

Fifth Grade:

Catherine Ji, Highcrest Middle School, Wilmette, IL

Role of Artists During Times of Conflict

Artists impacted society greatly during times like the World Wars. They boosted morale, raised funds for the army, and helped to inspire servicemen, people working in the war industries, homemakers and schoolchildren alike. The chance of raising lots of money increased because of the celebrities' popularity, leading to more people willing to donate.

For example, in New York's theater world, Rachel Crothers started the Stage Women's War Relief. The organization was started at the beginning of World War I to coordinate the efforts of volunteers among women in the theater, providing medicine and clothing for soldiers in Europe. During World War II, entertainers who helped to raise funds for war relief and the war effort included Tallulah Bankhead, Bette Davis, Lynn Fontaine, the Andrews Sisters, Helen Hayes, Katharine Hepburn, Hedy Lamarr, Ethel Merman, and Gypsy Rose Lee. They helped cheer up soldiers at home and overseas.

Upon watching the movie "The Pianist", the main character was found by a German army officer, but after the main character played a piece of music on the piano, the general was moved and helped the Jewish musician hide from the rest of the Germans. This shows that music impacts the general, and saves life. Artists usually remain politically uninvolved because if they express their own opinion, riots and fights could spark up against, or on behalf of the celebrity. Rather, it would be beneficial if artists remain silent on what they believe and take action on how they feel they could help solve conflicts, and decrease the amount of harm they can do.

The Andrew Sisters are another example of women who boosted the morale of soldiers at home and abroad. They performed in front of soldiers and were even nicknamed "America's Wartime Sweethearts". During the war, they entertained the Allied forces in America, Africa, and Italy, visiting Army, Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard bases, war zones, hospitals, and munitions factories. Bob Hope's quote, "I was offering time and laughs — the men and women fighting the war were offering up their lives. They taught me what sacrifice was all about," is an important phrase to understand. From my experience on watching "Life is Beautiful", the father acted as a soldier and an entertainer. He made his son laugh by disguising the Jewish concentration camp into a fun game, and he sacrificed his life to save his son.

In current times, many artists and celebrities, for example, Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, and many more are donating to charities and raising funds for people (especially children) in need. Today, all artists, celebrities or entertainers can help by donating to charities, volunteering, and helping as much as they can. After all, there is always another major event, like a natural disaster in which the roles artists play would be greatly helpful to people in need.

Sixth Grade:

Paisley Cooke, Bracken County Middle School, Brooksville, KY

Entertainers' Roles During Times of Conflict

Does art and entertainment reflect what is going on in our country? Should artists and entertainers have political ties? Entertainer and humanitarian, Bob Hope once said, *I was offering time and laughs — the men and women fighting the war were offering up their lives. They taught me what sacrifice was all about.* Do artists, entertainers and celebrities have an obligation to use their platform and audience reach to support the men and women “offering up their lives?” Certainly they do have a moral obligation to be involved during times of war by encouraging citizens to fight for their country, using their wide reaching audiences to spread information, and raising money for the war efforts and veterans.

First, fighting for one’s country is an important duty that was brought to life on the big screen by many entertainers. During WW2, actors such as Kirk Douglas, Jimmy Stewart, and Paul Newman served overseas in different facets of the war and in recruiting drives here on the Home Front. In addition, Hollywood’s motion picture industry joined the war cause by producing many patriotic movies that helped to boost Americans’ morale. In many cases, like Elvis Presley’s, entertainers were drafted. This encouraged Americans to join the cause; if their favorite celebrity could sacrifice, they could too.

Another example is using widespread audiences to spread information. Public radio, newscasts, and local movie theaters provided imagery as to what was happening in overseas. World War 2 was the first time that Americans had seen the destruction up close and personal on the big screen. With that, everyday citizens were updated on happenings throughout the war. During more recent conflicts such as Vietnam, Korea, and Afghanistan, actors and entertainers have always been vocal about their opinions of war to the American public no matter what side they are on.

Finally, celebrities can reach out to the masses to help war veterans in need. Celebrities have the charismatic and influential power to drum up support for causes such as the Wounded Warriors Project and Operation Home Front. Modern day entertainers such as Kid Rock, Tim McGraw, and Carrie Underwood are passionate in their efforts to support veterans and their families. Through concerts, charity events, and TV specials, they have helped to raise millions for our service men and women in need.

In conclusion, do artists, entertainers and celebrities have an obligation to use their platform and audience reach to support the men and women “offering up their lives?” Certainly they do. Their obligations extend to encouraging citizens to fight for their country, using their wide reaching audiences to spread information, and raising money for the war efforts and veterans. The impact of artists such as Bob Hope is truly significant. When asked about his time entertaining soldiers overseas Hope replied, “I have seen what a laugh can do. It can transform almost unbearable tears into something bearable, even hopeful.” And hope is truly what all Americans need in times of war.

Seventh Grade:

Isabella Barone, Riverdale Middle School, Jefferson, LA

Bob Hope's quote: "I was offering time and laughs-the men and women fighting the war were offering up their lives. They taught me what sacrifice was all about." By this statement I think Bob Hope meant that he was giving laughter to people during wartime in WWII who were giving up their lives by fighting for our country's freedom. The least he thought he could do was give a little glimmer of hope by offering them laughter during times of war and hardship to the men and women in the war who may possibly not be coming back home alive to their loved ones; as this had to be hard on young men and women serving during WWII.

I feel that the role art and artist should play during times of conflict and war should be to bring happiness to people who were fighting in the war. This should be the artists' role because whenever you are fighting in war it can be a very scary time of your life. If you had to fight in a war and got to see a comedian during this time it would make you happy. As whenever you are happy, your brain releases endorphins and dopamine thereby allowing one to enjoy themselves through a rough time in their life.

I had the privilege of interviewing one person who is still alive today and served in WWII. The person I interviewed was my great grandpa: Gramps who is 92 years old. He served in the Marine Corps during WWII when he saw Bing Crosby perform in Guam in 1945. Bing Crosby was an American singer and actor who was popular during that time and did a tour to entertain troops to lift their spirits. Gramps stated, "Seeing Bing Crosby was unforgettable, a joy to see, and something that the fellow people I trained with were looking forward to seeing. Whenever I saw him perform, I was free from the worries about the war and everything going on at that time for a moment."

Therefore, I think art and artists should remain politically neutral. I think this because there should always be laughter especially in times of conflict. I also think the artists' contributions of "Time and Laugh's" are sufficient because it is a good use of time to make people laugh.

In conclusion, the duty of artists during times of conflicts should be to make people laugh and be happy! This is still a factor in today's society as there is still war and conflict that people deal with to this day. Without laughter in people's lives the world today would be without hope! So, what Bob Hope gave to our troops during WWII was "HOPE"!

Eighth Grade:

Andrew Gabriel, Academics In Motion Homeschool, Greensboro, NC

Bob Hope – An Example for All

Since its start in 1941, the USO has put together shows for generations of soldiers. From 1941-1947 there were an astounding 400,000 performances! Bob Hope served the USO and America's soldiers for almost half a century, even into his late eighties. Bob Hope said, "I was offering time and laughs — the men and women fighting the war were offering up their lives. They taught me what sacrifice was all about." Just like Bob Hope was inspired by the soldiers' sacrifices, Mr. Hope's commitment to the troops inspired other artists to participate with him and continue his work. In this way, I think the role of artists is to inspire others to use their own talents in service.

Many different types of entertainers have served the troops -- baseball players, actors, football players, comedians, singers, and other celebrities. Most notably, Toby Keith is a famous country singer who has been working to fill Bob Hope's shoes. Toby Keith won the Spirit of Hope award in 2014 because of his commitment to the troops. Toby Keith said, "I saw a need and a void the great Bob Hope left behind, and no one was filling it." Bob Hope cheered up the soldiers with his jokes; Toby Keith does the same but with his music.

How do artists' performances help the soldiers? One way is to show them that they aren't forgotten. If I was a soldier, I would be grateful that the artist came across the world just to perform for me. Shows or visits also take the soldiers' minds off the tough conditions they're facing. When the soldiers get to see an artist they're familiar with, it's like they get a taste of home. However, I believe that you don't have to be famous or talented to help our troops.

For example, Operation Thin Mint is a Girl Scout project that started in San Diego in 2002. The girls have sent over 3 million packages of Thin Mints to soldiers. One soldier said, "Thank you for the cookies. It just feels like a little piece of home was delivered to us!" Another organization called Adopt A US Soldier connects deployed soldiers with people at home who send them letters and care packages with about one million people participating.

When I was in 6th grade, a woman who worked for our school had a cousin who was a soldier in Afghanistan. My class made thank you letters to the soldiers, decorating and filling them with candy. In a couple of weeks we got to see the soldiers opening our own cards. It was such a small thing, but I was happy when I saw the video because the soldiers were happy also.

Bob Hope's example continues to inspire artists, everyday people, and even kids to help the troops any way they can. Even you, the person who is reading this essay, you can help the soldiers too! So, go explore ways you can help America's heroes!

Middle School Honorable Mentions:

Stella Kwon, Skano Elementary School, Clifton Park, NY (5th)
Declan Howe, Park Avenue Elementary School, Auburn, ME (6th)
Skylar Guidroz, Riverdale Middle School, Jefferson, LA (7th)
Lorelei McIntyre-Brewer, The Cove School, Duncannon, PA (8th)
Gavin Miller, Freeport Middle School, Freeport, ME (8th)