

One Cannot Spell “Heart” Without “Art”

As an English major with a creative writing concentration, the question of “what’s your job going to be?” pops up all too often. I never knew how to answer; my career options were unknown to me. Being a chemical engineer, my father is practically guaranteed job stability. On the other hand, English majors like myself do not have a defined job. No matter what, my parents were always supportive of my endeavors. Of course, my father still wanted to make sure his little girl would be able to provide for herself. What he and many others do not realize is that art, such as creative writing, allows for plenty of job opportunities. After all, art matters because it is far more than a hobby; it’s a lifestyle.

In order to fully appreciate its value, one must first understand what qualifies as art. Due to its abstract nature, this task can prove difficult. As Paul Cezanne states, “if I were called upon to define briefly the word Art, I should call it the reproduction of what the senses perceive in nature, seen through the veil of the soul” (qtd. in Matthews 1). When the word first comes to mind, people tend to think of paintings and sculptures. Though this is true, art expands across many platforms. From fiction and poetry to photography and dance, art is everywhere whether we realize it or not. Despite their differences, they are all united by common themes. Some of these themes, such as aesthetics and freedom, involve an artist’s ability to establish identity. In a broader sense, art has the capability to enrich our lives by fostering love and even happiness. After all, as Theodore Dreiser says, “art is the stored honey of the human soul” (qtd. in Matthews 1). Each of these themes provides a greater perspective on why art matters.

Unlike science or business, art has proficiency in granting unparalleled emotional expression. Similarly, art allows people to see the world in an entirely new light. In fact, for

some, art is all they have. When telling her story about raising her son in poverty, Alison Stine mentions that “when I feel like I have nothing, I can give my son the gift of creativity, the gift of imagination, the gift of spending a happy hour painting cardboard on the porch.” Individuals like Stine use art to reveal truths in a way that, given certain circumstances, cannot be spoken in words. Likewise, art also teaches important life skills. In Stine’s case, “what is living in poverty if not constantly being creative? Continually making it work? Making the unbearable, bearable?” In making use of limited resources, Stine and her son are learning ingenuity and perseverance. Even today’s artists, who spend years honing their craft, attain a wide range of these special skills. As a result, they become more favorable to employers and earn better jobs.

Unfortunately, “‘liberal arts’ has become a put down, and ‘English major’ a punchline” (Deresiewicz 78). Not everyone finds art to be necessary for living a good life. As my father once understandably thought, art is the want in a world of needs— except that it isn’t. Art is one’s life’s work; it takes dedication and passion of the highest degree to stick with it. In a world of rejection, staying motivated can seem impossible. As Deresiewicz says, when quoting Allan Bloom, “‘Liberal education puts everything at risk and requires students who are willing to risk everything’” (84). Additionally, one must realize that money does not define character. After all, “what’s the return on investment of having children, spending time with friends, listening to music, reading a book” (79)? It doesn’t matter; art speaks enough for itself to earn the money people care so much about.

All things considered, art may not seem important, but when we take a close look at the world around us, we can see its influence everywhere. From the smallest autumn leaf to a massive cathedral, the beauty of artistic expression never ceases to astound people. With endless

creative possibilities, art almost transcends human appreciation. Though its malleability causes concern for success, we need not worry. In this world of minds dreaming up ideas, art transforms us into our truest selves. All we must do is seize the opportunity.

Works Cited

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