

A picture doesn't always say 1,000 words

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There is a fairly famous painting that hangs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

It was created in 1948 by American painter Andrew Wyeth, and is titled 'Christina's World.'

It shows what appears to be a girl or young woman, in a dress, reclining in the middle of a field.

Presumably, her name is Christina.

There is a farmhouse off in the distance and she seems to be gazing up at the house.

The viewer may wonder what she is up to and why is she in the middle of the field.

The painting itself is rather unremarkable. It is done mostly in shades of brown, with a grey-coloured house. Even the open sky is a muted shade of blue.

The only real colour in the painting is Christina's dress, which is a shade of pink.

You can't really gather much information from the work of art, other than what you see.

But you have to wonder what the artist was trying to say.

Is the girl relaxing? Is she waiting for someone? Or is she looking up at the house and waiting for someone to come out and greet her?

It wasn't until years after first seeing this painting I learned the real meaning of Christina's world.

Christina isn't a young woman or a girl - she was actually in her 50s when the painting was made.

She's on the ground because she has a degenerative muscular disorder. For some reason, she was firmly against using a wheelchair so she would crawl everywhere she went.

One day, the artist looked out of the window of his home at the neighbouring property and saw Christina crawling across the field on her way home.

He was inspired to capture this scene on canvas.

When you find out the real meaning of this work of art, the entire visual takes on an entirely different meaning.

A few years ago I attended a seminar at a local clinic that specializes in helping people with hearing loss.

There was a man there who described an experience when he was a kid.

He had an older uncle, who the guy described as a 'miserable person.' The uncle would attend family get-togethers, but not really participate.

He would sit by himself, not engage in any conversation, and seemed to be in a perpetually bad mood.

The guy I met, would avoid this uncle because as a kid, he was afraid of him. The rest of the family also kept a distance.

It wasn't until years later that this guy realized the real reason for his uncle's misery.

The man had slowly lost his hearing over the years. He didn't engage in conversation, because he couldn't hear anyone speaking to him.

Apparently, no one clued into the fact that his poor man was suffering in silence, and no one reached out to help him.

Quite often we are too quick to judge another person based on a single moment in time, or some other interaction that leaves you with a negative feeling about them.

However, do you really think that person who just cut you off in traffic really meant to do it? Or did they just not see you in their car's blind spot?

Is it worth blasting your horn and yelling insults at the next stoplight?

Maybe I watch too many YouTube videos, but it seems we have entered an age of entitlement where some people have lost the ability to be civilized.

You never know what someone else is going through, or what their life circumstances are.

Berating a cashier for giving you the wrong change, or yelling at a person serving coffee for making a simple mistake is just not acceptable.

A couple of years ago I was in the local grocery store when a local guy started reaching over the counter to grab some scratch lottery tickets. The kid behind the counter told him couldn't do that.

The customer started yelling at the kid. He called him a few names, ridiculed his youth and inexperience, and then made some threats about burning his house down.

I was about to yell out and tell the guy to knock it off when the guy standing beside me, I guess had heard enough. Maybe he knew the kid or remembered him from the store.

The guy was about 6'4" tall, and around 230 lbs. He calmly walked over to the offender, and quietly said something to him. I didn't hear what he said, but I'm sure it had something to do with putting the loudmouth's head through a wall or something.

The loudmouth stopped talking and exited the store like a scared rabbit.

Karen served, as they say.

It shouldn't have come to that.

A picture doesn't always say 1,000 words, sometimes you don't know the real story.