

process paper:

Section 1: Introduction

For my capstone project, I decided to outline a romance book that I hope to publish someday by writing a non-linear book, which is a collection of short stories, and each chapter shows the development of the overall story, while also focusing on different moments, perspectives, and emotions. I wanted this project to be creative and feel personal.

I chose this project because reading has always been one of my favorite and biggest parts of my life. Books are something that makes me feel like I'm the main character in each one of them, makes me connected to the other characters in a way that when I pick up a book, I forget everything and anything, and I have always wondered what it would be like to write a book that makes people feel the same way. I also wanted to challenge myself by doing something that requires creativity, passion, and patience, and also by choosing a project that would stick with me forever, and not something that I'll forget in a few years down the road.

My capstone connects to the SLA core values in many ways. First, inquiry was a major part of my project because I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what makes readers like me emotionally connected to the plot and the characters. Second, research was an important part, especially when I was looking for something that makes a romance book unique, which I soon realized was easy to pinpoint but hard to apply. It was also really helpful when I started looking into genres, tropes, plot, and character development. Third, collaboration was also present at some point when I talked about my ideas with friends, my mentor, and family members, who gave me feedback that I was able to use in one way or another. Fourth, reflection was probably the biggest part of my process because I constantly had to rethink my Ideas, either by adding things or getting rid of things, to see what works best for my story, so I can write something that

will prove the project was good, and not something that can only prove that I did it. Last, the presentation will be the last part of my capstone project, where I have to organize and explain my process and share my future plans for this capstone project.

Section 2: Process

The process of completing this capstone project took much more time and thought than I had originally planned. In the beginning, most of my time was spent brainstorming and figuring out what I really wanted to do because I had so many different ideas, but not a clear one I felt like using. One of the hardest parts was deciding on the plot, themes, genres, and tropes because I wanted the story to feel meaningful while still being interesting and fun to read. I changed a lot of ideas over time because I wanted everything to fit together naturally and be good.

After I committed to what I wanted to do, I began outlining the story and planning all the characters, naming them, and writing small details about them, so I could create relationships among them. And since my project is written in a non-linear format, I had to spend extra time thinking about how different chapters and moments can connect and make sense at the same time.

At first, I honestly did not understand how important research would be for my project, and when I started working on my bibliography, I was confused about how those 10 sources would actually help me in the long run, but over time, I realized that researching storytelling techniques, dialogue, and different writing styles helped me understand how authors build their stories that readers become emotionally attached to, I also realized that those 10 sources made me ask questions and do more research that I never thought would be part of my process.

To complete the 80 hours for the capstone, I spent time brainstorming different ideas to see which one fits better with what I had in mind, or the closest thing to it. I was trying to write a story that is not only good but also unique, while at the same time leaving the elements that every romance book has, for example, using the same tropes like enemies to lovers, friends to lovers, fake dating, and others.

Throughout this project, there were definitely multiple obstacles. One of the biggest obstacles I faced was figuring out what exactly I wanted my story to be about. I changed my original idea many times because I wanted to write something that I would enjoy reading if someone else wrote it. I think the way I got rid of those obstacles as best I could was by getting feedback from friends and my mentor, who reminded me that writing is a long process and that if you try to perfect it, you'll always feel like something is missing. It would be good if you just went with the flow.

One of the most helpful resources throughout this capstone was the people around me; they helped me gain new ideas and new perspectives that I don't think I ever would have thought about. As for inspiration, I used the books that I personally enjoyed reading.

Section 3: Reflection

The thing I am most proud of in this capstone is how much I grew throughout the process. At the beginning, I only had the idea of wanting to write a book, but I feel like my ideas have changed drastically since then. I didn't fully understand how much planning, patience, and revision it would take. This project pushed me creatively and taught me that creating something meaningful

takes a lot of time and effort. I am proud that I stayed committed to a project that challenged me instead of giving up when things became difficult.

My capstone matters because storytelling matters. Stories can affect people emotionally, make them think differently, and create connections between readers and characters. This project mattered to me because it allowed me to work on something that I genuinely care about instead of something that felt forced.

One of the biggest things I learned about this process is that creativity takes time. I learned that ideas do not always come together immediately and that revision is one of the most important parts of creating something good and unique.

If I could redo this capstone, I think I would trust myself more creatively and spend less time overthinking every detail. I would also start working on it during the summer, or at least have a rough draft of what I want it to look like.

I think SLA is a better place because I brought creativity, effort, and passion into the work I created and shared with others. Throughout my years at SLA, I tried to contribute thoughtful ideas during discussions and projects while also supporting people around me. My capstone reflects not only my love for storytelling but also the growth I experienced as both a student and a person during my time at SLA.

intro:

Beneath the Lies

GENRES: Romance - DRAMA - Mystery

TROPES: Slow-burn - Enemies to Lovers - childhood Best friends - Second Chance.

Main characters:

Eliana Brooks(FMC):

Eliana is a psychologist.

She's 28 years old.

has a cat called Nugget.

She works at the main hospital in Texas City called.

She loves shopping.

Her favorite color is purple.

She loves reading books.

Adrian Mercer (MMC)

Adrian is a cardiothoracic surgeon.

He's 32 years old.

His goal is to be a chief surgeon.

He studied abroad in Italy.

He has one sibling who is his stepsister.

Side characters:

Her side:

Nora Brooks (mother)

Michael Brooks (father)

Betty Collins (nurse/ friend)

Lila Bennett (best friend)

Daniel Carter (doctor/ her Bff's bf)

Sophie Carter (child)

His side:

Claire Mercer (mother)

Richard Mercer (father)

Vivian Mercer (stepmother)

Isla Mercer (stepsister)

Noah Whitmore (FBI friend)

Summary:

Chapter 1: The Cemetery

Eliana unexpectedly reunites with Adrian, her childhood best friend, at her mother's grave. and are interrupted by a familiar cat that brings back memories neither of them is ready to face.

Chapter 2: The Cat Rescue

A flashback reveals the day Adrian helped Eliana rescue a stray cat that she kept, showing the beginning of their friendship and the bond they once shared.

Chapter 3: His Penthouse

Back in the present, Adrian can't stop thinking about his encounter with Eliana. While his sister tries to get his attention, his focus remains on the girl he thought he had left in the past.

Chapter 4: The Elevator

Running late for work, Eliana rushes into an elevator only to find Adrian standing inside. When the elevator unexpectedly stops, the two are forced into an awkward conversation neither of them was prepared for.

Chapter 5: The Restaurant Scene

Eliana gets jealous when she sees Adrian at dinner with another woman, while Adrian also gets jealous when he spots her with a fellow doctor. Both are left questioning feelings they thought were long gone.

reaserch:

Sources:

1. [How To Come Up With A Character Name: an Author's Guide](#)

This source explains how to create effective and meaningful character names by providing twelve specific strategies for writers. It discusses how names can reflect personality, fit the story's setting and genre, and influence how readers view the characters. The article also explains the importance of sound, the length, the cultural relevance, and the symbolism when choosing names. I chose this source because it gives clear steps that I can use when naming my characters, and when writing my book, especially when trying to make characters more influential. The source also includes examples that help explain the process further. I think that this source will be really helpful in the process of writing.

2. [Best Writing Reference Books & Other Resources](#)

This source provides a list of different writing books and resources that help people improve their writing skills. It includes books about storytelling, creativity, structure, and publishing. The source also explains what each book is about and why it would be useful to writers. I chose this source because my capstone project focuses on writing, and these books can help me understand how to create better stories and characters for my book. I found this source helpful because it introduces different helpful resources instead of just one, which gave me more ideas to consider when writing. This source also explains writing in a simple way that is easy to understand. I think that this source will be helpful, even though it doesn't go as deep into the books mentioned as I would want it to be.

3. [Essential Elements of Romance.](#)

This source explains the main elements needed to write a good romance story, it talks about important parts of writing like characters, plot, conflict, and structure. The author explains that romance stories usually focus on two main characters who fall in love and go through challenges before ending with a happy ending. It also gives tips about point of view, dialogue, and making characters consistent and more realistic. I chose this source because my project is about writing a romance, and it clearly explains what makes a romance story work. I think that this source will be helpful because it breaks everything down in a simple way and gives examples that I can use in my own writing, and what I really like about this source is that it's based on an author's personal experience, and not common knowledge and research.

4. [Intro to Romance Tropes 101.](#)

This source explains what romance tropes are and why they are important in romance stories. It describes tropes as common patterns, like enemies to lovers or friends to lovers, that help guide the story. The author argues that even though some people think tropes are predictable, they actually make stories more enjoyable and comforting for readers. The article also gives examples of popular tropes and explains how they create tension and emotion in romance stories. I chose this source because my capstone focuses on writing a romance and tropes are

a big part of the genre. I found this source helpful because it explains tropes in a simple and relatable way.

5. [Romance novel types, tropes, lengths and formats](#)

This source explains different types of romance novels, including genres, tropes, length, and writing style. It describes categories such as historical, contemporary, and young adult romance, as well as common tropes like enemies to lovers and fake relationships. The article also explains things like “heat levels” and how long romance novels usually are. I chose this source because it helped me understand ways a romance story can be written. I found this source useful because it gives a clear overview of the genres and explains important terms in a simple way. It also helped me learn how authors plan their stories from start to finish. I like this source because it basically covers the whole process of writing a romance book.

6. [How To Design A Modern Romance Book Cover In Canva | Step-By-Step Tutorial ...](#)

This source explains how authors can design their romance book covers using tools like Canva, focusing on visual appeal and simplicity. It shows that modern romance covers often use minimalist designs, soft color palettes, and illustrations of couples to easily signal the genre to the reader. The process of choosing an image style, matching background colors to the illustration, and adding simple elements like hearts to enhance the romantic theme. It also emphasizes the importance of a clear, bold text so the title remains readable even in small font sizes. Overall, this source highlights that a well-designed cover should be clean and visually engaging in order for it to attract readers’ attention.

7. [Seduce Your Reader with the Perfect Title!](#)

This source explains how important a good title is in romance writing and gives advice on how to create one that’ll attract readers. Anne Marble emphasizes that titles should be short, catchy, and meaningful, because they are the first thing people notice about a book. She explains that strong titles often reflect the story’s theme, characters, or conflict, and may use contrasts or vivid words to stand out. The article also warns against boring or silly titles that don’t give readers a clear idea of the story. Overall, the source shows that a well-chosen title plays a big role in marketing a romance novel and shaping a reader’s first impression. I think that this source will be very helpful, because I think that this is one thing I really struggled with figuring out.

8. [How to Outline a Romance Novel ❤️ My Outlining Process as a Romance Writer | ...](#)

This source explains a step-by-step process for outlining a romance novel and shows how planning can really improve the writing process. Natalia Lee emphasizes starting with brainstorming ideas and building a playlist to match the story’s mood, then developing characters by identifying their wants, needs, and emotional struggles throughout the book. She explains that strong romance stories depend on clear structure, including key moments like

“meet cute,” conflict, and character growth. The source also highlights the importance of using tropes and conflict to keep the story engaging while still appealing to readers. Overall, it shows that carefully outlining your story helps writers create more organized and meaningful stories. This yt video was extremely helpful as it helped me with brainstorming building a playlist, and more.

9. [5 Steps to Writing and Publishing Romance](#)

This source explains a five step process for writing and self publishing a romance novel. The author emphasizes the importance of researching the genre first, including understanding story structure and different genres so the book will meet reader expectations. It then highlights actually writing the story without overthinking it, followed by creating a cover that clearly represents the genre, and attracts the reader's attention. The source also talks about choosing where to publish, like Amazon. Overall it shows that success in romance writing depends not only on the storytelling, but on planning accordingly, and how you present your book, while also understanding how to put it in the market the right way. I think this source is very helpful because I keep overthinking everything I write, and it would be good to publish it on Amazon because Kindle Unlimited is needed to do so, and I have it.

10. [Start Here: How to Self-Publish Your Book](#)

This source explains how to self publish a book and choose the best method based on the budget and goals you have. In the past self publishing was expensive and required paying a lot of money to companies. However, things changed with print on demand, and ebooks which make it more accessible. Many authors publish their work using platforms like Amazon. The article explains that authors can either do everything themselves or pay for help, but doing it themselves gives them more profit, and all. It also says that authors are responsible for editing, cover design, and marketing, which means that success needs a lot of effort and planning. I think that this source is really helpful because it provides all the info I need to self publish my romance book.

More in depth:

College:

- Nyu
- Rutgers

Hospitals:

- Texas Medical Center (TMC) in Houston

Live:

Rehab center:

chapters:

Beneath the Lies

CHAPTER 01

The stupid umbrella keeps slipping out of my hand, not enough to fall, but enough to annoy me. Plus, holding my phone and the two dozen flowers I bought earlier isn't helping either.

At this point, I'm one inconvenience away from a public breakdown that will lead me straight back to the comfort of my bed.

Rain keeps tapping softly against the umbrella as I keep walking to the last few rows of the cemetery.

As if carrying enough things wasn't irritating already, now my heels are sinking slightly into the wet mud.

I adjust the flowers against my arm, as I feel them slipping down my arm, before pulling my phone out for what has to be the third time in the last five minutes.

05:37 AM

I'm later than I thought I wanted to be for today's meeting with my mom and Aunt Claire.

Not that they would care or blame me for where I was, or why I was late.

Which, if you think about is really sad, though it's only after a few steps that it settles deep.

The cemetery is quieter than usual; maybe it always sounded like this, or maybe it's because no one is here today with the heavy rain and all.

Taking the familiar path that I had mesmerized, my grip automatically tightens around the flowers.

Getting to the graves, which are next to each other, I stop next to the first one, which is Aunt Claire's; then I walk the few feet to my mom's and put the second bouquet I brought with me. Standing there, reminiscing about how simple, happy, and uncomplicated my life was as a child with them.

Moving out of the rain and under a tree a few feet away, I get a blanket from my bag to sit down so I can have my monthly discussions with two of the best women I've ever known.

After recounting all that happened since the last time I was here, I take out the book I was reading this weekend, wanting to finish the last few chapters I haven't read yet.

I flip through the pages, really getting into finishing this book in this weather. My favorite time for reading would be when it's raining or sitting at the beach.

I think that there's something about the rain that makes everything feel a little more distant, like the world is happening somewhere else, and I just get to exist in between it.

I keep turning the pages until the words start pulling me in enough that I stop noticing the cold against my fingers.

I keep telling myself one more chapter, one more page, one more paragraph, until I get startled by a sound that cuts through my thoughts.

I pause mid-sentence, looking up, then up, and up until my neck is about to break to see a really tall figure walking my way.

I can't see his face or guess who he would be since the only graves near me are Mom's and Aunt Claire's.

I keep looking at the man coming toward me, trying to figure out who he is, but I can't with the heavy rain and the clouds, and when I look at the time, it tells me that it's six thirty PM, which tells me that I was really engrossed in the book.

As he gets closer, details start filling themselves in: tall, broad shoulders, dark coat, and that hair that is pushed back from his face.

Familiar, weirdly familiar.

But he walks past me and toward them...

Unease settles low in my stomach as my fingers tighten around the book.

Because last time I checked, no one had come here in years.

And the only person who used to visit, he who shall not be named, was supposed to be studying abroad. Not that I was stalking him or anything.

So...this guy can't be him, right?

I try sitting up to get a better look at him, but I can only see a glimpse of him. He crouched down and placed the flowers near the ones I had placed down.

He turns around so quickly that he makes me drop my phone on the wet floor.

Looking up at him again, I see him still staring.

Then...

"Eliana," I hear my name come out of his mouth before I even fully process it.

As he fully turns toward me, something twists in my stomach.

As my name keeps echoing in my head, with that voice taunting me.

Because no.

No, no, no.

Absolutely not.

Realization crashes into me so suddenly it knocks the air out of my lungs.

For a second, I forget how to breathe.

Forget where I am.

Forget that I'm 28 years old and not 13, standing on my front lawn watching him walk away

Because he doesn't get to stand here after all these years and say my name like that.

Like leaving never happened.

For half a second, something shifts in his expression when he says my name.

Something familiar.

Then, in the blink of an eye, it disappears.

His face settles back into that cold expression I knew too well. Like that split second of weakness never happened.

For a moment, neither of us moves. Rain is the only thing filling the silence between us.

He looks away first, toward Aunt Claire's grave.

And something changes in his expression again, softer than how he was looking at me a second ago, like he's looking at memories instead of a stone.

Slowly, he stands up, eyes still fixed on the grave.

His hand shifts slightly, just enough to brush against the edge of it one last time.

Then he turns away.

The moment he takes his first step, a loud meow cuts through the silence.

An orange cat comes running between rows of headstones.

Adrian stops.

And for a second, we both look at each other, then back at the cat.

Neither of us is saying anything.

He keeps walking as the gravel crunches under his shoes, and he disappears farther and farther into the cemetery until I can't see his retreating back anymore.

I keep staring at the empty space he left behind, too stunned to think straight, let alone speak, when the cat suddenly nudges its head against my thigh.

“Aren't you a sweet little thing?” I mumble softly, scratching behind its ears.

I blink down at it, half impressed, half confused when I realize its fur is completely dry.

The rain stopped a few minutes ago, but still, where had it been hiding?

Its ears twitch suddenly at the sound of a distant engine.

And just like that, the memories come rushing back.

The cat starts licking my cheek as it presses its small head to mine, and only then do I realize I'm crying.

I didn't think thinking about him could still do this to me.

I thought I had overcome it, especially after all these years.

CHAPTER 02

“Eliana, get down from there!”

The voice cuts through the yard as I climb higher up the tree.

I don’t stop; I continue with my rescue mission, focused on the tiny blur stuck above me.

A tiny orange kitten, holding on for dear life on a branch, meowing like its life depends on it.

“Eli, are you listening to me?” Adrian shouts from below.

“YES,” I shout back.

“Get down then, you’re gonna fall,” he says.

“In a sec, I just need to get this cat,” I tell him as I keep climbing.

The bark of the tree digs into my palms, and my sandals keep slipping against the trunk.

Okay.

Maybe this wasn’t my smartest idea.

But the kitten lets out another desperate meow, and any thought of going back disappears.

“Just wait,” I tell the cat softly.

The kitten blinks at me and meows again.

Adrian groans from somewhere below.

“Stop talking to it, and get down; you’re about to fall.”

“I’m not.”

The branch creaks underneath me, and I freeze, hoping he didn’t hear that, but my hopes are all in vain, as he says, “That is not very reassuring.”

I roll my eyes and carefully move closer to the kitten.

“See? I’m fine.”

The universe immediately decides to humble me.

My foot slips.

A startled scream leaves my mouth as the branch snaps beneath me.

For one terrifying second, all I see is sky.

Then leaves.

Then sky again.

I hit the ground with enough force to knock the air out of my lungs.

“Owww.”

I lie there trying not to cry, staring up at the tree while trying to remember how breathing works.\

A shadow appears above me.

“You’re an idiot.”

And there it goes, a sob, gets out before I can stop it.

My eyes immediately start burning.

“No, no, no,” I whisper to myself.

Because if I start crying, Mom is going to hear. And if Mom hears, she’s going to come outside.

And if she comes outside, she’ll make me go inside.

And then the cat will still be stuck.

A second sob escapes. Great.

Adrian stares down at me.

“You are literally proving my point.”

“I hate you,” I sniff.

“No, you don’t.”

“I do.”

“You cried last week because I didn’t go to your birthday party.”

I point at him accusingly.

“That was different.”

“How?”

“I don’t know yet.”

For the first time since I fell, I see his mouth twitch.

Sighing, he offers me his hand.

I stare at it, then at him.

He raises his eyebrow.

“What?”

“Mom says I shouldn’t hold hands with boys.”

He drops his hand, while saying at the same time, “Then stay on the ground, I guess.”

I grabbed his hand before he fully pulled it away.

The second I’m standing, I remember the reason I climbed the tree in the first place.

TO BE CONTINUED.