

# A role of art in station eleven novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



## **The Importance of Art**

Art is all around us. Art exists in the architecture of the buildings we enter and the homes we live in. It exists in the design of the car we drive and in the music we listen to while driving that car. Art also exists in books, and it exists in the stories living in those books. Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel is no exception. In Station Eleven, even the collapse of civilization caused by a fast-spreading disease cannot destroy the significance of art. For the characters in Station Eleven, whether its with Kirsten's acting or the Prophet's public speaking and manipulation, art is a way of going beyond surviving; it is a way of remaining human " Because survival is insufficient" (Mandel 58). In the post-collapse world, art is the most important thing in life because art will never die or fade away like family or memories can.

After the collapse, everyone faced great loss. When a person is faced with an absence of something that was once vital or loved, there is a sense of urgency to fill that void. A new passion, a new purpose, or a new direction is needed. For many after the collapse, this filler was art as shown in the following quote, " What was lost in the collapse: almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty. Twilight in the altered world, a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream in a parking lot in the mysteriously named town of St. Deborah by the Water, Lake Michigan shining a half mile away" (57). Art allowed many characters to find beauty in an otherwise dull and depressing world. There was immense loss from the disease that caused this collapse of civilization, but art was not a complete victim of this collapse as many things and people were. Remnants of art still

existed, and these remnants were used to help connect to the past and feel beauty once again through an expressive outlet.

Similarly, art reminds us that we actually have not lost everything. We are still living. We are still human. We can still feel. Art moves us in a way that transforms us and inspires us, even in the most miserable of times. After a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, “ The audience rose for a standing ovation. Kirsten stood in the state of suspension that always came over her at the end of performances, a sense of having flown very high and landed incompletely, her soul pulling upward out of her chest. A man in the front row had tears in his eyes” (59). In this quote, there is so much emotion because of a form of art. Kirsten feels elated, and in the book, Kirsten only finds this sense of euphoria through acting. When reality is too bleak, escaping into a new reality as a new person, even for a short period of time, can be the difference between going insane and staying sane. This effect is not specific to Kirsten either. You find this effect in the man in the front row that is moved to tears by the performance. The wonderful thing about this feeling is that it will not be killed by disease, starvation, or bad memory. The effect of art is something we carry from the moment we are born, where we are amused by our parents' smiles, to the time we grow old, where we are inspired by the works of the younger generations.

Furthermore, art was a source of happiness even before collapse. This pre-collapse love for art is seen in both Arthur Leander's acting and Miranda's dedication to her comic book series bearing the same title as the book, *Station Eleven*. Art is versatile in that it can be kept personal; like it was with

Miranda, or it can be an open passion like it was with Arthur. For Arthur, it was crucial that any talent he had be recognized; this desire for recognition was the motivation for most of his actions, even one when he was not on stage or in front of a camera. If there was no recognition, there was less happiness involved in his art. For Miranda, it did not matter if Station Eleven was a huge success read by every pair of eyes on earth; “‘What’s the point of doing all that work’, Tesch asks, ‘if no one sees it?’ ‘It makes me happy. It’s peaceful, spending hours working on it. It doesn’t really matter to me if anyone else sees it’” (95). If you think about why writers write or why artists paint, it would make no sense to believe they do it purely for an audience; they do it for themselves. Miranda craved an outlet to express how she was feeling, which is apparent in how so many characters in Station Eleven were based on people outside of the comic. Miranda did not crave fame like Arthur did; instead, she was more than satisfied with her comic book series only existing in the form of ten copies. Art is different from one person to the next, and that is part of its charm. Art allowed the characters to be passionate about something, even before everything else was lost. The significance of art does not begin and end with the collapse; the significance of art begins with the start and end of time.

Despite the circumstances of either an unsatisfactory life or a collapsed world, art gives the characters something they can truly believe in. Often we find ourselves in situations where we cannot really depend on anyone, but what we can depend on is a script, a clarinet reed, or a pencil. This dependency is such a comfort, and the characters realized this too; “There were moments around campfires when someone would say something

invigorating about the importance of art, and everyone would find it easier to sleep that night” (119). For these characters, even though they are fictional, their methods for dealing with their circumstances are real.

Obviously, The Traveling Symphony’s, along with every other character’s, life was made easier by the significance of art in their lives. This is apparent in Kirsten, Miranda, Arthur, Clark, and every other character intertwined in the story. Mandel did not create this importance for art out of thin air; you find this importance in the lives saved and transformed by all types of art. Art is powerful and vital because of how it can help us express ourselves and escape from what is often a disheartening world. This story relies so much on art that without it, it could not exist. Art is significant to the story as a whole and to each page in the story also, and this type of significance cannot be found in any other part of the characters’ lives.