

2025 Elie Wiesel Competition

3rd Place Junior Essay

Willow Johnson, 8th Grade

Norfolk Collegiate School, Amy Cushman

Powerful Messages

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” This quote by Edgar Degas holds a lot of truth. Art is not showing people in exact detail what is really there, art is a message or emotion shown through an image. Every work of art has a message whether it was just made for fun, on a sunny afternoon or if it was made with anguish during the Holocaust. Something that makes that creation good is how powerfully the message and emotion is showing through their craftsmanship.

One artwork that holds a powerful message is *The Refugee*, made by Felix Nussbaum, a refugee from the Holocaust. His painting shows a globe on a table and a man in the background with his head in his hands and a look of utter despair. The room the man is in resembles a jail cell showing that it feels as if there's no way out. This painting really speaks to me as you can tell exactly how he feels, like there's no hope left and he's dreaming for a means of escape. I think that the message that people interpret through art can change depending on the person's life experiences but everyone can still understand and feel the same emotions that the art invokes.

When I make art, the art piece is usually based around my emotions and what I'm feeling at the time. One thing that I express emotions through art is color. If I'm feeling calm or in a good mood I tend to use a lot of blues and lighter colors as well as I tend to make cleaner lines that still seem more free than when I'm in a negative mood. When I'm in a bad mood I tend to be less forgiving with my art, and I use darker colors and the art piece itself seems to carry more weight. The way art is made can have a heavy impact on how it's perceived as well as the artist's emotions. In the Holocaust many of the artist's paintings showed scenes, of sadness, loss, and anger. You can tell that in every painting there's a theme of dark colors and that they were all living in hard times.

Whether your masterpiece is made from joy or sadness, hope or despair, elation or disgust it can always share a message more powerful than words themselves. Every message behind every art piece is personal and true and can't be taken away from you, even if the painting is destroyed that art will live on within the people who saw it. I think that Darryl Anka states it perfectly, “Every piece of art is a mirror and serves the function of reflectivity to expose to you and reveal to you more of who you are.” I believe that art not only changes the way you view the world around you, but also how you view yourself.