Katie Nickolaou

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature and Composition

3 November 2014

**Silver Lining**

One of the first lessons we learn in life is that even the worst events or situations have some positive aspect. In the case of The Hunger Artist in Franz Kafka’s story *The Hunger Artist*, The Hunger Artist’s profession is killing him while at the same time he enjoys it. This sort of yin and yang battle has been going on for years and it eventually caused his life to fall apart. In the end, his journey closed in a decaying cage in an animal exhibit in a circus. This is indeed a twisted tale of a man’s self-inflicted torture.

When we first met the hunger artist, he was moving from city to city showing off his amazing talent. People were intrigued and came to see his act, but as the years went on, fewer and fewer people came to see him. One day he went ballistic and started “…to shake the cage like an animal…”(Kafka, 3). After this he went on one final lap around Europe before joining an immense circus. At first he was a success, but much like before, people started to loose interest. He was forgotten and eventually died. One can only imagine how much pain he must have felt while going though all of this; not only would he feel the pain of an empty stomach, but also the pain of appreciation. Through it all he never chose to stop and rest, for this was his profession—his passion—and he loved it. This is the silver lining for The Hunger Artist; he hurt, both mentally and physically, by what he does, but he loves doing it. This is why I painted the cage silver, to show the silver lining or The Hunger Artist’s profession.

Any sane person would simply find another hobby that they love that would not result in them getting hurt, but The Hunger Artist is no sane person. In the end it is revealed by The Hunger Artist that the reason he fasted was because he “…couldn’t find a food which tasted good to [him]…”(Kafka, 6). No one in their right mind would simply choose not eat because they didn’t find a food they liked. Children still eat vegetables even though they don’t like the taste of them, so why can’t a grown man do the same?

Kafka distanced The Hunger Artist from the rest of the world in the story by placing him inside of a cage. This shows that The Hunger Artist is like an animal on display. This takes away some of his humanity, thus widening the rift between The Hunger Artist and the real world. It is important to note that the cage was filled with decaying straw, which represents each pound that has withered off of The Hunger Artist’s decaying body.

The visual describes the scene of The Hunger Artist while at the circus. The cage is on a stand to show that The Hunger Artist is distanced from the rest of us on Earth because of his profession. The cage, as mentioned above, is silver to represent the silver lining to The Hunger Artist’s work. The cage itself comes directly from the story. It is an object that is constantly mentioned and is a key part in the story, for it shows that The Hunger Artist cannot escape to get food. I also included straw in the cage because it is included in the story. The Hunger Artist himself is a white skeleton, representing his starvation, wrapped in a black vine. The black vine shows how The Hunger Artist’s profession is starting to consume him because it has been able to grow out of control. I decided to make the vine black and the skeleton white because white mixed with black is grey—the color of silver.