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A Beautiful Apocalypse: A Collection of Poems

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A BEAUTIFUL APOCALYPSE: A COLLECTION OF POEMS



Emily Kesler
Senior Capstone
Division of Humanities and Communications
Spring 2016

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNbWnkwggp8>

Emily Kesler
Senior Capstone
Creative Writing and Social Action
Creative Project
Dr. Sam Robinson
Division of Humanities and Communication
Spring 2016

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HCOM Senior Capstone – Creative Project Option Proposal

1. My name is Emily Kesler. I am a Human Communications Major with a Creative Writing and Social Action concentration.
2. My project will take the form of a collection of poems. I will write five poems related to the topic of the world in 2050. The poems will be on the subtopics of community and the sharing of resources, the health of the economy and consumerism; the environment, what my life is like in 2016, and what I envision for myself in 2050.
3. Each poem in my collection will relate to an aspect of the future and will include both predictions about the year 2050 in regards to humans' caring for the environment, nurturing a healthy economy, and forming a community. I will also include my own ideas in the form of what my life is like in 2016 and what I envision for myself in 2050. My work will be inspired by the ideas presented by Eugene Linden in his book *The Future in Plain Sight* and by Hal Niedzvieck in *Trees on Mars*.
4. The purpose of my project is to inspire others to be mindful of the way that they treat their fellow humans, as well as the environment. It will also encourage fiscal responsibility. My reflective poems will inspire readers to consider their goals and aspirations and the steps they might take to achieve them in the future.
5. As a writer, I find that the most effective way for me to express my thoughts and feelings on a topic is through poetry. By creating an anthology of poems, I will

form a thorough and complete image of my visions for the future of both the world and myself. Each poem will offer a glimpse of each of these visions.

6. Working title: "The Year 2050: Moving Forward Towards Change"

7. My project will take the form of an anthology of five poems related to different aspects of the future. In the first poem, I will write on the topic of community and sharing natural resources. I will encourage readers to be mindful of how they treat fellow humans and how they share resources such as water, gasoline, and produce with one another. The second poem will include predictions on the global economy, including which products will be sold and how much humans will rely on material items. The third poem will be on the topic of the environment. I will predict how well humans will care for forests and whether pollution will change the climate and ozone layer. The fourth poem will be a reflection on my life so far – what I have accomplished and what I hope to accomplish in the future. My final poem will include a story of my life in 2050 – where I'm living, what I'm wearing, who I'm friends with, and other aspects.

8. In order to complete this project thoroughly and effectively, I must display my ability and competence in the field of creative writing. I also must show how my project ties into the themes related to my course, which is The Year 2050. I am expected to get prior approval from my teacher in order to ensure that I have met these two requirements. I will produce a proposal

9. I have been an avid writer and reader since I was very young. I spent much of my free time as a child drafting short stories and poems. I was enrolled in the Creative Writing program at the Marin School of the Arts at Novato High School, where I spent four years studying creative writing. Under the tutelage of Miriam Silver and Sue Sommers, I learned how to use correct grammar and spelling in my writing. I produced poetry, short fiction, memoir; and historical fiction. I also gained experience reciting my

pieces to a large audience. I have continued my study of creative writing at CSUMB by taking Introduction to Creative Writing, Multicultural Poetry, Creative Writing and Service, Women's Writing Workshop, and Social Action Writing. By working with professors Aimee Suzara, Deb Busman, and Diana Garcia, I have increased my writing skills and learned what is expected for works of creative writing.

10. After I submit my proposal, I plan to schedule regular meetings with my Capstone professor, Dr. Robinson, in order to go over the drafts of my poems and gain advice about my project. I will also meet with my past creative writing professors, Prof. Busman and Prof. Garcia, to discuss my creative process and gain feedback. I will ask several of my friends to peer edit my poems, as well so that my project will be as suitable as possible for my future readers and ready to be added to my portfolio.

11. I will turn in my first project report on March 9th. At this time, I plan to have at least 3 out of 5 of my poems completed. I also plan to have met with Dr. Robinson to discuss my process and the drafts of these two poems. By March 30th, when my second project report is due, I intend to have all 5 of my poems completed and peer-reviewed. Between March 30th and April 18th, I will try to schedule meetings with my creative writing professors so that my poems will be ready to be submitted as final drafts. On May 11th, I will submit my final portfolio with all 5 final drafts of my poems, my resume, and written reflection. I will rehearse one or two of my poems and make adjustments to the drafts so that will read smoothly during my oral presentation at May 20th's HCOM Capstone Festival.

The Environment in 2050

Earth's lush, fallow terrain
Once rife with ancient trees, scorching deserts, and jagged glaciers
Now barren and wasted
Sickened after thirty-four years
Of exploitation, destruction, and murder.

Species of fauna of feathers and fur
Now ill or suffering
Their habitats destroyed
By pollution and deforestation.

Oceans are spreads of floating trash
Remains of humanity's glory days
Fading and slipping through the cracks
Small slivers of sunlight breaking through
The space between poisoned clouds.

Smog skies, victims of pollution
From aerosol, light, gasoline
Evening sunsets bleed red
Grieving the beauty that has been lost.

Acid rain and dusty storms
Tear Earth apart at the seams

Homes ravaged, streets filled
With fallen trees and split wires.

Farmlands that once bore vegetables and fruit
Are lifeless, not even a sprout
Emerging from dehydrated earth
Humans survive on packaged foods
Dried fruit, canned vegetables, jars of soup

Lakes, oceans, and rivers are running dry
The last drops of purity enclosed in melting glaciers
Humans battle over access to water
A resource none can truly own.

The Earth has lost its splendor,
Its beauty, and its truth
Human error has rendered it empty
Bereaved and desperate
For life.

Fabricated Life

Shayna views the world
From the lenses of her Google glasses
Three-dimensional and high definition
Each jagged edge of a rocky canyon
Or curve of a voluptuous cloud
Enhanced, brightened
As if put through a filter on Instagram.

For eight-year-old old Shayna, a fabricated world
Is all she has ever known.

From birth, her life has been photographed
Each birthday, dance recital, and beauty pageant
Locked in time through an Instagram or Facebook post.

Her best friends were chosen for her
By way of a community database
Storing each resident's birthday, interests, job description,
Car model, marital status, and even their addresses.

Her border collie, Oreo, is genetically modified
With hypo-allergenic hair and the desired traits:
Loyal, smart, playful, comes when called,
And never leaves "surprises" on the carpet.

Shayna's mother, Tammy,
Works as a sixth-grade English teacher
Teaching lessons on grammar and *To Kill A Mockingbird*
To a class of 1,000 students each day
From behind her webcam.

Her father, Mark,
Works in advertising
Carefully constructing billboards
For anti-aging cream, cars, hair products,
Cell phones, and diet pills
Promising to remove ten pounds
In only one week!

School consists not of rows of desks,
Expo pens, gum wads, and pricey textbooks

But of webcasts and EBooks
Assignments submitted electronically
Instead of on lined notebook paper
Television commercials and magazine ads
Convince Shayna to buy, buy, buy
Toys, cell phones, video games,
And the latest fashion trends.

Technicolor days
Of pixelated scenes
Behind lenses and glossy screens
Consumer society
Television shows
Shayna's life is fabricated
But it's the only life she knows.

A Beautiful Apocalypse

I emerge from my apartment on a foggy evening

My tan loafers whispering down the stairs

Ripples of humidity lap against my forehead

As I step onto the dusty pavement.

I've lived in Futura for sixty years

Each one as clouded in my mind

As the sky above me, veiled in ominousness,

Averse to the blood red sun puncturing through

A smokescreen of cirrus.

I follow the pavement past apartments and houses

Their blinds open to let in the small rays of light

The setting sun allows

Windows closed to block the entry

Of the putrid, polluted air.

When I reach the city square, I gasp
The streets are filled with urine and blood
People wander, displaced from their homes
Due to losing jobs or inability to pay their rent
Their empty eyes beg me to give a dollar or a smile.

I give my scarf to a haggard woman
Who is shivering in a dusty corner.

She smiles gratefully
As I continue my walk.

Billboards show the face of Rupert Frump
Our nation's new President
His campaign promised change, but all I have seen

Is struggle and strife
As parents try to feed their children,
The unemployed try to find new jobs,
And the homeless try to find shelter.

President Frump smiles smugly
From a billboard outside the city hall
His promises of more jobs
Better social security and medical care

Have not been kept
He bides his time with interviews and fine dining
His gaze set on fame rather than charity.

Around me stand dying trees
Their leaves yellowed and shriveled
From the lack of oxygen, sunlight, and rain.
Flowers no longer bloom here
Their bright hues once gave this place life
Now it is fading
Breathing its last breaths.

I scratch my balding scalp
As I stretch my neck towards the skyscrapers
Towering regally and proudly
Like gods admiring their creations
Compared to the decaying mini marts and liquor stores
They have survived humanity's toil.

I recall the days of my youth
Spent riding my bike around the square
That once bustled with life and laughter

I bought saltwater taffy from Powell's candy shop

Button downs from the Good Will

Now all that remains are fragments of memories

Peering from the dusty, boarded windows.

I stand, a man of sixty, in a city

Once young and lively

Now turned to chaos and ruin.

In the year 2050, Futura stands

A graveyard for faded memories and broken dreams

In the midst of a beautiful apocalypse.

Reflective Essay

My creative project consists of three poems I have crafted on topics related to the future of the United States' environment, technology, economy, and infrastructure, as well as human welfare, in the year 2050. Each poem touches upon each of these subtopics through the use of imagery, vivid details, metaphor and simile, and point of view. I wrote these poems with future generations in mind. I pondered the types of technology that would be available to them, whether it was featherweight laptops, theater-size televisions, or multi-gigabyte cellphones. I considered the natural elements and resources that would be accessible, like water, trees, sunlight, and oxygen. I also thought about the state of the economy and government, including how many jobs would be available and the type of individual who would be serving as president. All of these aspects combine to form my predictions for the future of Earth and humanity.

My first poem, "The Environment in 2050", contains my predictions regarding the future state of the environment. I wrote it with the intended audience of today's young adults in hopes that the poem would inspire them to take action to prevent air and water pollution, drought, and the extinction of many animal and plant species that are now endangered. In the first and second stanzas, I envision the destruction of the environment and the displacement of animal species from their natural habitats. I

anticipate that human actions such as the exploitation of resources and the hunting of animals for entertainment purposes will lead to these ends. In the third stanza, I describe a beach that is covered in trash from visitors' parties and picnics. Beaches are typically associated with fun and leisure. When many people think of beaches, they imagine palm trees, golden sand, and rolling waves. I use imagery to create a new and terrifying vision of a beach covered in debris and decay. Later in the poem, I write of the threats of pollution and limited resources. Through the use of imagery and metaphors, I allow my readers to picture polluted, blood red skies; vicious storms due to global warming, and farms that have dried during droughts. The poem concludes with a solemn warning to my readers and future generations, foretelling the destruction that I feel is near.

My second poem, "Fabricated Life", tells the fictional story of an eight-year-old girl named Shayna who is growing up in 2050. She lives in a suburban community with her parents, Tammy and Mark, and Border collie, Oreo. Shayna's mother works as a teacher. Her classes are broadcast to thousands of students through an online live streaming service. Her father works in advertising. He creates advertisements for popular consumer products such as shampoo, cell-phones, and anti-aging cream. Shayna's Border collie, Oreo, has been genetically modified to be the "perfect" dog; he is loyal, obedient, and house trained. The theme of this poem is the creation of the ideal life. When people in 2016 daydream about the future, they often envision being financially stable, happily married, and living in a nice house. The poem "Fabricated Life" posits the possibility of creating a life that fits one's needs and desires. Yet, I raise

the question of whether or not having all one desires equates happiness and satisfaction. Shayna lives the type of life that many people see as ideal, yet she must sacrifice her privacy in the process. With the popularity of social media and the booming consumer economy, her every move is documented and all of her desires are fulfilled through beauty products and toys. She also is able to have the perfect dog and friends. The catch? Shayna has not received any of these luxuries through her own efforts. She does not know of or appreciate the hard work that past generations (including those living in 2016) put in to achieve that which comes easily to her in 2050. Since everything she wants is given to her, Shayna may never know what it is like to be poor, hungry, or unable to find friends or family who accept you. Her life has been fabricated, but it is all she knows.

My final poem, "A Beautiful Apocalypse," tells of a fictional sixty-year-old man who lives in the city of Futura. He has lived there since 2016. It is now 2050. The poem is told from the point of view of the man as he takes a walk around his neighborhood and the city square. As the man walks, he notices the ways that the city has changed over time. When he was young, the city was lively and filled with various small businesses. Now, the city is filled with the homeless, and many of the local businesses have since closed down. The man also reflects on the solemn, dark houses he passes by. They remind him of the memories of days past and cause him to feel both sad and nostalgic. The presence of both sadness and joy in the aging man's heart leads him to believe that the city is experiencing a beautiful apocalypse.

I have been writing since I was very young. I like to tell people that I have been creating stories and poems since I could hold a pencil properly! Although I enjoy writing in various genres, poetry has always been my forte. By writing poetry, I have endured the darkest times of my life. I have struggled for many years with depression and an anxiety disorder. I often felt that my life was too chaotic and unpleasant to handle. Whenever I became overwhelmed, I started writing. Through the expression of my deepest thoughts and feelings, I processed complicated emotions and compacted them into a simpler format. When the world seemed dark and I felt all hope was lost, writing allowed me to create something beautiful and tangible. My poems have given me hope and helped me to become a more positive person. This project, "A Beautiful Apocalypse" is an artistic expression not only of my visions of the future, but of the past, as well. It serves as a reminder that there is beauty in the madness and chaos of our lives. Even when things seem awful and unbearable, there is hope and beauty yet to be found.

Synthesis Essay

Over the course of the semester, I have been challenged to envision not only my own future, but also that of future generations. The issues of animal welfare and the environment have concerned me for some time, but the economy and government did not cross my mind often until I started taking my Capstone class. By engaging in discussions with my professor and colleagues, I was able to open my mind to various perspectives and possibilities regarding the future. I found that my attitude towards the future was hopeful, albeit a bit grim. I hoped that my future children would be able to experience a lot of the luxuries I had, such as access to quality education, nutritious food, and clean water. At the same time, I had a feeling that life in 2050 would not be as pleasant as I hoped.

I envisioned the depletion of natural resources, such as water and gasoline. I also imagined animals dying and becoming extinct due to the exploitation of their natural habitats. I thus formed an image of the future that influenced the outcome and tone of my Senior project, "A Beautiful Apocalypse."

The structure of the course required me to work both collaboratively and independently with my colleagues. During the group seminars, I discussed topics

related to the three books we read: *The Future in Plain Sight: The Rise of the "True Believers" and Other Clues to the Coming Instability* by Eugene Linden, *Trees on Mars: Our Obsession With the Future* by Hal Niedzviecki, and *The Politics of Time and Youth in Brand India* by Jyotsna Kapur. Hearing my classmates' opinions on topics such as the economy and technology helped me to open my mind to ideas and beliefs that were different from my own. I was also able to share my thoughts on various topics and hear what my classmates had to say about them.

Other forms of collaborative work were the in-class peer reviews of our Capstone projects. I found the peer review sessions to be immensely helpful and beneficial to the development of my poems. It was great to be able to converse with colleagues who were also doing creative projects. We compared notes and gave each other suggestions. I also emailed my poems to two of my friends through Google Docs. Their insight was extremely valuable to me because it allowed me to see which lines in my poems were the most powerful and which lines needed some touch ups. It was also great to see how several members of my target audience – young adults – responded to my work.

Independently, I read the three required books for this course, worked on my poster, and put together my portfolio. Since the majority of this course was independent work, I grew easily overwhelmed with the amount of work that was required from me. Despite how stressed I became, I convinced myself to keep moving forward and that all of my hard work would be worth it in the end. It was rewarding to see the smiles on my friends' faces when they saw my finished poster draft and read

my poems. Knowing that my work was well received made me proud of and confident in myself.

Taking this course has greatly increased my understanding of factors that will influence the future, including technological innovations, environmental organizations, and economic growth. Reading the required texts opened my mind to such topics and increased my knowledge tremendously. If I had not taken this class, I would not be as passionate about the topic of improving life for future generations. I am now genuinely concerned for the future and want to ensure that my future children and their children live comfortably.

My creative project meets the guidelines included in the Capstone Guide. It connects to the theme of the year 2050, for my poems make predictions for the future and include my hopes and fears regarding it. The project also shows my competency, since I worked with peers to make edits and improvements. The poems are well written, detailed, and thoughtful, which shows the strong writing skills I have developed throughout my life. I am confident that my project shows my passion for poetry and I have strong hopes that it will inspire others.

Emily M. Kesler

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Career Focus:

Hardworking college student who has completed a Bachelor's Degree in Human Communications with a concentration in Creative Writing and Social Action. Possesses strong writing, reading, and editing skills. Strives for a career in creative writing, publishing, or editing.

Summary of Skills:

- Basic clerical knowledge
- Microsoft Office, Excel, PowerPoint proficiency
- Exceptional writing skills
- Strong written and verbal communication
- Attention to detail
- Kind and courteous
- Responsible
- Hardworking
- Customer service skills
- Retail experience

Work Experience:

Target

Soft Lines (clothing)

December 2015 to January 2016

I placed and organized clothing on racks, attended the fitting room, folded clothing for tables and displays, and assisted customers.

J.C. Crumpton Elementary School/After School Academy

Volunteer at After School Academy

February 2015 to April 2015

As part of a service-learning course at my college, I worked with two colleagues to supervise a group of 20 first through fifth graders. I helped them with their homework, engaged with them in outdoor activities, and taught five creative writing lessons with the use of lesson plans.

Novato Human Needs Center

July 2014 to August 2014

Volunteer at Food Bank

I bagged, sorted, and stacked packaged foods in bins and carts and on tables before clients came to the Food Bank.

Smith Ranch Marketing Associates

January 2014 to August 2014

Clerical Office Assistant

I performed clerical tasks such as copying, filing, collating, and assembling marketing materials. I also entered data into databases.

Dorothy's Place Hospitality Center

October 15, 2012 to December 8, 2012

Volunteer at Women Alive!

I set up folding beds, checked in women when they arrived, and kept track of women's activities, such as doing laundry and taking showers.

Novato Youth Center

July 2012 to August 2012

Volunteer

I supervised a group of first and second graders. I assisted them with their reading skills and played games with them.

Okizu

June 2011 to July 2011

Clerical Office Assistant

I performed basic office tasks such as copying, filing, and shredding.

Westminster Woods Summer Camp

June 3, 2010 to June 17, 2010

Counselor for Sherwood Forest

I served as a camp counselor for eight nine and ten-year-old girls. I supervised them, followed a set activities schedule, disciplined them, and played games with them.

Novato Presbyterian Church

June 5, 2009 to June 11, 2009

Volunteer

I went on a mission trip to the Crow Indian Reservation in Billings, Montana. While I was there, I helped to paint a house and volunteered at a childcare program.

Education:

California State University, Monterey Bay
BA, expected May 2016
Major: Human Communications

Novato High School/Marin School of the Arts
Graduation Date: 2011
GPA: 3.6