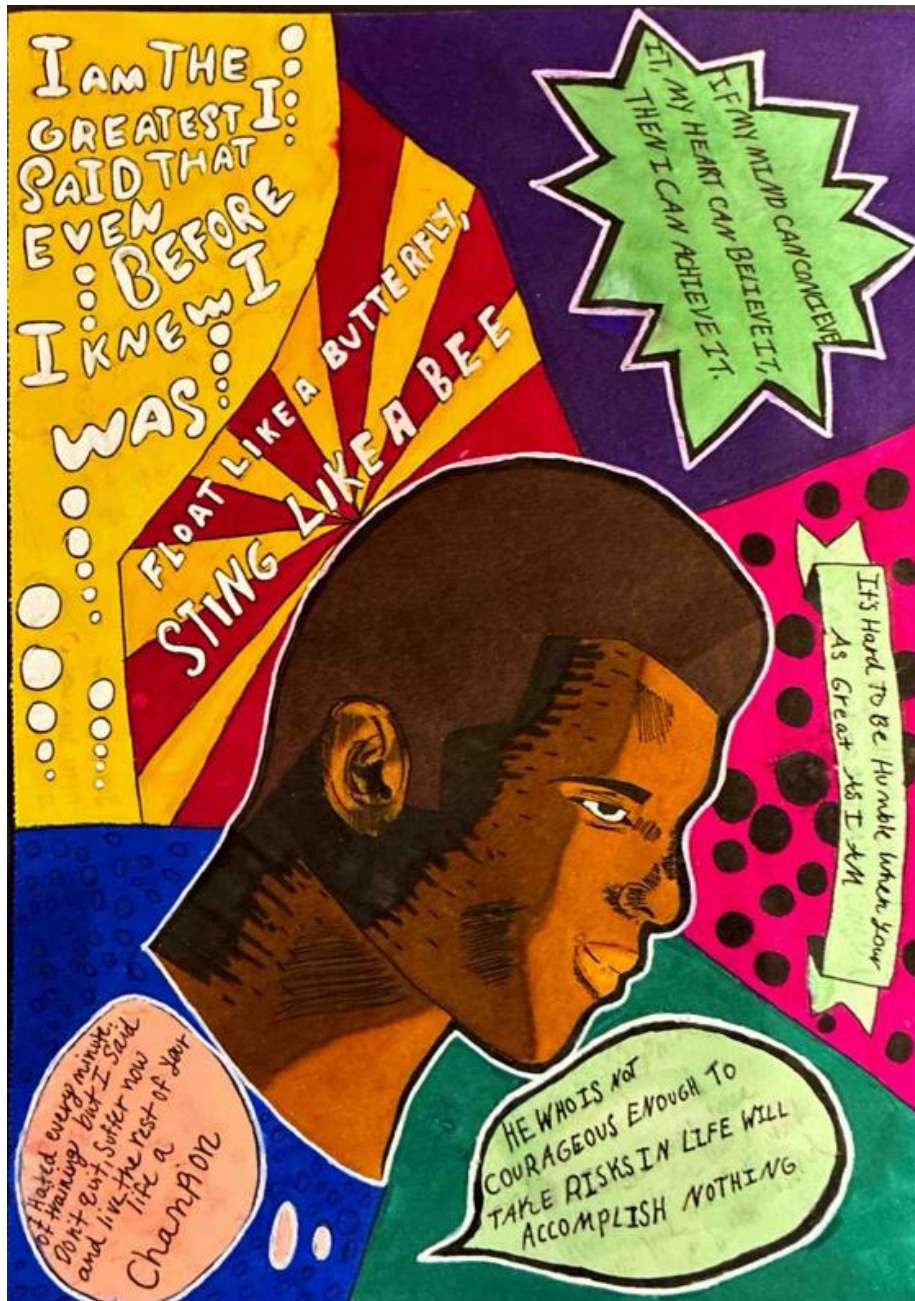
Hero: Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe, Mixed media on paper

My piece has been heavily influenced by Edgar Allan Poe. I drew Edgar Allan Poe as the main subject, but the rest of the artwork brings the rest of the pieces together. I drew a skeleton behind his right shoulder for two reasons: for the dark theme that he was famous for, and for his mother, who would always have his back. The raven in the top right symbolizes one, of the most, famous poems he's ever written, "The Raven." In the background, I drew a balance scale that symbolizes the balance between life and death and also symbolizes the unfairness between the rich and the poor, for the rich connections will always win against a skilled poor man.

Edgar Allan Poe profoundly shaped the modern world through his groundbreaking innovations in Literature that continue to resonate across genres and media. As the pioneer of the detective fiction genre, with stories like "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," he laid the foundation for iconic characters from Sherlock Holmes, to countless crime novels, TV shows, and films today. His mastery of psychological horror, macabre themes, and atmospheric suspense in works like "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Raven" established the blueprint for modern horror, gothic fiction, and thrillers, influencing authors such as Stephen King, filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock, and even elements of popular culture ranging from Halloween aesthetics to rock music and video games. Poe's exploration of the human psyche, madness, and the uncanny still captivates readers and creators, cementing his legacy as a timeless architect of mystery and the macabre in our entertainment and literary landscape.

This piece matters because it shows one of the things he believed most: "status should not be overridden by skill." It shows that the rich should not win everything against the poor just because of their status or connections, and that even when you don't know, someone will always have your back to lift you when you fall.



Hailey Hudson

Louisiana, High School

Hero: Muhammad Ali

Behind The Hero, Mixed media on paper

I chose Muhammad Ali as the subject of my work due to how much his story and life impacted me personally. His attitude towards life and how he always seemed to tackle things head-on has inspired me in many aspects of my life, from starting my own home bakery to always striving to learn more. Which is why with my piece, I wanted to convey more than the default image of him that comes to most people's minds. This led me to choose the pop art style from the 1950s - 1960s, as I wanted to choose an art style he would have resonated with. This piece was meant to show a rounded view of who he was and how he thought through the quotes used to make up the background, as well as the choice to use an art style he would have been familiar with. I was heavily inspired by the comic book style of the 60s, with the way I did the shadows, and chose the white outlines. In the end, I think I accomplished my goal of giving my piece depth and perhaps making someone stop for a moment and think about the man he was instead of just what was shown.



Margaret R. Lynch

Maine, High School

Hero: Meriwether Lewis and William Clark

Explorers Of The New Frontier, Acrylic and oil on canvas

In 1804, the year the Lewis and Clark expedition began, the United States possessed over 530 million acres of uncharted wilderness. Stretching from just west of the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, this massive area of land was known as the Louisiana Territory. It had been purchased from the French the previous year, doubling the size of our young nation. President Thomas Jefferson formerly commissioned an expedition to explore the newly purchased land, writing, "We shall delineate with correctness the great arteries of this great country: those who come after us will extend the ramifications as they become acquainted with them and fill up the canvas we begin." This expedition, known as The Corps of Discovery and led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, faced immense dangers including starvation, treacherous rivers, freezing temperatures and menacing wildlife. They traveled 8,000 miles from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean in two years and succeeded in overcoming obstacles and extreme challenges. They prioritized tenacity and persistence throughout their journey, repeatedly inditing the phrase, "We proceeded on." Lewis and Clark are two of America's greatest heroes. As leaders of the first U.S-sponsored trans-continental expedition, they transformed American knowledge of the continent and rapidly advanced our nation's expansion from coast to coast. They established peaceful relations with dozens of Native American tribes, recorded the geography of the Pacific Northwest, charted the first accurate maps of the area, documented over 300 new plant and animal species, and mapped a route from Missouri to the Pacific Ocean. My painting depicts Lewis and Clark, standing on high ground to survey the vast expanse of wilderness they and their men were traversing. The towering billow of clouds mimics the monumental peaks of the various mountain ranges the expedition crossed and frames the legendary men against the horizon. It was influenced by N.C. Wyeth's American Realist Style, combining dramatic lighting and bold colors to create a heroic setting for the figures.



Etian Huang

Maryland, High School

Hero: Gordon Chung-Hoon

Admiral Gordon Chung-Hoon, Acrylic and oil on canvas

My portrait honors Gordon Chung-Hoon, a decorated naval admiral who showcased great heroism and served as an example of breaking racial barriers. Being the first Asian American officer to attain the rank of admiral, he demonstrated resilience and bravery, qualities I hope to capture through my portrait.

My work is influenced by the American portrait style of John Singer Sargent, known for his refined realism and dignified depictions of figures. Being a part of the American realism movement, Sargent utilized soft and natural lighting, confident poses and touches of impressionism, elements I incorporated into my piece. I focused on subtle lighting to emphasize Chung-Hoon's upward gaze and composed expression, carefully rendering his naval uniform. The realistic detail reflects integrity and honor, while the soft contrast highlights his humanity, alluding to his gallant actions aboard the USS Sigsbee during World War II, where he suppressed Japanese air attacks while commanding the damaged destroyer to safety.

To me, Gordon Chung-Hoon wasn't just a war hero, but also a pioneer for the AAPI community. As a Chinese American, he represents that leadership and courage is not bound by race, breaking the mold of stereotypes in the military. His legacy, honored through the USS Chung-Hoon, serves as a reminder of America's diverse and valiant people.



Samantha Wiggin

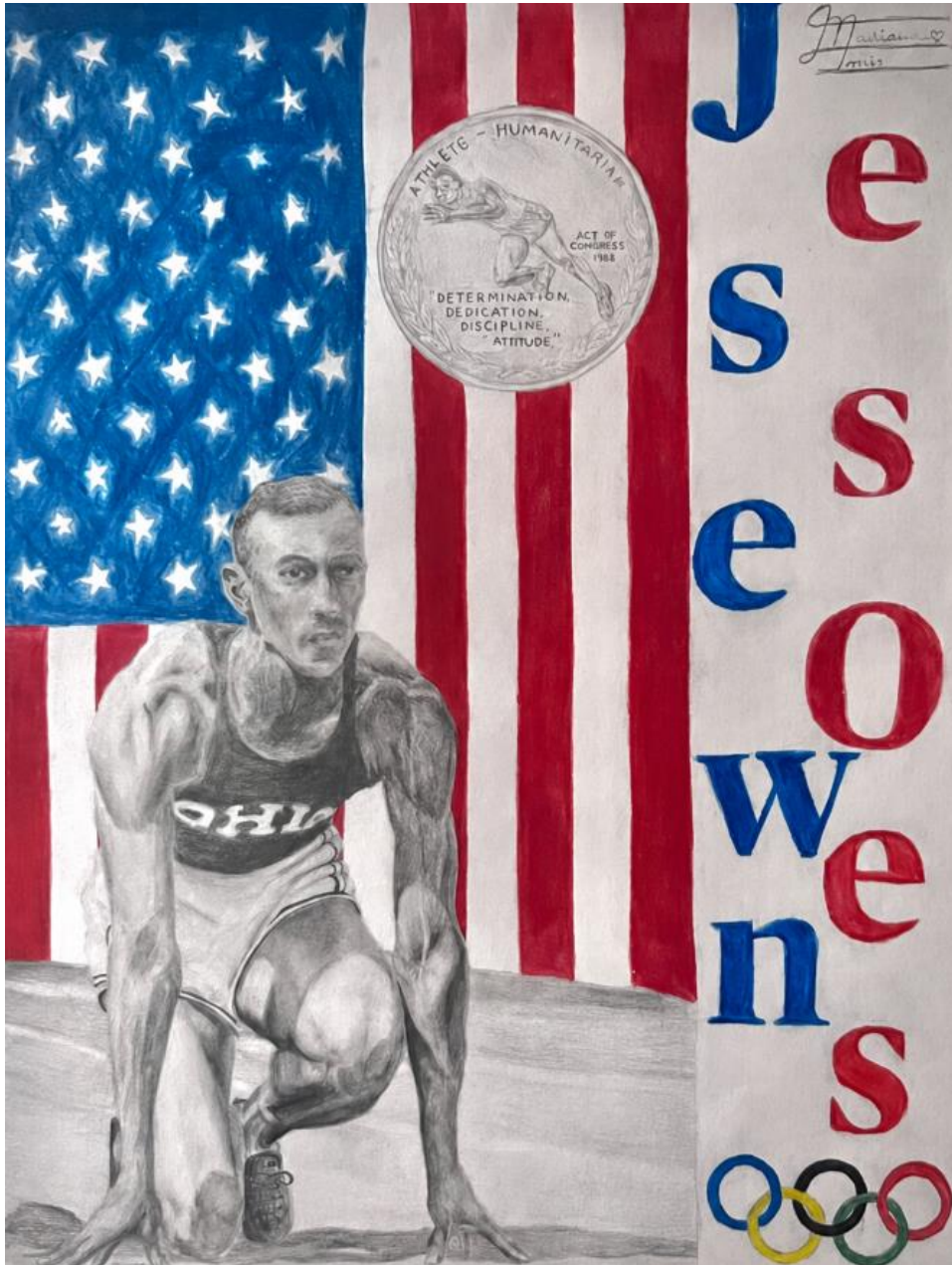
Massachusetts, High School

Hero: Theodore Roosevelt

America Embodied: A Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt, Graphite on paper

This drawing I've made of Theodore Roosevelt was influenced by many things. Since I have to choose an art movement to credit as inspiration, I'll say it was a mixture of photorealism and contemporary. Contemporary can be called modern art, but really it is the sum of all we have learned from and been influenced by all the art in the history of our nation. I also love photorealism because it captures the tiny details so often missed. For example, the horse's ears in this drawing are flicked back, straining to catch even the faintest command from its rider. Its nostrils are flared, prepared to speed into action at just a moment's notice. Roosevelt is sitting evenly in the saddle, his military bearing incredibly obvious even when he is simply posing for a picture.

I couldn't capture his life in just one image, because Theodore Roosevelt had a life much too full to be put on paper. If the essence of America could be embodied in a single person, it might very well have been Theodore Roosevelt. He was no stranger to grief and hardship but worked hard at everything he did and accomplished so much for the good of the country both in and out of office. He embodied the values we so desperately need in this country right now. Maybe it is by studying how he lived that we can see with greater clarity what we once were and must again strive to be: One nation under God.



Madison Imus

Michigan, High School

Hero: Jesse Owens

Jesse Owens: American Olympic Inspiration, Colored pencil on paper

My intent with this piece of art is to represent Owens and his accomplishments, while also showing his passions and talent. I personally am an athlete as well and I find Owens to be incredibly inspiring. Owens won four Olympic medals at his first and only trip to the Olympic Games and competed close to home from me. In Ann Arbor, Michigan, Owens broke three world records in the span of forty-five minutes. His peak athletic capability was during the time of Hitler's dictatorship. Adolf Hitler had incredibly strong opinions on what he deemed the "master race" or what qualified as, "Aryan traits," of which Owens did not fit under. To be Aryan was to be pale, blonde, and have blue eyes, while Owens was brown, with dark brown hair and brown eyes. Owens proved to Hitler and all those believing in his policies that the only true race is the Human Race, and that everyone, not just Aryan men, are strong, powerful, and capable of doing brilliant things. I felt drawing Owens in the way I did, represented him, not only through the portrait but also through the random pops of color. Behind him is the United States flag, due to his winning of four Olympic medals and setting four world records for them. To the right and above Owens is a medal awarded to him from Congress, recognizing him for his Acts of humanitarianism. Under his name, on the far right of this piece is the Olympic logo used from 1913 to 1936, which is the time in which he competed.

Aiden Schneider

Minnesota, High School

Hero: Ronald Reagan

Reagan, Ink on paper



On the 250th anniversary of the United States of America I have decided to draw Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the USA who many believe to have been the best president in 20th century America, if not all of American history in general and the reason for me picking him for my subject in this event is because I find myself fascinated by his methods of leading the nation and how it was so effective that even today he is credited with being the best president of the US by a lot of people throughout the country despite the evidence pointing strongly otherwise with how much debt he put the nation into. The main point that I want to bring up regarding Reagan and why I have chosen him in particular to draw, is his obsession with his image and what he shows to the public through the confidence in what he does, even going as far as to take a bullet, survive, and walk out of the hospital in his crutch (after that nurses had insisted he shouldn't) marking him as the first president to survive an assassination attempt just to prove a point to the people that times are changing in America and that they will be able to push through the hard times, showing that he knows what the people want to see out of the president which I think would most likely be a reassurance that America will be able to push through the stagnant economy that everyone was going through in the late 20th century, and I'm sure that his performance was aided by his previous careers in the entertainment industry so he might've known what people were attracted to when they were looking for a person to trust and feel good about trusting with the country. He was so good at what he did in fact that the people of America wanted to elect him for a third term, although, especially after FDR he was rejected from being elected for another term leaving his legacy (and the 4 trillion dollars of nation debt) behind, living the rest of his life out until 2003 when he died. Remnants of his impacts on the people are still showing through into today's world with his quote "Make America Great Again" that has been used by Donald Trump in his campaigns for office. Now, the style that I was aiming for was a sort of sketching structure with ink and making the lines shape the image which I suppose you could say is a symbolic way of showing how with many confident breaststrokes he was able to make an image of himself that many could appreciate and hopefully not see the mistakes in.

Hailey Beth Boland

Mississippi, High School

Hero: Neil Armstrong

To the Moon and Back, Colored pencil on paper

From a young age, Neil Armstrong showed courage, determination, and a deep love for his country. His bravery was not only seen when he walked on the moon, but throughout his entire life as a pilot, soldier, and an astronaut. Before becoming an astronaut, Neil Armstrong served as a naval aviator during the Korean war. Flying dangerous combat missions required great courage because pilots faced enemy attacks and life-threatening situations every day. Armstrong remained fearless and dedicated while serving his nation. His calm personality and strong decision-making skills later made him one of NASA's most trusted astronauts. Armstrong's greatest act of bravery came during the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. During the moon landing, the spacecraft faced technical problems and was running low on fuel. Despite the pressure, Armstrong stayed calm and manually guided the lunar module to a safe landing spot. His courage saved the mission and made history. Neil Armstrong's patriotism was equally inspiring. He worked tirelessly to help the United States succeed in the space race and proudly represented his country. Even after becoming famous, he remained humble and continued serving America through education and research. Even though he is no longer with us, Neil Armstrong's bravery, intelligence, and patriotism continue to inspire all Americans to be brave, shoot for the stars, and go places once thought to be entirely out of reach. He will forever be in the hearts of those that dare to explore.



Dylan Stewart

Missouri, High School

Hero: Shirley Temple

The Little Colonel, Block print, ink on paper

My artwork is inspired by Andy Warhol, a very well-known American artist, using bright colors and repeated images to create a pop art feel. I chose Shirley Temple as my subject because she was a huge star in the mid-1900s. The repetition and bold colors in my piece highlight her fame and the somewhat constructed nature of her image as a child star, mirroring Warhol's fascination with celebrity and mass culture.

Shirley Temple's significance goes beyond just being an entertainer. She became an unexpected symbol of unity during a time of racial discrimination in America. I think it's easy to forget she was just a little kid, happy and dancing, bringing joy to people during tough times. Her scene dancing with Bill Robinson in "The Little Colonel" showed a simple message of equality when it was really needed.

This matters to our community and nation because it reminds us that individuals can contribute to social progress in unexpected ways. Shirley Temple's story teaches us about the impact of small actions and the importance of kindness and inclusivity. It shows that a heroic life can be lived through positive influence and a commitment to fairness, even from a young age, which is something I find really inspiring.





Asher Hudson

Montana, High School

Hero: Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Good Night Dear Heart, Oil on canvas

Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) is most notably known for his writings, their fun, adventurous, and youthful feeling, however, I have come to know him mostly for his experience in grief. This year my choir did a piece called “Good Night Dear Heart”, a song that describes the grief and hope for a loved one after death. The song is taken from the poem Samuel Clemens put on his daughter Suzy's grave called “Annette”. The poem describes the writer asking the sun and breeze to shine and blow softly upon the grave of the one they loved and wishing their loved one a final goodnight. Samuel Clemens was torn apart by his daughter's death and the deaths of his children that would come later on. It marked a turning point into the darkest time of his life and from his previous writings. Last June I lost my mother to cancer, little did I know that Samuel Clemens would give me hope for her. In my painting I wanted to depict the warm sun and breeze shining on the grave through the viewpoint of Samuel Clemens lying on the grave of his beloved daughter. I imagine him reading the words of the tomb stone and finding peace in them. The country we live in has come at a heavy cost. The lives of hundreds of boys, girls, men, and women, this makes us a grieving nation, however, Samuel Clemens shows us a final hope for those souls. We hope that the summer sun would shine kindly on them, that the warm southern wind would blow softly, for green sod and warm light to lie on their graves, and for a good night for our dear hearts.



Jewel Denker

Nebraska, High School

Hero: Red Cloud

Finite Peace, Pencil on paper

Red Cloud, the Native American leader of the Oglala Lakota Tribe from the area around North Platte, Nebraska, is depicted in this artwork. I decided to make him the focus of my portrait because I am also from Nebraska, and he is a known member of Nebraskan history. The land that he fought to keep is land that I have walked on, spent summers relaxing on, and felt peace on. He spent his time on this land at war, to keep the land from being stolen from his tribe. He is known for being the only Native American leader to win a war against the United States. His win is important to the history of the United States of America because he caused the USA to rewrite its military strategy and permanently alter its approach to westward expansion. Without Red Cloud's influence, the United States would not be the same today. I took the liberty of adding more meaning to this artwork. There are five broken arrows, three of which have been mended, on the bottom right. Broken arrows mean peace; the fixing of them symbolizes finite peace, the peace that never lasts. The five arrows symbolize the five original Native American tribes, as well as unity. All of the arrows are pointed right, which means forward motion, protection, and defense. Red cloud is looking left, which symbolizes his wisdom. His wisdom is historically proven through his military prowess and relentless advocacy for his people.

"Hold on to what is good, Even if it's a handful of earth. Hold on to what you believe, Even if it's a tree that stands by itself". -Red Cloud

Xavier Roodhouse

Nevada, High School

Hero: Jimmy Doolittle

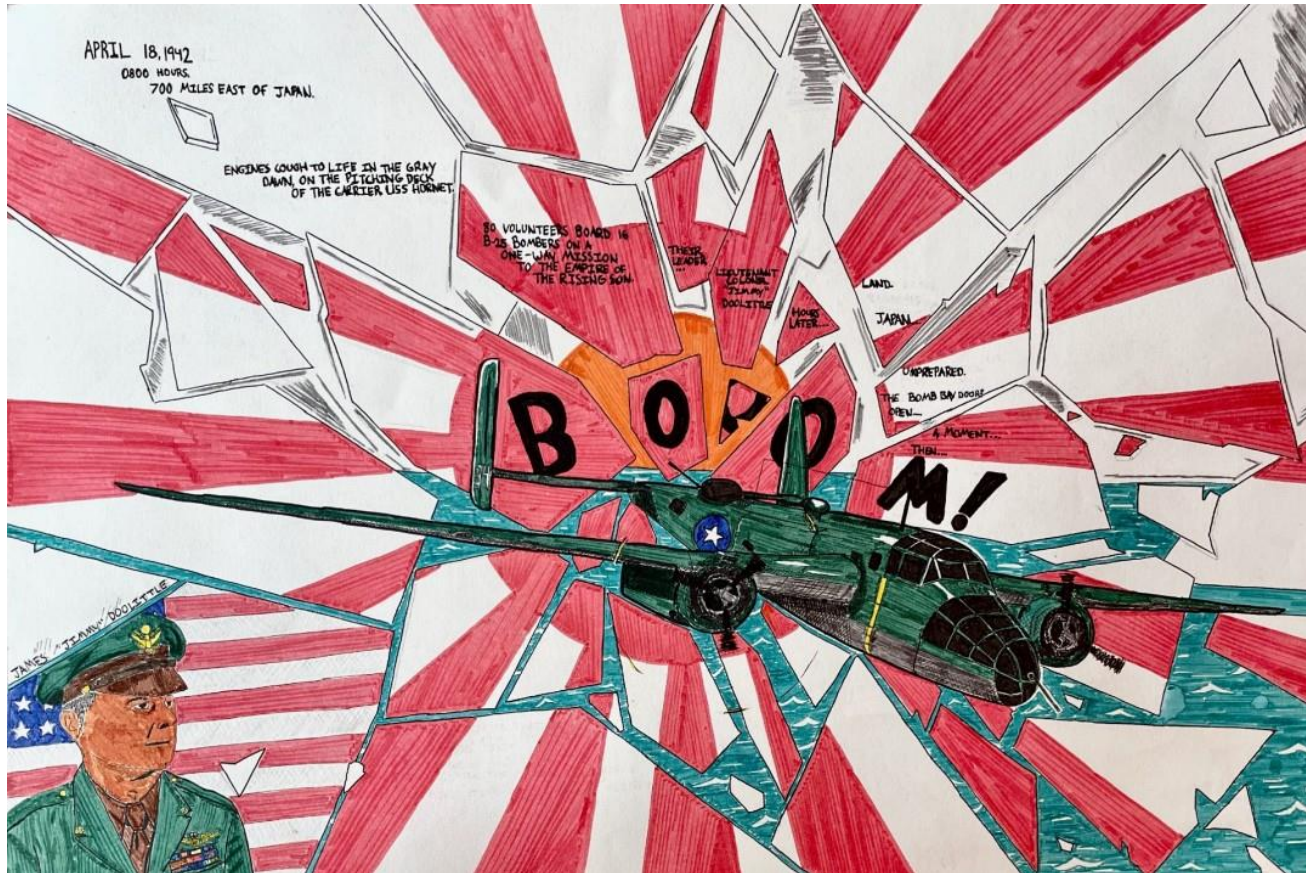
Shattering the Sun, Ink on paper

In my artwork, I chose to represent “Jimmy” Doolittle for his daring, patriotic, selfless, and brilliant character—especially in his plan to bomb Japan. Very few men in history have been able to organize, plan, crew, and command a precise strike on an enemy with no guaranteed return, all for love of country.

My piece, in a Pop Art comic-panel style, portrays the moment the first bomb falls during the Doolittle Raid, alongside a brief narrative and a panel of Doolittle himself. The central focus is a B-25 bomber shattering the Rising Sun like glass, symbolizing the raid’s psychological impact—the first successful attack on Japan’s mainland in its history. Yet the structure remains intact, serving as both a warning and a foreshadowing of what was to come.

I utilize bold lines to capture both the enormous energy and impact of the moment as well as the dangers it posed. Doolittle stands to the side, eyes distant, the American flag behind him, portraying his humility and focus on the bigger picture, as well as the nation he defended.

Doolittle, through my art, stands as a challenge to those who believe America’s days of strength are gone, because Doolittle represents what we need more of: men and women who are bold, daring, creative, smart, selfless, and patriotic enough to give their nation something great just as he did.





Serena Jung

New Jersey, High School

Hero: Theodore Roosevelt

Rough Rider, Acrylic on canvas

Theodore Roosevelt is widely remembered as one of the greatest U.S. presidents, who protected U.S. citizens and conserved the environment. He also won the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating the Treaty of Portsmouth. What many don't know about, however, was that he assembled the military unit "Rough Riders". During the Battle of San Juan Heights in Cuba, he helped and commanded the recruit and gained his "war hero" status. Through this painting, I hope that more people could know about this accomplishment of his dedication, not only as president, but also as the commander of the "Rough Riders".

Ibnijah Guerro

New Mexico, High School, Bureau of Indian Education

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln, Acrylic on canvas

I painted Abraham Lincoln as he is portrayed in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. I chose the Statue of Lincoln because I liked the simple lines and color. He looks important, powerful and serious.

I know he was a brilliant man who led with kindness and humor to get things done. I remember that he was very poor as a child and worked hard to get an education while also helping his family. He kept pushing forward and never gave up even when everything seemed to be against him. He cared deeply for the American people. He had sympathy for the soldiers in the civil war and the hardships they faced. He understood what they gave to serve their country and he wanted them remembered and honored as he said in the Gettysburg Address. Lincoln believed in America and the freedom that democracy gives the people of America, all the people. It was fun shading and painting in layers to get him to look like I wanted.

Lincoln was a man of the people and very brave. He is an example for me to be brave. He showed me not to give up on my dreams.





Maggie Jiang

New York, High School

Hero: Theodore Roosevelt

Teddy, Oil on canvas

My artwork is inspired by Theodore Roosevelt, one of the most influential presidents in American history and a member of the National Garden of American Heroes. Instead of creating a traditional portrait, I chose to represent Roosevelt through a teddy bear dressed in the uniform of a Rough Rider. This choice references both the famous origin of the teddy bear and Roosevelt's adventurous, courageous character.

The objects surrounding the bear symbolize important parts of Roosevelt's life and achievements. The naval insignia represents his work in the Navy Department. The Rough Riders emblem recalls his military service during the Spanish-American War. The Nobel Peace Prize symbolizes his efforts in international diplomacy, while the "big stick" references his well-known foreign policy.

My artwork was influenced by American historical portraiture and Colonial American art, which often commemorated important individuals and preserved their stories for future generations. Like those artists, I wanted to honor a historical figure whose actions helped shape the nation.

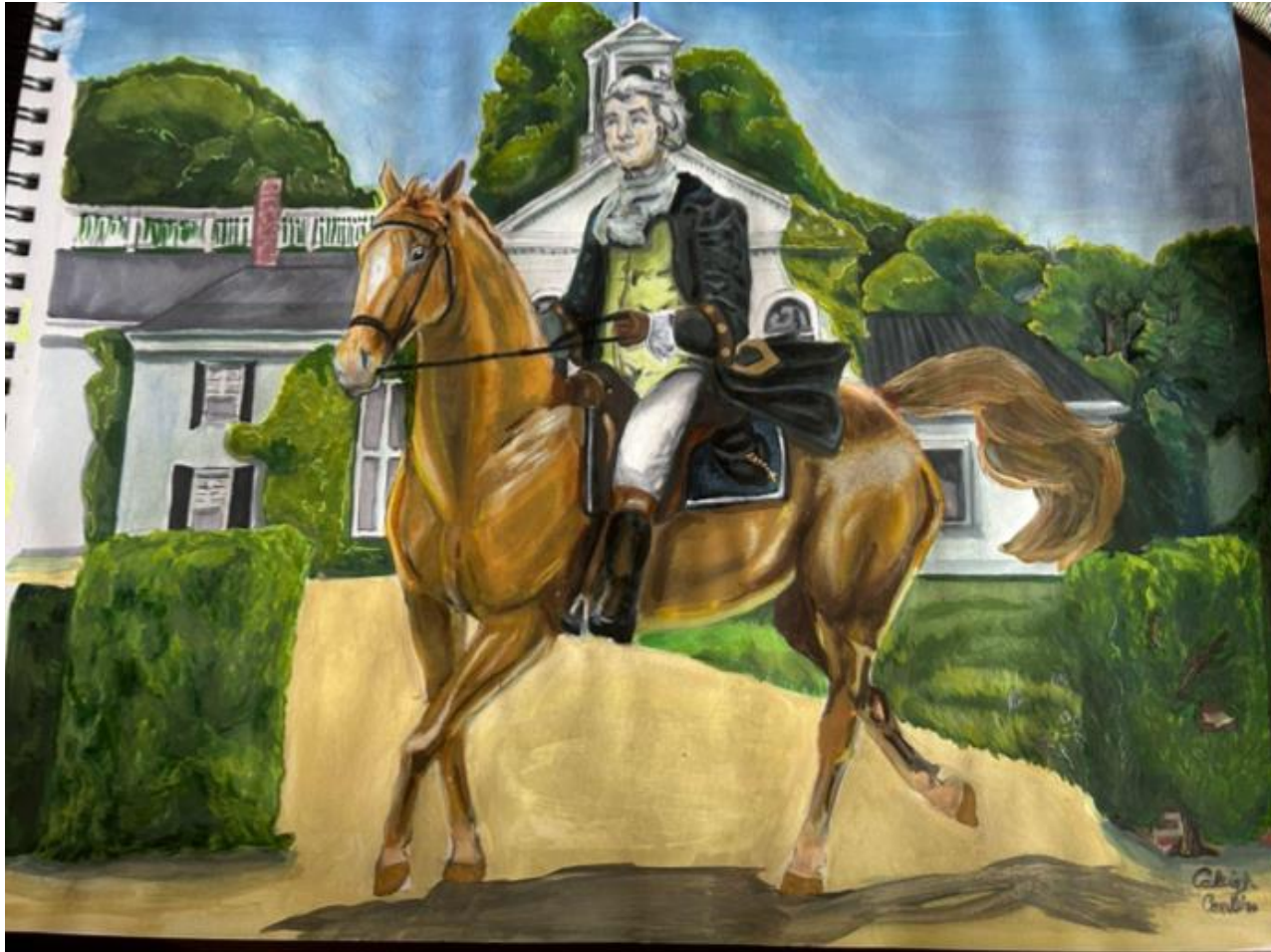
Roosevelt matters because he demonstrated courage, leadership, and a willingness to serve something greater than himself. He reminds us that heroism is not simply about fame, but about taking responsibility, facing challenges, and striving to improve the world around us. His example continues to inspire both my community and me today.

Caleigh Conlin

North Carolina, High School

Hero: Charles Carroll

Carrollton's Ride, Mixed media on paper



My name is Caleigh Conlin, and I am a classically trained artist, competitive equestrian, and homeschooled student from Pinehurst, NC. My family and I are devout Catholics who are proud of our Irish heritage and immensely grateful to be in a nation that allows us to practice our faith freely. This was not always the case. For nearly two centuries, Catholics in Ireland were denied the right to vote, hold property, or worship freely. Similar laws were enforced against Catholics living in America until the American Revolution. For my painting, I decided to focus on one of the greatest unsung heroes of the Revolution: Charles Carroll of Carrollton.

Charles Carroll was a remarkable man. As the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence, he joined the Revolution because he knew that, in bringing liberty to the colonists, it would also free his fellow Catholics from religious tyranny. Like me, Charles Carroll was a passionate equestrian, a believer in classical education, and proud of his Irish heritage. In 2022, my family chose to name our horse property “Carrollton” in honor of this great man.

My painting portrays Charles Carroll departing from his beloved Maryland home on his way to sign the Declaration. Carroll was the wealthiest landowner in the colonies, and by signing the Declaration, he knew that he was placing his family’s generational work at risk for the sake of liberty. My painting combines each part of Carroll’s life. As an equestrian and a man of faith, I intentionally painted Carroll on horseback passing by his family’s chapel with a rosary attached to his saddle (a product of his seventeen-year Jesuit education). I conducted extensive research on saddles, boots, and bridles from this point in American history to ensure that my piece was fully accurate.

Without the sacrifices of brave men like Charles Carroll, who risked everything for a nation that did not yet permit them to vote, my family would not enjoy the freedom that we are blessed with today. For him, and for all of the Revolution’s heroes, I am forever grateful.

Kinsee Huntimer

North Dakota, High School

Hero: Sitting Bull

Feathered Indian, Oil pastel on paper

I chose Chief Sitting Bull as my representative from North Dakota. Known as a Hunkpapa Lakota leader, he united Native American tribes in effort to stop the expansion into native's territory. Sitting Bull led the Sioux warriors in the battle of Little Big Horn, resulting in an impactful victory against General George Armstrong Custer. I resolved to draw Sitting Bull in the prairies to represent the Native American preservation he worked to create for the culture's tribes. He made an impact on society, teaching countless Americans the power of unwavering resistance and cultural values. Some

Key details I deliberately exhibited were the eagle feather on his head he so proudly displayed, and the sunset colors beloved by most in the Peace Garden State. His legacy still has an impact on history, which inspired me to show that in the style of American Impressionism with oil pastels. I chose impressionism since it captures the spirit of a fast-changing nation, much like how life changed rapidly for the Native Americans in the United States. In addition, the slight tonalism approach signifies the times of oppression faced mixed with rays of light for a brighter future. Overall, I strived to construct a piece holding as much meaning as it did appeal.





Jihun Park

Northern Mariana Islands, High School

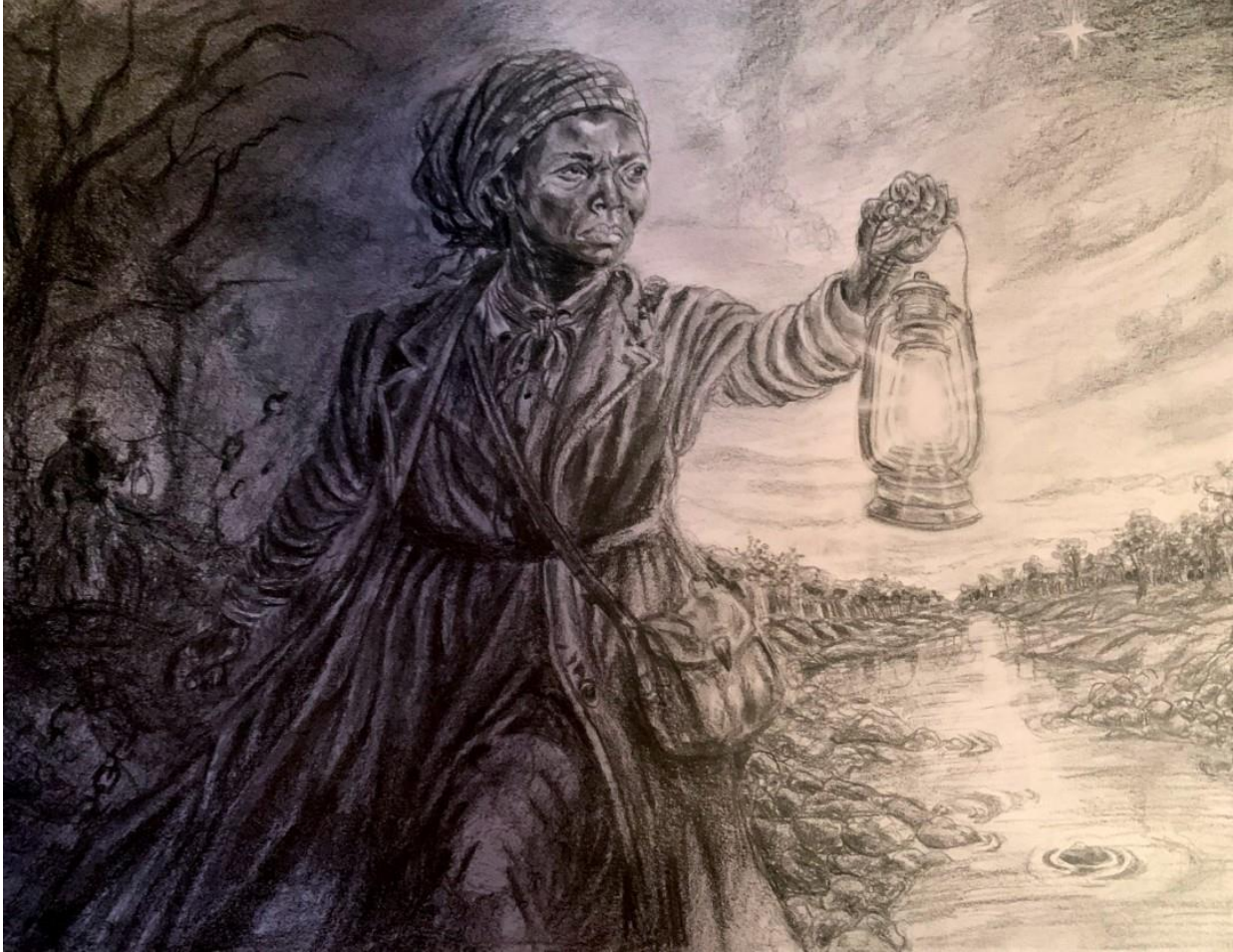
Hero: Harriet Tubman

Just Hope, Mixed media on paper

My artwork shows Harriet Tubman leading enslaved people in the darkness for freedom. I chose Harriet Tubman because her experience of bravery and leadership is similar to my own experience. After the super typhoon swept through Saipan, my family was left without a safe house, electricity, and water. As the only man of the family, I was responsible for keeping my family safe and guiding them. Like Harriet Tubman, I had to stay strong even when I couldn't shower for 4 days.

I used the American Realist style because it is about the real struggles and emotions people experience during hard times. Harriet Tubman's story is not a myth but a real example of bravery and sacrifice. The strong contrast between light and darkness symbolizes both her story of freedom and my family's story to survive the typhoon. I created this piece by flashlight using watercolor because those were the only tools available to me.

The message of my artwork is this, true heroes sacrifice for others in difficult times. Harriet Tubman's story shows that bravery is not an absence of fear, but the determination to keep stepping forward and leading others toward a better future we all pray for.



Emma Liu

Ohio, High School

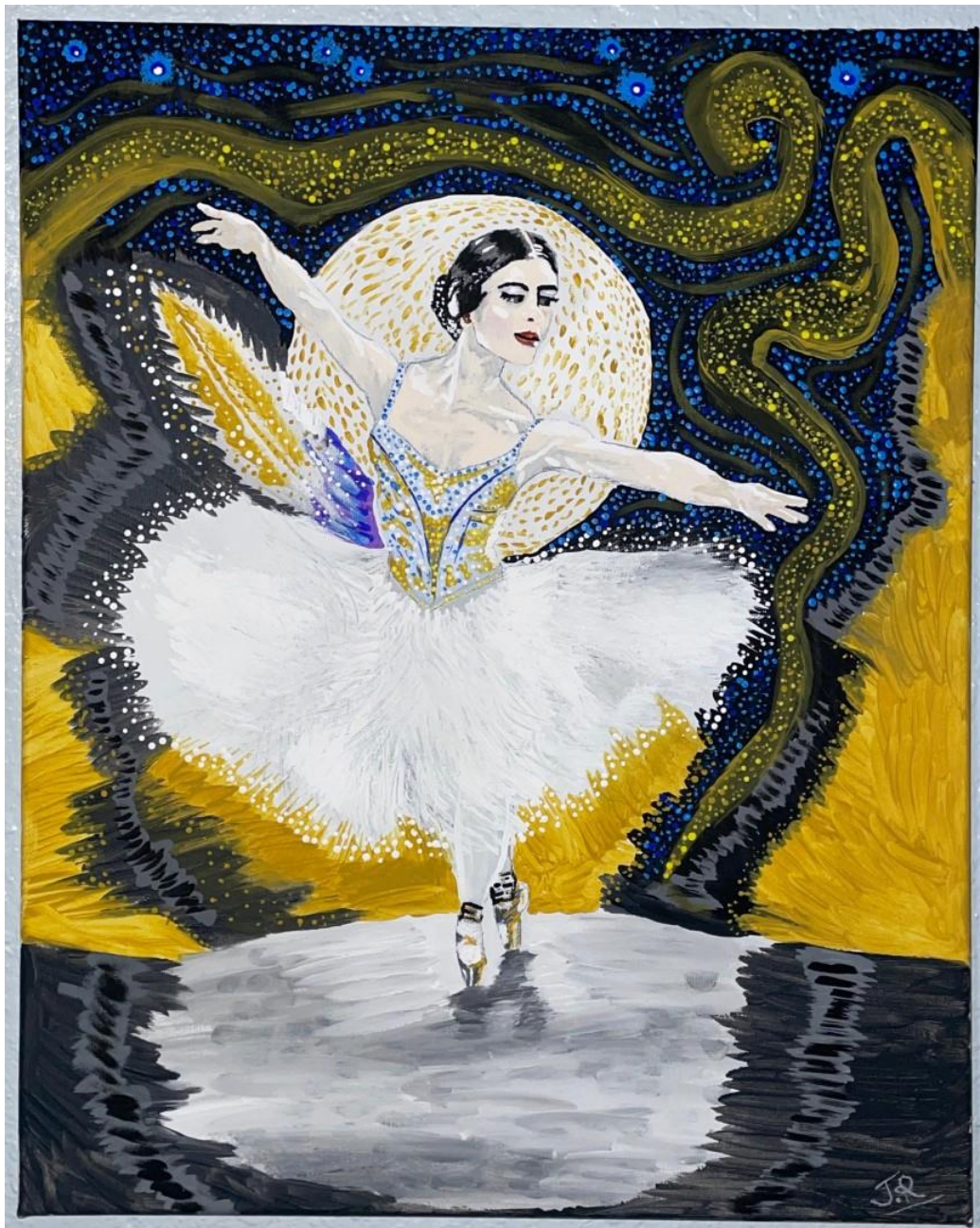
Hero: Harriet Tubman

The Conductor of Light, Pencil and charcoal on paper

In my piece, I chose to illustrate Harriet Tubman because of her extraordinary courage and selflessness. She repeatedly risked her life to guide others to freedom and fought hard for liberty. I portrayed her not just as a guide, but as a symbol of hope who brought light to America.

My piece was inspired by American Romanticism where I used dramatic lighting, emotion, and symbolism, highlighting individualism and nature. The light contrast from the left to the right illustrates the transformation she helped bring. The dark forest and slavecatcher on the left symbolize fear and oppression. Chains break as they move towards Tubman, representing slavery's weakening hold. Tubman wields a lantern, representing bravery and freedom, bringing light to America. The river reflects the lantern's light, symbolizing a transition to a hopeful future. The North Star in the sky symbolizes direction and possibility.

Tubman's story teaches us that American heroism isn't measured by power. She was in a position of little societal power but is depicted with authority. Her lantern shines brighter than the slavecatcher's, showing how courage itself is power. My message through Tubman is that courage isn't having no fear but choosing to act despite it.



Jonathan Riddle

Oklahoma, High School

Hero: Maria Tallchief

Golden Swan of the Osage, Acrylic on canvas

The Golden Swan of the Osage portrays Maria Tallchief as a radiant symbol of grace, strength, and cultural pride. Inspired by expressive American painting styles and dreamlike movement, this artwork combines glowing golds, deep blues, and flowing textures to create an ethereal atmosphere around the dancer. The swirling sky and luminous halo symbolize perseverance, greatness, and the spiritual energy of dance.

Maria Tallchief was a groundbreaking Osage ballerina who transformed American ballet through discipline, passion, and artistic excellence. Her poised stance on point represents resilience and balance, while the feather-like forms surrounding her evoke the elegance of a swan in motion. The glowing gold throughout the piece reflects both her brilliance on stage and the lasting impact she left on American culture.

This artwork matters because it celebrates Native American achievement and reminds viewers that greatness can come from any background. Maria Tallchief's story inspires future generations to pursue their dreams with courage, dedication, and grace.



Savanna Marcle

Oregon, High School

Hero: Sitting Bull

Sit and Wait, Oil on canvas

The great Sitting Bull, he was an American leader that spearheaded indigenous resistance against U.S. encroachment. I choose him because I have native American in my ancestry and very much enjoy painting the great native Americans of are time. I choose Sitting bull because he is very impactful for his fight for against the US Army. During the war of red clouds Sitting Bull was there to prevent white encroachment and preserve tribal lands.

Sitting Bull got his name from killing a bull buffalo when he was very young. the tribe revolved around buffalos and horses. he was also a prisoner of war for two years at Fort Randall before being permitted to join his people on the standing rock reservation in the Dakotas. Some other leadership things he has did was refusing to give up native land to the government. He didn't want them to move the native reservations. Additionally, he traveled with Buffalo Bills wild west show for a short time to earn money for his people. He cared very deeply about buffalo because they were important to Lakota life and survival. Finally sitting bull is remembered today for defending his people, protecting Lakota traditions, and standing up for native American rights.



Solomiia Zhukova

Pennsylvania, High School

Hero: Thomas Jefferson

All Men Are Created Equal, Acrylic on canvas

My painting, deeply influenced by the American Genre Painting movement of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century, explores the endurance and impact of historical legacies. Genre Painting sought to show subjects with a balance of relatability and individuality that shaped my ideology for this piece. Through the use of a formal seated pose, I have captured Thomas Jefferson as the “common man” rather than a distant, elevated leader. Jefferson often preferred the idea of staying “close to the ground” and connected with the people he was leading. This belief in grounded rule is central to my piece, as I believe that this trait of accessibility is a trait the nation must continue to live by. This painting specifically highlights his most remembered contribution, his quote of “All men are created equal.” By placing the idea in the modern idea of air travel, I aimed to bridge the gap between eighteenth-century ideas and our modern lives. Ultimately, my artwork serves as a way of combining the story and message of Jefferson's legacy. Through this depiction of the president, I hope to remind my community and people in general that the foundations of this nation are not just historical facts needed to pass their high-school classes but are living lessons on equality that we have to uphold each day.



Ruiwen Zhong

South Carolina, High School

Hero: Lauren Bacall

***Glory*, Oil on canvas**

I chose Lauren Bacall, as shown by the half-length portrait. It represents her as a person, the film in the background showing her success as an actress, and the freehand caricature on the right representing the advocacy of her values. I chose her because of her outspoken, bold nature, which redefined Hollywood's traditional view of women to a more assertive, witty, and independent one.

Lauren Bacall was not only a legendary film and stage actress, but also a bold advocate for civil rights and artistic freedom. During the 1940s Red Scare, when government censorship threatened the First Amendment and blacklisted creative voices, Bacall played a foundational role in rallying many prominent stars to form the Committee for the First Amendment. Even with the risk of destroying her career, she spoke out and protested anyway because she stood by her values. Her willingness and actions capture the truest version of the American spirit: fighting for freedom and standing up to protect her community, no matter what risk it poses on herself. With her persuasive nature and powerful voice, she shows what it means to be a hero: to do, not what is good just for her, but what is right for everyone.



Daniel R. Grabitske

South Dakota, High School

Hero: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

The Defender of Little Roundtop, Acrylic on board

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was the commander of the 20th Maine during the Battle of Gettysburg. His courage during the battle was of great magnitude when his regiment was stretched thin after repelling multiple waves of Confederate soldiers on July second defending the end of the union flank on Little Roundtop. He boldly ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge directly into the onslaught of the rebel horde. This bravery and the success of this action extinguished any modicum of hope the secessionists had to capture the hill and be able to point their artillery directly into the union lines which would have allowed them to obliterate George Mead's Army of the Potomac.

It is my hope that his bravery that has been so common in the last 250 years of this great country will continue on for the next 250 years and then for many more after that. Joshua Chamberlain's actions arguably helped save our glorious nation from collapse that day, something that I believe others will do when the time arises. This bravery does not have to be only present on the field of battle but also in education, government, etc. I mention those three because those were things that Chamberlain took part in. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain is a man that Americans ought to respect for his immense bravery and courage and then go on to practice courage if fighting for freedom for their descendants to come.



Genesis Maier

Tennessee, High School

Hero: Carl Gorman

Kin-Ya-Onny-Beyeh, Acrylic on canvas

Carl Gorman, known by his tribe as Kin-Ya-Onny-Beyeh, lied about his age to be chosen in 1942 along with 28 others to create a code so unique no one could break it. They did so flawlessly. The code, based in the unwritten Navajo language, remained unbroken throughout WWII. I used the contemporary style so I could use bold lines and colors to reflect the strength and power it took each one of the code talkers to create such a system. My subject is Carl Gorman himself in his uniform, honorary medals and cultural bead necklaces. His expression is serious and focused, eyes solemn. The cool-toned black of the background represents the cold reality of war, contrasted with the bright, warm colored hat showing the warmth of recognition and celebration of victory. I also used vibrant, expressive paint strokes to show the part of his life no one talks about—he was an artist! His paintings are centered around Navajo women and are usually bright-colored like the colors found in his clothing and necklaces shown here. Let us never forget the crucial work that was done by these men. If it weren't for them, the war's result would have been much different.



Rebecca Smith

Texas, High School

Hero: Dwight D. Eisenhower

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Colored pencil on toned paper

The American hero I have chosen to draw is Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States. The reason I chose him as the main subject for my artwork was partly because of his incredible bravery in battle and services for our Nation, but the sole reason is because he was born in my home state, Texas, and not far from where I live. The art style I chose, Realism, is one that I am familiar and comfortable with, and the style I believe best displays Eisenhower's optimistic personality, focusing on his well-known and warm grin that was commonly found on his face. The style also distinctively shows the colorful badges this brave man obtained throughout his life. Dwight D. Eisenhower still has a great influence where I live in Texas, and I have had the pleasure of visiting his birthplace home before in the city, Eisenhower, Texas, which was named in honor of him. Eisenhower, who fought in difficult battles such as D-Day, was a strong leader and excellent team builder, and through all of the trials he faced, he remained joyful and displayed an unwavering faith in the truth of the Bible. I believe he can be a great example of leadership for all generations today, showing that even people from small towns can grow up to be heroes in American history.

J'Leah Arielle Connor

United States Virgin Islands, High School

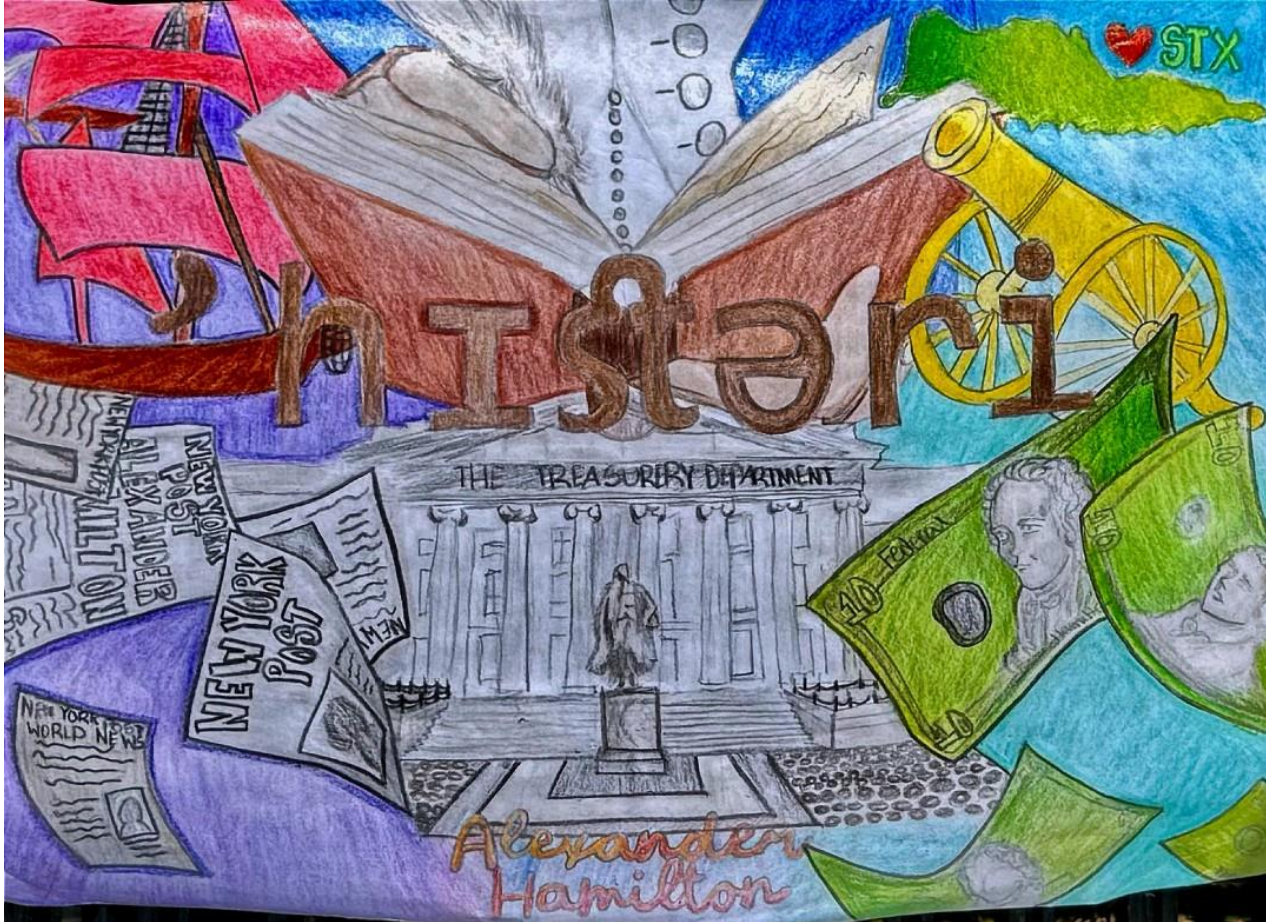
Hero: Alexander Hamilton

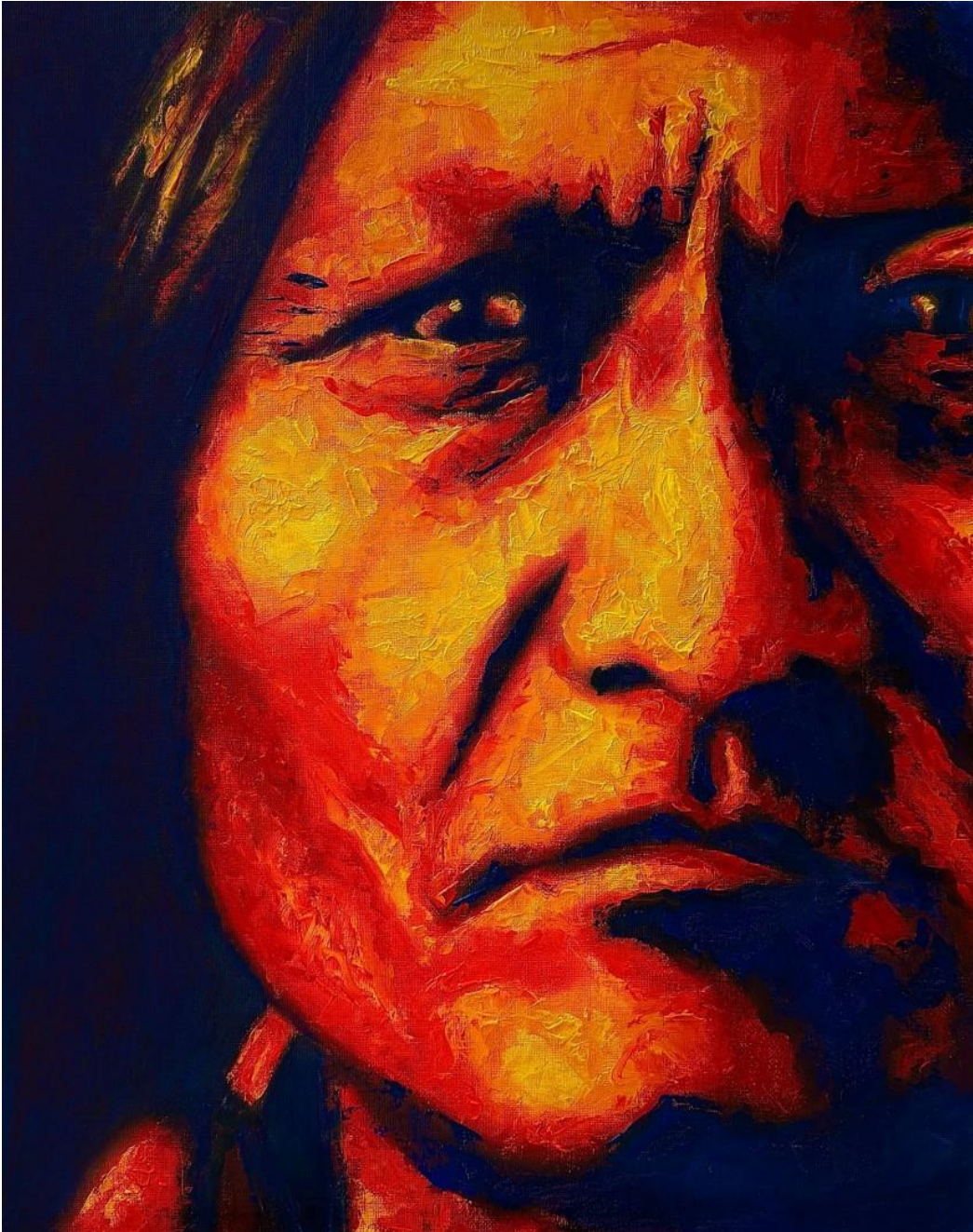
'histø-ri, Colored pencil on paper

The American Hero I chose is Alexander Hamilton. My artwork represents him by illustrating his accomplishments and connecting them to my home, St. Croix. Alexander Hamilton is the only Founding Father who lived on this exact island around my age, which made me feel deeply connected to him. We both endured horrible Category 5 hurricanes. Hamilton wrote about the devastating 1772 hurricane that he experienced, and I survived the twin monsters of 2017-2018, Irma and Maria.

Arriving on St. Croix at age ten, Hamilton spent seven years mastering global trade and shipping. He was then sent to New Jersey to further his education at age 17. Because he was an expert in trade, he caught the eye of General George Washington, soon becoming his chief of staff by age twenty and, later, the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.

Inspired by Pop Art, I used vibrant gradients on St. Croix and ten-dollar bills to show that his financial legacy grew directly out of the island that raised him. I stepped out of my comfort zone here and am very proud of the outcome. I hope people learn new things from viewing my art.





Jade Weeks

Utah, High School

Hero: Sitting Bull

Rugged Endurance, Oil on canvas

Reflecting on freedom requires us to honor the deep, complex history of the land and those who first lived here. My painting of the Lakota leader, Sitting Bull, is a close-up examination of resilience, enduring strength, and pride. By focusing entirely on his face, I wanted to capture the depth of a leader who dedicated his life to protecting his people's freedom and way of life. The viewer is able to look directly into his eyes and feel the weight and struggle of his leadership.

The piece is defined by constraints. I restricted my palette to the sacred Lakota colors; red, yellow, and blue, using their symbolic weight to connect the subject directly to his heritage. Red symbolizes endurance and the way of peace and proper living. Blue represents heaven and the foundation of the world. Yellow signifies light, rebirth and begging of wisdom. To bring raw, tangible energy I finished the painting with a palette knife. The chunky paint creates textures across his features, mirroring the rugged endurance of both the man and his legacy.

Through Sitting Bulls portrait, I hope to remind the viewers that the story of American freedom is vast and multi-layered. True freedom includes the history of resistance, preservation of culture, and the unforgettable faces of those who stood their ground.



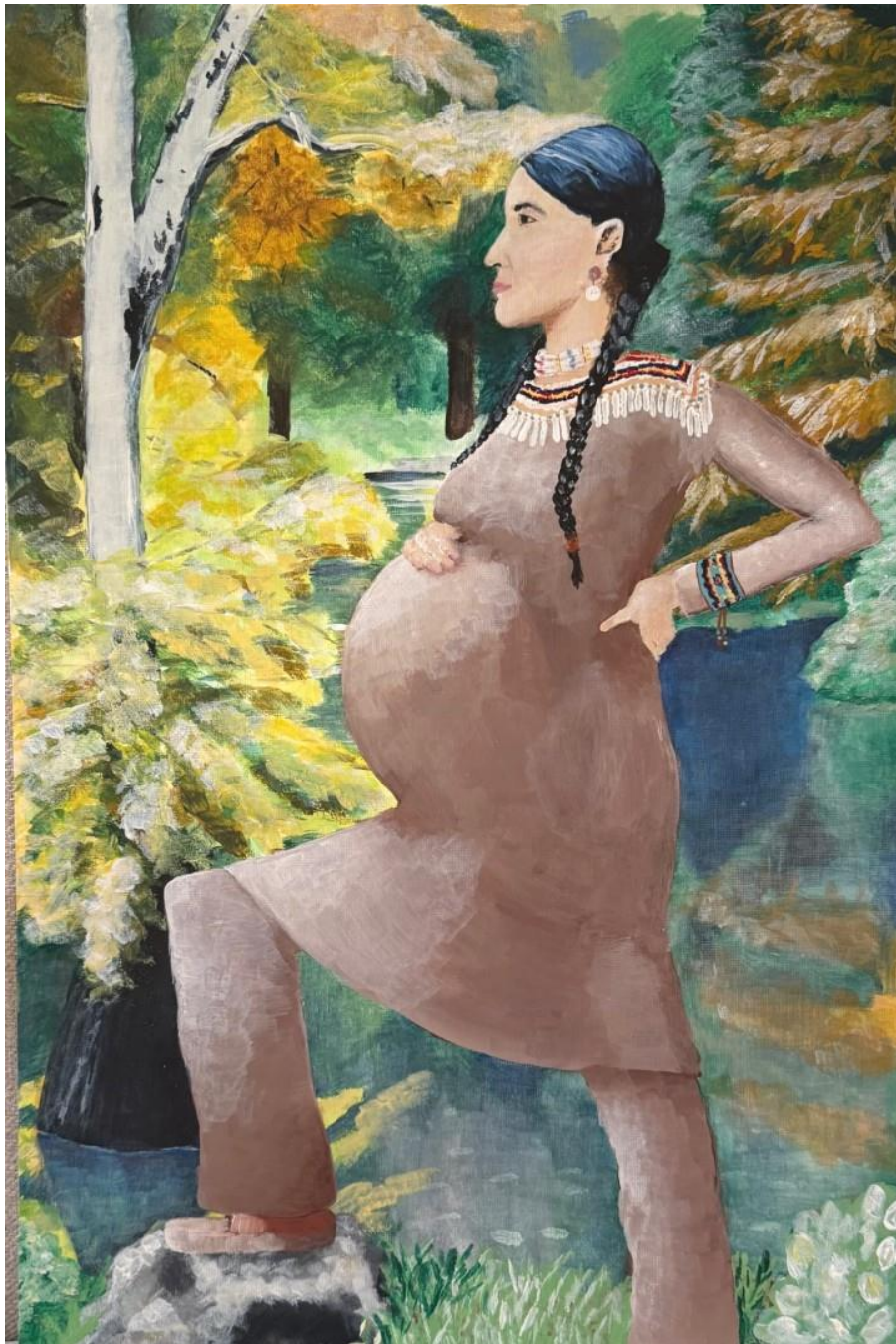
Sadie Springhetti

Virginia, High School

Hero: Walt Disney

Partners, Acrylic on canvas

I was inspired by the style of photorealism, and I chose Walt Disney for my American Hero. To represent him I chose to use the partner's statue that's seen in Disney parks. Using a close-up abstract part of the statue where Walt is holding Mickey's hand. I chose this specific statue over other Walt statues because it's one that is nostalgic to all who visit the Disney parks. I wanted to make this painting realistic to relay the nostalgia that many people in American society feel. Mickey was one of Walt's characters who gained fame and has remained the face of the Disney company. This statue shows Walt's vision of welcoming the guests into a world of imagination that he had created with Mickey. Walt's legacy continues to inspire people from all over by showing them the true meaning of the American dream. Walt came from a humble beginning and used his determination and dream to build a giant entertainment empire. His legacy continues to be an example that those who pursue their dream can accomplish great things. American children grow up with Walt's stories which portray American courage and they continue to inspire all who watch them.



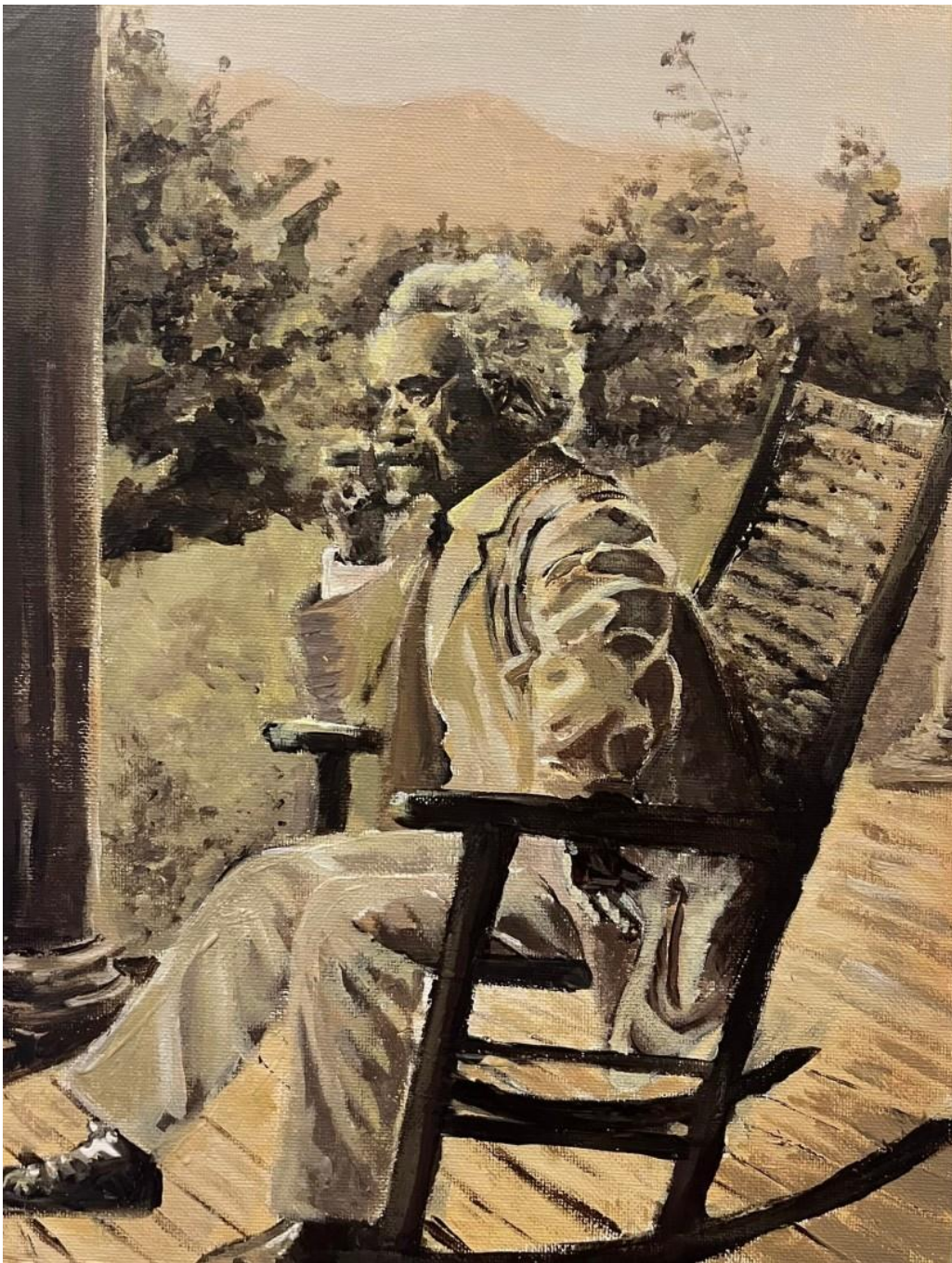
Clair Shipley

Washington, High School

Hero: Sacagawea

Mother of the West, Acrylic on canvas

In my painting, *Mother of the West*, I have depicted Sacagawea on the shore of the Mississippi River looking forward to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. When I was glancing over the American art movements, I fell in love with American Impressionism especially for its use of white in outdoor scenes. Surprisingly, Sacagawea was around sixteen to seventeen, married, and nine months pregnant when Lewis and Clark asked her to be on their expedition. She was extremely important in this undertaking which opened the West. For without her, the exploration most likely would have failed. Sacagawea is significant for in her crossing the West, all the way to Washington State and return home, she helped to give birth to the West. This is why I decided to portray her pregnant. I was inspired by her maternal image as Sacagawea's life gives a straightforward and clear answer to one of the most pressing lies of today, that because you have children you are incapable of doing anything else. For while Lewis and Clark's expedition could only begin in earnest after the birth of her son, she was both able to take perfect care of him and be extremely instrumental in Lewis and Clark's adventure. On the exploration, she learned how to be a mother, while also becoming the Mother of the West.



Amy Osborne

Wisconsin, High School

Hero: Mark Twain

Mark Twain, Acrylic on canvas

My artwork was influenced by Norman Rockwell and Mark Twain. Rockwell, an artist in the 20th century, drew in a realist style. In an attempt to reflect the true nature of Americans, he picked subjects he loved and painting life scenarios that defined what it meant to be an American. I have used his style to portray the American hero, Mark Twain. I believe the men and women who love America the most are those who seek to preserve it by recognizing America's flaws and seeking to change them. Only a true hero could do what Mark Twain did. He saw the hypocrisy in America, the confusion and pain we were inflicting on fellow men, and instead of ignoring it, he shed light on it. Mark Twain possessed the character and courage that men need today to save America. We are not to be blind. We are not to be comfortable. We need a hero to act as a gadfly and wake us up from this ignorance and reveal exactly what is going wrong in America. The founding of America 250 years ago relied on courageous men like Mark Twain to keep American morals and ethics in check. In the 1800s, it was men like Mark Twain who awoke America from its hypocrisy, and 250 years later, heroes like Mark Twain will be the ones to save us from our folly.

Regional Winners



Raeanna Smith

Northeast Region, New York, Elementary

Hero: Sitting Bull

***The Holy Man*, Acrylic marker on paper**

Sitting Bull, or Tȟatȟánka Íyotake, born into the Hunkpapa Lakota tribe led the resistance against the United States and defeated Lieutenant Colonel Custer in the battle of Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. His story is important to me because it inspires me to be brave and stand up for what's right. He teaches us that it's important to be good to each other and treat everyone with respect and kindness. Especially people who cannot speak up for themselves. My favorite quote by Sitting Bull is

“The warrior is not someone who fights because no one has the right to take another life. The warrior for us is one who sacrifices themselves for the good of others. His task is to take care of the elderly, the defenseless, those who cannot provide for themselves and above all, the children, the future of humanity.”

My artwork is influenced by Steven Lang's art. When I saw his art for the first time his art made me feel calm; it made me feel as if I was there with those people in the painting. His art inspired me to add Sitting bull in a plains setting. He also influenced my style of art, realism.



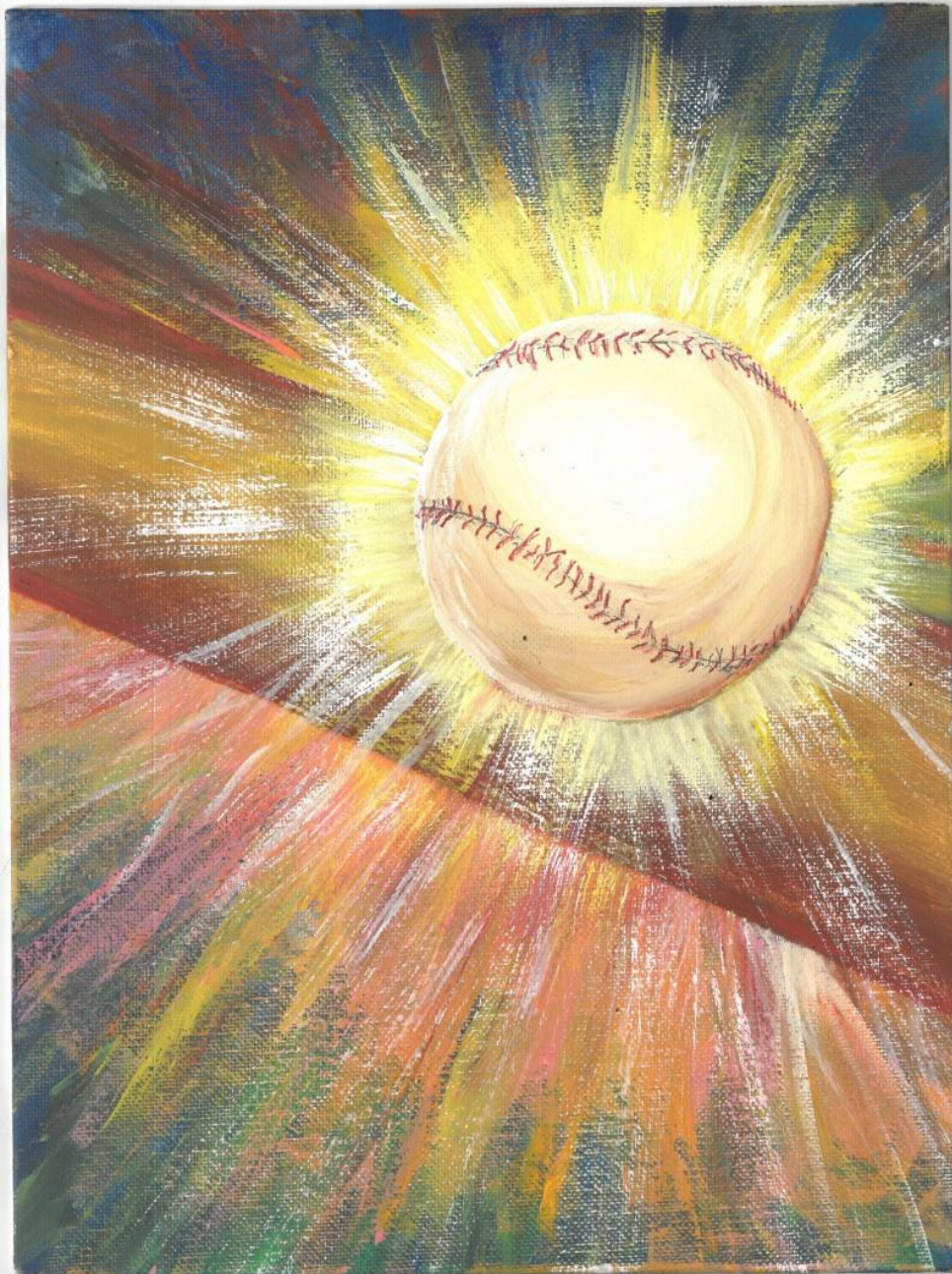
Lilah Olivia Covher

Southeast Region, Louisiana, Elementary

Hero: John James Audubon

Red, Flight, and Flew, Acrylic and marker on canvas

I chose to paint American Hero John James Audubon because we both love birds and my home state of Louisiana. My painting includes twenty species of birds that are special to both Audubon and me. I can name them all. My painting is a folkart celebration of his life's work. He drew more birds for his famous book "Birds of America" in Louisiana than anywhere else because it was his happy place. He spent a lot of time at Oakley Plantation, and I spend a lot of time at Melrose Plantation. That is where I learned about folk artist Clementine Hunter. I used bright colors like red, white, and blue like she did. When doing research, I found a book at home and three at the public library. People started bringing me books when they found out about my painting. The portrait part of my painting is inspired by the cover of "Audubon, On The Wings Of The World" by Fabien Grolleau and Jérémie Royer. My favorite was the complete works of Audubon that Paul Keyser lent me. I feel blessed to be born in the United States of America. Audubon said, "The State of Louisiana has always been my favorite part of the union," and I agree. He wasn't afraid to think big and take risks. He bravely went into the wilderness to find the birds he needed for his book. I took risks in my painting to show that strength.



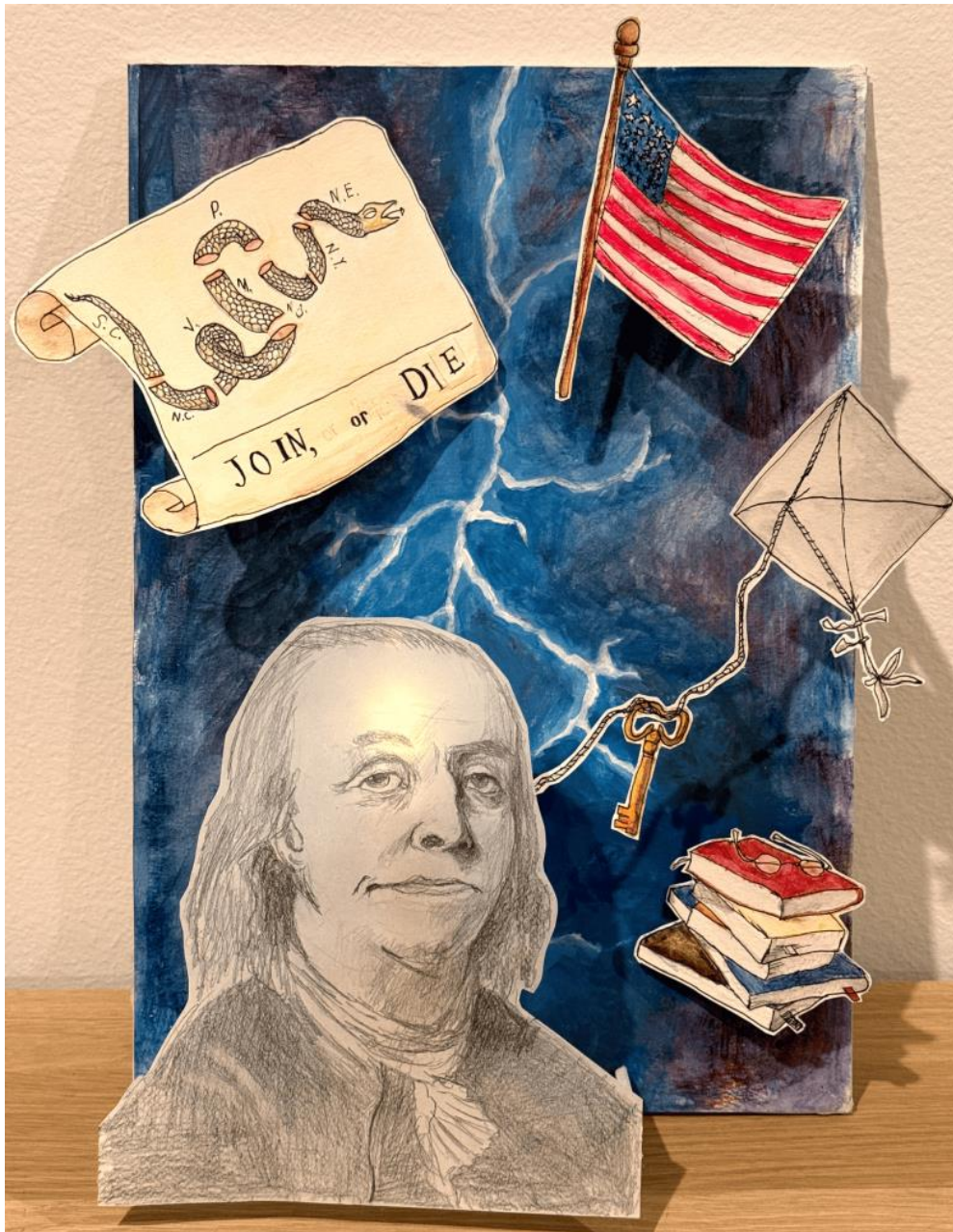
Daniel Fronick

Midwest Region, Missouri, Elementary

Hero: Babe Ruth

***Hit it Hard!*, Acrylic and colored pencil on canvas**

Babe Ruth's legendary confidence, raw power, and profound wisdom inspire me as a baseball player. He changed baseball forever by setting records in both home runs and strikeouts. He famously said, "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game." This applies to everything in life. We can learn from his resilience—"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run," and determination—"It's hard to beat a person who never gives up!" I chose to represent the blast of this baseball in the Neo-expressionism artistic style because it emphasizes movement, expressive brushwork and the raw emotion of excitement! To give a variety of textures, I used mixed media (graphite, acrylic paint and colored pencil) and my fingers to blend the ball and bat.



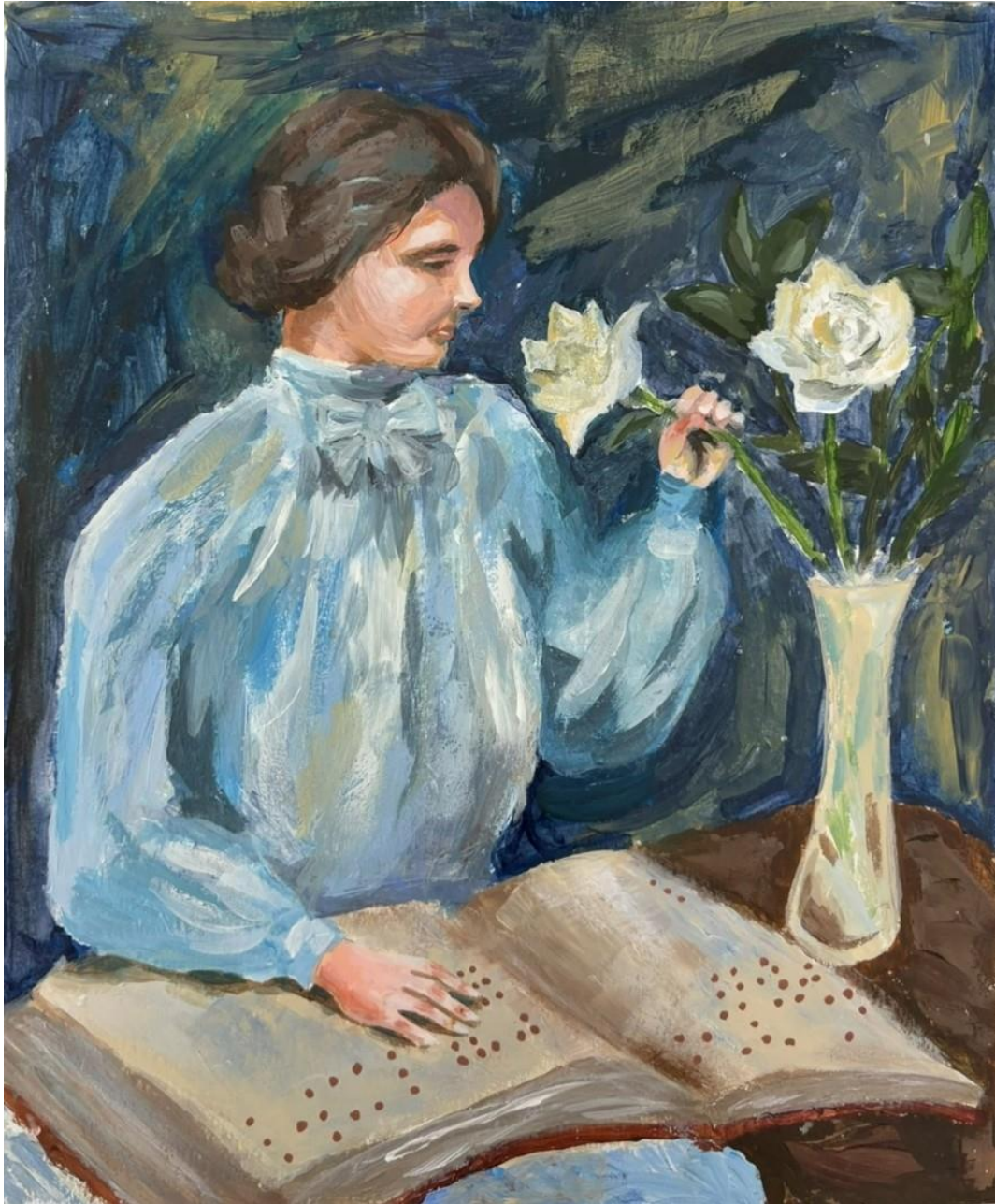
Roy Kim

West Region, California, Elementary

Hero: Benjamin Franklin

The Spark of Ideas, Mixed media on board

I drew Benjamin Franklin because I watched a TV show called Oddballs where a character named James acts as Benjamin Franklin. At first, I thought Benjamin was just one of the important people, but after I researched him, I learned that he discovered electricity, invented bifocal glasses and did many other amazing things. Benjamin Franklin discovered that lightning is electricity by flying a kite with a key hanging on the kite. I found this fact fascinating because electricity helps me everyday by making things easier, like typing on a computer and reading a book at night with a lamp. More importantly, Benjamin Franklin and I have some things in common because we both like reading books and drawing. I thought that “Join or Die” poster looked fascinating because it is not only a good picture, but also it delivers a strong message. To show Benjamin Franklin’s creative mind, I used a thin tracing paper and placed a light behind it. The glowing light represents a spark of many ideas from his mind. His ideas helped many people, and he helped America grow into a country where my family and I can live with freedom, hope, and opportunities for the future.



Jiyun Kim

Southwest Region, Texas, Elementary

Hero: Helen Keller

Her World Beyond Sight and Sound, Acrylic on canvas

I chose Helen Keller because I think her story is really inspiring. Even though she could not see or hear, she still learned how to communicate and understand the world in her own way. She shows that people can achieve great things even with difficulties. In my artwork, I showed her touching braille and holding a flower. The braille represents how she learned to read and connect with others, and the flower shows that she could still experience beauty through touch and smell. I used soft colors and visible brushstrokes to make the painting feel calm and thoughtful. I painted this too show that even in silence and darkness, there is still beauty, strength, and meaning. It reminds us that everyone experiences the world in their own unique and meaningful way.



Sarang Lee

Northeast Region, New Jersey, Middle School

Hero: Louis Armstrong

***The Sound That Became America*, Charcoal and pastel on paper**

Have you ever imagined a world painted by music, where sound turns into color? I chose Louis Armstrong because he is not only a famous musician but also represents the spirit of America. Among the heroes, I was drawn to him because his music feels powerful and brings people together. Although our nation is made up of many different cultures and backgrounds, I believe these differences create a beautiful harmony.

In my artwork, Armstrong is shown in black and white charcoal. From his trumpet, music spreads and fills the world with vivid color using pastels. Buildings, people, lights, and the American flag all become part of this joyful melody. What a wonderful world!

This spring, I visited the Whitney Museum and saw contemporary American artworks. I loved Andy Warhol's *Ethel Scull 36 Times*. I noticed how he used contrast between figures and bold colorful backgrounds. I learned that color could express emotion and meaning. That inspired me to place Armstrong in black and white while surrounding him with a world of color created by music.

Armstrong brought hope and strength to people through music, shaping American culture. Through my artwork, I wanted to show that America is not only history, but also a living story still being written. I hope viewers can almost hear the music and imagine America becoming brighter, more colorful, and united.



Minchan Kang

Southeast Region, Tennessee, Middle School

Hero: David Farragut

Battle of Mobile Bay: David Farragut, Acrylic on canvas

In my painting, I showed Admiral David Farragut in front of the Battle of Mobile Bay to connect the person with the important moment he was part of. I chose Farragut because I think he shows courage and strong leadership during the Civil War. His famous quote, “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead,” stood out to me because it shows how he stayed brave even when things were really dangerous.

I made Farragut bigger and put him in the front so he would be the main focus. In the background, I painted the battle with ships, smoke, and a fort to show how intense everything was. I wanted to show a difference between how calm and focused he looks and how chaotic the battle is behind him. I also used warmer colors on his face and darker colors on his uniform, so he stands out more.

This painting is connected to American Realism because it shows a real event in a simple and honest way. My goal was to honor Farragut and show how one person’s leadership can make a big difference. I hope people who see my painting can feel the action of the battle and understand his strength as a leader.



Violet Crowder

Midwest Region, Nebraska, Middle School

Hero: John Glenn

A First Glimpse, Embroidery thread on felt

My artwork, titled "A First Glimpse," honors the American Hero John Glenn, shown through embroidery. He did many notable things in his life, but the reason I chose him is our shared love of outer space. He was the first American to orbit the earth, and solidified America's footing in the space race. He was also the first person to take a handheld photo of the earth from space. Using a minimized, handheld drugstore camera, he took a picture to share with the world, which inspired my title A First Glimpse. My art depicts his capsule, Friendship 7, and the earth and moon in the background. I centered the globe so you can clearly see the USA and depicted an open capsule so you can see the intricacy inside. Glenn was a great example of a public servant, as a senator and astronaut. My art shows the beauty of what he shared with the world. He truly was a hero.

My art was influenced by American embroidery. Early American women used embroidery to tell a story, or stories, and record history, which is what I've done here. The story is of a fighter pilot, who went on to join the Mercury 7, and pilot a historic flight. I used the beauty of the thread to make the capsule feel 3D, the earth's water moving. This style helps the story come to life.

Aadya Janesh

West Region, California, Middle School

Hero: Amelia Earhart

Her Sky, Her Story, Mixed media on paper

Growing up, I have always been inspired by women in history who didn't let limits define them, and Amelia Earhart is one of the strongest examples for me. When I learned about her story, I didn't just see a famous pilot...I saw a brave woman who believed in herself even when others doubted her. She showed me that being different or facing challenges doesn't mean you stop; it means you keep going.

In my artwork, I was inspired greatly by colonial art, and I wanted to show Amelia Earhart as a symbol of courage and equality. Her airplane and goggles represent her achievements in aviation but also remind us that women can reach places that once felt impossible. The globe shows how her impact reached the whole world and continues to inspire people today. I used a warm evening sky to show hope and new beginnings, and I added birds to represent freedom- the idea that no girl should feel held back from her dreams.

Most of all, this piece is personal to me, because I hope to grow up to be a woman like Amelia Earhart, someone who is brave, independent, and determined, and who shows other girls that we all deserve equal chances to dream and succeed.





Ysobella G. Depala

Southwest Region, New Mexico, Middle School

Hero: George Washington

The Future of History, Acrylic on canvas

My painting, *The Future of History*, explores how a messy, bloody past shapes our present. George Washington built a nation from the gravel of war, yet history often overlooks the carnage. In my center, Washington stands scathed but proud, holding his flag. The background brushstrokes depict explosions and gray smoke. Below, faceless soldiers blur into the soil they fought and died for. Though he could not stop his army for proper burials, Washington's bold leadership set a monumental global standard for everyone. A tear in the top right reveals Mount Rushmore, where faces blur to represent how human memories decay and are distorted by others' depictions. Ultimately, we rely on journalists and historians to set legacies in stone, as humanity thrives only through others. The bright blue background behind this tear contrasts with the gloomy battlefield, symbolizing how Washington's sacrifices altered the trajectory of the U.S. toward a bright future. Finally, a bottom-left tear features Donald De Lue's statue of Washington. By stripping away hyper-realism, my expressive, unembellished strokes of varying shapes and colors project a raw, emotional view of history and its ongoing footprints.



Samantha Wiggin

Northeast Region, Massachusetts, High School

Hero: Theodore Roosevelt

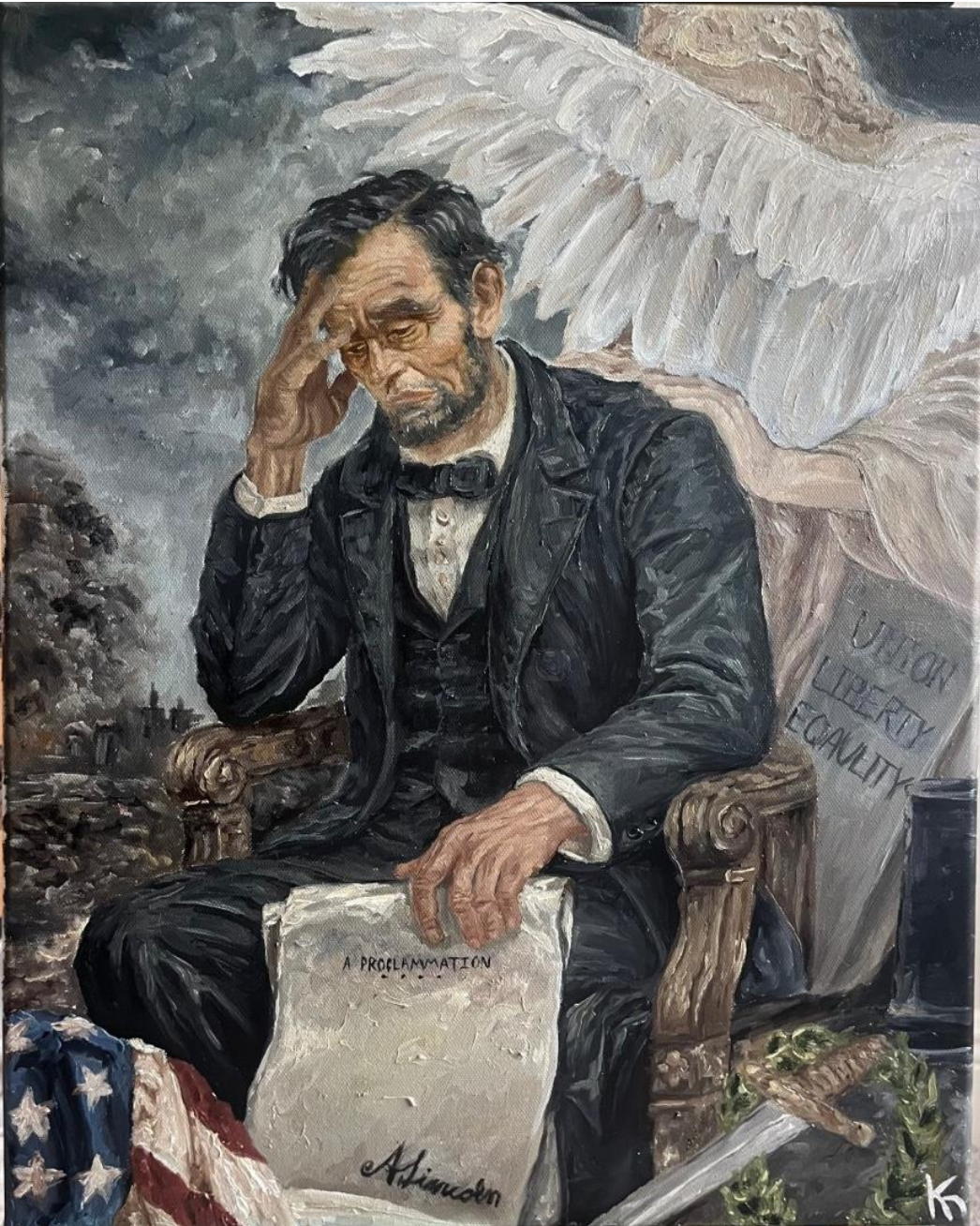
America Embodied: A Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt,

Graphite on paper

This drawing I've made of Theodore Roosevelt was influenced by many things. Since I have to choose an art movement to credit as inspiration, I'll say it was a mixture of photorealism and contemporary.

Contemporary can be called modern art, but really it is the sum of all we have learned from and been influenced by all the art in the history of our nation. I also love photorealism because it captures the tiny details so often missed. For example, the horse's ears in this drawing are flicked back, straining to catch even the faintest command from its rider. Its nostrils are flared, prepared to speed into action at just a moment's notice. Roosevelt is sitting evenly in the saddle, his military bearing incredibly obvious even when he is simply posing for a picture.

I couldn't capture his life in just one image, because Theodore Roosevelt had a life much too full to be put on paper. If the essence of America could be embodied in a single person, it might very well have been Theodore Roosevelt. He was no stranger to grief and hardship but worked hard at everything he did and accomplished so much for the good of the country both in and out of office. He embodied the values we so desperately need in this country right now. Maybe it is by studying how he lived that we can see with greater clarity what we once were and must again strive to be: One nation under God.



Britian Major

Southeast Region, Florida, High School

Hero: Abraham Lincoln

Unite Them, Oil on canvas

My painting of Abraham Lincoln displays the moral and psychological weight of leading a nation in fall out during the civil war. Lincoln was chosen as my hero because he uniquely carried the responsibility of preserving the union through its sole civil war, the burden is often overshadowed. This work draws from neoclassical traditions through its use of symbolism, allegory, and a moral narrative all while empathizing emotional realism. Symbolism throughout the painting is seen in the Emancipation Proclamation as a symbol of national rupture and moral progress, behind Lincoln is smoke and a battlefield reinforcing that his decisions are inseparable from violence, at his feet lies a worn American flag that represents a fractured country while a sword and wreath rest beside him suggesting tension between war and honor. A biblical allegory is seen in the angel standing behind Lincoln with a face covered by her wing symbolizing grief that cannot be fully expressed. She serves as a silent witness to the historical and emotional burden he carries. My intent was to remind people that true leadership often involves carrying immense invisible weight while still moving forward.

Amy Osborne

Midwest Region, Wisconsin, High School

Hero: Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Mark Twain, Acrylic on canvas

My artwork was influenced by Norman Rockwell and Mark Twain. Rockwell, an artist in the 20th century, drew in a realist style. In an attempt to reflect the true nature of Americans, he picked subjects he loved and painting life scenarios that defined what it meant to be an American. I have used his style to portray the American hero, Mark Twain. I believe the men and women who love America the most are those who seek to preserve it by recognizing America's flaws and seeking to change them. Only a true hero could do what Mark Twain did. He saw the hypocrisy in America, the confusion and pain we were inflicting on fellow men, and instead of ignoring it, he shed light on it. Mark Twain possessed the character and courage that men need today to save America. We are not to be blind. We are not to be comfortable. We need a hero to act as a gadfly and wake us up from this ignorance and reveal exactly what is going wrong in America. The founding of America 250 years ago relied on courageous men like Mark Twain to keep American morals and ethics in check. In the 1800s, it was men like Mark Twain who awoke America from its hypocrisy, and 250 years later, heroes like Mark Twain will be the ones to save us from our folly.





Asher Hudson

West Region, Montana, High School

Hero: Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Good Night, Dear Heart, Oil on canvas

Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) is most notably known for his writings, their fun, adventurous, and youthful feeling, however, I have come to know him mostly for his experience in grief. This year my choir did a piece called “Good Night, Dear Heart,” a song that describes the grief and hope for a loved one after death. The song is taken from the poem Samuel Clemens put on his daughter Suzy's grave called “Annette”. The poem describes the writer asking the sun and breeze to shine and blow softly upon the grave of the one they loved and wishing their loved one a final goodnight. Samuel Clemens was torn apart by his daughter's death and the deaths of his children that would come later on. It marked a turning point into the darkest time of his life and from his previous writings. Last June I lost my mother to cancer, little did I know that Samuel Clemens would give me hope for her. In my painting I wanted to depict the warm sun and breeze shining on the grave through the viewpoint of Samuel Clemens lying on the grave of his beloved daughter. I imagine him reading the words of the tomb stone and finding peace in them. The country we live in has come at a heavy cost. The lives of hundreds of boys, girls, men, and women, this makes us a grieving nation, however, Samuel Clemens shows us a final hope for those souls. We hope that the summer sun would shine kindly on them, that the warm southern wind would blow softly, for green sod and warm light to lie on their graves, and for a good night for our dear hearts.



Rebecca Smith

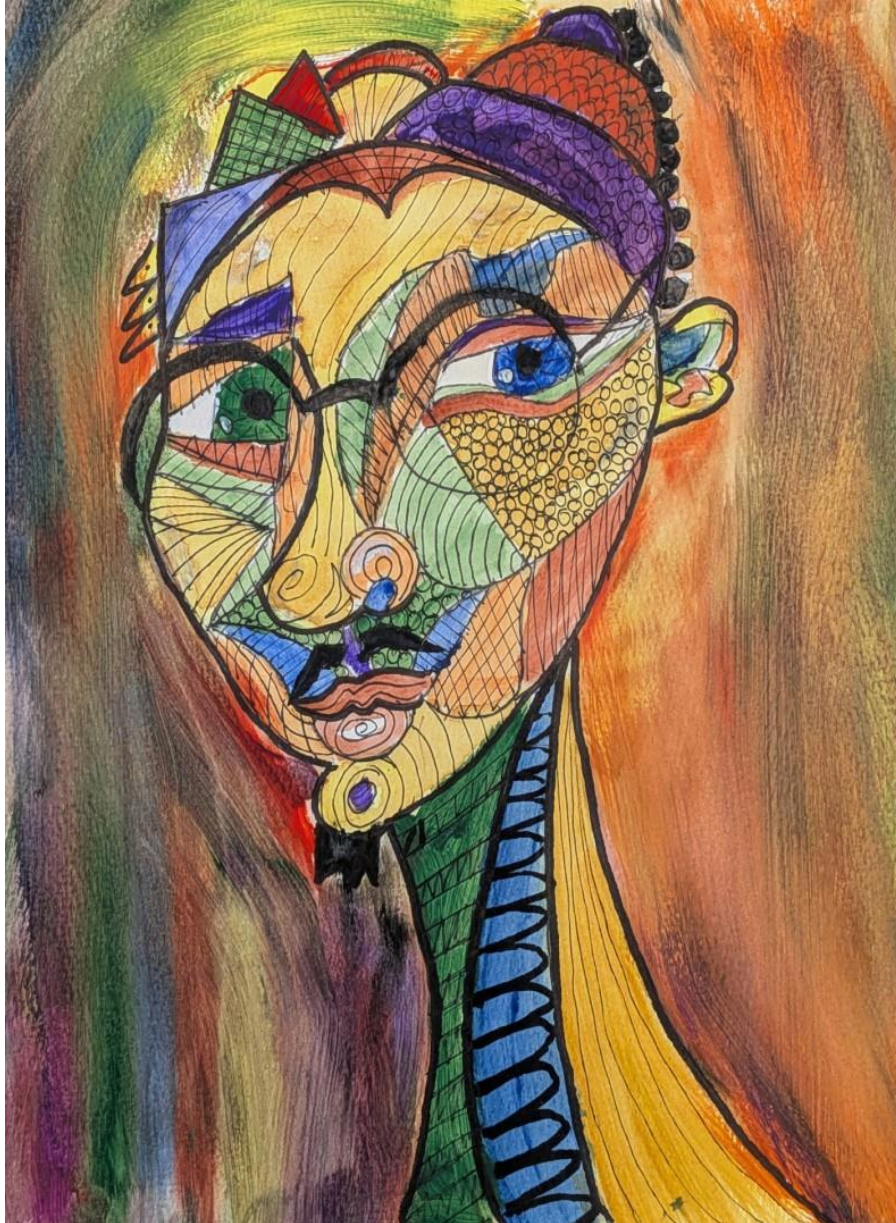
Southwest Region, Texas, High School

Hero: Dwight D. Eisenhower

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Colored pencil on toned paper

The American hero I have chosen to draw is Dwight D. Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States. The reason I chose him as the main subject for my artwork was partly because of his incredible bravery in battle and services for our Nation, but the sole reason is because he was born in my home state, Texas, and not far from where I live. The art style I chose, Realism, is one that I am familiar and comfortable with, and the style I believe best displays Eisenhower's optimistic personality, focusing on his well-known and warm grin that was commonly found on his face. The style also distinctively shows the colorful badges this brave man obtained throughout his life. Dwight D. Eisenhower still has a great influence where I live in Texas, and I have had the pleasure of visiting his birthplace home before in the city, Eisenhower, Texas, which was named in honor of him. Eisenhower, who fought in difficult battles such as D-Day, was a strong leader and excellent team builder, and through all of the trials he faced, he remained joyful and displayed an unwavering faith in the truth of the Bible. I believe he can be a great example of leadership for all generations today, showing that even people from small towns can grow up to be heroes in American history.

People's Choice Winners



Sophia Vanlandingham

Florida, Elementary

Hero: Nikola Tesla

The Man Who Lit America, Gouache on paper

I chose Nikola Tesla because he was very smart and created inventions that changed the world. He worked with electricity and new ideas that people still use today. I think he was a hero because he never gave up, even when life was difficult. I also love that he came to America and helped make the country stronger with his inventions. I love America because people from many places can come here and share their talents and ideas to help others.

My artwork was inspired by Abstract Expressionism. I used bright colors, shapes, and patterns to make the picture feel energetic, like electricity moving around Nikola Tesla. I made the face look unusual and artistic instead of realistic to show his imagination.

I think Nikola Tesla teaches us to keep learning and believing in ourselves. I want people to feel proud of America and the people who helped make life better for everyone.



Lexi Weaver

Florida, Middle School

Hero: Paul Revere

Midnight Ride, Gouache on paper

This artwork depicts a scene of Paul Revere's midnight ride. The dark yet hopeful mood and visible strokes show the intensity and importance of this moment in history. Similar to *Starry Night* by Van Gogh, this artwork focuses on impressionism, capturing the fleeting moment of Paul Revere. It focuses on light and atmosphere, mainly onto the horse. In the center, a great stallion is shown on its hind legs, with the rider alerting the militia that British troops were marching to arrest leaders and seize weapons. The bright moonlight and dull glow of the lamps shine upon the path. To the left is a dark, gloomy background. I chose Paul Revere for his courage. He showed independence and leadership. The subject represents the power and courage of an individual citizen. He inspires us to do what we believe is right. Even regular people can make a difference. According to this artwork, living historically means having the courage to stand up and adapt when the world around you shifts. Some of the brushstrokes are blended. The movement of the horse and rider makes the scene feel dramatic and urgent. The houses, road, and sky have a little texture to create a somewhat realistic yet loose and mainly impressionist setting to the viewer.



Mia Elizabeth Cossick

Georgia, High School

Hero: Desmond Doss

***One More*, Oil and modeling paste on wood panel**

Bullets whizzed by like angry hornets, acrid gun smoke stinging his eyes. Desmond Doss belly-crawled to a wounded man, strapping him to a makeshift stretcher and lowering him to safety. Then he went back for another, ignoring orders to retreat. "Lord," he prayed, "help me get just one more."

May 5, 1944 -- the Battle of Hacksaw Ridge on Okinawa -- was one of the bloodiest days in World War II. Rather than retreat, Doss stayed atop the ridge and rescued over 75 wounded men, even treating some Japanese soldiers. Remarkably, he did this without touching a weapon. A devout Christian, Doss served as a medic, saving lives, not taking them. Ridiculed at first, his courage ultimately earned everyone's respect and the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Doss's story speaks to me because I believe convictions are worth standing up for, even under persecution. My generation needs this message: standing for your country and for your values is not always popular, but Desmond Doss proved that you can be a hero without compromising your beliefs. He shone with the light of his faith, even on one of the darkest days in human history.

To capture the struggle of war, I painted in the Realism tradition using oil on an 18"x24" birch wood panel with heavily textured modeling paste ground symbolizing the grit of battle. Black and white honors the era and shows how war drains life from a landscape. Doss wears his medic's pack, his hand reaching out to save "just one more."

National Winners

Second Place



Raeanna Smith

New York, Elementary

Hero: Sitting Bull

The Holy Man, Acrylic marker on paper

Sitting Bull, or Tȟatȟánka Íyotake, born into the Hunkpapa Lakota tribe led the resistance against the United States and defeated Lieutenant Colonel Custer in the battle of Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. His story is important to me because it inspires me to be brave and stand up for what's right. He teaches us that it's important to be good to each other and treat everyone with respect and kindness. Especially people who cannot speak up for themselves. My favorite quote by Sitting Bull is

“The warrior is not someone who fights because no one has the right to take another life. The warrior for us is one who sacrifices themselves for the good of others. His task is to take care of the elderly, the defenseless, those who cannot provide for themselves and above all, the children, the future of humanity.”

My artwork is influenced by Steven Lang's art. When I saw his art for the first time his art made me feel calm; it made me feel as if I was there with those people in the painting. His art inspired me to add Sitting bull in a plains setting. He also influenced my style of art, realism.



Sarang Lee

New Jersey, Middle School

Hero: Louis Armstrong

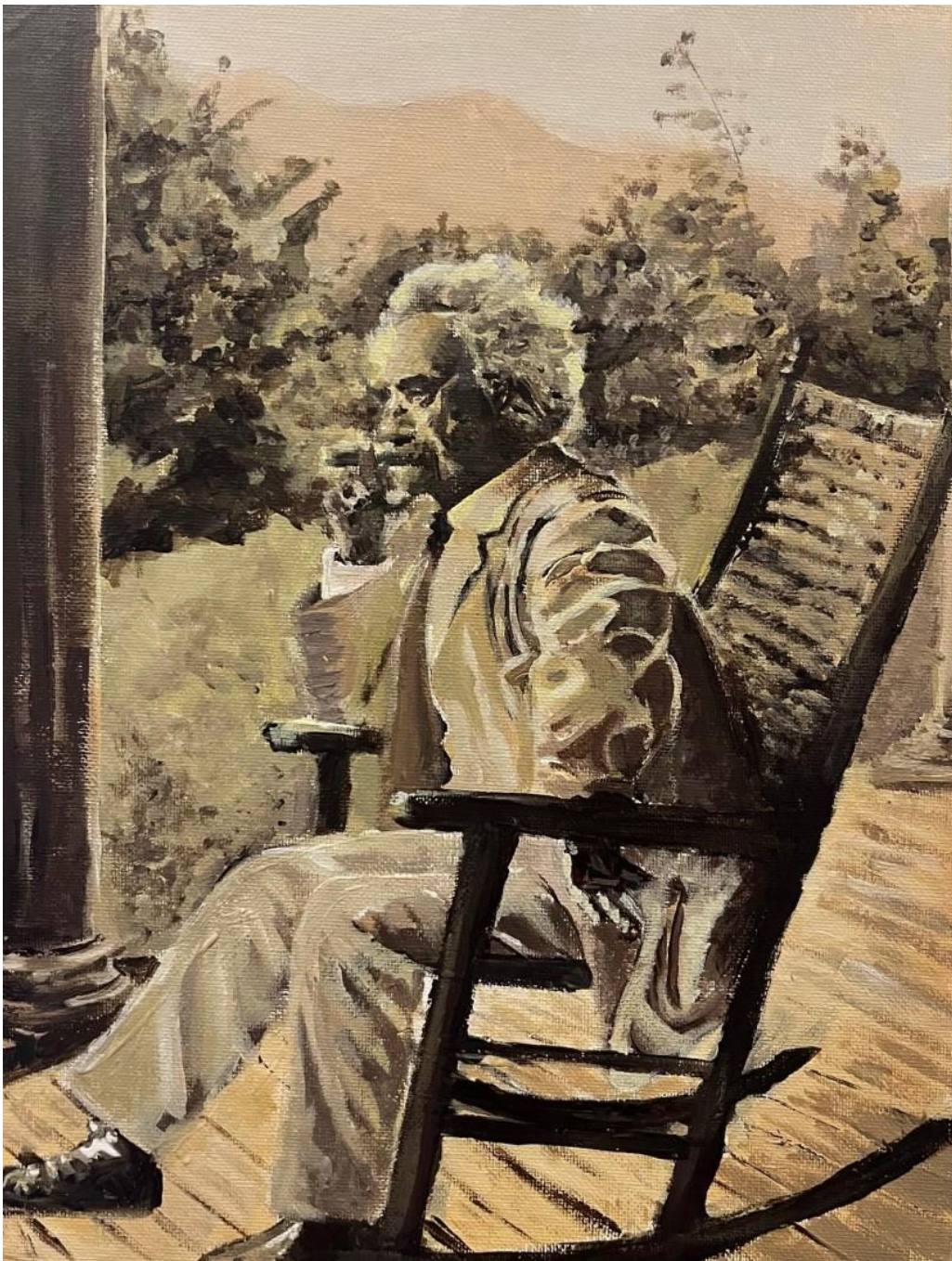
The Sound That Became America, Charcoal and pastel on paper

Have you ever imagined a world painted by music, where sound turns into color? I chose Louis Armstrong because he is not only a famous musician but also represents the spirit of America. Among the heroes, I was drawn to him because his music feels powerful and brings people together. Although our nation is made up of many different cultures and backgrounds, I believe these differences create a beautiful harmony.

In my artwork, Armstrong is shown in black and white charcoal. From his trumpet, music spreads and fills the world with vivid color using pastels. Buildings, people, lights, and the American flag all become part of this joyful melody. What a wonderful world!

This spring, I visited the Whitney Museum and saw contemporary American artworks. I loved Andy Warhol's *Ethel Scull 36 Times*. I noticed how he used contrast between figures and bold colorful backgrounds. I learned that color could express emotion and meaning. That inspired me to place Armstrong in black and white while surrounding him with a world of color created by music.

Armstrong brought hope and strength to people through music, shaping American culture. Through my artwork, I wanted to show that America is not only history, but also a living story still being written. I hope viewers can almost hear the music and imagine America becoming brighter, more colorful, and united.



Amy Osborne

Wisconsin, High School

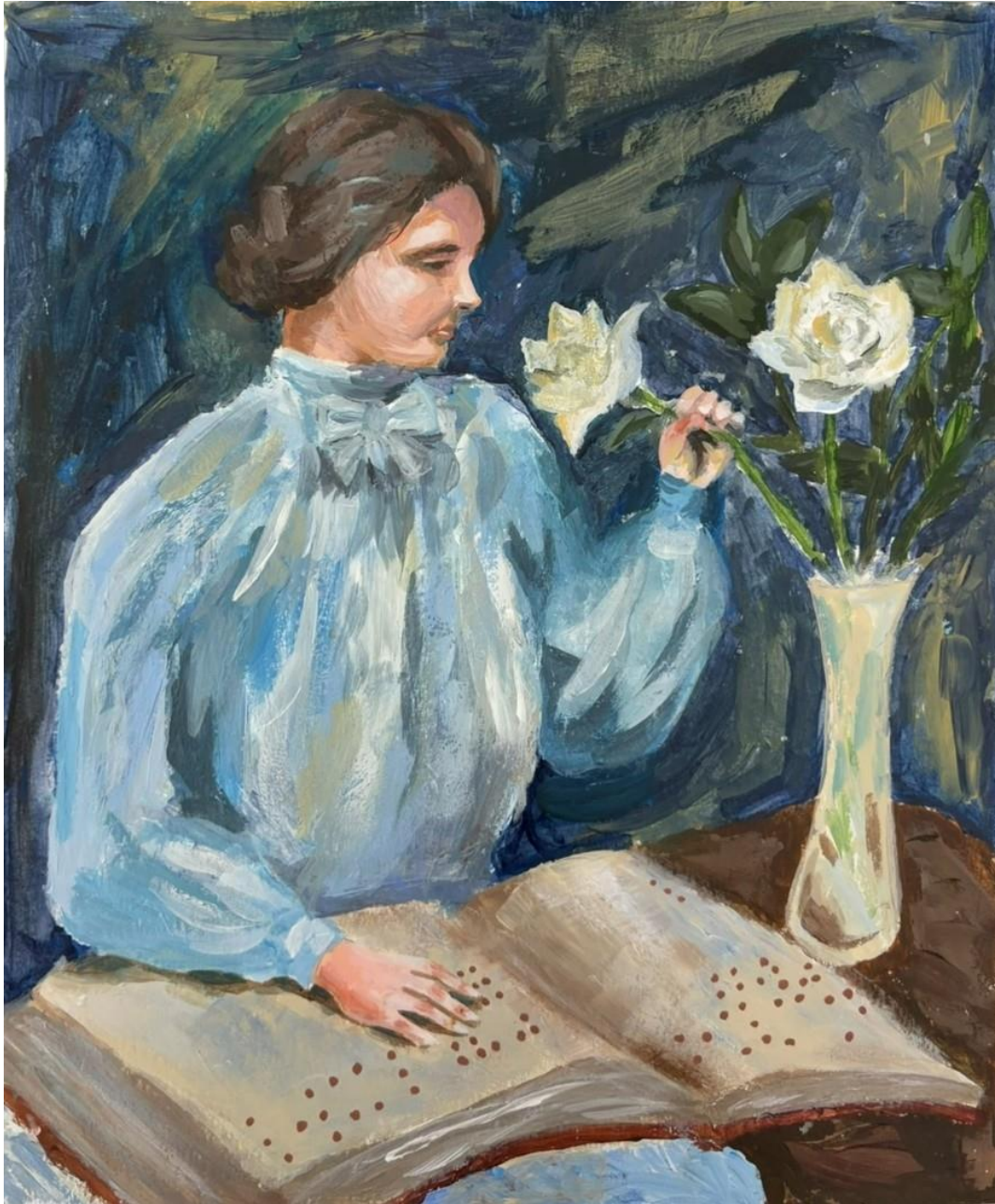
Hero: Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain)

Mark Twain, Acrylic on canvas

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National Winners

First Place



Jiyun Kim

Texas, Elementary

Hero: Helen Keller

Her World Beyond Sight and Sound

Acrylic on canvas

I chose Helen Keller because I think her story is really inspiring. Even though she could not see or hear, she still learned how to communicate and understand the world in her own way. She shows that people can achieve great things even with difficulties. In my artwork, I showed her touching braille and holding a flower. The braille represents how she learned to read and connect with others, and the flower shows that she could still experience beauty through touch and smell. I used soft colors and visible brushstrokes to make the painting feel calm and thoughtful. I painted this too show that even in silence and darkness, there is still beauty, strength, and meaning. It reminds us that everyone experiences the world in their own unique and meaningful way.



Violet Crowder

Nebraska, Middle School

Hero: John Glenn

A First Glimpse

Embroidery thread on felt

My artwork, titled "A First Glimpse," honors the American Hero John Glenn, shown through embroidery. He did many notable things in his life, but the reason I chose him is our shared love of outer space. He was the first American to orbit the earth, and solidified America's footing in the space race. He was also the first person to take a handheld photo of the earth from space. Using a minimized, handheld drugstore camera, he took a picture to share with the world, which inspired my title *A First Glimpse*. My art depicts his capsule, Friendship 7, and the earth and moon in the background. I centered the globe so you can clearly see the USA and depicted an open capsule so you can see the intricacy inside. Glenn was a great example of a public servant, as a senator and astronaut. My art shows the beauty of what he shared with the world. He truly was a hero.

My art was influenced by American embroidery. Early American women used embroidery to tell a story, or stories, and record history, which is what I've done here. The story is of a fighter pilot, who went on to join the Mercury 7, and pilot a historic flight. I used the beauty of the thread to make the capsule feel 3D, the earth's water moving. This style helps the story come to life.



Samantha Wiggin

Massachusetts, High School

Hero: Theodore Roosevelt

America Embodied: A Portrait of Theodore Roosevelt

Graphite on paper

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I couldn't capture his life in just one image, because Theodore Roosevelt had a life much too full to be put on paper. If the essence of America could be embodied in a single person, it might very well have been Theodore Roosevelt. He was no stranger to grief and hardship but worked hard at everything he did and accomplished so much for the good of the country both in and out of office. He embodied the values we so desperately need in this country right now. Maybe it is by studying how he lived that we can see with greater clarity what we once were and must again strive to be: One nation under God.