

Maggie Hale

2024-2025

Ms. Roma's Capstone

Senior Reflection Essay

Introduction/Thesis

My name is Maggie Hale, and I am a senior at America Academy of Innovation where I have been since the second semester of 10th grade.

I really like making things. I love to draw and make art any way I can. My favorite class here at AAI is ceramics open lab; I really enjoy the freedom it gives me just to make anything.

I enjoy listening to music while I work. I enjoy many different types of music, but my favorite artists consist of Fiona Apple, Sinead O'Connor, Lorde, and Florence + The Machine.

I really like to learn new things and learn more about what I already know. I like to learn about history of any type, as well as sociology and outer space. My goal for my senior year was to learn.

My two parents have lived in Utah all their life, and the same is true for their children. I have one older sibling who is currently studying game design at the University of Utah. I also have two younger sisters who are twins. All of my siblings look a lot alike so it's pretty uncanny.

I have always had an imaginative brain. In the future, I hope to be able to profit off of that brain and make things. What I make is still to be decided as there are so many things I enjoy making and doing and learning about. How could I possibly choose what to make for the rest of my life? I plan to ease into college, doing only a couple classes this fall so as not to overwhelm myself too quickly.

I read plenty, but most of my reading material, if not all, consists of superhero comics. Recently I've been reading lots of X-men. Hunger Games is novel series that I enjoyed so much that I read a couple of the books twice.

Every time I see a new movie, I usually believe it is the best one I have ever seen. That being said, I do dearly enjoy watching Alien (1979), Little Shop of Horrors (1986), and Bottoms (2023). My personal qualities and skills include being able to feel other's feelings as if they were my own, media literacy, and roller skating. A fun fact about myself is that I have two cats.

In this essay, I will go over the ways my learning experience excelled as well as was hindered during my time at American Academy of Innovation. I also will be going over what I accomplished during my year-long capstone project and my opinion on how it turned out.

Part I - Entire tenure at AAI

I learn best visually and through hands-on experience. I like being able to see and touch the information to fully grasp it. Over this year I have become as comfortable as I am able to be with all the Microsoft applications that we use here at AAI. I have also gotten more familiar with Procreate, the app on my iPad that I use for drawing, although there is still a lot that I need to become confident with on there.

I enjoyed my ceramics open lab a lot this year. In that class I was able to create any projects I wanted to without having to worry about another one coming up and having to get it in on time.

I still would always rather do my work alone if I am able to. It is just easier for me to focus and not get stressed. I came into the year with more knowledge of how to navigate group projects, although it did not make talking to people any easier this year. I did a lot of work my

junior year trying to talk to people more and make friends. I ended up making a really great friend group that I still hang out with all the time. Unfortunately, all expect for one graduated that the end of last school year. As I started my senior year, I realized that I basically actually did not care anymore and just wanted to leave. But I'm still here, aren't I? Against all of my own better judgment.

I hate being the oldest in the room. I'm so used to having at least one grade older than me, but now I'm at the top of the totem pole, and it scares me to look back down.

Artifact 1 – Agatha Harkness witch drawing for The Crucible project. - First drawing i did for school last year, as my capstone project had not yet changed.

Artifact 2 – Robots essay. - I was particularly proud of this essay I did for my capstone project about robots used as metaphors for slavery.

Artifact 3 – Anthropomorphic hare ceramic bust. - I believe this turned out quite well, and I enjoyed making and painting it.

Part II - Senior year artifacts and service

I really quite enjoyed my capstone this year. It was interesting because my project focused heavily on reading and writing, which aren't usually my favorite forms of expression. But what I do know is that I really enjoy learning. I picked a topic that I was interested in, got to

learn about it, and wrote up my own opinions on the subjects. It made me realize that I could go into that type of career if I so desired.

I've never enjoyed writing school projects and writing isn't something that I would do in my free time. But this year in capstone, it wasn't all that scary. I'm just quite a slow writer and get distracted easily. I also wrote a bit in my Language Arts class for some assignments. The artifacts that I choose were different things I've written that I was proud of; I think these helped me level up my writing game my senior year.

This Christmas, our capstone class volunteered at a non-profit that supplies toys for children all over the world. I joined in on their factory line up in the station that applies the wheels to the body of the toy car. I wasn't really sure what i was getting into before I went, but it was all pretty simple. I used a power drill to screw the wheels in, and they were ready for the next station. It was mind numbing work and I'd always rather be on the creative end of something, but I was glad to be helping along with everyone else.

Part III - Grade-level project

At the start of the year, I planned to research many different important parts of sci-fi in our media throughout time and write them into scripts for video essays. There were many topics I wanted to touch on because I am interested in many parts of this genre.

I chose a vague and expansive subject because there were many things I wanted to accomplish, but I fear I may be continuing this on my own time this summer.

After I finished one script with all the information and resources I found on that subject, I planned to film and edit the video on a video editing platform, and then share the video with others in person or by posting it online.

I underestimated how much time one of these projects would take and just how distracted or side tracked I would get. I only ended up accomplishing a couple of my goals but, at least I put all the time and effort into it that it needed.

In the beginning, I was going to focus mainly on the space race and sci-fi in the 1960s, but I ended up changing it to include many more things that had to do with the cultural impacts of sci-fi in general. In the end, I used most of my time on my Frankenstein research.

Frankenstein is widely known as the first example of the science fiction genre in literature by being published in 1818. As I learned just how much Mary Shelley was erased as the mother of science fiction, I wanted to fully discover this book in the context of who wrote it and when it was written. I am not usually that much of a reader, but as I was reading this, I found I really enjoyed it. The fact that I even picked up this book on my own and read the whole thing out of my own volition is pretty cool. As I read, I also did lots of research.

The story of Frankenstein has become so well known that there were just so many things to focus on. I researched Mary Shelly herself, her life, her family, what inspired her, the historical and geographical context as well as Shelly's own context. I then would go on to research where the concept of reanimation (that was explored in the book) originated from. That led me into many different myths and stories that contained the concept of bringing inanimate material to life with the ability to walk and think on its own. These stories now being put in the context of the industrial revolution created many new opportunities for my imagination to wander.

I explored how the book was written in the middle of the industrial revolution in Europe, which was a time filled with lots of change and fear. As I researched and as I read, I collected quotes and ideas to use in my own work. I annotated the book heavily as I read, there were just so many interesting topics introduced that I wanted to touch on. Once I had enough information from all my research, I created an outline for a script that would eventually turn into a video essay. I was able to get to the point of having a completed script, just needing to film and edit the video. I hope to complete this project within the coming weeks to showcase all my work.

Through my research and writing, I was able to take a deep dive into science fiction by starting at the very beginning. I explored not only the novel, but all the early mythology and inspirations that lead up to the novel being written. While researching, I got to strip this project down to the very core values and morals that science fiction deals with. In the middle of my Frankenstein research, I would often get side-tracked on other related things that interested me. While still working on my first project, I branched off into the territory of robots and their use as metaphors for slavery and the working class, especially during the industrial revolution. Just like Frankenstein, this topic intrigued me, and I ended up writing an essay on it within a month. I liked this change of topic although both of my topics shared some of the same attributes.

I ended up getting more than 200 hours from not just my research and writing, but the science fiction media I consumed during this year. I mainly watched television shows like Star Trek and Doctor Who, but I also watched a couple movies from the Alien franchise for the first time this year and really enjoyed them.

When it came to coding my website for my portfolio, I chose this because I mentioned in my project proposal that I wanted to go out of my comfort zone this year. I wanted to write more but also dip into science and technology territory, and that is a territory that I am not very comfortable in. Luckily my dad speaks computer very well. He ended up teaching me a lot

coding and the basics of html. We would get together a couple times a week to work on building up my website the way I had it planned out in my head. All in all, I really enjoyed this project and the freedom it gave me to explore topics I was interested in. I got to explore the politics behind stories and the reason behind why we create art (specifically sci-fi) during times of cultural and political change. I ended up fulfilling my main goal, which was to learn, and I learned a lot.

This project was important to me because sci-fi is important to me. Science fiction media and television has been a big part of my life, and I wanted to explore more in depth the genre that has been keeping me curious and interested all these years. I learned many new things that both quenched my curiosity and made me more curious.

Throughout this project, I learned that my natural way of operation is to work within my random bursts of energy. I had to combat this as I don't have that many bursts of energy. I had to learn how to organize my time effectively so that I would be able to get everything done that I needed to get done in a certain time frame.

This project was much more time consuming than I expected and I worked mostly alone without any help from others. When I create anything, I am always very judgmental of it. I put so much pressure on myself to be perfect and I rarely can accept the outcome the way it is. If I were to go back in time, I would not only organize my time better, but I would have put more faith in my abilities. Everything I created turned out pretty well and I wish I would've trusted myself more.

While doing this project, I realized that I really do have a passion for sociology. When discovering new types of thinking and being throughout human history, I really want to know "why?" Our species is so complex and interesting and the way we show that through our stories

is what really intrigued me to choose this project. I think that I have many different paths ahead of me; there are so many roads to choose from (and I hate choosing).

Part IV - Post-Secondary Goals

This period of our lives is a time of such immense change and realization about ourselves. It was very fun to see myself grow and change and learn, but that being said, I would never want to go through it again. I have learned that dwelling on the past gets you no where so I'll just say this: my early years of high school were some of the worst of my life, but I would not change it for the world. I would not be the person that I am today without all the trials that I went through during these years. I learned a lot and I grew a lot, and to undo any of what I did would be to undo any of the growth I went through. I could have been kinder to myself. That girl who was going through so much already didn't need that voice inside her head saying that it wasn't enough. She will always be with me as I head into the future and for that I am grateful.

I don't have that concrete of a plan for the future. I do want to go to college for something creative. If I don't have the option to create, I will go crazy. College seems like a pretty big word right now and I'm not sure if I am ready right out of high school to just jump into the deep end. After I graduate AAI and complete my SLCC courses, I plan to get a job and do some more SLCC classes this upcoming fall to ease into it all. I mean to take a gap year, I want to travel and work and experience new things that I didn't have the ability to while stuck in high school. As of now, I want to get all my core classes done in-state (at SLCC probably?) and maybe go to an art school out of state. I should decide soon because it is all coming up faster

than I would like. But I am The Master Procrastinator and it's my job to put everything off until the last second.