Don’t do this

For the artifact analysis assignment, I have chosen to write about

My personal artifact is the

For this essay, I chose

**Passages of description that are working or starting to work**

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As a young gymnast, I always admired the older gymnasts as they soared from low bar to high bar. It truly seemed like they were flying with power, strength, and grace all at once, while doing this captivating sport called Gymnastics. Women’s gymnastics involves the execution of four different events – floor, vault, beam, and bars. They all fascinated me, but watching gymnasts perform on bars always left me in awe. I always thought the magic that gave gymnasts their flight on bars was because of what belonged in their chalky bags hidden in the back of their lockers. Before starting their routine on the uneven bars, the older gymnasts would open their squeaky metal locker and reach in to grab a chalky small fabric bag. As they opened this bag and reached in, white powder chalk erupted into the sky like a rocketship. This bag had their grips, an accessory that they wore on their hands whenever they touched the uneven bars. It felt as if grips gave them wings, allowing them to fly effortlessly.

Grips are used by advanced gymnasts to complete their bar routines and provide them a better “grip” of the wooden bars. Grips themselves are composed of a wide strip of leather that protects the gymnast’s palm from blistering and tearing, which is connected to holes that secure their fingers. To prepare for takeoff, the older gymnasts would first slide on fabric wristbands. Then, they insert their fingers into the leather holes of the grips, which fits to perfection like a handmade ring – snug and secure. Then, you tighten the velcro wrist strap securely, just like tying your shoes to the perfect fit. The next step is doing a quick spray of water to the leather strip of the grip, which allows the key ingredient of chalk to stick like glue. Chalk, which is as powdery white as snow, ensures smooth flight and soaks up any moisture that could cause gymnasts to slip off the bar. With it, gymnasts smoothly glide along the wooden bars and fly from one to another. With this recipe, grips properly function for advanced gymnasts to swing around and around the bars.

Grips are absolutely necessary for most gymnasts to perform on the uneven bars, but they are a fairly recent invention in the scope of history. Before grips, author Astor states that gymnasts would wrap their hands in sports tape to keep them dry and less likely to slip off the bar due to moisture (Astor). However, that sports tape was thin and often ripped during gymnast’s routines, which was extremely dangerous. To solve this problem, grips were invented! Although the exact date of invention of gymnastics grips is not well-documented, it is estimated to be around the early 1990’s. In fact, according to a research article by author Pekkeriet, grips were patented in 1994 by Mark Goodman (Pekkeriet, 12). At this time, grips were made out of 100% leather, which allowed for a more firm and sturdy hold on the bar. This Pekkeriet’s article also emphasizes that studies conducted in 1995 show that grips are effective because there are increased forces on the bar with grips when compared to being bare handed. Furthermore, USA Olympic gymnast Dominique Dawes is among one of the first gymnasts who competed with grips in an Olympic uneven bar routine in 1996 (TodayShow). From that point forward, the majority of Olympic gymnasts also adopted grips, including Olympian Simone Biles, who is considered to be the greatest gymnast of all time. Grips were game-changing in the advancement of Gymnastics, and they continue to evolve with the sport. Grips have been popular in Gymnastics for all gymnasts since the early 2000’s. Now, advanced gymnasts everywhere wear grips, and they are fundamental in performing on the uneven bars. Although in the past grips were made of 100% leather, a material that is often inflexible and stiff, now there is lots of variety when choosing grips. Nowadays, you can choose the material of the grips to be a blend of leather and synthetic materials, whether the grips are secured by velcro or a buckle, or even customize the size to perfectly fit one’s hand (“A Guide to Breaking in Your Grips.”)

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My personal artifact is the 2007 Neil Young album, Live at Massy Hall 1971. Released as the third cd in an archival series, Live at Massy Hall 1971, is an acoustic solo album recorded in Canada. The album features both new (for the time) and old songs of Young’s. Played to a small audience, the intimacy really comes through.

My discovery of this album came at age six in 2007. I am an ice hockey player, and have been my whole life. As a kid I would regularly have to wake up at 4am for an early morning hockey game across town. One such morning, my dad, brother, and I stopped at a Starbucks on the way to the ice rink. We were sitting at our usual table; it had a checkered board pattern on it. We always chose that table because of it. I had my hot chocolate and blueberry scone as a Neil Young song came on the café speakers. My dad, being a fan of Neil Young, pointed it out to my brother and I. I liked the song and my dad went to the cash register and bought the album, Live at Massy Hall 1971.

On the way to the ice rink my dad played the album. I remember he started with the third track, “Old Man.” It was a brand-new song of Young’s, and he gave this long introduction to the song where he explained the meaning. Neil had just moved onto a ranch and it came with a foreman to look after the place. It’s a story I have heard him tell a million times now, but it was new then. It was the one and only time it could be new, and it was captivating.

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The first time I consciously examined a facemask, I stared down at the too big, batman patterned, fabric that my mom placed into my hands. I hated it. I found it laughable and assumed that my peers at school would do the same. Not only did I think it unfashionable, but unnecessary. ‘Calling off school for a couple of days is no cause for panic, I’m sure that the whole thing will blow over in a couple of weeks; and besides, I can handle a cold,’ I thought as I smiled at my mom and closed my door. I swiftly cast the mask aside to my desk covered with old papers, and water bottles, and a wide assortment of other forgotten knick knacks.

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Small round purplish pill, that says it's blackberry flavored and smells a little bad. On a more chemical level, this medication inhibits the reuptake of norepinephrine and dopamine. Wellbutrin, also known as bupropion, is a NDRI antidepressant that can also be used to stop smoking and is even used off label to treat ADHD. Norepinephrine helps with alertness and Dopamine can help with… This medication was first named amfebutamone when it was patented in 1976 by Burroughs Wellcome (Heucker, Smiley, & Saadabadi, 2023). It became FDA approved in 1985 but due to it causing seizures, it was discontinued from 1986 til 1989. It was the high dosage of the medication that was causing seizures, so now the highest recommended dose is 450mg. There are both rapid release and extended release for the medication.

Every year, around the end of October, I start to notice that I don’t really look forward to Halloween as much as I did a few weeks prior. By the end of November, I start to notice that I haven’t been having the motivation to paint or read and going out with friends doesn’t bring me as much joy as before. By the end of December, I’ve completely stopped reaching out to people and on Christmas I’ll be sitting there watching everyone around me look so happy and filled with excitement, but I’m just there. Completely empty, with the inability to feel any joy that I know I should be feeling. During January, I’m struggling to get out of bed, my room is a mess and I genuinely don’t remember the last time I genuinely laughed. Depression is different for everyone and sadly it is a very common mental health disorder, but this year I finally decided that I didn’t want to let this debilitating disorder take over my life anymore. It took me a few weeks to find a therapist and psychiatrist, but I was finally put on an antidepressant, Wellbutrin, and felt a bit of hope coming back.

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My interest in film photography peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic, which happened during my junior and senior years of high school. At the time, my older brother had established a collection of vintage film cameras from different thrift stores. When he showed me his first set of film photos from his trip to Santa Monica, I instantly fell in love with the soft colors, grainy texture, and vintage quality that his photos conveyed. This inspired me to buy a film camera of my own. Up until this point, I had only used digital cameras to capture photos, so I was excited to learn something new and shoot on film for a change. Since we were all restricted to our homes during the lockdown, I also figured that I should take up a new hobby given all the free time I had. After countless hours of research on different film camera brands, I narrowed my focus down to the Minolta brand. Minolta was a Japanese manufacturer of digital and film cameras, camera accessories, photocopiers, and laser printers during the 1900s. The company introduced its first 35mm manual focus SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras in 1981, which included the Minolta X-370 model. These cameras were discontinued in 1999, but luckily, avid photographers can still find a range of Minolta products circulating on secondhand platforms today. As I began my search for a used Minolta film camera on eBay, one listing caught my eye: “MINOLTA X-370 SLR Camera with Five Star 35-75mm lens”. I was immediately drawn to the antique appeal and beginner-friendly features of the Minolta X-370, so I ended up purchasing the whole kit for only $40. When the camera arrived in the mail a couple weeks later, I was initially surprised by how heavy it was and how many different dials and levels it had. Nonetheless, I was still eager to become more A close-up of a camera

Description automatically generatedfamiliar with the Minolta X-370 and explore the complexities that film photography had to offer.

A close-up of a camera

Description automatically generatedDuring its prime, the Minolta X-370 was marketed as an easy-to-use 35mm film camera that offered precise control and creative flexibility. The camera sports a rugged chrome body, a bright optical viewfinder, and an interchangeable manual-focus lens. Tactile controls along the top and front of the camera allow for specific manipulation of the ISO, aperture, shutter speed, and focus for any given scene. ISO refers to the film’s sensitivity to light; a higher number indicates a higher sensitivity and greater ability to capture light. Next, the aperture setting controls the depth of field of an image. A smaller aperture creates a greater depth of field (commonly used for landscapes and groups of people), while a wider aperture blurs the background while keeping the subject in focus (commonly used for portraits and close-up shots). Shutter speed refers to how fast the camera shutter opens and closes when taking a photo. A faster shutter speed is best for “freezing” a subject while in motion, while a slower shutter speed will create a “motion blur” effect. Finally, the focus of an image is achieved by adjusting the lens to find the maximum resolution and sharpness for your chosen subject.

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Visualize if you will a mechanical eye. The sclera is no longer a pearl white but of the deepest black, absorbing all the light that surrounds it. The cones and nerves connecting to a mushy central brain of hills and valleys replaced by circuit boards connected with wires, the eye’s lens being made of glass and metal. This eye can blink at speeds completely above humanity, and it can be forced to focus on details even those with abnormal vision could not see. Even more, this eye can swap out its lens for something so large and long, even the stars cannot hide from it. All of this and so many more hidden underneath a push of a button.

This eye is capable of telling stories and preserving memory in a way beyond our own. It surpasses the drawing, the storyteller, or the historian. It presents itself objectively, nothing about reality being romanticized or twisted. If there is, those are the ones we call “shopped” or doctored, as false as the boy’s cries for the wolf. It can show it in the same color we see or reduced to nothing more than black and white. The memories can be tangible physical prints or digital files to be shared. This wondrous “eye” is none other than a camera if it wasn’t obvious enough by this point.

Cameras these days are not as much the sought after commodity ever since the revolution of the smartphone. With the tiny lenses becoming better by the day, they no longer require these devices that were once separate.

One fine evening after a long day of school, I walk into my local gym and walk straight to the basketball courts to work on my craft. I lace up my basketball shoes and take my new Wilson Evolution out of my gym bag. As I spin the basketball in my hands, the first thing that strikes me is its impeccable craftsmanship. The surface of the ball is smooth yet textured, adorned with fine pebbling that provides just the right amount of grip for optimal control during dribbles and shots. The pebbling is evenly distributed across the entire surface, ensuring consistent performance with every touch.

The vibrant orange hue of the ball is eye-catching, a recreation of the blazing sunset outside. The color seems to radiate energy, reflecting the dynamism and excitement of the game itself. As I rotate the ball in my hands, I notice the Wilson logo proudly emblazoned in bold black letters, a testament to the brand's legacy of quality and innovation in basketball equipment. I bring the Wilson Evolution basketball closer to my nose, and I'm greeted by its distinct, fresh leathery smell. It's a scent that evokes memories of countless games played on fully lit courts, of sweat-soaked jerseys and the sound of sneakers squeaking on hardwood floors. There's a richness to the aroma, reminiscent of the ball's premium materials and expert craftsmanship. It's the smell of potential, of endless possibilities waiting to be unlocked with each dribble and pass. Closing my eyes, I inhale deeply, savoring the essence of the game encapsulated within this simple yet powerful scent.

Running my fingers along the seams, I feel the precision stitching that holds the ball together. The seams are tight and well-defined, adding to the ball's durability and enhancing its aerodynamic properties. Each stitch seems to tell a story of countless games played and victories achieved, a testament to the enduring legacy of basketball as a sport. As I bounce the ball lightly on the floor, I'm struck by its responsiveness. The Wilson Evolution basketball has just the right amount of bounce, neither too high nor too low, allowing for fluid dribbling and effortless handling. With each bounce, I can feel the ball come alive in my hands, eager to be a part of the game unfolding before me.