

„Das eiserne Kreuz“

The name of the painting I analysed is „Das eiserne Kreuz / The Iron Cross“. It was painted by the German photographer and painter Heinrich Zill and got published at first on 20th July 1916 in an art magazine called „Der Bildermann“.

The painting is drawn in black and white with a lot of shadows and shapes. The point of view we get is like an inside look of a room. On the left side we can see a bed, with a woman who is holding a baby and two children sitting on the edge. They are looking in the same direction. On the right side we can see a table with some stuff on top of it. One object seems to be really interesting to the family, because everyone is looking at it. In front of the table you can see the fourth child, who is looking straight at the object, which is an iron cross. Right next to it lies a letter and a knife. In the background we can see a wall, another table, an open window a wash basin and some things that are hanging from the wall. The entire family seems to be kind of dressed up. The boy who is standing in front of the table is wearing something that looks a bit like some kind of uniform and the girls wear dresses and ribbons; the mother has a blanket around her shoulders, she seems to be freezing.

The atmosphere in the picture seems kind of sad, because the whole family is looking at the iron cross, which I guess belonged to the father. But since there is an opened envelope lying right next to the cross, I think the father died in war and the family got his iron cross, which he got for being brave. It seems to me that the children haven't realized that their father is gone; they are just being curious about the iron cross and its meaning, while the mother is looking sad and helpless, the way she is sitting there with the blankets around her shoulders, having to explain to her kids that their father is not gonna come home.

I'd say that this painting was supposed to deliver a message to the public: What is an iron cross worth, without its owner? The family of the fallen soldier is going to be in a very difficult situation now, because they are gonna have trouble finding another place to live, because now they don't have much money and an unpredictable future ahead of them. The mother needs to manage the future of her four children, which is probably not gonna be easy. Maybe this painting was supposed to spread a message, so that the families would think again before deciding to send a father to war. This painting is one way to see how art has influenced WW1, by spreading a message through one simple painting that everyone gets to interpret by himself and that may even change his mind about the way he actually wants to grow up and live together with his family.

Lucy, Year 9