

The Great Gatsby: Finding the Past in the Present

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Rationale

Some people adamantly believe that relatability should not be the final goal of the literary pursuit, but I think that in American public classrooms, we need to start somewhere. Not all individuals inherently look to literature for comfort, enjoyment, personal growth, or knowledge, so an underlying component of my teaching will focus on revealing how literature can provide some or all of these things. In my four-week unit centered on *The Great Gatsby* (novel), *The Great Gatsby* (Baz Luhrmann film) and the accompanying soundtrack, I will be creating an exploratory experience for my students. We will study the 1920s history of the novel, but we will also draw connections between Fitzgerald's world and the 21st century present. We will read the novel critically, but we will also watch the new film as a literary text to be enjoyed and interpreted. I am not trying to churn out literary critics from my classroom. I do, however, want to foster a classroom of students who see the timeless qualities of the tale and feel confident enough to explore their own interpretations of the text.

On Teaching a Classic American Novel

What exactly is a classic novel, and why should *The Great Gatsby* continue to be taught in high schools today? Though wordy and somewhat ostentatious, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve's definition from his 1850s essay provides valuable insight into the classification:

A true classic, as I should like it defined, is an author who has enriched the human mind, increased its treasure, and caused it to advance a step; who has discovered some moral and not equivocal truth, or revealed some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed known and discovered; who has expressed his thought, observation, or invention in no matter what form, only provided it be broad and great, refined and sensible, sane and beautiful in itself; who has spoken in his own peculiar style, a style which is found to be

also that of the whole world, a style without neologism, new and old, easily contemporary with all time (Sacks).

The heated debate about the value of “classic” novels and canonical literature will continue to thrive until the day these novels cease to be read, but the more important issue to address is how this all affects the way *Gatsby* is perceived today. This overly used label of “the great American novel” has, in a sense, crippled the novel by distracting people from the remarkable universality that exists at its core.

Gatsby is not merely a point of insight into the American Dream but of dreams in general: their terrible necessity, their built-in futility. The novel’s best lines on the subject – “the high price of living too long with a single dream” (*Gatsby* 128); “No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart” (76) – have an almost scriptural quality, reverberating far beyond their immediate context (Allen). Consider Nick Carraway, for example: He’s jaded, and he feels distanced from everyone he meets. Furthermore, he becomes entangled in a party culture of people who drink illegally to avoid reality, who foolishly believe in their own youthful immortality, and who somehow cannot see that the choices they make now will affect them for the rest of their lives. He may be thirty years old, but his mentality is easily relatable for many adolescent aged students. Though nearly a century has come and gone since Fitzgerald penned this novel, the story, the themes, and the characters are all still very much alive and relevant today.

Louise Rosenblatt writes about the existence of an insuppressible pervasiveness of human tendencies to identify with something outside of one’s own personal experience (Rosenblatt 2005:37). Through the natural empathy that a person feels when reading about a character’s or his/her situation, the process of reading becomes not an acquisition of additional information but

of additional experience. Rosenblatt describes this phenomenon as literature's ability to provide a "living through, not simply knowledge about" (38). With this in mind, I argue that *The Great Gatsby*, in addition to other "classics" and next to Young Adult novels, is rightfully taught to adolescent students across the United States each year. The problem, then, is the method by which this novel is introduced. If a teacher merely stands at the front of a class declaring *The Great Gatsby* as the classic American novel, expecting his/her students to grab at the opportunity of poring over the pages, the approach is not likely to result in much success. Classic American novels cannot just be handed over on a platter like exquisitely garnished hors d'oeuvres – perfectly proportionate and bite-sized for easy swallowing. Teachers need to show, and not just tell, their students the reasons behind why this novel has garnered its longstanding status and acclaim. I really like Rosenblatt's explanation that the enjoyment and understanding of literature is more than the individual components - the author's "intention," the reader's reaction, and the text itself. Rather, a transactional relationship bridges all of them into a complex experience that "stirs up both referential and affective aspects of consciousness" (Rosenblatt 2005:33).

Narrowing the Gap Between Past and Present

Alongside the primary text in this unit, *The Great Gatsby* (novel), I will be incorporating a three-day in-class film viewing of Baz Luhrmann's 2013 production of *Gatsby* as well as an overview of a few songs from the soundtrack. The inclusion of these two controversial contemporary texts is where I anticipate the most opposition in my unit – some strongly oppose Luhrmann's creative deviation from the original text through his over-the-top visuals and hastily dismiss popular music, namely the hip hop genre, as a text to be unpacked in the literature classroom. My questions, then, are as follows: how else was Luhrmann to make the audience truly feel and experience the atmosphere of the 1920s upper class party scene - to convey the

sheer grandeur, frivolousness, and recklessness of it all? And, to those who are severely opposed to the content of the novel itself, with its elements of shady bootlegging, material extravagance, alcohol, drugs and partying, adultery, racism and more, I argue that readers need to see the plot of *Gatsby* as more than just a glorified anecdote. If people desire is to successfully shield adolescents from all of the flaws in human life, they will inevitably fall short, despite parental controls and attempts at censorship. History and present day media, two inescapable vehicles for information transmission, highlight and contribute to these issues every day. The purpose of this unit is not to take note that these issues are prevalent in *Gatsby*, but to think twice about what these images contribute to the telling of the tale.

Amidst the green screen and CGI infused visuals, I would argue that Luhrmann knew exactly what he was doing, that each element of the film was meticulously and intentionally crafted. Movies are so effective and enjoyable because they act as an outlet for escape. Suneal Bedi argues that, in the same vein, “Luhrmann has tried to recreate Carraway’s experience of escapism on the big screen for all of us to partake in – this is why the music, dance, visuals, and general sentiment of the film must be awkward, jarring, and provocative at the same time – it’s exactly how Carraway experienced it as his own therapy.” Bedi provides just one interpretation of Luhrmann’s work, and I would like for my students to come out of this unit with the ability to intelligently construct and evidence interpretations of their own.

The soundtrack (featuring icons such as Jay-Z himself, will.i.am, Beyoncé, Lana del Rey, Florence + the Machine, and more) provides a brilliant segue between past and present in Luhrmann’s film – “distilling the essence of the Jazz Age though never completely reflecting it, this soundtrack is as much an event as the film that inspired it” (Powers). Rather than commissioning for updated versions of popular 1920s songs, Luhrmann draws a parallel between

the jazz-influenced pop songs that Fitzgerald references and his own soundtrack, ultimately aiming to show how deeply hip-hop has come to inform rock, pop, and dance music. The 20s were the apex of the Jazz Age. Jazz's lewd and provocative beats/tunes and dances permeated underground clubs and house parties. Yet, today, jazz is refined and sophisticated – “even the Charleston has become an innocent dance done in jest at weddings” (Bedi). Thus, in order for Luhrmann to provide a renewed authenticity for the 21st century audience, he traded in 1920s jazz for modern hip-hop. And, in doing so, he effectively evoked the emotion and imagery that audiences would not have bought into as easily had he used actual period music. In this way, Luhrmann shows us all a glimpse of the roaring twenties that Gatsby, Carraway, and the Buchanans lived and breathed in. My intention is for my students to consider the film and the soundtrack as more than just entertainment. I want them to examine the messages and images embedded into the texts and realize the efficacy of these two mediums for transmitting old, but timeless, ideas to a fresh, new audience.

Some students will absolutely love the new perspective on *Gatsby*, while others may prefer the solidarity of the original text. Regardless, I think students should understand that any text holds a countless number of interpretations. Also, these interpretations differ from person to person based on his/her own values, beliefs, biases, knowledge, and personal experience(s). Understanding the diversity of interpretations, then, relates back to Rosenblatt's concept of the ‘transactional relationship’ between the reader and the text. Rather than constantly questioning what can be extracted from the text, I want my students to consider what *they* bring to the text. Whether or not they appreciate hip-hop music themselves and/or agree with Luhrmann's use of it, they need to be able to articulate their understanding of how Fitzgerald's novel and the historical context of *Gatsby* inform these contemporary texts. Students will be encouraged to

reflect on how the novel is significant to them today and direct their efforts towards examining an issue, such as the juxtaposition of the heavily commercialized and commoditized 21st century world and that of the 1920s or Nick's difficulty in coping with the irrationalities and inequities he is surrounded by as the story's unreliable narrator.

Putting the Texts to Work: In-Class and Long-Term Assignments

One of my long-term goals for this unit is that my students discover meaning and connections in the texts that we cover. To do so, I am incorporating quite a bit of writing into this course of study. Writing enables students to think about, reflect on, and work out their ideas as they progress through the literature. My three major assignments for this unit include free response journals, a book cover project, and a compare/contrast essay.

Using the free response journals, I would like for my students to familiarize themselves with the transactional process of reflecting on a text by measuring events that occur within it with their own experience(s) or thoughts. I am leaving a great deal of room for my students to explore within this assignment, so I will not be looking closely at grammar and mechanics. Instead, I want to see that my students have put substantive thought towards their own understanding (or even confusion) of specific lines, scenes, characters, whole events, etc. Matthew Brown in his article from *The English Journal* aptly states:

I may not get all students to love books as much as I do, and I still may not convince students that reading a book is a good way to spend their free time. But, I will show students how to connect with the text that they read, finding meaning for themselves. As a result, I may one day find my students holed up in a library someplace, poring over a book, wringing from it all that they can (Brown 5).

I can only hope to spark interest in the minds of my students, to help them grow confident and empowered with agency to become lifelong readers.

The Book Cover Project is a tool for students to really allow their creativity to take over as they explore symbolism as a literary device. Again, I do not want to place too many restraints on my students for this assignment, but I also need to make sure they submit substantive and thoughtful work for me to assess. Therefore, I have placed a specific requirement of incorporating three symbols/symbolic messages into their book covers; however, if any student has his/her own ideas about crafting their cover, I will be open to approving a different approach. Using book covers as a method for teaching symbolism is effective because students must inquire into the text and derive meaning from what they are reading. *The Great Gatsby* is chock full of vivid imagery and symbolism, so I know that they will be engaged in reading past the surface level of the text. I intend to clarify with my students that I am not necessarily looking for them to feel bound to any specific or obvious symbols (e.g., the green light, the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, etc.). Rather, I am giving students the freedom to discover and point out any symbols/messages that they deem significant to the novel as a whole, provided that they back their ideas up with textual and/or historical evidence.

Lastly, the Compare/Contrast essay is the culmination of everything that has been covered in this unit. Given the level of thought that students will have been taught to put into their free response journals and overall analysis of all the texts in this unit, I believe that they will be capable of constructing an extended essay putting *The Great Gatsby* (novel) in conversation with one of the contemporary texts – either the film or excerpts/songs from the soundtrack. Students will select a character, theme, event/series of events, collection of imagery, or an extended metaphor and construct a thoughtful and well-evidenced essay analyzing the two

texts through that lens. I think that this assignment will be a productive way to end this unit because it ties together everything that the students have learned about the importance of historical background, variety of interpretation, symbolism, and the significance of the novel in light of our understanding of the 21st century world we live in. I will be looking for specificity, creativity, evidence, articulation of ideas, and an overall demonstration that the student has learned something in this unit that enabled him/her to think critically about a collection of texts. In addition to verbal dialogue and body language, writing is one of the most effective means of communication. Students will need this skill, not only to be successful in their high school literature course, but also in their future academic and career pursuits. Writing is a form of discovery; thus, I hope that my students discover both a pragmatic and an enjoyable element to engaging in this form of communication.

Works Cited

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Texts

Primary Text:

The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)

Film:

The Great Gatsby – Baz Lurhmann (2013)

Articles:

[All That Jazz](#) (The New Yorker)

[Book Editor's Response to Baz Lurhmann](#) (Huffington Post)

[F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Age of Excess](#) (Gilderlehrman)

[First Listen: Music From Baz Lurhmann's Film 'The Great Gatsby'](#) (NPR)

[Gatsby Soundtrack Track-by-Track](#) (Hollywood Reporter)

[Movie Tie-In vs. Classic Cover Controversy](#) (New York Times)

Song Lyrics:

["A Little Party Never Killed Nobody \(All We Got\)"](#) (Fergie feat. GoonRock & Q-Tip)

["Back to Black"](#) (Beyoncé feat. Andre 3000)

["Young and Beautiful"](#) (Lana del Rey)

Visuals:

[A Book by its Covers](#)

[John Held Jr. and the Jazz Age \(1920s cartoons\)](#)

Audio:

[American Icon: The Great Gatsby](#) (Studio 360)

Grading Breakdown

- Daily Grades – 40%
 - a. Reading Quizzes
 - b. Free Response Journals
 - c. Class Participation
- Book Cover Project – 25%
- Compare and Contrast Essay – 35%

Goal 1: Free Response Journal

In order to better understand and appreciate a text, it will be beneficial to interact with the text by measuring events that occur within it against your own experience(s). You can also learn from the emotions a text evokes within you. To record this process, you will be keeping a free response journal (FRJ) in a notebook.

As you are reading, take the time to jot down quotations or descriptions of an event. Try and be as specific as possible when you are making these documentations (e.g., page numbers, specific descriptors, etc.) because these FRJs may function as a jumping-off-point for another assignment during this unit. You should allow some or all of the following entry points to enhance your reflection:

- Quotes** – Jot down any quotes that you find to be significant, relevant, and/or interesting
- Art** – Incorporate your own drawings or insert external artwork if you find it relevant to something that you have come across in the reading or you are simply inspired by a particular image/passage. Feel free to be creative because the FRJ is your space to really familiarize yourself and wrestle with the text.
- Words** – This assignment does not require you to use correct grammar or complex sentence construction. Rather, I would like you to feel free to write what comes to mind as you read the text.
- Questions** – If you encounter words or references you don't understand, write them down. If you think you don't understand a character's actions or ideas, or if you find yourself confused with the plot, note your confusion in your journal and

bring it up in class discussion. Questions lead to understanding, and we can help each other make sense of these texts together!

□ **Self-reflection-** Note your emotional reactions to the text. Feel free to write what comes to mind when you read the text. Do you find yourself relating to a character or an experience? How are your ideas about the main themes evolving and transforming through reading and class discussion?

Use whatever formats help you to get your thoughts on paper. For example, sketches, diagrams, charts, and timelines (or plot lines).

Please make a minimum of three entries in your FRJ each week. Each entry should address a different thought, or series of thoughts, that arises when you read. An entry should be close to **one page** long. Please do not just copy from the text; each entry should mostly comprise of your original thoughts—quotes from the readings do not count as original thought. If you choose to express your thoughts through drawings or charts, please spend at least half a page free writing about these contributions. I will collect journals at the end of each week and will return them to you at the beginning of the next week.

Additionally, at the end of class, on occasion, you will write a paragraph on your experiences during class that day. What did you learn today? What did you find most notable in today's activity/reading/discussion? Did one of your peers say something that really got you thinking? What was it?

Note: I am required to disclose any information you share in your journal that may indicate potential harm to you or another person.

FREE RESPONSE JOURNAL RUBRIC (completed by teacher)

The student completes the required number of entries (3) per week.

No entries=0 points; 1 entry= 10 points; 2 entries=15 points; 3 entries=25 points

The student's completed entries reach the required length.

Never=10 points; Sometimes=15 points; Always=25 points

The student's completed response shows that they have read the assigned reading.

Never=10 points; Sometimes=15 points; Always=25 points

The student engages the reading in creative ways.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Disagree

Strongly Agree

At some point during the unit, the student uses an example from their FRJ to launch or revive classroom discussion.

Agree=10 points

Total Points: _____

**Adapted from Rhinehart, H. [Social Alienation and Nonconformity: The Risks and Rewards of Journeying Beyond the Pale](#), 2012.*

Goal 2: Book Cover Project

Francis Cugat originally designed the iconic blue cover for this novel, and it was completed before Fitzgerald finished the manuscript. Interestingly, when the book was first released, the cover was not glorified and appreciated in the way that it is today. Ernest Hemingway wrote in his memoir “A Moveable Feast” that he was ‘embarrassed by the violence, bad taste, and slippery look of it,’ even going so far as to say that ‘it looked like the book jacket for a book of bad science fiction. In this way, you can see the significance of a book’s cover in representing the themes and ideas behind the novel as well as its ability to affect the reader’s initial perception of it.

Today, you will be creating your own book cover for *The Great Gatsby*. This assignment will challenge you to demonstrate your knowledge of what symbolism is and how Fitzgerald employs symbolism through his writing.

Your book cover should:

- Be designed on a sheet of 8 ½” x 11” paper
- Include an artistic representation of two to three symbols or symbolic messages that you discovered in your analysis of the text

Feel free to browse through some preexisting book covers for *The Great Gatsby* to get an idea of how others have interpreted Fitzgerald’s work. Use these for

inspiration, but make sure that you allow your own creativity to shine in your own work.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/04/14/t-magazine/14document.html?gwh=C3451E0467A5E47F9BDA9DFD71AE1756>)

Additionally, you will submit a 350-450 word accompanying essay explaining the creative choices that you made in designing your cover. You should describe the symbols/symbolic messages that you have incorporated into your cover and also your interpretation of its meaning using textual, historical, and other forms of evidence. Therefore, make sure that you are able to fully defend the reasoning behind your selection(s). You will be provided with two class periods to work on this assignment, so work diligently and rely on each other for collaboration of ideas and constructive feedback on your products.

BOOK COVER RUBRIC

	4	3	2	1
Appearance	Illustrations are creative, representative of the intended symbols/symbolic messages, and drawn to the appropriate size	Illustrations show the student's thought but do not provide a clear representation of the symbols/symbolic messages intended	Illustrations do not show much effort and do not provide a clear representation of the symbols/symbolic messages intended	Illustrations were minimal and did not have any discernible relation to the intended symbols/symbolic messages
Symbolism	Includes 2 or more symbols/symbolic messages that are supported by textual, historical, and/or other evidence	Includes 1 symbol/symbolic message that is supported by textual, historical, and/or other evidence	Includes 2 or more symbols/symbolic messages that are not supported by textual, historical, and/or other evidence	Includes 1 symbol/symbolic message that is not supported by textual, historical, and/or other evidence
Short Essay	Provides a detailed and thoughtful explanation of book cover – symbolism and	Provides a good but less detailed explanation of book cover. Explains symbolism and	Provides an adequate explanation of the book cover, but does not fully explain the	Does not provide an adequate explanation of the book cover, symbolism, and/or

	well-evidences interpretation	well-evidences interpretation	symbolism and interpretation	interpretation
Use of Time	Class time used wisely and assignment turned in on time	Class time used wisely with some mild disengagement. Assignment turned in on time	Class time is not used wisely (e.g., off-task behavior, excessive off-topic conversations, etc.), but assignment turned in on time	Class time is not used wisely, and book cover is turned in past the deadline

*Adapted from [Rubistar](#).

Goal 3: Compare and Contrast Essay

Our study this unit has taken us through *The Great Gatsby*, a work of literature that many consider to be *the* classic American novel, as well as Baz Lurhmann’s rather modernized version of it. We have also studied jazz music in juxtaposition to the soundtrack overflowing with pop, hip hop, and alternative rock numbers produced by Jay-Z for the new film. Some argue that the two worlds – the 20s and the 2000s – collide horrifically in Lurhmann’s film, while others eagerly embrace this innovative production, calling the director a master interpreter of our time.

Regardless of these differing opinions, one thing that we can be certain of is that different interpretations of the same work of literature create new opportunities for the provocation of thought and generation of ideas.

In a 700-850 word essay, take *The Great Gatsby* (novel) and put it in conversation with another text from the modern era that we covered during this unit – either Lurhmann’s film or the accompanying soundtrack. Select a character, theme, event/series of events, collection of imagery, or an extended metaphor and construct a thoughtful and well-evidenced essay analyzing the two texts through that lens. Make sure to narrow in on something specific for this essay; it will be difficult to work with ideas that are too loose or generic.

Some important questions to keep in mind as you brainstorm ideas (feel free to also incorporate some of your own observations and questions about the texts – this is where your Free Response Journals come in handy!):

- How does one event/situation look in the eyes of another character besides Nick? Try to keep the other characters' perspectives in mind, as Nick Carraway is not a reliable narrator. What he sees and feels are not necessarily accurate to the experiences of Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, etc.
- How has the modernization of a particular scene deviated from or adhered to the original text? Does this modernization facilitate an effective transmission of the past to a contemporary audience?
- Why might Lurhmann or the musical artists/producers behind the soundtrack have opted to replace or reshape different aspects of key moments from the book? What effect did their use of artistic license create?

Possible Essay Topics (You are certainly not limited to these):

1. Based on your observations of the book and the film, write an essay on how your interpretation of Jay Gatsby's character during your reading of the novel differed or aligned with the Gatsby in the film? How is he portrayed differently in the film (Leonardo DiCaprio) from the book – speech, mannerisms, and personality? How does a different interpretation of one individual add to our understanding of a character?
2. Analyze the party scene at Myrtle's and Tom's apartment in New York City in Chapter 2 alongside Baz Lurhmann's portrayal of the scene in the film. How do the camerawork and background music work to effectively alter your perception of what is taking place?
3. Choose one song or a few excerpts (with permission from your parents) from the soundtrack of the film and discuss an idea, theme, or metaphor that you think runs parallel to a particular character, event, or idea in the novel.

ANALYTICAL ESSAY RUBRIC

	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaches Expectations (2)	Does Not Approach Expectations Yet (1)
Ideas and Analysis (4.5x)	~Shows thorough, insightful, and highly perceptive understanding of the text’s big ideas, characters, conflicts, nuances, or unanswered questions. ~Constructs a highly original, probing, insightful thesis and argument that illuminate something new about the text ~Delivers incisive, well supported analysis and crafts argument seamlessly.	~Shows thorough understanding of the text’s big ideas, characters, conflicts, nuances, or unanswered questions. ~Constructs a strong complex thesis and argument that go beneath the surface but do not probe as deeply as thesis that exceeds expectations ~Spends most of paper analyzing the relationships and developing ideas in a well-crafted, well-supported argument.	~Shows some understanding of the text’s big ideas, characters, conflicts, nuances, or unanswered questions. ~Constructs a simplistic thesis and argument that state the obvious. ~Spends some of essay giving plot summary but also spends some time analyzing and developing key ideas.	~Shows little or no understanding of the text’s big ideas, characters, conflicts, nuances, or unanswered questions. ~Does not construct a complex thesis and argument. ~Does not provide commentary or analysis of ideas that advances argument.
Evidence (4.5x)	~Selects highly insightful, persuasive evidence that clearly supports the claim ~Gives succinct, clear context for the quote ~Analyzes the evidence insightfully and clearly explains its significance as it relates to claim ~Integrates evidence smoothly into overall commentary	~Selects strong evidence that supports the claim ~Gives clear context for evidence ~Analyzes the evidence clearly but does not explain its significance as it relates to claim ~Integrates evidence into overall commentary but does flow as smoothly as the exceeds expectations paper	~Selects adequate evidence that supports claim superficially ~Gives some context for evidence but is still confusing ~Analyzes the evidence superficially and does not relate back to central claim or sub claim ~Integrates evidence into overall commentary somewhat forcefully	~Does not select evidence that supports the claim ~Does not give context for quote ~Does not analyze evidence ~Only inserts evidence into paper without explanation
Organization (2.5x)	~Ideas are presented seamlessly and clearly. ~Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are seamless and advance the argument logically. ~Paper’s overall structure is logical, clear, and exceptionally easy to follow.	~Ideas are presented logically and clearly. ~Transitions are used between ideas and paragraphs in a way that advances argument. ~Paper’s overall structure is logical and easy to follow.	~Ideas are presented in somewhat logical fashion, although some parts are confusing. ~Some transitions are used between ideas and paragraphs. ~Paper’s overall structure is somewhat logical and easy to follow.	~Ideas are presented erratically. ~Little to no transitions between ideas and paragraphs are used. ~Little to no logical order to the paper’s overall structure.
Grammar and Spelling (1x)	~Grammar and spelling conventions are mostly sound ~Paper is formatted properly with no few errors.	~Writer makes some errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	~Writer makes frequent errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	~Content is obscured by the errors in spelling and grammar.

Total: ___ / 50

*Adapted from <http://sharepoint.mvla.net>

Introductory Activity

Class: Honors 11th Grade Language Arts (American Literature)

Length: 50 minutes every day

This unit will take place during the Spring semester, so by the time, students will be familiar with how the class typically runs. They will come into class, take their seats, and look on the board for any updates or brief assignments that they need to begin work on. Also, I will keep track of attendance as they come in to reserve as much time as possible for instruction.

Monday (Day 1):

Daily Objective – This introductory activity will provide an opportunity for students to think critically about some of the universally controversial issues that are present in *The Great Gatsby* prior to reading the novel and potentially find interest in topics/ideas to further explore throughout the unit.

2 minutes – Announcements and housekeeping

5 minutes – Introduction to the new unit on *The Great Gatsby* (include a quick run-through of how the unit will progress from Fitzgerald's original work to Luhrmann's modern interpretation) and an introduction to the opinionnaire.

5 minutes – Distribute the opinionnaire (See Appendix A) and have students answer the questions individually

15-18 minutes – Self-selected groups will discuss their responses to the opinionnaire.
[The group will appoint a scribe who will record the issues that arise during the discussion and note those items for which there was agreement or disagreement.]

15 minutes – Reconvene as a class and carry on a discussion about the issues from the survey.
[Each group will have a few minutes to report their responses to the class.]

Remaining class time – Pass out unit handouts, discuss the expectations, texts, and projects of the unit, and answer any questions that they students may have.

Homework – Read Chapter 1 in *The Great Gatsby* and write the first free response journal entry on the reading.

Lesson Plans: Week 1

Tuesday (Day 2):

Daily Objective – Students will participate in a chalk talk that will open up discussion on the struggle between nouveau riche and old money. I will introduce them to the historical context of Gatsby’s world; however, I will not give too much away at once because a huge part of reading *The Great Gatsby* is being able to see it all unfold through Fitzgerald’s writing.

Preparation/Materials: Two large sheets of white butcher paper, black marker

5 minutes – Reading Quiz, Announcements, and Housekeeping

3 minutes – Provide a quick introduction on “chalk talks”

5-7 minutes – Chalk talk with the center topic being “Old Money/East Egg”

[Students have finished reading Chapter 1, so they may already have been alerted to some of the key characteristics that Nick Carraway inserts into his narration (e.g., his time studying at Yale, the dinner party at the Buchanan’s house.)]

8-10 minutes – Discuss the ideas, concepts, and characteristics that the students came up with for this topic

5-7 minutes – Briefly introduce the term *nouveau riche* and begin a second chalk talk with the center topic being “New Money/West Egg”

[At this point in the novel, Gatsby is still a rather elusive character, so I expect that students will draw on more contemporary examples/constructs of “new money” for this exercise, but I eagerly anticipate anything that students have gleaned from Carraway’s descriptions.]

8-10 minutes – Discuss the ideas, concepts, and characteristics that the students came up with for this topic

[Make sure that students understand that the difference between old and new money in *Gatsby* is both a physical and a theoretical divide.]

12 minutes – Provide more information on the historical context of the novel: economic situation, new inventions, new forms of recreation/entertainment, fashion, etc.

[Source: <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/roaring-twenties/essays/f-scott-fitzgerald-and-age-excess>]

Remaining class time – Go over the homework assignment and open the floor for any questions

Homework – Read Chapter 2 in *The Great Gatsby* and write a free response journal entry on the reading.

Wednesday (Day 3):

Daily Objective – Introduce students to relevant themes from the novel in relation to 21st century American culture, while continuing to familiarize them with the historical context of the book through the genre of comics/cartoons.

Preparation/Materials: Have websites ready for viewing

5 minutes – Reading Quiz, Announcements, and Housekeeping

3 minutes – Provide an overview of the motto *YOLO* (you only live once – phrase originally attributed to Mae West) that has recently been reintroduced into popular culture by way of the song “YOLO” by The Lonely Island.

[Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YOLO_\(motto\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YOLO_(motto))]

4-5 minutes – Introduce and provide background information on John Held, Jr., the quintessential artist/illustrator of the Roaring Twenties

8-10 minutes – Show the students a sampling of Held’s comic/cartoons

[Source: <http://ana-lee.livejournal.com/178989.html>]

- Some important themes/ideas (students can certainly propose others that they discern):
 - Youth
 - Rebellion
 - Loss of Innocence
 - Materialism/Frivolity
 - Sexual Promiscuity
- Point out image of the couples from *Cosmopolitan* magazine titled “We Can Be Young Only Once” and tie this back to the modern-day reception of the motto *YOLO*

15-16 minutes – Students will get into five groups, each of which will be assigned a specific theme/idea.

- Assignment:
 - Select 2-3 cartoons that reflect on or resonate with the given theme
 - How does John Held, Jr. effectively convey messages using comedy/humor?
 - Relate this theme back to Ch. 2 of *Gatsby*, documenting specific examples of how Fitzgerald introduces these issues into the novel

Remaining class time – Come together as a class and have each group present

Homework – Read Chapter 3 in *The Great Gatsby* and write a free response journal entry on the reading. In addition, students will be assigned to generate two images/cartoons – one for the 20s and one for the current times (this will be due on Friday).

Thursday (Day 4):

Daily Objective – Students work closely with Fitzgerald’s text to observe his usage of language

and imagery at the height of the novel's glamour and magnificence. By constructing a found poem, each group will be piecing together their own interpretation(s) of the events that take place in Chapter 3

Preparation/Materials: Check out laptops for the class (1 per group)

5 minutes – Reading Quiz, Announcements, and Housekeeping

3-5 minutes – Introduction to writing a found poem

1-2 minutes – Have students select groups of 4-5 people and sit down together

18-20 minutes – Each group will construct a found poem highlighting the imagery and events from Chapter 3

[While I will be providing a set of instructions for my students to follow, under the assumption that they are not very familiar with writing a found poem, I would like to give them a sense of autonomy and not hover too much over this process.]

- Together, the group must decide on how they want to structure their poem and if they want to organize it around a central theme or idea.
- Everyone must contribute in some way to the composition of the poem by finding important words, phrases, and sentences from the text that can possibly be included.
- One member can be in charge of typing everything onto the computer
- One member can be in charge of the aesthetics of the project (let them know that with a found poem, the presentation can be just as important as the content)

Remaining class time – Groups present their found poems to the class

[Because this is a computer assignment, students can email their poems to me, and I will project them onto the board.]

- Students should be prepared to share their poem, discuss its design, and explain their interpretation of the events in Chapter 3

Homework – Read Chapter 4 in *The Great Gatsby* and write a free response journal entry on the reading. Finish up work on the cartoon assignment, if necessary.

Friday (Day 5):

Daily Objective – Use a gateway activity, in which students compose character narratives in groups. This activity will help students who struggle with composing narratives and also provide a segue way into the independent in-class writing activity next Monday.

Preparation/Materials: Print out handouts with character descriptions (1 per student) and check out enough laptops for each group to have its own

5 minutes – Reading Quiz, Announcements, and Housekeeping

3 minutes – Introduce activity, pass out handout to each student, and have students quickly form five or six groups.

[Handout attached to lesson plan]

15-17 minutes – In the groups, students will analyze introductory paragraphs for a particular character in *The Great Gatsby*.

20 minutes work together to compose a creative narrative based solely off of the details of the description they are given.

Remaining Class Time – Wrap up the activity and let students know that they will get into the same groups on Monday and present their narratives.

- Collect the images/comics that the students were assigned on Wednesday
- Collect weekly journals

Homework – Research articles on self-reinvention in preparation for fishbowl discussion next Wednesday. Here are a few questions to keep in mind:

- Is it possible to truly re-invent yourself in a thorough and authentic way?
- How can you tell if you are re-inventing yourself for yourself? Or is it always done in order to please others or assimilate oneself successfully into a group/society?
- How far is too far when it comes to self-reinvention? Can it become self-destructive after a certain point?

My Homework – Grade students' journals and comics

Lesson Plans: Week 2

Monday (Day 6):

Daily Objective – Students will write a short, in-class narrative piece, in which they construct an internal monologue for one of the characters in Chapter 4.

Preparation/Materials: Check out enough laptops for the entire class (or reserve the computer lab)

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

18-20 minutes – During this time, students will present the narratives that they composed yesterday in their groups.

- Allow time for presentations as well as further questions or discussion about why students went in the direction that they did with the prompt.

6-8 minutes – Let students know that they will be engaged in a short, in-class writing assignment today, though, nothing to be alarmed about. Explain that the purpose of this assignment is to help them a) dip their toes into narrative writing and b) learn to proofread, edit, and revise more efficiently and effectively

[At this time, I will also explain my stance regarding the linear writing model, in which pre-writing, drafting, revising, etc. occur in stages. I strongly disagree with teaching writing this way because I argue that this structure leads students to believe they must wait until they are at a specific point in the writing (i.e., after the first or second draft) to engage in a more reflective conversation with their composition – an utterly ridiculous predicament.]

- Stream of consciousness as a possible method for this assignment

14-15 minutes (or until end of class) – Students work independently to draft an internal monologue for one of the characters in Chapter 4

[Chapter 4 is filled with interesting dialogue, including the long-awaited explanation of Gatsby's background and actions. Creating an internal monologue will require students to expand their understanding of the verbal/non-verbal exchanges that take place in this chapter to include the descriptions they have garnered about each character over the course of the past few chapters (Meyer Wolfsheim being the exception, since he is a new character).]

Remaining Class Time: Pass back journals

Homework – Read Chapter 5 (no journal entry tonight!) and finish the internal monologues for homework. Also, continue researching articles online about self-reinvention for fishbowl discussion on Wednesday.

Tuesday (Day 7):

Daily Objective – Students will learn how to effectively and revise/edit, using their informal

writing assignment from yesterday (internal monologue).

[When students draft an entire paper at home, I am unable to see how the paper progresses from the first draft to the final draft since much of that process will be difficult to capture on paper. In class, however, students will not be able to hash out all of the issues with their paper within such a small time frame; therefore, I will assess their ability to revise by comparing their in-class drafts with their final draft.]

Preparation/Materials: Make copies of the two handouts on editing/revising, check out enough laptops for the entire class (or reserve the computer lab)

5 minutes – Reading Quiz (Chapter 5), Announcements, and Housekeeping

1-2 minute – Pass out UNC Chapel Hill handouts, “Revising Drafts” and “Revision Checklist”

[Sources: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/revising-drafts/>,
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/faculty-resources/classroom-handouts/revision-checklist/>]

15 minutes – Discuss key points about revision

- Why is revision important?
- Avoiding surface level revisions
- The Process of Revision
- Concerns about Revision
- Checklist of important things to look for when revising

25-27 minutes – Have students work individually to edit/revise their internal monologue pieces using the two handouts, focusing particularly on the revision checklist.

- Remind students to send their updated drafts to themselves through email or save the document onto a flash drive. They will need to print out a new draft and turn it in tomorrow.

Homework – Read Chapter 6 and write a journal response. Students can continue editing and revising their internal monologue pieces until they are satisfied with the product – the updated draft will be collected at the end of class tomorrow.

- Fishbowl Discussion Preparation: Consolidate research on self-reinvention and form your own opinion based on the evidence that you have collected. Be sure to tie in evidence from the novel, particularly Chapter 6.

Wednesday (Day 8):

Daily Objective – Students will take part in a class-wide fishbowl discussion centered on self-reinvention. This discussion will tie in with Chapter 6, the chapter in which Nick finally opens up about Gatsby’s past. Students should take note that in Chapter 6, the reader is given a glimpse of not only the ‘real’ Gatsby, but also a juxtaposition of the ‘real’ Daisy and the ‘dream’ Daisy.

Preparation/Materials: Individual whiteboards, dry erase markers, notebook (to jot down notes during the fishbowl discussion), set up classroom to have inner/outer rings of desks

5 minutes – Reading Quiz (Chapter 6), Announcements, and Housekeeping

8-10 minutes – Explain the concept behind the fishbowl discussion

- The classroom has an inner ring of about 5-6 desks, and anyone who is not in the inner ring will be seated in the outer ring.
- Students may only speak if they are seated in the inner ring. If someone has a point that they would like to make, but are sitting in the outer ring, they may write it down on the white board and raise it up in the air. Someone sitting in the inner ring, then, can say the point on his or her behalf.
- After a student in the inner circle has spoken, any student from the outer ring may come up and tap the student to switch places.
- Explain that the entire discussion should be pretty fluid without any designated transition periods – students must take the initiative to rotate in and out of the two rings.

30 minutes – Fishbowl discussion

[Since this will likely be the students' first time taking part in a fishbowl discussion, I understand that they may need some time to get used to the format. I don't expect things to go perfectly; I mostly want them to familiarize themselves with how everything works because I will try and use the fishbowl discussion later on in another unit.]

- If the students need a prompt to get started, they can begin with one of the questions that I had them consider for their research:
 1. Is it possible to truly re-invent yourself in a thorough and authentic way?
 2. How can you tell if you are re-inventing yourself for yourself? Or is it always done in order to please others or assimilate oneself successfully into a group/society?
 3. How far is too far when it comes to self-reinvention? Can it become self-destructive after a certain point?

Homework – Read Chapter 7 and write a journal entry

Thursday (Day 9):

Daily Objective – Read through several key passages in Chapter 7 and discuss them as a class

Preparation/Materials: None

5 minutes – Reading Quiz (Chapter 7), Announcements, and Housekeeping

5-7 minutes – Brief overview of Chapter 7

[Ch. 7 is, arguably, the most eventful chapter in the entire novel; thus, I want to go through and highlight some passages]

8 minutes – Passage 1 (Daisy and her daughter)

- Lack of intimacy between mother and daughter – the latter is a mere trophy for show
- Gatsby’s reaction at seeing the child in the flesh
- Daisy doesn’t seem to have the capacity for ‘motherhood’ in her

8 minutes – Passage 2 (Jay Gatsby – Oxford Man?)

- Tom Buchanan does a bit of investigation on Gatsby and discovers that the man is nothing like what he portrays himself to be
- Is it redeeming to use pretenses in order to seek genuine motives?
- Who is more admirable here – Gatsby or Tom?

10-12 minutes – Passage 3 (The big blow-up between Daisy, Jay, and Tom)

- Does Tom have a right to be angry at Daisy considering his own infidelity?
- Is anyone truly at fault here, or is this the product of individual self-destruction?

Remaining Class Time – (If time permits) Passage 4 (Gatsby waiting for Daisy at the end of the chapter)

- At this point, Nick’s dislike for Gatsby has increased to the point where he can hardly stand to be around the man.
- What is it that drives Gatsby most? Hope? Love? Or something else?

Homework: Read Chapter 8 and write journal entry

Friday (Day 10):

Daily Objective – Students will create their own body biographies for any major character in the novel, which will require them to integrate their own understanding of his character with direct quotes from the book.

Preparation/Materials: Large sheets of white paper, colored construction paper, scissors, glue, and markers

5 minutes – Reading Quiz (Chapter 8), Announcements, and Housekeeping

8 minutes – Explain the concept behind a body biography and provide explicit instructions (See Appendix B)

Remaining Class Time – Students can spread out around the classroom and out into the hall to work on their body biographies. Once they have finished, they will come back in the room and post their body biographies onto the wall. They may also walk around and look over other completed body biographies.

- Collect journals

Homework: No homework!

My Homework: Grade journals over the weekend

Lesson Plans: Week 3

Monday (Day 11):

Daily Objective – Most of today will be spent going over the prompt for the summative unit assessment and addressing any questions about the novel/what is to come in the unit; however, I will incorporate a gateway activity that will help students understand the fundamental concept of comparing and contrasting.

Preparation/Materials: Make copies of the Compare/Contrast Essay prompt

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

15-17 minutes – Students will get into groups and compare/contrast their cell phones

- Place phones onto the desk and discuss the pros/cons of each phone
- Students will select the one phone from their own group that they believe is the best and promote it as a group
- Each group will report its decision to the class, providing solid evidence as to why they believe that particular phone is superior to the others.
- I will document the various reasons/arguments on the board

Remaining Class Time – Pass out Compare/Contrast Essay prompt, thoroughly go through the directions (See Appendix D), and answer any questions or concerns that students have about the essay.

- Pass back journals

Homework – Read Chapter 9 (the last chapter!) and write a journal entry

Tuesday (Day 12):

Daily Objective – In groups, students will create their own board game that provides a recap of the entire novel.

Preparation/Materials: Large sheets of paper, colored construction paper, glue, scissors, and markers

5 minutes – Reading Quiz (Chapter 9), Announcements, and Housekeeping

8 minutes – Explain board game assignment

- The board game is an effective way to teach the traditional elements of literature: plot, setting, character, theme, etc. without setting out to define and label each one.
- Students will get into groups of 5-6 people and create their own boardgame based on *The Great Gatsby* – overall, I am not going to be strict about how I want the final product to look. I'm just going to leave it up to the discretion of the group members. I do, however, want to see thoughtful reflection and attention to detail, when appropriate.

- Students can use their board to map out the trajectory of a character's life or represent the effect of the board/setting on a character's actions. If group members think of an even better idea, I highly encourage them to go for it!
- I would like for students to try and get as much done in the class period as possible – ideally finishing before the bell rings – so that they can present their board tomorrow to the class. Remind students to divide and conquer (e.g., have one person make pieces while another person traces out the board itself).

28-30 minutes – Work on board games in groups

- Once students finish, they can begin to clean up their work space and put their board game somewhere in the classroom where it won't get knocked over or stepped on.

Remaining Class Time – Clean up and collect journals

Homework – No homework!

My Homework – Grade journals

Wednesday (Day 13):

Daily Objective – Students will present their board games and then I will explain the prompt for their upcoming assessment project.

Preparation/Materials: Make copies of the Book Cover Project directions handout

5 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping (Remind students to pick up their group's board game as they walk in the door)

30 minutes – Each group will present its board game to the class

- Have students describe how the game's goal aligns with the novel's theme
- What is the significance of the different elements of the board – color, pieces, shapes, moves, etc.?

Remaining Class Time – Pass out Book Cover Project handout to each student and introduce the project that they will be working on for the rest of the week

Homework – Read the *New York Times* article “Judging *Gatsby* by its Cover(s)” to better understand the controversy behind movie tie-in book covers.

Thursday-Friday (Day 14-15):

Daily Objective – Students will begin/continue working on their book cover projects.

Preparation/Materials: Be prepared to show the *New York Times* “A Book By its Covers” webpage. Have colored construction paper, pens/markers, glue, scissors, tape, and any other craft

supplies I can get hold of ready for students.

[<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/04/14/t-magazine/14document.html>]

3 minutes –Announcements and Housekeeping

(Thursday only)

10-12 minutes – Introduction Activity

- Briefly discuss the article that students read last night for homework – how do they feel about movie tie-in book covers?
- Show students the *New York Times* “A Book By its Covers” webpage for project inspiration

Remaining Class Time – Work on book cover projects

- I will be walking around answering questions and helping out anyone who needs more direction
- Pass back journals

Homework – (Thurs) Students can work on their book covers at home if they would like to, but it is not required. (Fri) If students still haven’t completed their book covers, they will need to finish up over the weekend and turn it in on Monday.

Lesson Plans: Week 4

Monday-Wednesday (Day 16-18):

Daily Objective – Students will view a film version of *The Great Gatsby* (2013), making observations of this interpretation of the Fitzgerald’s novel.

Preparation/Materials: *The Great Gatsby* (2013) DVD

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

(Monday only)

5 minutes – Provide background on Baz Luhrmann’s film interpretation of *The Great Gatsby* [Quite a bit of controversy exists behind this film, but I want my students to have a chance to watch the film and form their own opinions and observations without too much influence from outside sources. Therefore, I won’t go into too much detail here. We will also have time set aside to discuss the film on Thursday.]

- Let students know that they will be writing their major compare/contrast paper on both the film and the novel, so they should be “reading” the film as a “living text,” taking detailed notes, just as they would with any novel.

Remainder of Class – Watch the film

- These questions/notes will remain posted on the board:
 1. How does Luhrmann’s film deviate from Fitzgerald’s novel? How is it true to the original?
 2. Make note of very specific details that you notice regarding not only the plot line, but also the set, costuming, characters’ mannerisms, music, style, etc.
 3. Try to think beyond whether or not the film coincided with your understanding of the novel/characters (e.g., if Carey Mulligan portrayed Daisy in the way you pictured as you read the novel) and consider if it is an effective and/or accurate interpretation of Fitzgerald’s work.
- Turn in book cover projects

Homework – Students should write one journal response each night about they are learning and observing from the film. They should go beyond mere summary and really try to analyze something specific from the film or even their own reaction to what they are seeing. I will also encourage them to ask questions and raise concerns in their journals because they will have a chance to voice these in the class discussion.

My Homework – Begin grading book cover projects (deadline to finish grading: day 24 of unit)

Thursday (Day 19):

Daily Objective – Students will draw on the observations that they made during the film viewings and their journal responses to talk about the issues they found to be most important or would like to simply explore further as a class. Then, they will consider their own views in light of opinions from external sources.

Preparation/Materials: Make copies of article from *The New Yorker*

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

20 minutes – Class Discussion on the film

- Students will have an open floor to discuss their response to the film
- They can draw on their answers to the questions on the board, their journal responses, or any other issues that caught their attention as they watched and reflected on the film

10 minutes – Pass out article from *The New Yorker* and have students read it on their own
[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2013/05/13/130513crici_cinema_denby]

15-17 minutes – Group Discussion on the article

- Students will get into groups and discuss whether they agreed or disagreed with the article, providing specific points of evidence for support or counterargument
- Some possible questions:
 1. Did the film deserve to be characterized as a “seedy orgy,” just as Edith Wharton described Fitzgerald’s novel nearly a century ago?
 2. Was Luhrmann’s narrative framing device (Nick writing from a sanatorium rather than returning to the Mid-West) a mistake?
 3. Do you agree that Luhrmann’s portrayal of character is the most redeeming factor of the movie, or is it, perhaps, something else altogether?

Friday (Day 20):

Daily Objective – Students will listen to and analyze song lyrics from the *Gatsby* soundtrack. They will then tie this genre into the other two (film and novel) that we have covered in this unit and reflect on how its contemporary feel contributes or detracts from the modern rendition of the classic story.

Preparation/Materials: Soundtrack to *The Great Gatsby* (2013), make copies of the song lyrics to “Back to Black” and “Young and Beautiful,” and the handout “From Flappers to Rappers: ‘The Great Gatsby’ Music Supervisor Breaks Down the Film’s Soundtrack”

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping (Play “A Little Party Never Killed Nobody (All We Got)” as students walk in the door.

- **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:** Because students have been working so hard, we will be having a *Gatsby*-themed party **next Friday** to celebrate the end of the unit. Students can dress up in 1920s attire (so long as the outfit adheres to school dress code policy) and bring food/snacks/drinks/utensils to share! A sign-up sheet for things to-bring will be going around during class.

3 minutes – Pass out the song lyrics to “Back to Black and “Young and Beautiful” and explain

to students that they will be analyzing the lyrics to two songs from the soundtrack today in groups

[Since we will most likely not have time to come together and discuss as a group, I will circulate around the room throughout the class period and take note of the different interpretations.]

5 minutes – Students will get into groups (I will encourage them to get into groups with people they have not yet worked with), and I will play “Back to Black”

- As the song is playing, students should simultaneously be making annotations on the page

10-12 minutes – After listening to the song, students will have some time to continue making annotations. Once everyone in the group has finished, they can discuss their individual interpretations of the song/lyrics

- Things for students to pay attention to: tone, word choice, point of view, repetition, metaphor, etc.

5 minutes – I will play “Young and Beautiful,” and students will repeat their analysis for this song, annotating along with the music.

10-12 minutes – After listening to the song, students will have some time to continue making annotations. Once everyone in the group has finished, they can discuss their individual interpretations of the song/lyrics

- Things for students to pay attention to: tone, word choice, point of view, repetition, metaphor, etc.

Remaining Class Time – Let students know that we will continue to discuss music in *The Great Gatsby* on Monday. Also, pass out the handout “From Flappers to Rappers: ‘The Great Gatsby’ Music Supervisor Breaks Down the Film’s Soundtrack” to provide some insight into Jay-Z’s inspiration for the album.

[<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/great-gatsby-soundtrack-track-by-track-521092>]

- Turn in journal responses

Homework: Listen to another song from the album and write a journal entry in response to the piece. If your parents have any issues with the language in a particular song, feel free to let them look over the lyrics and select one that they feel is more appropriate. Also, continue to work on your compare/contrast essays because you will need to have a rough (it’s okay if it’s really rough!) draft by next Tuesday.

My Homework: Grade journals

Lesson Plans: Week 5

Monday (Day 21):

Daily Objective – On Friday, we covered two songs from the Gatsby soundtrack; however, today, I would like to focus more on the album as a whole, both its integration into Luhrmann’s film as well as its critical reception.

Preparation/Materials: Prepare with NPR’s “First Listen” web page [<http://www.npr.org/2013/04/30/180098344/first-listen-music-from-baz-luhrmanns-film-the-great-gatsby>]

5 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

- Students will be turning in their book cover projects as they walk into the door
- They should also pick up their journals at the front of the classroom

35 minutes – To give students a break from all of the hands-on activities, I will hold a lecture-based discussion for the class period

- Begin by raising some of the complaints that critics had about the album
- Point out how, contrary to most critics’ arguments, hip hop was actually a perfect fit for a 2013 interpretation of a 1920s story.
- Show movie clips of specific scenes, in which the music is a defining characteristic
 - For example, the repetition of “Young and Beautiful” – the played as a foxtrot in one of the party scenes

Remaining Class Time – Let students know that the rest of the week will be devoted to a writing workshop that I am putting together to help them with their compare/contrast essays.

Homework – Bring in rough draft of compare/contrast essay in tomorrow

Tuesday-Thursday (Day 22-24):

Daily Objective – Students will take part in a three-day writing workshop, in which they will participate in peer conferencing, teacher conferencing, and also have time to work independently on their compare/contrast essays.

Preparation/Materials: Notebook and an organized schedule for meeting students, check out enough laptops for about half of the class

3 minutes – Announcements and Housekeeping

- Students will be turning in their book cover projects as they walk into the door
- They should also pick up their journals at the front of the classroom (if I have finished grading them)

45 minutes – I will separate students into three groups A, B, and C

- Each day, students will stay in their assigned group, but the group's activity will change
- On Tuesday:
 - A. Independent Writing Group – This group will work independently for the full 50 minutes, either reading for quotes to incorporate or writing their draft on one of the laptops.
 - B. Peer Conferencing Group – This group will be further divided into smaller subgroups. Students will then use the UNC Chapel Hill 'Revision Checklist' handout to look over each others' essay. Students should each have a different colored pen, so that the author will know who made what suggestions to the essay.
 - C. Teacher Conferencing Group – I will be working with students individually and timing each session for 5 minutes (important to be strict with time because otherwise, I will not be able to meet with everyone). While I am working with a student, the others in this group may choose to either pair up and look over each others' papers or work independently.

Homework – Continue to work on essays at home (they will be due next week). Also, students should prepare anything that they would like to bring in on Friday for the party.

Friday (Day 25):

Daily Objective – Class party with a Gatsby theme to celebrate the end of the unit

Preparation/Materials: Anything that we still need for the party (plates, cups, and/or utensils), music (mix CD with some songs from the movie soundtrack and also other jazz music), and tablecloth for food table.

50 minutes – Gatsby-themed party!

- I will be passing back students' graded book cover projects

Homework – Finish up compare/contrast essays over the weekend, and be prepared to turn them in next week. If they are already finished, then they do not have any other homework.

Appendix A

The Great Gatsby Opinionnaire

Below, you will find a series of ideas, issues, and opinions. Circle the response that most closely indicates how you feel about the statement.

1. People are either all good or all bad.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Money can buy you happiness.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. A materialistic culture is an unhealthy culture.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The pursuit of something is better than its attainment.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Hopes and dreams hold value in an age of cynicism and materialism.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Knowledge gained through schooling is more valuable than knowledge gained through experience.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. All educated citizens in the U.S. are presented with the same opportunities for success.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Popular music is more than just pure entertainment. It acts as an effective form of information transmission.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. An individual has the ability reinvent him/herself at will.

Strongly Agree Agree Not Sure Disagree Strongly Disagree

**Adapted from Dana Buxton and Paul Kramer

Appendix B

Narrative Writing Activity: Introductory Paragraphs of *Gatsby* Characters

For this activity, you will be working together in groups to (1) analyze the introductory paragraph(s) of a particular character in *The Great Gatsby* and (2) compose a creative narrative based solely off of the details given in the passage.

Roles:

- 1) Note taker – Each group will need to designate one person to jot down everything that is said during the analysis portion of the activity
- 2) Writer – When the group is ready to move on to composing the narrative, choose someone (or can be the same as note taker) to type.
- 3) Everyone else – Regardless of whether or not you are typing, make sure that you are fully engaged in the activity by contributing your own ideas and inferences.

Instructions:

- 1) Analysis – Take note of the specificity and detail that Fitzgerald provides as he crafts background, personality, style, voice, etc. into his characters. You should not only draw on explicit descriptions, but also implicit ones that come from Fitzgerald’s word/detail choice, syntax, and tone to gather insight into the individual. (Also, look up any words or references that you do not understand!)
- 2) Composition – Write a 1-2 paragraph anecdote about the character during a situation that has not already been described in detail in the novel. For example, if your group is working on a paragraph about Tom Buchanan you could write on his time at Yale. Or, perhaps, you can muse upon what Jay Gatsby was up to before he moved to West Egg and began his pursuit of Daisy.
 - If your group wants to think outside of the box even more, make up your own character and write an anecdote about him/her; however, make sure to stick to the description assigned to your group and use *only those details* to write your own narrative.

Introductory Paragraphs:

1) Nick Carraway

“My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we’re descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather’s brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on to-day.

I never saw this great-uncle, but I’m supposed to look like him – with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in father’s office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe – so I decided to go to the East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support

one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, and finally said, “Why – ye – es,” with very grave, hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two.”

2) Tom Buchanan

“He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body — he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage — a cruel body.

His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it, even toward people he liked — and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

‘Now, don’t think my opinion on these matters is final,’ he seemed to say, ‘just because I’m stronger and more of a man than you are.’ We were in the same senior society, and while we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.”

3) Jordan Baker

“I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her gray sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.”

4) Daisy Buchanan

“For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the “Beale Street Blues” while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low, sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor.

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen men, and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately – and the decision must be made by some force – of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality – that was close at hand.

5) Myrtle Wilson

“Then I heard footsteps on a stairs, and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout,

but she carried her flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crêpe-de-chine, contained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. She smiled slowly and, walking through her husband as if he were a ghost, shook hands with Tom, looking him flush in the eye. Then she wet her lips, and without turning around spoke to her husband in a soft, coarse voice:

‘Get some chairs, why don’t you, so somebody can sit down.’”

6) Jay Gatsby

“James Gatz — that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career. . . . I suppose he’d had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people — his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that — and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed. His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce, half-lazy work of the bracing days. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.”

Appendix C

Body Biography Assignment

What is a Body Biography?

- A body biography is a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the story
- You have many choices as far as the direction you want to go for this assignment. However, you must be able to verbally explain (essentially, defend) anything that you place onto the body biography
- The completed body biography should complete these objectives:
 1. Review significant events, choices, and changes involving your character
 2. Communicate to others the full essence of your character by emphasizing the traits that make him who he is
 3. Promote discussion of your character

Body Biography Requirements

- Although I expect your body biography to contain other elements, your portrait *must* contain the following:
 1. A review of significant happenings in the story
 2. Visual symbols
 3. At least 5 quotes from the original text that help to further define this character and/or help others understand the kind of person s/he is.
 - For the sake of creativity and promoting variety, avoid quoting introductory passages on your character, such as the ones we used for the narrative writing activity earlier this week

Body Biography Ideas

- **Placement:** Carefully choose the placement of your text and artwork. For example, the area where your character's heart would be might be appropriate for illustrating the important relationships within his/her life
- **Spine:** Actors often discuss a character's spine. This is his/her objective within the story. What is the most important goal for your character? What drives his/her thoughts and actions. This is his/her spine.
- **Virtues and Vices:** What are your character's most admirable qualities? Her worst? How can you make us visualize them?
- **Color:** Colors are often symbolic. What color(s) do you most associate with your character? Why?
- **Symbols:** What objects can you associate with your character that illustrate his essence? Are there objects mentioned within the story itself that you could use? If not, choose objects that especially seem to correspond with the character.
- **Formula Poems:** These are fast, but effective, recipes for producing a text because they are designed to reveal a lot about character.

- **Mirror, Mirror...:** Consider both how your character appears to others on the surface and what you know about the character's inner self. Do these images clash or correspond? What does this tell you about the character?
- **Changes:** How has your character changed within the story? Trace those changes within your work.

**Lesson Plan adapted from Cindy O'Donnell-Allen (Teaching By Design, 2008)

Appendix D

The Great Gatsby Book Cover Project

Francis Cugat originally designed the iconic blue cover for this novel, and it was completed before Fitzgerald finished the manuscript. Interestingly, when the book was first released, the cover was not glorified and appreciated in the way that it is today. Ernest Hemingway wrote in his memoir “A Moveable Feast” that he was ‘embarrassed by the violence, bad taste, and slippery look of it,’ even going so far as to say that ‘it looked like the book jacket for a book of bad science fiction. In this way, you can see the significance of a book’s cover in representing the themes and ideas behind the novel as well as its ability to affect the reader’s initial perception of it.

Today, you will be creating your own book cover for *The Great Gatsby*. This assignment will challenge you to demonstrate your knowledge of what symbolism is and how Fitzgerald employs symbolism through his writing.

Your book cover should:

- Be designed on a sheet of 8 ½” x 11” paper
- Include an artistic representation of two to three symbols or symbolic messages that you discovered in your analysis of the text

Feel free to browse through some preexisting book covers for *The Great Gatsby* to get an idea of how others have interpreted Fitzgerald’s work. Use these for inspiration, but make sure that you allow your own creativity to shine in your own work.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/04/14/t-magazine/14document.html?gwh=C3451E0467A5E47F9BDA9DFD71AE1756>)

Additionally, you will submit a 350-450 word accompanying essay explaining the creative choices that you made in designing your cover. You should describe the symbols/symbolic messages that you have incorporated into your cover and also your interpretation of its meaning using textual, historical, and other forms of evidence. Therefore, make sure that you are able to fully defend the reasoning behind your selection(s). You will be provided with two class periods to work on this assignment, so work diligently and rely on each other for collaboration of ideas and constructive feedback on your products.

Appendix E

The Great Gatsby: Compare/Contrast Essay

Our study this unit has taken us through *The Great Gatsby*, a work of literature that many consider to be *the* classic American novel, as well as Baz Lurhmann's rather modernized version of it. We have also studied jazz music in juxtaposition to the soundtrack overflowing with pop, hip hop, and alternative rock numbers produced by Jay-Z for the new film. Some argue that the two worlds – the 20s and the 2000s – collide horrifically in Lurhmann's film, while others eagerly embrace this innovative production, calling the director a master interpreter of our time.

Regardless of these differing opinions, one thing that we can be certain of is that different interpretations of the same work of literature create new opportunities for the provocation of thought and generation of ideas.

In a 700-850 word essay, take *The Great Gatsby* (novel) and put it in conversation with another text from the modern era that we covered during this unit – either Lurhmann's film or the accompanying soundtrack. Select a character, theme, event/series of events, collection of imagery, or an extended metaphor and construct a thoughtful and well-evidenced essay analyzing the two texts through that lens. Make sure to narrow in on something specific for this essay; it will be difficult to work with ideas that are too loose or generic.

Some important questions to keep in mind as you brainstorm ideas (feel free to also incorporate some of your own observations and questions about the texts – this is where your Free Response Journals come in handy!):

- How does one event/situation look in the eyes of another character besides Nick? Try to keep the other characters' perspectives in mind, as Nick Carraway is not a reliable narrator. What he sees and feels are not necessarily accurate to the experiences of Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, etc.
- How has the modernization of a particular scene deviated from or adhered to the original text? Does this modernization facilitate an effective transmission of the past to a contemporary audience?
- Why might Lurhmann or the musical artists/producers behind the soundtrack have opted to replace or reshape different aspects of key moments from the book? What effect did their use of artistic license create?

Possible Essay Topics (You are certainly not limited to these):

4. Based on your observations of the book and the film, write an essay on how your interpretation of Jay Gatsby's character during your reading of the novel differed or aligned with the Gatsby in the film? How is he portrayed differently in the film (Leonardo DiCaprio) from the book – speech, mannerisms, personality? How does a different interpretation of one individual add to our understanding of a character?
5. Analyze the party scene at Myrtle's and Tom's apartment in New York City in Chapter 2 alongside Baz Lurhmann's portrayal of the scene in the film. How do the camerawork and background music work to effectively alter your perception of what is taking place?
6. Choose one song or a few excerpts (with permission from your parents) from the soundtrack of the film and discuss an idea, theme, or metaphor that you think runs parallel to a particular character, event, or idea in the novel.

Appendix F

References

Texts

Primary Texts:

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The Great Gatsby – Baz Luhrmann (2013)

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Articles:

- “All that Jazz” (2013)
 - David Denby
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- “Revising Drafts”
 - No Author
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- “What Baz Luhrmann Asked Me About The Great Gatsby” (2013)
 - James L.W. West III
 - Huffington Post
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Song Lyrics:

- ["A Little Party Never Killed Nobody \(All We Got\)"](#)
 - Fergie feat. GoonRock & Q-Tip
- ["Back to Black"](#)
 - Beyoncé feat. Andre 3000
- ["Young and Beautiful"](#)
 - Lana del Rey

Visuals:

- A Book by its Covers (2013)
 - No Author
 - New York Times
 - <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/04/14/t-magazine/14document.html>
- John Held Jr. and the Jazz Age (2009)
 - Anna Lee
 - Live Journal
 - <http://ana-lee.livejournal.com/178989.html>

Audio:

- American Icon: The Great Gatsby (2010)

- Emily Botein
- Studio360
- <http://www.studio360.org/story/95326-american-icons-the-great-gatsby/>