

**Teesri Duniya Theatre thanks all of the students who participated in our inaugural essay writing contest. The following were chosen by an independent panel of judges and appear as originally submitted without any changes or edits.**

### **Finalists**

Nicholas Backman – Selwyn House School

Aleksi Campagne – Centennial Regional High School

Marcos Archambault - Selwyn House School

### **Honorable mention**

Sarah Amirali – Marymount Academy

Rijha Bhattacharjee - Marymount Academy

Soren Senchey - Marymount Academy

Ronghui Wang - Marymount Academy

## **1st position**

**Nicholas Backman – Selwyn House School**

**Topic: Can art be a powerful tool in building peace in the context of *Truth and Treason*?**

The day that changed the course of the entire 21<sup>st</sup> century is nothing more than a blur in my sixteen-year-old memory. I wasn't old enough at the time to understand what had happened, just a few hours' drive away, in New York City. There was no attempt to shield me from the truth. I remember sitting in a black leather armchair in my grandparents' living room, watching the events of September 11, 2001 unfold in slow motion on CNN. At first, there were far more questions than answers. The United States of America, the most powerful nation in the world, had been brought to its knees by terrorists. The aura of invincibility that had shrouded America since the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. in 1991 had been destroyed, in one fell swoop. When the vultures of the mainstream media uncovered the story that an organization of Islamic terrorists was behind the 9/11 attacks, the War on Terror began.

How did we allow ourselves to become so deluded, in the first place, that we forgot the principle that is most treasured in Western society: that peace, with no exception, is always greater than war? In hindsight, it's easy to point fingers and to lay the blame on the Bush regime, on the Republican voters, or on the mainstream media that was so gung-ho for a war in the Middle East in the first place. But the truth is that at the time, most people I knew wanted to see America exact vengeance on the network of Islamic terrorists that had caused the deaths of innocent civilians on that cataclysmic day in September.

We were bloodthirsty for revenge. The pervading opinion at the time was that "if we don't show them that they can't mess with America, they'll bomb the hell out of us again." The trouble, of course, was defining exactly who was responsible for the attacks. Remember how Osama bin Laden was public enemy number one in America for a brief period, before bin Laden's disturbing links to the Bush regime surfaced? Eight years later, after the deaths of countless innocent civilians whose only crime was to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, what does America have to show for it? As the War in Iraq, a heavy burden on the taxpayer, drags on pointlessly, where is Osama bin Laden?

*Truth and Treason* is a shocking, jarring portrayal of contemporary Iraq. The once-great city of Baghdad, now a shell of its former self, lies in ruins with a completely disillusioned populace and a

corrupt government. The truth, which many people still find difficult to accept, is that the true victims of the Iraq War are the innocent civilians whose lives have been shattered by death and destruction. What I found profoundly disturbing about *Truth and Treason* is that the Americans, who we generally perceive as our allies and as the defenders of justice and democracy, have committed acts of treachery on the same scale as the September 11 attacks over the course of their conflict with the Middle Eastern states. Nahla Abdul Ahad witnesses her young daughter Ghazal's death at the hands of American soldiers at a checkpoint. The disturbing reality is that every day, unpardonable atrocities involving human beings as innocent as Ghazal are condoned. In times of war, the veneer of civilization that separates mankind from beasts wears off as soldiers are conditioned to lose their humanity. Whether it's the American soldiers' written testimonies confessing their war crimes, or the inhuman treatment of Ghazal and her father at the checkpoint, *Truth and Treason* paints an alarming picture of the Occupation of Iraq.

I read somewhere that the Iraq War is referred by the U.S. military as *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. Is it necessary for the soldiers to justify a war that has caused an estimated 1.2 million deaths in Iraq in this way? The bitter irony is that the chances of the U.S. occupation leading to a proclaimed peace is on a par with the probability of weapons of mass destruction existing in Iraq. For a nation with a bloodstained past and a 21<sup>st</sup> century marred by interminable internal and external conflicts, the American occupation can hardly be welcomed by the Iraqi civilians. The greatest tragedy is the estimated 5 million Iraqi children who have been orphaned during the U.S. occupation. How is it possible for the Americans to justify what amounts to genocide?

The reality is that ignorance is what prevents the average American from understanding the plight of Iraq. As long as the Iraqis can be stereotyped and inaccurately pigeonholed as Islamic extremists who were responsible for 9/11, Americans will not feel any remorse for their deaths.

When I read the proposed essay topics for the 'Writing Peace' contest, my first reactions was of cynicism. When contemplating the atrocities committed by people all around the globe, it's difficult to keep faith in humanity. We are all capable of acts of incredible barbarity and cruelty. We are all capable of becoming as desensitized to the horrors of war as Commander Hektor Frank. Yet as I thought further about the essay topics, I realized that I was wrong. There is one emotion powerful enough to repress our instincts of savagery. It is compassion.

For a soldier to kill in cold blood, he must be perfectly devoid of compassion for his enemy. If each American soldier felt compassion and empathy for the Iraqi civilians, it would be impossible to motivate them to fight in Iraq. Instead, like Edward in *Truth and Treason*, they would refuse to fight

on. For peace to be achieved, it is necessary to make humans feel compassion for one another, regardless of race or religion.

There is no better way of reaching out to people to convey emotions and beliefs than through art. For a bridge of compassion to be built over the great void separating Americans from Iraqis, there must be solid foundations of mutual understanding.

How can a play like *Truth and Treason* affect people's sense of compassion? In our society, we have a wealth of information in newspapers and on the Internet. Written testimonies and harrowing reports on the turbulence of the Iraq War are only a click of a button away. However, it is hard to feel strong emotions unless one is affected visually. The power of theatre is that it transports its spectators into a different environment. Anyone who sees the tragedy of Iraq with our own eyes will not fail to be affected emotively. There may be cause for hope after all.

## **2nd position**

**Alexi Campagne – Centennial Regional High School**

### **The importance of theatre**

Theatre is (and always have been) very important in today's society. It can definitely help shape humanity. How? By performing plays which are socially and politically relevant today. Believe it or not, plays can convey very strong messages. Think of it this way. If you were simply told that the war in Iraq is really corrupt, you might not take it too seriously. You've been told plenty of things today already: you need to eat more fibre, world hunger is a huge problem, you need to lose weight, support your local bakery...it never ends. That statement just gets lost along with all the other facts you've been told. But, you enter a theatre, gather with other people, if you go see a play that talks about the corruption of being in a position of power (like *Truth and Treason*), it stays with you. Not only is it entertaining, but it is thought provoking. Then you tell your friends about it and then the message slowly starts to spread. Simply with one play, many people can be influenced.

I, for one, have been influenced enough to take a considerable amount of time writing an essay about it. It was powerful, it was enjoyable, but most of all, it made me think. How can theatre shape humanity? Simply by making people think of topics, problems they wouldn't normally think of.

Theatre is a very creative way of sending a message. Unlike the news, theatre works on many levels. It can be viewed by people of all ages. Whether it's a twelve year old or a sixty year old, both will be able to enjoy the play. Sure, the meaning will be different for each of them, but they will both see something that they can understand. Theatre is interpreted differently by each individual, depending on their intellect, vocabulary and education. For example, if a young child is listening to the news, that child might not understand a lot of it. In fact, they most likely won't because the language is aimed at adults, whereas the message from a play can be interpreted in many different levels of complexity. A play is also a lot like the child's life. People move and interact in three dimensions. On top of that, the child might not even want to listen to the news because it isn't entertaining. Theatre has all of that.

You're probably thinking "theatre can't help shape humanity. If you really want to send a message, you can reach way more people through the internet". That is true. But how many of those viewers will actually remember that message? It's easy to forget about it when there are so many other videos out there. What's to say your viewers won't remember the man who can fit himself inside a balloon? Will that video move someone as much as theatre would? No, because all a video is, is a

collection of images on a computer screen and sound out of speakers. There is something really special about seeing people in real life, in real time, in front of you. Anything can happen. There's a certain connection between the performers and the audience that can never be recreated digitally. Why do we love seeing live bands play? I mean, in reality, the recorded versions can be altered to be perfectly in pitch, so why is the live version better? It's better because there is a human connection. The same thing goes for storytelling. Why are stories so entertaining when everyone's sitting around the campfire reciting scary stories? The connection. That is why theatre can shape humanity. Because it moves people in ways most people have forgotten is possible.

The other question asked is: can art be a powerful tool in building peace? Absolutely. Simply by viewing *Truth and Treason*, I feel more drive to end this war. Of course, everyone knows that war is horrible and it should be ended, but most people don't feel the urge to do anything about it. They think it doesn't concern them, it's happening in a completely different continent or country. But this play really gives an idea of what it is to be in the middle of it; the tragedy of the innocent girl dying, the total corruption of the army leader, the fall of the people who stand up the corrupt leaders, how every single person thinks that they are doing what is best for the country. This makes me want to work for peace and if I can convince a few other people

A play like this one can help build peace by simply showing both sides of the conflict. Understanding each other is the first step to building peace. With understanding comes compassion and trust. Think of it this way, if you are having a fight with someone in your family, what do you have to do to end that conflict? First you have to listen and think of the situation from both points of view, but mostly you have to consider that you might be the one being unreasonable. Theatre can clearly show this. In the play, really the only reason there is a conflict is because both sides are unbelievably convinced that they are right. If people understand that, peace can follow.

Now, I could try and tell people about the corruption of war, I could make a video on the internet about the atrocities of war, I could force people to read a textbook on war and peace, but if I really wanted to make someone care about what is being done about the "war on terror", I would send as many people inside that theatre as possible. I truly want to make a difference, and if I can get one thousand people inside that theatre, to make a thousand people think of war and peace in a way they normally wouldn't think of, to move a thousand people in ways most people have forgotten is possible, who knows what could happen?

### **3rd position**

**Marcos Archambault - Selwyn House School**

**Topic - How can theatre help shape humanity?**

In the theatrical production *Truth and Treason*, written by artistic director Rahul Varma, and directed by Arianna Bardesono, the ugly truth taking place in the American War on Terror against Iraq is irrevocably exposed to the naïve audience. Being a witness to this travesty is disturbing and leads one to contemplate the real motives of the United States military plan. In the play, one is transported to the forefront of the Iraqi experience, where Gahzal, a young Iraqi-Canadian is shot down by American soldiers. Her father, Omar Ahad, jailed for suspected terrorist crimes, is prevented by the Americans to provide her with a lifesaving blood transfusion and thus, the young girl dies. The inhumanity depicted in the play troubles the viewer and provokes him to question the North-American propaganda against terrorism. Having the opportunity to be exposed to a political production of this nature, stimulates thought and action aimed at social change. In this fashion, significant pieces of theatre may help to shape the humanity of our future intercultural relationships.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the United States declared the actions against the Americans as inhumane acts of terrorism. President George W. Bush promised retaliation and promoted a war on Iraq and Afghanistan. Destroying weapons of mass destruction became the nation's quest and much of its resources have been directed towards this cause. The enemy was portrayed to the North-American population as reprehensible. In contrast, in *Truth and Treason*, the U.S. soldiers, for the most part, are characterized as cold, non-compassionate extremists. Many of their actions are, in fact, morally unjust. Innocent civilians are tortured and terrorized in the name of American justice. Gahzal, the innocent ten-year-old, is left to die, simply because of who her father is. Captain Edward Alston, an American officer in charge of the checkpoint, relates the story of another American soldier who had received a command to shoot and kill two elderly women carrying only vegetables. Omar himself was threatened by Commander Hektor Frank with the mutilation of his young daughter's body and his wife's torture and death. Near the end of the play, a freed Omar and his wife Nahla flying to Canada are mysteriously killed as the plane explodes. There is the implication that the Americans were behind this as Omar had many truths to reveal. Throughout the play, Iraqis are manipulated and violated by American soldiers and officials. The War on Terror has thus become an outright act of terrorism and abusive power of the American militia over innocent peoples.

The United States' presence in Iraq is illustrated as a war of aggression in *Truth and Treason*. Unaware Americans have been convinced by their media to believe that their nation is fighting

terrorism and rebuilding Iraq. Instead, in the play, we are made aware of their role in the propagation of terrorism. Billions of dollars and many military and innocent lives have been needlessly spent in this ongoing futile mission. In the production of *Truth and Treason*, we are invited to see another view point of this experience. We are given the opportunity to empathize and relate to the innocent Iraqis and in doing so, endure shame for our naïvety. The absurd denial of human rights based on race makes the viewer uncomfortable. We begin to question our complacency as part of the problem. It is easy to relate to Captain Edward as the only American in the play that appears to have a conscience. He demonstrates compassion and declares that “even a terrorist has the right to save his child.” Although, when Captain Edward tries to expose the truth behind young Gahzel’s death, his life is put in jeopardy by Commander Hektor. The audience, in turn, is moved to explore the reality of what is actually happening in the Middle East. The victimization of the Iraqis illuminates our vision of their condition and of society in general. The nature of being human, regardless of race, religion or culture, is shared by all. The revelation provided by this theatrical work bring us towards a heightened sense of humanity and sensitivity for mankind. We examine what the media has been feeding us and become angered with ourselves for having bought into the propaganda. For a play to have accomplished this, is an enormous social contribution.

Considering that the play *Truth and Treason* is based on actual events, this art media allows for the education of the general public and particularly, the youth of our society. It is a forum whereby we can be exposed to information that may not be readily communicated in the general media. The fact that the characters are brought to life before a live audience, permits the viewer to relate more closely to their human experience. Cultural boundaries are thus crossed and awareness is spread. Social change can be brought forth through empathy, compassion and education. The theatrical venue in this case allows for a new vision of our global makeup.

The ethical issues raised in the dramatic *Truth and Treason* force us to reflect on our role as humanitarians. We are sickened by the terrorism inflicted by the Americans onto innocent Iraqis and are called upon to further explore the dilemma our society currently faces. The reality that violence begets violence is confirmed in the play. Racism, the denial of human rights, aggression and manipulation are all forms of terrorism in themselves. War cannot be won by war. We are incited to question our society’s values, particularly when we live in a country that supports multiculturalism. In the play, Omar declares that his daughter Gahzal’s death needs to be a call for freedom. Witnesses to her touching story, we, the audience, are also moved to call for her and her nation’s freedom from the oppression of America’s War on Terror. It is truly a remarkable feat that a theatrical production could accomplish such a shift in viewpoint over a relatively short period of time. Such is the power of art as a tool in our human awareness

## **Honorable mention**

**Sarah Amirali – Marymount Academy**

### **Truth and Treason**

Do Iraqi civilians deserve to be under siege?

Do Innocent Iraqi children deserve to see bloodshed and get killed at such a young age??

Why should the Iraqi children and families suffer because of terrorism?

We did not do anything to them, why are we victims of their ruthless invasion?" is the question on every Iraqi's tongue!!

Why can't Iraq be a free country like any other country???

Do Iraqis' deserve to see their country getting ruined in front of their eyes; in fact does anybody deserve to see their house, their country, their family getting ruined in front of them????

It is indeed difficult to comment neutrally on the American invasion in Iraq, especially after the valid proofs of American tortures on helpless Iraqi civilians. There is little doubt that the entire invasion and the political unrest that proceeded had been a meticulously planned agenda by the heads of many countries directly or indirectly. It is not the first time in history that a so called super-power had terrorised and oppressed the weak, this time under the shield of "Iraqi Liberation Act", a document officially signed by the United States Government.

There seems to be so much confusion regarding the purpose of this war in the minds of most people. Looking back, a wide variety of motives and arguments for justifying the Iraq war have been presented by both pro-war and anti-war camps over the past two years. Numerous people assume as to why this war had taken place since nobody exactly knows what the valid purpose of the Americans was.

The play Truth and Treason was about an Iraqi family who was a victim of the American torture, despite the mother and daughter being Canadian citizens. A woman who lost her daughter in all this terrorism, whose husband is in jail for no relevant reason. This skit is about a father who is in jail and cannot donate blood to his own daughter who is fighting between life and death. This story is every Iraqi's story. There are several mothers who are crying because they lost their little child, or their husband or a loved one!!! Why should they suffer even though they have nothing to do with this war; they never asked for it. All they want is to live in peace with their families. All they want is to be assured that when their loved one will step out of their houses no soldier's bullet or bomb will kill

them. The youths have been exposed to ruthless tortures mentally, morally and physically scarring them for life. These youths who are supposed to be the future leaders of Iraq!!!

Unfortunately, the world had been and has been unaware of these autocracies. Their silence has only proved to increase the invaders horrific attitude. Civilised persons with barbaric act. This skit clearly illustrated every aspect of the war in each scene, in each dialogue...

Gazelle is a young pre teen girl shot by an American soldier, why?? Because he suspected her of some terrorist act. She is severely wounded and in need of a blood transfusion, her blood group is rare O- and the only person who can help her is her father (Omar) who is in prison. She is critical but the commander refuses to release her father even for a little while, because he had old enmity with Omar. He clearly states that he did not care for one more civilian death. The American Captain who is under the commander's wing is a good hearted soul. He tries his best to help the ailing girl but his efforts go futile. It is undoubtedly obvious that during war the oppressors become void of emotions. They don't feel an iota of guilt when they see a little girl or an infant in agony. While watching the play I felt disgusted when I saw that little girl dead, but the commander who was present at that time didn't even feel a pinch of guilt.

The girl dead, the father in prison leaving the mother (Nahla) alone distraught running from one place to another. At this point a sheikh is introduced who tries to console the distressed mother. Nahla sits by her daughter's body wailing and complaining to deaf ears. Later in the scene she visits her husband who is tremendously shocked and heartbroken. She informed him that a few soldiers broke into the house asking for the documents that her husband had concealed. Their frightened and anxious daughter ran to her father in prison to tell him about this but was shot on the way there. What kind of justice is this??? Snatching away a little girl from her parents. What might have gone through her mother's heart when she saw her one and only treasured daughter shot dead, lying on the floor with blood all over. I don't think she deserves this in fact no mother deserve to see this in their life time. Why is it that thousands of Iraqi deaths are overlooked and unnoticeable but if a few American soldiers die, it is all over the news?? Aren't Iraqi's as much humans as American soldiers are? Don't they deserve the treatment and respect that an American soldier deserves?

People say 'the soldier was so young when he died, poor him', but what about those Iraqi new born babies who are killed by these same American soldiers. Because of too much pressure from other countries the commander had no choice but to release Omar (girl's father) from jail. Once released from jail, Omar decided to give a speech in front of the Iraqi's and tell them about the American's motives and intentions. Meanwhile the prime minister is attending a conference in which he is trying to give a company the contract of rebuilding Iraq. Nahla was not in favour of Omar giving the speech

because she was concerned about Omar's welfare. She didn't want to lose her husband again; she was already in a shock from her daughter's death. Later in the story the captain is shot on the head and a Canadian journalist is kidnapped. Omar and Nahla finally decide to go to Canada but unfortunately they never reached there. Their plane crashes on the way.

Where are the human rights??? Where are all the other countries who despite knowing that this is wrong, do not interfere. People are marching all over the world, is this the real way to protest??? What did the U.N do about it and all the other international organisations?

I would not have been opposing the Americans had they not caused such chaos. After a study of this invasion and reflecting it from every angle, I have come to believe that except for Saddam Hussein's overthrow not much good has come out of this invasion.

Had the American collateral forces truly wished for a new and better Iraq, they would have respected the human right resolutions. Rather than abusing the Iraqis they would have appreciated them and educated them into ways of managing their own country. Iraq is an ancient country, but one look at it today and we can see that there are hardly any artifices or monuments left.

How many people knew the reality of the American invasion in Iraq before they saw this skit? Perhaps a few perhaps none. But this drama has changed their way of thinking it has shown them that there is not one but many different angles to a news or an event. What you see is what lingers in your mind and heart and this influences your thoughts and attitude towards the subject. Theatre in my opinion is a finest way of informing people about the realities of the world. It is one of the efficient ways of relaying to people whatever message one wishes to give them. It is therefore important not to portray message that might be offensive or opposite to the truth. It is important that the theatres be unbiased and sticks to the truth. The title Teesri Duniya means third world, which in my opinion means telling people what they don't know, "the unseen". It could also mean portraying what happens in third world countries (poor countries.). While writing the skit, the director should take into consideration that he has a responsibility toward mankind.

In conclusion I would like to say that every individual should broaden his or her horizon and view of an issue from different perspective; and try to the best of their ability to show the world the truth be it through books, magazines or the internet.

## **Honorable mention**

**Rijha Bhattacharjee - Marymount Academy**

### *How Theatre Can Shape Humanity*

Mankind has always wanted others to think like them, speak the same language as themselves, have the same religious/non-religious views as themselves, etc. They also want to be richer, better, more powerful than their fellow humans, no matter what cost. When they can't have what they want, they try to either force or influence others (in a bad kind of way) to reach their goal. Since the beginning of mankind to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, countries have tried to invade each other and force people under their rule for no particular reason. Now, in the modern days, the United Nations try to stop all gratuitous violence. Even though we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the thinking and morality of many human beings still have not changed. Nations try to give excuses to other nations in order to invade their enemies. Living in a world of machine guns, bombs and wars, the media gives us a different version of the tales about the countries plagued by war (Iraq, Afghanistan) than what is whispered about. How can the general population truly know what is happening in these countries of war? How can we know if our army is not corrupt and is using properly all the taxes we pay to help them? Theatre can help shape humanity by plunging us into a sea of emotions, lets us feel and experience a small amount of the pain that civilians in war-torn countries experience and also see the other evil shade in a conflict that is not always shown by the media by opening our eyes. Theatre also helps us bring out the best of ourselves and can influence us to help the people in countries destroyed by war and also show us how corrupted a person can be even though they are supposed to help others who need their help.

Theatre helps us open our eyes and see both sides of a conflict. How? It helps us distinguish the facts from the lies, truth from the evil, justice from injustice. It helps us make right and proper decisions and judge life in general with the help from the experiences we gathered from the play. For example, in *Truth and Treason*, when Ghazal was injured and Nahla asked the Captain permission to see her daughter and let her husband (in jail) donate his blood to their daughter, Commander Hektor Frank stops Captain Edward from signing the permission form, saying that Nahla's husband is a suspected terrorist and could, "escape, when no escape was possible." And so, poor Ghazal, who had chance to live, died in U.S. custody. I noticed that Frank had murdered the girl on purpose and it made me *dislike* him from the beginning of the play.

Now, the captain was innocent; he truly wanted to help the girl and her mother. He gave several solutions to his commander, for example, he told the commander to let the doctors take blood from Omar's (Ghazal's father, Nahla's husband) cell. But Frank did not want to do it. Why? Who knows?

As we later learn in the play, Omar had some crucial information about the commander that was treasonous and that Frank wanted it to be destroyed. So, I guess the old commander wanted to give Omar a warning by neglecting the treatment that Ghazal needed. Therefore, theatre helps us open our eyes and see both sides of a conflict.

Theatre can show us how corrupted a person can be when they are supposed to help others. For example, the Prime Minister of Iraq, who is supposed to help his people and support them, accepts bribes from the U.S. and decides to become their puppet and keep quiet about the U.S. Army's corrupted officials. Why? He wants to stay in the U.S. good books so that he can maintain his position. Another example is the Sheik. Nahla had asked the Sheik to help her with her loss and to give her advice; but instead, the Sheik invites the press and announces a public fatwa and calls upon the Muslims to kill Edward. Why did he do this? For political reasons: so that he can have more power. Another example is how Kendra Cox does things like hiding a bag of cash in her closet and supporting Commander Hektor Frank. Why does she do this, when her boyfriend Edward is trying to prove Hektor that he is wrong? For personal gain. She, being the first female in the Congress wants to advance into a higher post, no matter what cost. She supports Hektor because if something happens to Hektor and all the fraudery that she helped Hektor with gets unearthed, then she would lose her position. Selfish, isn't it?

Theatre helps us to share and experience the things that civilians in war-torn countries experience. I could give many examples. For example, I could feel the pain that Nahla was feeling when her daughter died. I could feel the indecision Omar felt: save his country and its people or protect his family. I knew how Edward felt when he was haunted by his thoughts and how he felt guilty that he could have done something to help Ghazal. I could taste Iraqi people's bitterness and their want to fix their country once and for all and right the many wrongs. Also, as oddly as it may seem, I understand why Kendra Cox, the Sheik, and the Prime Minister did what they did, why they antagonized our protagonists: because they wanted to save their positions. I think that everyone would do what they did if they were in the characters' shoes. I have no doubt that if I was Kendra, I would do what Kendra did to cover my frauds.

Theatre can bring the best out of ourselves and influence us to help those in a country destroyed by war. I always wanted to help those who are poverty-stricken. After I saw *Truth and Treason*, I found out more ways how I could help those in need in countries such as Iraq.

How can theatre shape humanity? Theatre can help shape humanity because it lets us feel and experience a small amount of the pain that civilians in war-torn countries experience and also see the other evil shade in a conflict that is not always shown by the media by opening our eyes. Theatre also

helps us bring out the best of ourselves and can influence us to help the people in countries destroyed by war and also show us how corrupted a person can be even though they are supposed to help others who need their help. We may not be able to shape humanity in the present until that it is perfect, but we can do so in the future. When we students of the younger generations see plays such as these, it inspires us to become something that will help people and stop the treachery in this world.

## **Honorable mention**

### **Soren Senchey - Marymount Academy**

#### **Writing Peace**

I'm going to write about the play 'Truth and Treason', I think the four most important things to say about the play are the following: The noticeable differences and similarities between the play and real life, how the play influences peace, the art of theatre, and the specialty of theatre. I think these things are important to talk about because it doesn't focus on just one point of the play, it talks about a lot, as you will see in my essay.

You hear all these stories about soldiers killing people and animals in the war for their amusement, I don't think the captain would care about one little girl. There are a lot more people dying in war than in the play. But there were a lot of accurate things, like how the general didn't care at all; he just wanted to get his hands clean so he saw this dead girl as an opportunity to black mail Omar.

The specialty of theatre is that you experience the show, not just watch it. For example, I have experienced the anger, pain and suffering of the actors. It helps you realize that what is happening is real. I've seen the expressions on their faces. It's not like seeing something on a two dimensional television screen. When Omar was talking it seemed real! Like his girl really was dead and he really was in prison. I know they do that on TV too, but when you see a real person in front of your eyes it just makes it that much more believable. For example, when Omar was talking about the torture, it made me feel sick, but on a television I would just say nasty and that's it. I much rather go see plays than watch a movie, they make you think and act better after seeing it. For example, if you see a movie that shows the world in like one hundred years and it's totally polluted, when you walk out of the theatre you might just say "That was a good movie", and forget about it two weeks after. Where as seeing a play that shows you the same thing, when you walk out of the theatre you would say "That's sad", because it made you realize that it's going to happen if you don't do something about it so you might pick up a piece of garbage off the street and put it in the garbage or recycle more. Everything shown in the play was for a reason, to add more realism to the play, to add more personality to the characters and most of all to expose the audience to more and more emotions. The play showed that you have to see people as individuals, not good side and bad side.

The author of a play is like an artist painting a picture, they have to think of how it's all going to come together before they start, they have to think of what people will see and understand, not just

what they will. They have to plan it carefully because if they make a mistake, they have to start over. They have to think of all the different possibilities and pick the best. The art of theatre is interpreting a story through acting so as to make the audience feel all the emotions involved. Plays are one of the more exciting arts in life, they have movements, sounds dialogues and characters that are all different and important in the play. I think that's why plays have been around so long. This play is special, it is talking about the actual events in our world today. I think it is more important to see plays that are more fact than fiction because they help you realize that there are more important things out there than made up stories, although they are fun sometimes. The art of theatre almost always surprises the audience, for example when the plane blew up at the end. That was sad because they were almost free, almost home and it had to end like that to show more about real life and how harsh and unforgiving it is in the war. It was interesting to me that the general was most afraid of being exposed to the public, that's why he had the journalist kidnapped or killed. It just shows that there are a lot of bad things being done on both sides of the war. It was also interesting that the play showed more bad things happening on the Americans side, I think that was on purpose to help even out what is being shown on the news, that all the bad things are being done by the Iraqis.

The play influences peace because it shows you how terrible war is without being there, the news and television shows tell you what happens but the play shows you. It gives you the feelings and desire to do something. It shows you that people are suffering and that they do need help, and they need someone to give it to them. It also shows both sides, the news just shows what people want to see, but a play like this shows what people need to see. For example if the news says that an American died Americans would be even more mad than they were before, but the play shows Iraqis getting killed by Americans and vice versa then people would be more aware that they are doing the same thing that they would just ask "why are we doing this to each other?". And start to understand that it is wrong to have war.

In conclusion, I liked the play because it is art that shows the specialty of theatre and how much of an important role a play has in real life. How it influences peace and helps people realize what is happening around them. It makes you realize how bad war is. And why it is wrong. I will be recommending this play to family and friends, Thank you.

## **Honorable mention**

**Ronghui Wang - Marymount Academy**

### **Art changes People, People change the World**

“Art changes People, People change the World”

- John Butler, singer

I strongly believe that art can change our personality which in turn has a big impact on our choices and the future. Art includes many different things, such as movies, music, theatre, painting, sculpture, writing, etc. These different branches of art can have many different effects on the morality, personality, or ethics of a person. For example, some viewers cried when they saw the movie “United 93”, a recreation of the only hijacked 9/11 flight not to reach its intended target. If a movie can evoke such deep emotions, it surely must be capable of changing a person’s perspective on the world or other issues.

After I saw the play Truth and Treason, I saw the dark side of war which I had never know before. It struck me as very surprising that some people can be so cruel toward others. I think this play made me see how theatre can cause very strong emotions in oneself. Not only did I see cruelty, I also saw a shocking amount of selfishness. During the play, Kendra Cox, the conference manager, said if the money designated to help Iraq can not be spent completely, then the remaining funds were meant to be thrown away. However, she decided to keep the extra. I am sure if she tried hard enough, and truly wanted to help the people in Iraq, then she should not end up with almost a million dollars left. After I saw this, I have since tried to be a less selfish and a more caring person. I have veered away from temptations of selfish acts. Such is a strong example for my belief that art can change people. I’m sure that if soldiers saw this play before they when to the Middle East, then they would have a better morality than before.

In the World War II movie Saving Private Ryan, Captain Miller and several men take on the journey to find the private who was the last surviving son of his family. It won many Oscar awards. This powerful film made many people realize how precise a life can be, and how determination and acts of kindness and understanding can mean a lot to someone else. In the end, Private Ryan made it out of World War II alive, and was reunited with his family. However, Captain Miller was fatally wounded during a battle, and died. Although took a great risk by trying to find Ryan, he made sure that Ryan when threw World War II alive and live a happy life. Of course, most of the time in our world today, we do not need to put our lives at stake to help someone else. After my family and

friends saw the film, they were deeply touched by the events that happened. This film showed us to be nice and offer help to others, and therefore positively affected our personality.

During Truth and Treason, Commander Frank Hecktor told the soldier Edward to ignore the injured girl's mom's request for a blood transfusion. After a hard decision, Edward did what he was told and rejected the request, a decision he would come to regret later. The girl soon died from bleeding, just because someone decided to go against what he thought was right. All Edward needed was a little encouragement, and then he could have accepted the request and saved the girl's life. Art can be such a motivation. We all know the name Star Wars. Some people think it is just a fun story, but actually, it can teach us many things. It teaches children the concept of good and evil, and that they should choose the path of honor. Master Yoda often says things that may affect our morality in a positive way, such as to control our fear and anger. Also, like many other stories, Star Wars often tell a character, such as Anakin Skywalker, to believe in what you think is right. A lot of times in our society, people hold back from their belief because they are afraid of the consequences. In times like these, it's when one needs the courage to stand up for what he or she believes in.

Literature is also a form of art. In fact it just may be the most influential type of art. In 1939, DDT's amazing ability to eliminate insects was discovered. It was soon adapted into agriculture as an anti-insect agent, and its production skyrocketed. At the time it seemed like a blessing. However, in 1962, American biologist Rachel Carson published a book called Silent Spring. It stated the biologist's concern on the extensive use of DDT and its harmful effect on humans and nature. This historical book led to a worldwide environmental concern. This book also led to the birth of the environmental movement and the creation of the US Environmental Protection Agency. The public become more environmentally friendly after this event, and thought to protect the environment. Literature can truly change people.

Not only can art have a positive effect on people, sometimes it can also have a negative effect. In the news recently, many parents and teachers are concerned about the amount of violence in movies and video games. Since many movie goers and gamers more realism, along came violence and gore. Although there are many ways to prevent younger kids from it, such as parental controls on cable and the internet, it can't be avoided completely. For example, a child may stumble upon a magazine or eavesdrop on the conversations of older kids. Under these circumstances, art can also be a negative influence.

Through these concrete, I believe art can influence humanity, most of the time positively, other times negatively. It depends on what kind of art the person exposes himself or herself to. A type

of art, such as a song, can effect a person's morality, personality, etc., which in turn effects the choices the person makes. Quite possibly, that decision may change the world.

**The above articles are the property of the individual writers and Teesri Duniya will make every effort to fully acknowledge the writer in the publicity material and presentation on the company website. A copy of all of the articles as submitted will remain at the Teesri office in Montreal.**