

For my senior capstone project, I created two creative sister essays about a cracked phone screen and a Polaroid camera to explain the connection between people and their phones. Both of these essays examine how everyday objects, particularly damaged or outdated technology, serve as metaphors for memories, identity, and the way people experience modern life. Through these essays, I examined how people often overlook or dismiss small moments, and how this behavior can reflect deeper emotional and social experiences.

I chose this project because writing has always been my way of contributing and making sense of the world. This topic is also very important to me as I have struggled with being addicted to my phone, and have been battling with mental health considerably over the course of my high school career. I was interested in taking a topic that is widely known but often overlooked, such as mental health, and adding a more personal narrative into it. I wanted to push my writing further by developing a sustained thematic focus rather than isolated pieces. The idea of using physical objects as emotional and philosophical symbols allowed me to connect personal reflections with broader observations about modern life and the way modern technology is shaping it.

When creating my capstone, I made sure to keep in mind SLA's five core values: inquiry, research, collaboration, presentation, and reflection. It is grounded in inquiry as it began with the questions about how people find meaning in everyday objects and experiences within the digital era. It involves research as these questions needed to be answered throughout my essays. I needed to research which groups of people find meanings in what moments, and what obstacles technology opposes to those experiences by interrupting attention, altering communication, or changing the ways memories are preserved. Collaboration played an important role in my process through feedback from friends and family, which helped me improve my ideas and

strengthen my key points. Presentation is reflected in how I intentionally organized my essays into a cohesive collection, making sure the structure supports the themes of my writing. Finally, reflection is present throughout the entire process as I continuously revised my writing and thought about how my ideas should evolve from the rough draft to the final product.

The process of completing my capstone began with identifying the themes I wanted to explore. I knew early on that I wanted to create an essay on technology and its impact on mental health. I then decided to do this through metaphorical objects, similar to the style of *The Anthropocene Reviewed*. Once I established these themes, I began thinking about how I can make these essays personable and relatable in order for other people to connect their own experiences to bridge the divide found in our communities due to technology.

In addition to writing, I spent time studying John Green's writing style, taking note of his use of symbolism and imagery to create a reflective essay. I also researched how technology affects attention, communication, and mental health to truly understand the severity of its impacts. This research helped me develop more thoughtful and layered essays rather than relying solely on personal experiences.

To complete the required time limit, I divided my time between brainstorming, researching, drafting, revising, and organizing my final product and presentation. The majority of my time was dedicated to drafting and revising, as this was the bulk of completing my ten pages. I also spent time gathering feedback from peers, friends, and family to improve my work, sinking more time into revising sections of my essays.

The main obstacle I faced when completing my capstone project was my own mental health. Because my own mental health has been poor this past year, I missed a lot of school. This hardship made it difficult to complete tasks such as creating a completely fleshed-out project.

Because of this setback, I had to pivot from my original idea of creating a children's book and focus on creating two essays, which is something that felt more manageable. In addition, because I changed my capstone at the last minute, I wasn't able to give my essays the time they would have deserved in different circumstances.

To complete my capstone, I used a variety of resources such as peer review, mentor check-ins, online research articles, and inspiration from a preexisting piece of literature. These resources helped me strengthen both the content of my essays and the way I presented them as a collection.

The thing I am most proud of in this Capstone is the way I was able to turn abstract ideas into a social commentary that feels meaningful and relatable. By itself, it is difficult to complete this task, but I am even more proud that I was able to find a link between my writing and present them together. Throughout this process, I challenged myself to move past simple storytelling and create essays that encourage readers to think more deeply about the relationship between people and technology. I am also proud of how much my writing has developed despite the setbacks I faced. Through constant revision and reflection, I became more confident in my voice and more intentional with the way I used imagery, symbolism, and structure.

My capstone matters because it explores experiences that are becoming increasingly common in modern life, but are not always deeply examined. Technology has become such a constant part of everyday life that many people no longer stop and appreciate the simpler moments in life without the need to chase perfection or crave true human connection. By focusing on ordinary objects and experiences, my project encourages readers to slow down and recognize meaning in moments that are often ignored or forgotten. I created a capstone that feels

relatable enough to the human experience for people to digest and comprehend, hopefully allowing there to be a positive visual change in the way we treat technology.

Through this process, I have learned that good results come from patience and perseverance. I learned the importance of balancing creativity with clarity so that deeper ideas remain accessible to readers. I also learned how much research and being open to feedback can strengthen writing. Learning to listen to feedback helped me recognize the weaknesses in my essays and pushed me to improve areas that I would have otherwise ignored.

If I could complete this capstone again, I would begin my process earlier. Starting sooner would have allowed me to add research into my Polaroid camera essay, which would make that one feel as raw as the cracked screen essay. If I could completely start over, I would follow through with writing my children's book in the hopes of getting it published. For both projects, I would have sought more feedback more consistently rather than waiting until the later revisions.

SLA is a better place because my work is strongly built around reflecting on your worldview, and reflection is one of its five core values. In addition, throughout this capstone and my time at SLA, I have contributed ideas, perspectives, and writing that reflect on the school's emphasis on inquiry and self-expression. This capstone project represents not only my growth as a student and as a writer, but also the skills and mindset that SLA has helped me develop over the years.