The Great Gatsby
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Persuasive Essay
English 2 Honors

You are going to write a 7 – 8 paragraph persuasive essay on *The Great Gatsby*. This packet contains directions; however, I strongly urge you to communicate with me throughout this process. Ask questions! I will not simply read your essay, but you are encouraged to ask specific questions. This essay is due Monday, May 5, at the start of class. You must provide THREE things to consider your essay “turned in” officially: a paper copy of the essay, an emailed PDF of the essay, and your ONE scholarly source that you found on your own as an emailed PDF.

**MLA format** (including works cited page and in-text citations) must be used. As well as the following format criteria:

- 12 point, plain font (either Arial, Helvetica, Calibri, Cambria...NOT Times New Roman, please)
- Double-space the entire essay
- MLA heading and header (last name and page number in upper right corner)
- Use MLA – OWL Purdue website for all formatting rules for WORKS CITED and IN-TEXT CITATIONS
- Essay must have a creative/catchy (but also informative) title – do not forget that you may use a colon (example: White Skin, White Mask: Passing, Posing, and Performing in *The Great Gatsby*) – This title clearly shows the reader the essay is about race in The Great Gatsby, but the title is also imaginative and intriguing (juxtaposition and parallelism of “white skin” and “white mask” AND alliteration of “p” sound in “passing, posing, and performing”)
- Introduction – this first paragraph must hook (interest) the reader and also “open/introduce the conversation” on the topic of your main point
- Thesis statement – must appear inside first paragraph and be a mixture of fact and your own opinion (you should be arguing/asserting something about the novel...not pointing out the obvious...it must be something that you are required to prove/argue/explain)
- Body paragraphs
  - Each body paragraph must have its own subpoint (“miniature thesis”) and be formed like a constructed response (5 – 7 sentences is the average) – the subpoint (topic sentence) must SUPPORT the main thesis of the essay – this will build UNITY in your essay (and tie your whole essay together)
  - At the beginning and end of each body paragraph, you must supply TRANSITIONAL words and thoughts, so your paragraphs are COHESIVE (stick together) – imagine you are building little “thought bridges” that allow the reader’s mind to walk smoothly from paragraph to paragraph
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- Be sure to thoughtfully arrange the order of your paragraphs and present your information/build your argument’s case in a logical manner. ORGANIZE (put in the correct order) each body paragraph, so your paragraphs expand your main thesis point and also logically lead up to your concluding point (conclusion)
- NEVER “sparknote” – you are writing to an informed reader, so you should never drift into merely “telling the story” – if you are talking about the plot of the novel, then you best be proving something, showing something, or arguing something related to your thesis

• Conclusion – You have heard me talk about the BSW (big so what) all year. A conclusion must not merely repeat what has already been said. A good conclusion will do the following:
  - Push beyond the boundaries of the question being asked (you’ve already answered it, so make your reader look at the “bigger picture”
  - Elaborate on the significance (importance) of your findings/opinion – actually answer the question “so what?” – why does all this matter?
  - Propel your reader to continue thinking about your opinions after he/she is done reading your essay
  - Remain focused on the subject/topic that has been discussed, but deepen the connection between the subject/topic (your answer or thesis) AND the piece of literature as a whole, the time in which it was written or present-day time, or humanity or society as a whole. Make your reader see a larger connection, and this will help answer the reader’s question – “so what...why does this matter?”

SOURCES

You will have a minimum of three sources for this essay. I do not encourage you to use more than these three sources. The essay is only 7 – 8 paragraphs (that is short).

1. Your novel – The Great Gatsby (this is your primary source)

2. ONE of the scholarly articles provided by me (this is a secondary source)
   [These articles may be found on our class website organized by topic]

3. ONE scholarly article found by you (this is an additional secondary source)

Where can you find a scholarly article?

- Lafayette Public Library website -- Use the EBSCOhost database
- Google JSTOR – find an article and send me the title and author (I will send you the pdf via email)
- Google Project Muse -- find an article and send me the title and author (I will send you the pdf via email)
CITATIONS

- You are required to have THREE sources—The Great Gatsby novel and two scholarly articles

- You must CITE from EACH source a minimum of TWO times (so, you must have a minimum of SIX total in-text citations in your essay) – each time you use a citation from a source, you are required to provide your own analysis/thoughts to say something about the citation

- Citations = you may directly quote, paraphrase (reword “word for word” information from a source using your own simpler words/synonyms), or summarize (reduce a large amount of information from a source into a smaller amount using your own words)

- Any time you use THOUGHTS from a source (the novel or a scholarly source), you must use an in-text citation and list that source in your works cited page

- Use OWL-Purdue MLA website -- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/ -- to see clearly how to format an in-text citation. There are several correct ways to do this.

Examples of In-text Citations

Quote from the novel ---- notice the citation is after the quote –
The billboard in the “valley of ashes” is described as possessing eyes that “look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose” (Fitzgerald 23).

Summary from the novel ---- notice the citation is included in the actual sentence:
In chapter one of The Great Gatsby, class differences between West Egg (the more affluent) and East Egg (the less affluent) exist even amongst the wealthy, upper classes.

Quote from a scholarly article
In “The Great Gatsby: A Novel of the 1920s,” Kathleen Parkinson asserts, “Fitzgerald was regarded, however, by readers of the Post as the writer who best represented images of the new post-war generation of ambitious middle-class Americans wanting to enjoy the consumer spending boom of the 1920s” (12).

** the number 12 indicates the page number from the Parkinson’s article
Paraphrase from a scholarly article
In addition to reflecting life of the wealthy New Yorkers during the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* also shows the reader two other sides of early 20th century American society: the disillusioned post World War I generation and artistic, experimental writers of the new era of Modernism (Parkinson 35).

** the part in pink above is my own rewording of Parkinson’s thoughts in her article – I still must cite and give HER credit for her thoughts that I am simply rewording

Works Cited:

Sample Works Cited page:

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/

The OWL Purdue MLA website contains several tabs that show examples of Works Cited entries (how to document a book, periodical, electronic source, etc.). Notice below the three sources are arranged alphabetically by the first words (Fitzgerald, Goldsmith, and then Parkinson), and all lines after the first line of the Goldsmith and Parkinson sources are indented (this is called a “hanging indentation”---it is the opposite of how paragraphs are indented). The Goldsmith source is from the Internet database JSTOR (that is why it has “Web,” while the Parkinson source has “Print” to indicate it was not gotten off the Internet but was found in a paper/printed source.

Example of Works Cited for an essay on *The Great Gatsby*:

Works Cited


18 Apr. 2014.

TOPICS

Choose ONE of the following topics to write a 7 – 8 paragraph persuasive essay on The Great Gatsby. Your essay must develop and support a persuasive thesis (main point); in other words, your aim is to convince/persuade your reader to SEE and BELIEVE your essay’s main point about the novel. The scholarly articles that I am providing may be found on the class website.

RACE and CLASS DIFFERENCES

The Great Gatsby is rife with references (both subtle and overt) to race. From Tom Buchanan’s overt elitist racism to the clash between nouveau riche and old money, Fitzgerald’s novel is brimming with themes of race and class differences. Form an original persuasive thesis point regarding race and/or class differences tied to prejudice in the novel. Use Meredith Goldsmith’s article “White Skin, White Mask: Passing, Posing, and Performing in The Great Gatsby” and one other scholarly article pertaining to race/class issues in this novel to support your own argument.

GENDER and SEXUALITY

Gender roles (femininity and masculinity) are explored in The Great Gatsby. Ranging from gender stereotypes to dangerous violations of society’s gender rules, Fitzgerald offers the reader a peek into the changing landscape of American society in 1922. Form an original persuasive thesis point regarding gender roles and/or sexuality in the novel. Use Frances Kerr’s “Feeling ‘Half Feminine’: Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in The Great Gatsby” and one other scholarly article pertaining to gender/sexuality issues in this novel to support your own argument.

OBSERVING / WATCHING – INSIDE & OUTSIDE

Throughout The Great Gatsby, the reader is confronted with myriad forms of observation—from the most obvious, Nick Carraway’s narration and Dr. Eckleburg’s eyes, to more subtle varieties of observation, the reader is drawn to question the dichotomy of those on the inside (being watched) and those on the outside (the watchers). Form an original persuasive thesis point regarding outsiders observing/watching and those being watched in the novel. Use Tom Burnam’s “The Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg: A Re-Examination The Great Gatsby” and one other scholarly article pertaining to observation/watching issues in this novel to support your own argument.
COLOR SYMBOLISM

Fitzgerald packs symbolic use of color into every nook of *The Great Gatsby*. From automobile colors to clothing to interior design—and the incontrovertibly important green dock light—the reader must not miss the metaphorical significance behind specific colors. Form an original persuasive thesis point regarding color symbolism in the novel. Use A.E. Elmore’s “Color and Cosmos in *The Great Gatsby*” and one other scholarly article pertaining to observation/watching issues in this novel to support your own argument.

THE GROTESQUE: DISTORTION and DYSFUNCTION

*The Great Gatsby* undoubtedly is a masterpiece of Modernism fiction that illustrates a deep concern many Americans in the 1920s held regarding changes in American society. The characters of Nick Carraway, the Buchanans, the Wilsons, and Jordan Baker (and others) all work together to represent a distorted society...for what purpose? Form an original persuasive thesis point regarding the distorted and dysfunctional society in the novel. Use Howard Babb’s “*The Great Gatsby* and the Grotesque” and one other scholarly article pertaining to distorted/dysfunctional societal issues in this novel to support your own argument.

Final Essay is due MONDAY, MAY 5

Do not procrastinate – A POLISHED ESSAY should be turned in NOT a rough draft!!!

EDIT – proofread your paper for GUMS (grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling)

REVISE – rewrite anything that is confusing, off topic, in the wrong place, too vague, repetitive, or otherwise not working in your essay