

“Why did you choose different shades of grey for your painting?” she asks me as she peers over my shoulder. “I feel like these colors are colors of sadness which portrays the pain Sara felt as she sacrificed her own happiness for the sake of her husband. It was incredibly brave of her.” She smiles and gives me a nod of approval and I continue working.

I have never taken an art class beyond what was required, so when my teacher first introduced the project where we were assigned to capture the deeper meaning behind the ancient words themselves through oil paint, I was skeptical. How was I supposed to paint my ancestor’s emotions? I didn't even know where to begin. It would have been easier to be in the honors class next door filling out worksheets instead of trying to put myself in Sara's shoes. In order to find inspiration, I searched for images of select words that appeared in the text and explored other famous paintings like “The Scream”. At first glance, this painting did not look like much, but when I looked closer I saw fear and distress in the subject’s face. I looked at the colors and strokes and saw they were all there for a reason. And from that, I got an idea for my painting. Once I got started, there was no stopping me.

After each bible class would end, I would go to wash the paint off my hands and was met with the girls from the class next door. They would comment on how my class was not serious and questioned what we could possibly learn by painting. Little did they know how much I gained with that paint brush in my hand. I was able to empathize with Sara and at the same time found a new way of learning.

At the end of the year, to celebrate our year’s worth of work, the members of my class and I transformed the auditorium into a museum. We hung our projects complete with captions that described each piece in detail. The exhibit was opened to the whole community- parents, extended family, fellow classmates, and the administration. The reactions were rewarding not only because so many people complimented my hard work, but I was able to show them a different angle of a biblical text that was familiar to them. From my painting, they understood the suffering Sara endured and began seeing her character through a different lens. Those same students who doubted the method of my teacher, realized how wrong they were. They too wanted the same opportunity to learn through art. We wanted to show the administration how valuable this class was to ensure that it would be offered in the upcoming year. I helped make petitions, and send emails until the school agreed to make the class an elective to anyone who wanted to take it. I was thrilled that others were going to be able to have the same experience I had, and that I made a difference.

My painting now hangs in the main hallway of my high school and I am proud of my work that taught me so much about myself. That painting is a constant reminder that I should never let my skepticism cloud my willingness to try something new.