

Running head: PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY

Perception versus Reality:  
And the greatness of Gatsby  
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**Table of Contents**

Rationale .....3  
Goals and Accompanying Rubrics .....13  
Introductory Activity .....22  
Lesson Plans.....27  
Appendix .....40

### **Rationale**

#### **Disclaimer:**

The theme of my unit is Perception versus Reality – not to be confused with “perception IS reality.” I feel that it is important to differentiate the two concepts before proceeding. My perception of the difference between these two concepts is this: **Perception versus Reality** deals with the surface distinctions between perception, which I define as opinions and judgments based on prior knowledge, and reality, which I define as that which is free from judgment and the inflections of the personal. To use my anchor text as an example: Some perceive as Gatsby as genteel, but in reality, he is a bootlegger who came from nothing. **“Perception IS reality,”** as I understand it, is an intensely complex philosophy that questions whether reality truly exists and supposes that reality changes based on the person perceiving it. Again using Gatsby as an example: “Perception IS reality” might unpack “genteel” and “bootlegger” and question the perception of these terms in accordance with who is doing the perceiving. While I believe that “Perception IS reality” is a worthwhile topic to explore, and we will no doubt unpack terms like genteel or celebrity, I am more concerned with illuminating *that* reality changes according to who is perceiving it rather than trying to find elusive answers to questions about what constitutes reality. My unit theme is more about judgments and the experience and prior knowledge that color judgment – not a deep philosophical probing into the nature of perception and reality.

#### **Rationale**

One of the most disturbing observations I have made about information consumption is that some people tend to passively accept the information that is given to them – whether they are receiving information by word of mouth or receiving it through media. How many times have

I heard someone say “I read somewhere that...?” How often do people go down the rabbit hole of informational sources? Not often enough, I am afraid. One shocking revelation is that most young people do not understand that certain types of media routinely practice manipulation and count on consumer ignorance to line the pockets of corporate executives. In a study done with teenage girls who read teen magazines, Margaret Finders found that the girls were unaware that adults wrote the articles dictating fashion trends. The girls thought that the young models sporting the advertised clothing were the actual people writing the articles (Finders 1997).

Realizing this made me wonder how often teenagers hear or read something and then fail to ask simple questions such as “who is responsible for this information?” or “what do they have to gain by me believing them?” Questions such as this are at the heart of my unit. Questions such as this are also at the heart of critical thinking. And, in a time when critical thinking seems to be on life support, as a teacher, I feel that I have an imperative to construct units that help students understand how to be critical thinkers. Understanding the relation between perception and reality is only the beginning of learning to think critically. And because critical thinking is a cornerstone of personal development, social awareness, and literary criticism, I hope that my unit on Perception versus Reality will provide either a jumping off point or a more efficient vehicle for students on their journey with critical thinking.

### **Personal Development**

Understanding the difference between Perception and Reality can be a powerful tool as a young people are developing who they are and their relationship with the world around them. Perhaps a young boy might wrestle with wanting to be in musical theatre, and perceives it as something only gay men want to do. In reality, one of *People's* sexists man alive (and straight

father of two) is the Tony award winning musical theatre actor Hugh Jackman. Or perhaps some young girl feels pressure to look a certain way according to images that she sees in magazines and on TV. She may not fully understand just how much time and money can make the difference between a person having average beauty and billboard beauty. In this case the perception is that billboard beauty is attainable for everyday people. The reality is that striving for billboard beauty is an unrealistic expectation. Yet some girls do it every day. However, after discussing Perception vs. Reality, perhaps one or two girls will inch closer to accepting who they are and begin to see the fruitlessness in coveting billboard beauty.

The text I have chosen to illustrate this particular understanding of Perception vs. Reality is the Dove evolution video, which is a time lapse video that shows the process of a model going from no make-up and undone hair to camera ready. The video then shows the extensive Photoshopping of her “flaws.” The last shot is of her on the actual billboard advertisement – looking like a totally different person from the one in the beginning of the video. This video is a pretty powerful realization – even for people who think they know what goes into the process of obtaining a final image in an advertisement. Ironically, the video is part of Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty,” which is just another advertisement meant to subvert the consumer and manipulate women into buying Dove products. Knowing this manipulation is yet another layer of Perception vs. Reality that cannot be ignored, yet seems to be disconnected from many people’s understanding of advertisement and media’s dictation of self-perception. Although this video is a great example, I can also foresee using other types of advertisements to illustrate the same point. Several female celebrities have been part of ads where they appear undone then done. Another way to approach media manipulation of perception could be to objectively compare opposing pundits’ arguments and then do fact-checking to see if either pundit manipulated facts.

## **Social Awareness**

From the standpoint of society, the stakes of Perception versus Reality are very high. How many students fully understand that people are paid by government officials to manipulate language as a means to sell Americans on certain legislation? For example, Global Warming is now called Climate Change. How many people realize that Frank Luntz coined that term when asked by the president to come with a term for Global Warming that was less menacing? This type of linguistic gymnastics is a great example of how politicians change people's perception of reality – a tactic that is used by both sides of the aisle. The truth behind Climate Change/Global Warming is irrelevant. I have no wish to argue the merits of being green or not being green. Rather, I want students to understand that stakeholders can intentionally distort perception, which happens everyday in America. In my opinion, knowing this clears the pathway to a more informed citizenry.

As a means to demonstrate how political stakeholders can distort perceptions, I have selected a piece of investigative journalism by David Grann, which recently appeared in *The New Yorker*. In it, Grann tells the story of Cameron Willingham, a Texas man falsely accused of murdering his three children by setting fire to their home. Early in the investigation, witnesses to the fire, including a minister, issued eyewitness statements that indicate that Willingham was visibly distraught and had to be physically held back from going back into the raging fire to try and save the children. Later, after coercion by prosecutors who obtained faulty evidence, all of the witnesses recanted their statements and swore that they now remembered thinking that Willingham was *too* distraught and that he seemed to be pretending to want to go back inside and save the children. Interestingly, hearing the “evidence” against Willingham made the witnesses

doubt their own initial observations and changed what they perceived as reality. Grann's investigation uncovers a DA who desperately wanted a conviction and the newer versions of eyewitness testimony were key evidence in convicting an innocent man (Grann 2009).

Although I initially had trepidation over using this piece, I decided that it reveals an important piece to the Perception versus Reality puzzle: Sometimes our own perceptions can change with new information. And because the stakes were literally life and death in the Willingham case, it reinforces that Perception versus Reality is not a frivolous catch phrase. Yes, sometimes it is the difference between thinking that someone is a snob when really he or she is painfully shy. But at other times, the difference between Perception and Reality can mean a man or woman's life, especially considering that the prosecution in the Willingham case used Willingham's skull and crossbones tattoo as proof that he was a sinister psychopath (Grann 2009) – a gross manipulation of perception and reality, which a jury of citizens failed to recognize.

### **Literary Criticism**

In my view, Perception versus Reality is soooooo vital to literary criticism. So much so that the bulk of my unit is spent distinguishing between the two in the context of literature. Comprehending the relationship between Perception and Reality is a great way to deepen understanding of characters and is a great segue into talking about Point of View and how POV affects narrative structure. Perception versus Reality can also help students have a clearer sense of that age-old dilemma of whether or not a narrator is reliable. Most of the students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade class in which I am doing my practicum struggle with this concept. They tend to automatically take whatever the narrator says at face value, or they are aware that a narrator can

be reliable or unreliable but have no means of discerning between the two. Juxtaposing Perception versus Reality with Nick Carraway as the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* has tremendous potential in unlocking the mystery of the unreliable narrator. Activities such as the interview about two sides of an event and the in-role writing from another character's POV are designed to help students answer questions such as "why is he telling this story;" "what does he have to gain by telling it;" and "how does Nick's perception line up with the possible perceptions of other characters?" Other texts with questionable narrators that could be used in much the same way are endless. *Wuthering Heights*, the YA novel *Stargirl*, and the short story "A Rose for Emily" are three distinctly different examples that come to mind.

Also integral to Perception versus Reality in literary criticism is knowing that an author might intentionally distort perception. Sometimes an author will use an unreliable narrator. Other times he or she will employ a different method. Filmmakers are a classic example of distortioners of Perception and Reality. Consider any movie where the audience thinks that the bad guy is a certain character only to learn at the end that the bad guy was really the guy faking a limp (Kaiser Soze). As a fun example of how perception/reality can be intentionally distorted, I intend to show the opening sequence of the HBO drama *Dexter*. In it, everyday tasks such as making eggs or flossing or putting on a t-shirt are made to look sinister and are perverted into murderous tasks. However, I might also use clips from the movie *The Matrix* or *The Usual Suspects*.

Through looking at the world, themselves, and literature through the lens of Perception versus Reality, perhaps my students will realize that questions of Perception and Reality are everywhere – in gossip magazines, in gossip at school, in politics, in TV and movies, and on and on. Scratching the surface of Perception and Reality can open students to not accepting



everything at face value, which can make them better critical thinkers and, by extension, better consumers and citizens. Furthermore, by transacting with Perception and Reality and the questions that surround them, I hope that students will learn how to construct knowledge of new texts that are encountered once the unit has come to its conclusion.

### **To potential detractors**

Parents: This unit is designed to help your child understand that sometimes deciphering between perception and reality can help them see a situation more clearly. If you have ever advised your child to not judge another person, to consider someone else's feelings, to think about something from someone else's point of view, or to think before they speak or act, then you understand the spirit of this unit. After better understanding Perception versus Reality, I hope that your child will better understand human nature. It is human to think that our perceptions are the most correct or best way. However, in reality, sometimes we are limited by our experience and prior knowledge. For example, when you ground your child for making a bad grade or for breaking curfew, your child might perceive you as being too strict or mean or not caring. When in reality, you ground your child so that he or she might learn that poor decisions come with undesirable consequences, which will help them become better decision makers in the future. Understanding that perception is not always reality and vice versa can go along way to helping your child distinguish between the times when you are acting in their best interest and not just punishing them to be "mean."

Students: Have you ever misunderstood someone's intentions or been misunderstood? Have you ever sent money to a Nigerian prince thinking that you were going to be later rewarded with 10%

of 24 million dollars? Understanding the difference between Perception and Reality can help you in these situations and many other life situations where you are unclear about other people's intentions. And by "other people" I mean anyone from your family, friends, or teachers to media and the government. Perception versus Reality is a simple concept that is sometimes hard to fully grasp. In this unit, I hope to help you do that. And if you can grasp Perception versus Reality, you will be better at critical thinking. I know that critical thinking is a buzz word that gets thrown around a lot by teachers, but I assure you, critical thinking is more than just a buzz word. If you can be a good critical thinker, you will be better at making important decisions that affect your life and the world around you. It can save you money and time and hurt feelings. Sometimes it can also help you get your way.

Administration: I have chosen to construct a thematic unit for two reasons. One, I want students to see how many different types of texts can be viewed through a common lens. And two, utilizing a unit concept can help students "have an active role in constructing new knowledge through their engagement with the unit concepts" (Smagorinsky 2008). The theme of Perception versus Reality is an effective way to engage students in not only critical thinking about themselves and the world around them but is also a dynamic means to ground their understanding of character, point of view, narrative structure, and how these literary devices work together to alter a reader or audience's perception of the text. In particular, I intend to use the theme to reinforce the idea of an unreliable versus reliable narrator – a concept that often arises and that students often struggle with.

In addition to a theme, I will also employ activities to supplement understanding. I selected a variety of activities -- interview, in-role writing, dialogue journals, creative project, and presentation – as a means of differentiating and accounting for multiple intelligences.

The accompanying texts will offer a variety as well. I have selected 2 poems, an advertisement, a TV clip, an investigative journalism article, and *The Great Gatsby*. My intention is to scaffold these texts in a way that enriches my students' understanding of Perception versus Reality AND grounds it in relevant current media so that by the time we reach the canonical, required text, they will be able to synthesize their knowledge and construct new meanings of a time honored text that might otherwise seem irrelevant and outdated to teenagers. My intention is to move from the perceptions and realities of advertisement, media, and celebrity obsessed culture to the parallel themes of *The Great Gatsby*, which is a novel that uncannily lends itself to discussions of Perception, Reality, point of view, and narrative structure. Considering the needs of the students and administrative interests, I believe that I have designed a unit that is engaging and relevant to 11<sup>th</sup> grade American Literature students while acknowledging the realities of a standards based environment.

Works Cited

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## Goals and Accompanying Rubrics

### Goal 1:

#### **Design Project with accompanying Rationale**

Students will create a design that is a reflection of their perception of *The Great Gatsby*.

Assuming that we are putting on some type of production of the novel, students will produce some aspect of the production, which includes but is not limited to a movie poster, costume, setting, performance of a scene, soundtrack, etc. The student will also provide a two page, double spaced rationale for their product, which will include cited evidence from the text and one secondary research source. Students may work in collaborative pairs or groups, but each student must create an individual design and rationale.

The purpose of this activity is three-fold. I want to tap into multiple intelligences by giving them the option of what to create. I also want them to ground their ideas in cursory research of the period. But most importantly, I want students to have a chance to present their own perception of *Gatsby*. Therefore, the goal is for the student to use new knowledge discovered during the research portion to construct a creative representation of his or her perception of the novel – whether or not the creative product is a reflection of the actual time period. \*Using production aspects is, more than anything, an idea generator. If a student comes up with another similar idea, then they may do something different but must obtain approval.

This assignment should include the following:

- A product based on a design concept which is a reflection of student's perception of the characters, time period, POV, tone, and/or imagery of the novel

- 2 page rationale which explains the design concept and uses evidence from the text/cursory research to support the design
- Emphasis will be placed on the creative product. The rationale is merely a means for me and the student to better understand the thought process that went into creating the product.
- To reflect the weight of the product and rationale, on a 100 point scale, the creative product will be worth 75 points, and the rationale will be worth 25.

**Rubric for Design Project:**

Designs receiving an A will:

- Be well thought out and reflect a clear, cohesive perception of some aspect of the novel. For example, if you are designing a costume, don't just copy a dress from the 20's, design a costume for Daisy for a specific scene in the novel.
- Use evidence from the text to support your concept and explain it in your rationale. For example, if you put Daisy in an exquisite gown for the party, the evidence could be that she is a member of high society so she would wear something exquisite.
- Show an obvious connection of the design to the text. For example, if the text describes an actual costume, you might use details from the description.
- Honor creativity and thinking outside of the box. For example, instead of merely coloring Daisy's costume on a paper, include sample material or inspiration photos from the internet/magazines.
- Have a rationale that clearly explains the thought process of your design. It answers the questions of why you chose this design and the steps you took to execute it. Your

rationale includes quotes from the text as evidence and employs a secondary source to aid in inspiring and informing your design.

Designs receiving a B will:

- Be creative and interesting, but maybe little thought was given to the text. For example, if you are creating a soundtrack, you use all jazz tunes, but one or two songs do not relate to the events of the novel.
- Show obvious connections to the text but maybe little thought was given to the creative product. For example, the songs of your soundtrack are all jazz tunes about unrequited love. What about the rest of the novel?
- Have ideas that are creative, but maybe you didn't go the extra mile in the execution of the product. For example, you wrote down all of names of the songs, the artist, and sample lyrics, but you did not provide audio samples.
- Have a rationale that explains your choice of design but does not clearly define your thought process in creating it, or vice versa. You use quotes from the text but not a secondary source, or vice versa.

Designs receiving a C will:

- The product mostly connects to the text.
- Have evidence or details from the text that do not clearly support your design.
- Contain ideas that are somewhat creative but fall short of thoughtful execution. For example, your movie poster is drawn with a pen on loose-leaf paper.
- Have a rationale that does not clearly define why you selected your design or how went about creating it. You do not use quotes from the text or a secondary source.

Designs receiving a D will:

- Make me wonder if you have even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.
- A rationale that makes me wonder if you have even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.

Your design will receive a Failing grade if:

- You do not turn in a design and/or rationale. In other words, if you make an honest attempt at doing this assignment, you cannot fail.

Goal 2:

**In-Role Writing**

Students will create a piece of writing that reflects the POV of a character other than Nick in *The Great Gatsby*. This activity closely resembles fanfiction. Possible ideas for the piece include but are not limited to a diary entry, what characters would say in a reality TV style confessional after particular scenes, a scene that represents action before the start of the novel or after the novel ends, a scene that occurs during the novel that the reader does not see, or a re-telling of a scene in the novel using a different character's voice as narrator. The main criteria are 1) students must stay true to the spirit of the characters and 2) not change the actual events of the novel. Another option for the assignment is an in-role writing as a character from another text in the unit who has been dropped into *The Great Gatsby* – how do they fit in, what do they think of other characters, does their presence change the story, how?

The purpose of this activity is to help students deepen their understanding of the characters and to help them better understand how POV affects the reader's perception of the story and its characters. This activity can also reveal how narrative structure affects a reader's perception. Engaging in this activity will further demonstrate to the student how and why characters, thereby people, maintain certain truths and perceptions of events. Furthermore, it will help them answer



the question of how and why narrators, ergo authors, make the choices that they do when constructing a narrative.

This assignment will include:

- No less than 2 pages double spaced
- The student may combine options in order to achieve the 2 page minimum. For example, one diary entry to accompany a scene told from Daisy's perspective.
- Appropriate use of character, setting, and events. Points will be deducted for gross deviations from character, etc.
- Evidence from the text to substantiate new material
- A demonstration of how different perspectives create new meanings and truths behind events and attitudes

**Rubric for In-Role Writing:**

In-Role Writing receiving an A will:

- Be a minimum of 2 full pages double-spaced. You can choose to fill the two pages with a combination of ideas. For example, a diary entry can be one page and the next page can be a re-told scene that pertains to the diary entry.
- Use a voice that is distinct to the character from whose perspective you are writing. For example, if you are writing a scene from Jordan's perspective, a detached "too cool for school" tone might be appropriate.
- Stay true to the character and events of the novel AND add a deeper meaning to the character and events. For example, you write a diary entry that offers an explanation of

why a character has done something and acted a certain way – but only when an explanation has not been already offered by the text.

- Offer new insights into the text. For example, you write a scene that takes place after the story ends that shows how the characters have changed/grown because of their experiences that we witness in the novel.
- Show a plausible yet different perspective than Nick's – one that makes sense with the information presented in the text but contradicts what our given narrator believes to be the truth.

In-Role Writing receiving a B will:

- Be less than 2 pages double-spaced
- Use a voice that is not immediately and clearly identifiable as the character from whose perspective you are writing. For example, you portray Jordan as too upbeat and perky.
- Stay true to character for the most part but maybe once or twice I go “Wha? Would Jordan Baker really run naked in a rainstorm?”
- Be plausible and interesting but do not offer any new insights into the characters and events of the novel. For example, you re-write a scene from Jordan's POV, but all you really do is re-tell the same events with a detached, “over it” tone. An A paper might include Jordan's inner monologue.

In-Role Writing receiving a C will:

- Be no more than 1 page double-spaced
- Make obvious and/or extreme deviations from character.
- Include writings that are completely implausible given our understanding of the text.

In-role Writing receiving a D will:

- Makes me wonder if you have ever even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.
- Be written from the POV of a character I have never heard before. I might really enjoy it but I will not be able to honor its brilliance with a grade it deserves if it does not pertain to *The Great Gatsby*.
- Be significantly less than 1 page double-spaced.

In-role Writing receiving a Failing grade will:

- Contain words that are gibberish, or the same word typed over and over again. In other words, if you make an honest attempt to complete this assignment, you cannot fail.

Goal 3:

### **Dialogue Journal**

In pairs, students will dialogue through the journal format of their choice (literal journal, email, Facebook email) about the texts and themes presented throughout the unit. This will give them another method of expressing their thoughts and opinions and will also give them the opportunity to experience one of their peer's perspectives of the texts and themes. I will encourage them to be as informal as they want to be – whatever keeps the conversation going – as long as they stay on task.

The purpose of this activity is to give the students a place to have an open forum to discuss their ideas. Classroom discussion is great, but sometimes not all students feel comfortable enough to participate freely or if they do, sometimes the conversation moves on before they have a chance to express a relevant thought or feeling. By employing a dialogue journal, students can have another opportunity to express themselves or expand the conversation or bounce ideas back and

forth. In addition, in a unit on perception, it is imperative that students experience as many perspectives as possible.

This assignment will include:

- A minimum of two entries/responses to an entry a week.
- Entries/comments that are no less than 200 words total; responses no less than 100.
- Entries with either informal or formal language, text ease, etc. – student's choice. But no Pig Latin please.
- Entries that address either the texts or themes that we are discussing in class. Straying off topic is allowed as long as it is a logical deviation – the prom may very well logically follow a discussion of *Gatsby*, but the conversation should continue to be relevant to the text and/or theme.
- Demonstration that students are critically thinking independently AND using peers to help them construct new meanings/understandings

**Rubric for Dialogue Journal:**

Dialogue Journals receiving an A will:

- Have the appropriate number of entries: 2 entries and two responses a week
- Include only conversations that have obvious connections to the theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a B will:

- Have one entry or response missing
- Includes a conversation that has nothing to do with theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a C will:

- Have only two out of four entries/responses
- Have multiple conversations that have nothing to do with theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a D will:

- Only have one entry or response
- Will not connect to theme/texts of unit

Failing Dialogue Journals will:

- Not exist

\*a note on conversations that are not connected to the texts: many times this happens logically and organically when we are talking about texts and themes. It is ok if this happens. You will not be counted off for it. My only concern is that you not use the dialogue journal to make plans for the weekend, etc.

\*\* if your dialogue partner does not keep up with entries so that you do not have anything to respond to, you can make up for it by adding another (abbreviated) entry to your side.

### **Introductory Activity**

As an introduction to my unit on Perception versus Reality, I want my students to start thinking about what it means to perceive “something” differently from another person. I also want them to make judgments and share them with the rest of the class to illustrate how individuals can judge the same thing differently based on their prior knowledge, experience, and views of the world. Equally important is that they understand how those who wish to change perceptions of themselves or the world can manipulate reality. Therefore, my introductory activity offers examples of the preceding ideas about Perception and Reality and also offers an opportunity to discuss the examples in small and large group. After the introductory activity has commenced, I will give the students some time to write their first dialogue journal entry.

The following lesson plan is for a 90-minute class period:

5 minutes – roll call and follow protocol to arrange into groups of 3-4

45 minutes – Introductory activity titled “What do you See?” Part 1:

- On a blank sheet of paper, students number the sheet 1 through 10 leaving space between each number for brief writing.
- I will present a slide show of ten images. While each image is up on the screen, the students will write a brief description of what they see. I will give them a minute or so for each image. I am not looking for right or wrong answers; I simply want them to describe each image. Students may also write down brief descriptions of any visceral reactions to an image. The same procedure is to be followed for each image. Only image #4 requires special instructions. The slide show contains the following images and a rationale for why the image was selected:

1. **Images from the blog “Faces in Places.”** – multiple images may be shown before landing one image for the students to write about. “Faces in Places” contains humorous photos of objects that can be seen for what they are in reality or can be seen conceptually as a face. The objects have not been manipulated, and in certain images the face is more prominent, for example, an electrical socket versus the front end of a car. These images are the opening slides because they reflect the simplest aspect of the Perception versus Reality theme – sometimes “things” can be conceived of one thing when, conceptually, they can be conceived as something else.
2. **The Young Girl-Old Woman optical illusion** – this is one drawing that has two different images embedded: one is a young woman turning away; one is an old woman looking down. When each image is pointed out, they are immediately obvious. However, usually either one or the other image is the only one that the brain can discern until the other is highlighted. I selected this image as an extension of the first slide: more than one perception can exist for one “thing.”
3. **The photo titled “Vanity”** – this is another optical illusion. At first glance, the image in the photo looks like a skull. On closer inspection, the image is of a woman looking into a mirror surrounded by beauty products. I selected this image because it not only plays off of the first two slides, but it also uses Perception versus Reality to question the implications of excessive vanity, which ties into one of the larger points of the unit: reality can be manipulated to change perceptions.

4. **Random photo of a person from a magazine** – I will give the students a chance to look at this photo a little longer than the others. Special instructions: do not write anything down for #4 yet.
5. **Hugh Jackman as Tony host** – singer, dancer, actor Hugh Jackman hosted the Tony award show, which is an award show for Broadway. Theatre men are stereotypically thought to be gay or feminine, and from certain angles during the Tony's, Hugh Jackman does kind of look feminine. For further explanation, see #6.
6. **Hugh Jackman as Wolverine** – in the *X-Men* comic series, no character exudes manly masculine testosterone than Wolverine, a character played by Hugh Jackman. I am using these two separate images of Hugh Jackman to further show how individuals can be perceived in different ways based on context. Both images show two very different types of people (even though Wolverine is a technically a mutant) – one accentuates Jackman's bulging muscles; the other depicts Jackman in a blousy, leopard print shirt – yet they are the same man. Juxtaposing these two images reminds students that perception can largely depend on context or individual situations.
7. **High school photo of Lady Gaga** – although she goes out of her way to be shocking and provocative now, Lady Gaga's high school photo depicts an average teenage girl who might may or may not be a cheerleader. I love this photo because it elicits such a shock to learn that this long brown haired, sweet looking girl is actually the person who attended the Grammy's this year wearing what can only be described a bird's nest around her face, performed an act where she ended up



hanging and bloody, and later accepted her award wearing red lace literally from head to toe with red lace even covering her entire face. BUT in reality her middle name is Joanne. So who is the real Lady Gaga? How does she want people to perceive her? She is a perfect example of an individual who manipulates others' perception of her.

8. **Photo of Marilyn Manson** – to follow up Lady Gaga is a super scary photo of Marilyn Manson aka Brian Johnson. He is another example of someone who drastically alters his appearance to change people's perceptions of him.
9. Students should go back to #4 and, from memory, write a detailed description of the person in the photo. Students should also include a judgment about what kind of person they think he might be, for example, the music or books he might prefer. Later during the discussion phase, I will point out how perceptions can change or be distorted after a lapse of time and how different people can make different judgments about the same person.
10. **Hermes handbag** – to the untrained eye, a photo of an Hermes handbag is just another purse. But to those “in the know,” an Hermes handbag (especially a Kelly or a Birkin) is an indication that the person carrying it is mega wealthy. The low end Birkin costs \$7000. However, an exotic animal skin Birkin can set a person bag as much as \$100,000. Yes, the price of a ladies handbag – the thing that carries her lipstick and tampons – could feed The Duggar family for several years. I selected this image to spark the discussion of how Perception versus Reality can frame ideas of status and worth, which is one of the major themes in *The Great Gatsby*.

10 minutes -- During Part 1 of “What do you see?,” students are writing individual reactions to the images without any accompanying discussion. After Part 1, they will turn to the small group to discuss what they saw. During this discussion, they should be taking notes on the similarities and differences between what they each saw and didn’t see. At this point, they might not know that Stefani Joanne is actually Lady Gaga or what a Birkin bag is. However, someone in the group might, which could result in a broadening of discussion beyond initial perceptions and into reality.

15 minutes – large group discussion. I will tell them that the theme of the unit is Perception versus Reality, and as a group, we will unpack those terms using the images of the slide show as examples.

Final 15 minutes of class – As a follow up to the introductory activity and as a lead in to *The Great Gatsby*, I will ask the students to write an entry in their dialogue journals. The topic will be “a time in your life when you manipulated others’ perception of you.” For example, I might write about a time when I wanted to impress a boy so I pretended to be a basketball lover. Students should think of questions such as “how did manipulating perceptions of you make you feel,” “how did manipulating perceptions of you make others feel,” and “did you achieve anything by manipulating others’ perception of you?” If students do not have a moment in their lives to draw upon, as an alternative, they may write about time when someone they know manipulated others’ perception, or they may write about a fictional character/historical figure (not Lady Gaga or Marilyn Manson) that manipulated others’ perceptions.

## Lesson Plans

The lesson plans are for my conceptual unit titled “Perception versus Reality and the Greatness of Gatsby.” My plans are based on a three-week unit designed for classes on a block schedule, or 90 minute class periods that meet five days a week. The intended course for this unit is 11<sup>th</sup> grade American Literature. Therefore, all of the texts selected are representative of American authors of various mediums and time periods.

### Week 1 – Focus is on the concept of Perception v. Reality

#### Day1

5 min            **Roll call and follow protocol to arrange into groups of 3-4**

45 min           **Introductory activity titled “What do you See?” Part 1**

On a blank sheet of paper, students number the sheet 1 through 10 leaving space between each number for brief writing. I will present a slide show of ten images. While each image is up on the screen, the students will write a brief description of what they see. I will give them a minute or so for each image. I am not looking for right or wrong answers; I simply want them to describe each image. Students may also write down brief descriptions of any visceral reactions to an image. The same procedure is to be followed for each image. Only image #4 requires special instructions. The slide show contains the following images and a rationale for why the image was selected:

**1. Images from the blog “Faces in Places.”** – multiple images may be shown before landing one image for the students to write about. “Faces in Places” contains humorous photos of objects that can be seen for what they are in reality or can be seen conceptually as a face. The objects have not been manipulated, and in certain images the face is more prominent, for example, an electrical socket versus the front end of a car. These images are the opening slides because they reflect the simplest aspect of the Perception versus Reality theme – sometimes “things” can be conceived of one thing when, conceptually, they can be conceived as something else.

**2. The Young Girl-Old Woman optical illusion** – this is one drawing that has two different images embedded: one is a young woman turning away; one is an old woman looking down. When each image is pointed out, they are immediately obvious. However, usually either one or the other image is the only one that the brain can discern until the other is highlighted. I selected this image as an extension of the first slide: more than one perception can exist for one “thing.”

**3. The photo titled “Vanity”** – this is another optical illusion. At first glance, the image in the photo looks like a skull. On closer inspection, the image is of a woman looking into a mirror surrounded by beauty products. I selected this image because it not only plays off of the first two slides, but it also uses Perception versus Reality to question the implications of excessive vanity, which ties into one of the larger points of the unit: reality can be manipulated to change perceptions.

**4. Random photo of a person from a magazine** – I will give the students a chance to look at this photo a little longer than the others. Special instructions: do not write anything down for #4 yet.

**5. Hugh Jackman as Tony host** – singer, dancer, actor Hugh Jackman hosted the Tony award show, which is an award show for Broadway. Theatre men are stereotypically thought to be gay or feminine, and from certain angles during the Tony’s, Hugh Jackman does kind of look feminine. For further explanation, see #6.

**6. Hugh Jackman as Wolverine** – in the *X-Men* comic series, no character exudes manly masculine testosterone than Wolverine, a character played by Hugh Jackman. I am using these two separate images of Hugh Jackman to further show how individuals can be perceived in different ways based on context. Both images show two very different types of people (even though Wolverine is a technically a mutant) – one accentuates Jackman’s bulging muscles; the other depicts Jackman in a blousy, leopard print shirt – yet they are the same man. Juxtaposing these two images reminds students that perception can largely depend on context or individual situations.

**7. High school photo of Lady Gaga** – although she goes out of her way to be shocking and provocative now, Lady Gaga’s high school photo depicts an average teenage girl who might may or may not be a cheerleader. I love this photo because it elicits such a shock to learn that this long brown haired, sweet looking girl is actually the person who attended the Grammy’s this year wearing what can only be described a bird’s nest around her face, performed an act where she ended up hanging and bloody, and later accepted her award wearing red lace literally from head to toe with red lace even covering her entire face. BUT in reality her middle name is Joanne. So who is the real Lady Gaga? How does she want people to perceive her? She is a perfect example of an individual who manipulates others’ perception of her.

**8. Photo of Marilyn Manson** – to follow up Lady Gaga is a super scary photo of Marilyn Manson aka Brian Johnson. He is another example of someone who drastically alters his appearance to change people’s perceptions of him.

**9. Students should go back to #4** and, from memory, write a detailed description of the person in the photo. Students should also include a judgment about what kind of person they think he might be, for example, the music or books he might prefer. Later during the discussion phase, I will point out how perceptions can change or be distorted after a lapse of

time and how different people can make different judgments about the same person.

**10. Hermes handbag** – to the untrained eye, a photo of an Hermes handbag is just another purse. But to those “in the know,” an Hermes handbag (especially a Kelly or a Birkin) is an indication that the person carrying it is mega wealthy. The low end Birkin costs \$7000. However, an exotic animal skin Birkin can set a person bag as much as \$100,000. Yes, the price of a ladies handbag – the thing that carries her lipstick and tampons – could feed The Duggar family for several years. I selected this image to spark the discussion of how Perception versus Reality can frame ideas of status and worth, which is one of the major themes in *The Great Gatsby*.

10 min

**Discussion in small groups**

During Part 1 of “What do you see?,” students wrote individual reactions to the images without any accompanying discussion. After Part 1, they will turn to the small group to discuss what they saw. During this discussion, they should be taking notes on the similarities and differences between what they each saw and didn’t see. At this point, they might not know that Stefani Joanne is actually Lady Gaga or what a Birkin bag is. However, someone in the group might, which could result in a broadening of discussion beyond initial perceptions and into reality.

15 min

**Whole class discussion**

I will tell them that the theme of the unit is Perception versus Reality, and as a group, we will unpack those terms using the images of the slide show as examples.

10 min

**Dialogue Journal free-write**

Topic: Discuss a time in your life when you pretended to be somebody that you are not in order to get what you want.

5 min

**Clean up and pack**

Homework:

Read pages 1-7 of *The Great Gatsby* and make at least 3 predictions about what you think will happen in the story. Predictions will be turned in for a daily grade.

**Day 2**

3 min

**Roll call and follow protocol to get into groups of 3-4**

2 min

**Watch Dove “Evolution” video**

The Dove “Evolution” video is a time lapse video of a model going from no make-up to full hair/make-up plus digital photo touch ups. The last frame of the video is the model’s image on a billboard. The unmade model is unrecognizable from the model in the beginning frame. The purpose of the video is to introduce how media can influence perception and how much work can go into making a celebrity, which later ties into *Gatsby* when Jay goes to great lengths to be perceived as a celebrity.

10 min

**Dialogue Journal (see Appendix A)**

- 20 min     Topic: The Dove “Evolution” video depicts how much work goes into making a model magazine ready. If you only ever see the “finished product,” how do magazines and other media influence our perception of beauty and/or celebrity?  
**Discuss the Dove “Evolution” video**  
First in small groups and then in whole class discussion, students should use their dialogue journal free-write to make connections and share perceptions of the video.
- 5 min     **Share predictions**  
In the same groups that they are in, students will share the 3 predictions that they made about Gatsby and their initial perceptions of the novel. Focus question: how do you think that perception and reality might come into play in the novel *The Great Gatsby*?
- 30 min     **Chapter 1 of *The Great Gatsby***  
As a class, we will listen to Tom Robbins reading Chapter 1 of *The Great Gatsby*. As we listen, I will be stopping the CD and asking questions that guide the reading and will address any questions that students might have as they are listening and following along in the book.
- 15 min     **Open-ended questions**  
Based on previous discussions about what constitutes a “good” open-ended question, in their current groups, the students will come up with five open-ended questions about Chapter 1 of Gatsby. One member of the group should write down their questions on a separate sheet of paper and hand them in.
- 5 min     **Clean and pack up.**
- Homework:     Give preliminary answers to your group’s questions to Chapter 1. Read chapter 2 of *The Great Gatsby*.

### Day 3

- 3 min     **Roll call and follow protocol to move desks into a circle.**
- 20 min     **Discuss questions**  
Select questions from handed in questions the day before. Select the most commonly asked questions, and make sure at least one question from each group is selected. As a whole class, discuss possible answers to questions.
- 2 min     **Opening sequence of the Showtime series *Dexter***  
This two minute video depicts the morning routine of the character Dexter, an expert blood spatter detective and loving father/husband who moonlights as a serial killer. His victims are the murderers and rapists whom the justice system fails to catch. In other words, Dexter is a vigilante crime fighter ridding Miami of its worst criminals – by being a criminal himself. This video works on two levels. One, the video shows how the director of *Dexter* uses editing, lighting, etc to manipulate the audience’s perception of everyday activities. Dexter pulling on a t-shirt and tying his shoes take on a sinister feeling of suffocating or strangling – perception versus reality at its finest. And two, the video opens discussion of Dexter’s character and whether or not he is a good guy or a bad guy. At the very

heart of this discussion is perception and reality and how, in fiction, authors can blur the line between the two – a line that Fitzgerald blurs when depicting Jay Gatsby.

15 min

**Discussion**

As a class, discuss the implications of the Dexter video in the context of the above rationale for showing the video in a unit on Perception versus Reality.

45 min

**“Gatsby in Performance” activity**

In order to have the students try their hand at manipulating perception, in groups, they will adapt a section of Chapter 2 of *The Great Gatsby* into a script and perform it. Today is about creating the script; tomorrow will be the performance. I have divided up the chapter into sections: section 1 = p. 27 – the bottom of p. 30; section 2 = p. 31 – the middle of p. 32; section 3 = p. middle of p. 32 – middle of page 36; section 4 = middle of p. 36 – end of the chapter. The number of group members depends on the number of speakers in a scene. Each group should have one writer/director who is not expected to perform and one person for each character depicted in the section of the chapter that the group is performing. In order for the numbers to work, more than one group might have to perform the same section, and certain groups might have to employ cross gender casting. Each group has a certain amount of dialogue and a certain amount of narration. Both aspects need to be represented in the performance. Although all group members should contribute to the collaboration, the role of writer/director has final say on how the group handles dialogue/narration and on deciding stage directions. Therefore, the role of writer/director should be chosen accordingly. Narration and dialogue can be cut/changed but should remain true to the characters/story. Two questions that each group should keep in mind are: what in this section can be changed/eliminated, and how are our editing decisions affecting the audience’s perception of this section of the chapter? \*\*Oscars will be awarded for the winner’s choice of either extra credit or an extra homework pass.

5 min

**Clean and Pack up.**

Homework:

Dialogue journal entry. Topic: Today in groups, you turned part of Chapter 2 of *The Great Gatsby* into a script. How do you think your group’s performance of this section of the chapter will affect your audience’s (the class) understanding of the novel? And, students should rehearse their parts for tomorrow’s performance.

**Day 4**

5 min

**Roll call and other administrative duties**

30 min

**Chapter 2 in performance**

Each will group will perform their sections of Chapter 2 in sequence.

15 min

**Feedback**

As a class, we will discuss the various performances of Chapter 2. We will give warm comments to each group. I will announce the Oscar winners (Best Actress, Best Actor, Best Writer/Director, Best Ensemble).

15 min

**Discuss book covers and movie posters**

- Students will follow protocol to get into groups of 3-4. I will pass around photocopies of the various book covers and movie posters for *The Great Gatsby*. The students will discuss how the various book jackets and posters might affect perceptions of the novel for people who know nothing of the novel. Focus question: how would you change the book cover or movie poster according to your own perceptions of the novel?
- 20 min **“You can’t judge a book by its cover (or movie poster)” activity**  
 Because *The Great Gatsby* is about a man who invents another side of his persona to alter a woman’s perception of him, I want the students to continue thinking about how people can change who they are according to the circumstances. To use Dexter as an example, by day he is a law-abiding father and husband. By night, Dexter is a murderer of murderers. All humans, usually to a less sinister degree, have multiple selves. Therefore, in this activity, students will create two book covers, two movie posters, or one of each to represent two different sides of their selves – the cheerleader versus the debate captain, the dutiful daughter versus the crazy best friend, the musician versus the jock, etc. The focus question: how do I want people to perceive the self reflected in this movie poster/book cover? Students are encouraged to be creative with their titles, quotes, blurbs, tag lines, names of production teams, etc.
- 5 min **Clean up and Pack**  
 Homework: Finish book covers

**Day 5**

- 5 min **Roll call and follow protocol to get into groups**  
 10 min **Share book covers**  
 Students will explain their book covers/movie posters to their group members. Each group will select one person to share their book covers/movie posters to the class. If one student’s work is selected, but he or she does not want to present, another member of the group may volunteer to present their peer’s work.
- 2 min **Student’s reading choice**  
 Students will vote on how to read Chapter 3 of *The Great Gatsby*. They can either do Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) or paired reading.
- 30 min **Read Chapter 3 of *The Great Gatsby***  
 35 min **Watch *The Great Gatsby* film**  
 Play the film until the end of Chapter 3. While students are watching, they should be taking notes on lighting, direction, camera angles, acting, etc and how the film of *The Great Gatsby* compares/contrasts with novel.
- 10 min **Dialogue Journal**  
 Topic: After reading and watching *The Great Gatsby*, how does the movie change or influence your perception of the characters/story?
- 2 min **Clean and Pack up**
- Homework: Read Chapter 4 of *The Great Gatsby*.



**Week 2 – Focus is on Reading and Comprehending *The Great Gatsby*****Day 1**

2 min	<b>Roll call and other Admin. Duties</b>
10 min	<b>Reading check quiz</b> Chapter 4 of <i>The Great Gatsby</i>
20 min	<b>Mini Lesson on Voice and Perspective</b> First, as a class, we will unpack the terms voice and perspective. What makes a person's voice unique? How does perspective influence voice? To demonstrate, I will show video clips of familiar characters with obvious voices: an innocuous clip of Stewy from <i>Family Guy</i> , Yoda from <i>Star Wars</i> , Simon Cowell from <i>American Idol</i> , Daffy Duck or other Disney characters. <i>Family guy</i> is especially illuminating because Seth McFarlane voices four different main characters, all of whom have distinct voices and perspectives.
3 min	<b>Follow protocol to get into groups of 3-4</b>
10 min	<b>Discussion of Voice and Perspective</b> Students will select a group member to take notes on the discussion to be handed in for a group grade. For discussion, students will choose three characters that they are familiar with and decide what is unique about the different voices. What kinds of accents do they have? What types of words do they use – difficult or easy? Is there a specific speech pattern that they use frequently? Once they have picked out the obvious elements of voice, students will discuss the different perspectives of the of the characters and how they influence the characters' voices. Are they genuine? Sarcastic? Condescending, etc?
15 min	<b>In-Role Writing</b> As a class we will select one character to do an in-role writing as. I will talk about the elements that make an in-role writing successful: voice and perspective, but also new information about an event in the story based on given understanding about how a particular character feels about other characters/events in given story. For example, using yoda, we should capture his unique voice (transposes objectival phrases and noun/verb phrases, has a distinct sounding accent), perspective (wise, witty), but he is slightly agitated with Luke and knows more than Luke about the given circumstances. What would he write in his journal about his interactions with Luke after trying to get Luke to use the force to lift the ship out of the swamp?
10 min	<b>In-Role Writing in groups</b> In their same groups, students will select a character other than Yodato do an in-role writing as.
23 min	<b>Feedback and Revision</b> One group will volunteer to share their in-role writing. As a class, we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. We will revise the in-role writing to make it stronger. If time permits, will do the same for another group's in-role writing. At the end of the revision section, I will assign the night's homework.
2 min	<b>Clean and Pack up</b>

Homework: Pick three characters from *The Great Gatsby* and write a five-line analysis of the characters' voice and perspective based on the work we did in class.

**Day 2**

- 5 min           **Roll call and collect Homework**
- 35 min       **Read Chapter 5 of *The Great Gatsby***  
 For this chapter, we will listen to Tim Robbins' narration of *The Great Gatsby*, which has gained the favor of many 11<sup>th</sup> graders of all reading levels.
- 10 min       **Follow protocol to get into groups of 3-4**  
 Each student will pick a quote from a hat. Each group "pod" will represent a character from \*G. Students will match their quote with the character, and that will be their group for the day.
- 10 min       **In-Role Writing**  
 As a group, students will select a "writer" and do an in-role writing for the G character that they selected from the hat. Students should consider the feedback and revision from the day before and do their best to make the in-role writing strong. The "writer" will be transcribing the in-role writing and will turn in the writing for a group grade. The write-up will not be graded for form or format – only content.
- 15 min       **Share In-Role Writing**  
 Before turning in their writings, groups will share in-role writings with the whole class.
- 13 min       **Assign individual In-Role Writing and rubric**  
 Hand out assignment sheets (See Appendix A) and go over them. Initial drafts will be due Friday. Answer the inevitable onslaught of questions ☺
- 2 min         Clean and Pack up

Homework: Begin working on In-Role Writing

\* From here on G will stand for *The Great Gatsby*.

**Day 3**

- 2 min           **Roll call and Admin. Duties**
- 20 min       **Mini Lesson on questions**  
 Questions that promote critical thinking are crucial to meaningful discussion. During this lesson, I will talk about what makes a question one that promotes critical thinking. For example, a question about the location of West Egg versus East Egg in G has a right or wrong answer. However, a question about why certain types of characters reside in either Egg is open-ended and might have multiple answers. Even better are questions that burn and seem to have no answer at all. Why does Tom have to be such an A-hole? I call these questions "Ask the author" questions. They are the questions that you would ask the author if you had

five minutes of their time. In other words, a person might not ask Fitzgerald questions that have a definitive answer and can be easily gleaned by the plot. If a student had five minutes with the author, instead they might ask deeper questions that only the author might have the answer to. In this lesson, we will discuss how to come up with these questions.

50 min

**Illustrated reading of G**

As we listen to Tim Robbins read Chapter 6 of G, I will stop the CD at various points for students to illustrate what they just heard/read. Illustrating while reading is a great tool for visual learners. By helping students think about what the story “looks like,” illustrations can help with comprehension. This technique has been successfully used with students who have learning disabilities and perform at low reading levels. Therefore, illustration should be a great way to increase the comprehension skills of on-level students. At the very least, illustrating might keep them awake! Even though this method takes quite a bit longer than regular comprehension discussions, it is worth it.

3 min

**Follow protocol to get into pairs**

10 min

**“Ask the Author” questions**

In pairs, students will come up with no less than 3 “Ask the Author” questions for G, one of which should be about Chapter 6. One person in the pair should make a separate copy of the questions to turn in after the discussion.

Homework:

Students will answer, with their opinion, the “Ask the Author” questions that they came up with in pairs.

**Day 4**

5 min

**Roll call and collect Homework**

5 min

**Vote on how to “read” G**

35 min

**Read Chapter 7 of G**

50 min

**Discussion of “Ask the Author” questions**

From a hat, I will pick out questions that the students came up with the day before in pairs. We will discuss them accordingly. If this discussion is lively and sustained, I will allow it to go on for the rest of the period. If it falls flat, we can move on and work on the In-Role Writings that are due tomorrow.

5 min

**Clean and pack up**

Homework:

Work on In-Role Writing that is due tomorrow

**Day 5**

10 min

**Roll call, collect In-Role Writing, pass back homework grades from the week  
Dialogue Journal**

20 min

For 10 minutes, students will write in their journal about the topic of their choosing, as long as it is about G. They might expound on a comment previously

made in discussion. They might write about a point that they wanted to make in a discussion but never had the chance to contribute. They might simply write critically about what they have read of the novel so far. For the second 10 minutes, they will have the opportunity to write a response to their partner's entry.

13 min

**Design Project**

Hand out Assignment sheet and Rubric for Design Projects (Appendix B) and answer questions about the assignment.

45 min

**Watch G movie from chapter 3-7**

As we watch the movie, I will be stopping it from time to time to discuss directional choices and how they affect perception.

Homework: Finish reading G and come up with 3 potential ideas for Design Project (to be handed in on Monday).

**Week 3 – Synthesis and Wrap-Up**

**Day 1**

5 min

**Roll call, return In-Role Writing with feedback, collect Design Project ideas**

10 min

**Reading check quiz**

Students will be quizzed on basic comprehension for Chapters 8 and 9 of G.

20 min

**Chalk Talk**

I will write the topic “Gatsby’s Greatness” on the board. On one side of the heading, I will write “Perception.” On the other side I will write “Reality.” At the end of the novel, Gatsby’s greatness is called into question. Whether or not Gatsby, a man who comes from nothing and bootlegs his way to riches all for the love of a married woman, is *great* is a matter of debate and opinion. At the end of the novel, Nick gives his opinion about what made Gatsby great. I want the students to be given a chance to “voice” their opinion on the subject. Therefore, the students will participate in a chalk talk on the perceptions and realities of Gatsby’s greatness.

10 min

**Whole class discussion**

We will follow up the chalk talk with a verbal discussion of the ideas generated on the board. Of course, the timing will depend on the discussion. If the discussion is lively, I will allow it to continue for the remainder of the class period. If the discussion becomes stilted, I have the media center reserved for research and work on the Design Project.

40 min

**Design Project**

Students will use this valuable class time to begin researching and working on their final projects. At this time, each student should have three possible avenues to pursue with their design project. As they are working on deciding which way to go, I will be walking around and conferencing individually on the direction of their project.

5 min

**Clean and pack up**

Homework: Work on In-Role Writing revisions and final project.

**Day 2**

5 min

**Roll call and Pass out copies of *New Yorker* article**

5 min

**Introduce article**

Students will be doing a jigsaw reading of “Trial by fire: Did Texas execute an innocent man?” by David Grann. This article tells the story of Cameron Willingham, a man who was almost certainly innocent when he was executed for killing his three young daughters by arson. Willingham’s conviction was secured primarily through “expert” and eyewitness testimony that changed after perceptions were altered by erroneous “facts.” However, the story will not be introduced to them as such. I will merely give them the different sides to the story and tell them that Willingham’s innocence has yet to be proven – which it hasn’t.

15 min

**Read a section of the article**

The Willingham article will be divided into four sections – each section can be understood independent of the others. Each person will read his or her section and write a brief reaction to what he or she read – impressions of Willingham, thoughts on his guilt or innocence.

2 min

**Follow protocol to get into groups of four.**

Article sections 1, 2, 3, and 4 should be in one group.

15 min

**Discuss sections and individual perceptions**

Based on what is read, each student should have a unique perception of the case. Together, they should piece together a new perception based on the collective’s understanding of the story. In other words, each student will bring a piece of the jigsaw that will change everyone’s perception. What are the perceptions and realities associated with the case? How do they change as new knowledge is added to the pre-existing understanding? Whose opinions change? Stay the same? Why or why not? A note taker will be selected to document the group’s discussion to be turned in for a group grade.

20 min

**Mini Lesson on court cases**

Using the *New Yorker* article, I will talk about the different roles that are “played” during a trial – judges, lawyers, defendants – and how evidence is used to either dispute or prove a claim. What was the evidence used to support or dispute the claims made during the Willingham trial and after? How much of this “evidence” is perception? How much is reality?

25 min

**Gatsby and Daisy on trial**

I will divide the class into groups of five. In G, debate surrounds whether or not the events leading to Myrtle’s death is Daisy’s fault or Gatsby’s fault. Each group must decide whether or not they are going to put Gatsby or Daisy “on trial” for the events that lead up to and include Myrtle’s death. Each group must also decide on roles: 2 prosecuting lawyers, 2 defending lawyers, and 1 person to be either Gatsby or Daisy. They will spend the next day putting together a “trial” for their respective characters. During the trial, the prosecuting lawyers should find textual evidence that supports the claim that “everything” is Daisy/Gatsby’s fault, the defending lawyers should find textual evidence that disputes the claim. The

lawyers on each side should prepare questions based on the evidence and ask Daisy/Gatsby to answer the questions during “the trial.” Groups will decide together how to divide responsibilities. However, the role of Daisy/Gatsby should also be the note taker for the group and document the group’s discussion. This double role will help facilitate Daisy/Gatsby’s conferring with both sides. Each lawyer will deliver either an opening or closing argument that reflects the questions and evidence collected during the group’s collaboration. Arguments and questions do not need to be memorized. Groups presenting the strongest trial will be awarded the “gift” of their choosing: extra credit, extra homework passes, exemption from a major assessment, breakfast from Chic-Fil-A on me, etc.

3 min

**Clean and pack up**

Homework: Revise In-Role Writing. Think about G trial. Work on final project

### **Day 3**

5 min

**Roll call, collect In-Role Writing revisions**

80 min

**Gatsby/Daisy on Trial**

Students will have the entire period to work on their trials. I will be walking around taking notes and monitoring progress, but I will also be available to answer questions that will inevitably surface during this complicated activity. At times, I may find it necessary to stop everyone and address a particular issue that seems common.

5 min

**Clean and pack up.**

Homework: Polish trial. Work on final project.

### **Day 4**

2 min

**Roll call and Admin duties**

60 min

**Present trials**

Students will have 10 minutes each to present trials. Notes taken during the group process should be turned in before each group presents.

25 min

**Peer editing**

In pairs (or groups if students are doing collaborative projects), students will help each other edit their final projects. Pairs will decide on the protocol for peer editing -- only warm comments, only cool comments, both warm and cool comments – and individuals will decide on the focus of his or her revision – grammar, word choice, ideas, creativity, etc. I will be walking around to offer one on one feedback.

3 min

**Clean and pack up**

Homework: Work on final project.

**Day 5**

2 min

**Roll call and Admin**

30 min

**Watch the end of G movie**

For \*extra credit, students can write a 2 page double spaced review of G movie and how it compares/contrasts with the novel -- due Monday.

30 min

**Design Projects**

Students will have extra time to put the finishing touches to their final projects. We have the media center reserved for students who need the computer to polish their projects. Projects are due at the end of class.

25 min

**Project presentations**

For \*extra credit, students may elect to present their final projects to the class. During this time, attention must be given to the presenter. Therefore, students not presenting may not be working on their projects. If only one or two (or no one) decides to present, the extra time may be allotted to working on final projects. If students are finished with their projects and do not wish to work further, they can work on the extra credit assignment attached to G movie. If they have completed the extra credit assignment, they may work silently on something else. They may not sleep or be disruptive.

5 min

**Clean and pack up**

Final projects are students' ticket out of the door.

Homework: Enjoy the weekend!

\* As always, extra credit values are to be determined based on the quality of the work and the effort put into it.

## Appendix A

### **Dialogue Journal**

#### **Due Monday after week 3 of unit**

You will select a partner and, in pairs, you will dialogue through the journal format of your choice (literal journal, email, Facebook email) about the texts and themes presented throughout the unit. This will give you another method of expressing your thoughts and opinions and will also give you the opportunity to experience one of your peer's perspectives of the texts and themes. I encourage you to be as informal as you want to be – whatever keeps the conversation going – as long as you stay on task.

The purpose of this activity is to give you and your partner a place to have an open forum to discuss your ideas. Classroom discussion is great, but sometimes not all students feel comfortable enough to participate freely or if they do, sometimes the conversation moves on before they have a chance to express a relevant thought or feeling. By employing a dialogue journal, you can have another opportunity to express yourself or expand the conversation or bounce ideas back and forth.

This assignment will include:

- A minimum of two entries/responses to an entry a week.
- Entries/comments that are no less than 200 words total; responses no less than 100.
- Entries with either informal or formal language, text ease, etc. – student's choice. But no Pig Latin please.
- Entries that address either the texts or themes that we are discussing in class. Straying off topic is allowed as long as it is a logical deviation – the prom may very well logically follow a discussion of *Gatsby*, but the conversation should continue to be relevant to the text and/or theme.
- Demonstration that students are critically thinking independently AND using peers to help them construct new meanings/understanding.

\* Please note that you will be given the opportunity in class to write in your journal. However, do not depend on class time for the entirety of required entries. You and your partner will need to coordinate outside of class to fulfill this assignment.

\*\* Over for rubric \*\*



**Rubric for Dialogue Journal:**

Dialogue Journals receiving an A will:

- Have the appropriate number of entries: 2 entries and two responses a week
- Include only conversations that have obvious connections to the theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a B will:

- Have one entry or response missing
- Includes a conversation that has nothing to do with theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a C will:

- Have only two out of four entries/responses
- Have multiple conversations that have nothing to do with theme/texts of unit

Dialogue Journals receiving a D will:

- Only have one entry or response
- Will not connect to theme/texts of unit

Failing Dialogue Journals will:

- Not exist

\*a note on conversations that are not connected to the texts: many times this happens logically and organically when we are talking about texts and themes. It is ok if this happens. You will not be counted off for it. My only concern is that you not use the dialogue journal to make plans for the weekend, etc.

\*\* if your dialogue partner does not keep up with entries so that you do not have anything to respond to, you can make up for it by adding another (abbreviated) entry to your side.

## Appendix B

### **In-Role Writing**

#### **Initial draft due Friday – week 2 of unit**

You will create a piece of writing that reflects the voice and perspective of a character other than Nick (the narrator) in *The Great Gatsby*. This activity closely resembles fanfiction. Possible ideas for the piece include but are not limited to a diary entry, what characters would say in a reality TV style confessional after particular scenes, a scene that represents action before the start of the novel or after the novel ends, a scene that occurs during the novel that the reader does not see, or a re-telling of a scene in the novel using a different character's voice as narrator. The main criteria are 1) you must stay true to the spirit of the characters and 2) you may NOT change the actual events of the novel. Another option for the assignment is an in-role writing as a previously discussed character from another text in the unit who has been dropped into *The Great Gatsby* – how do they fit in, what do they think of other characters, does their presence change the story, how? For the second option, see me for approval. Remember: No approval = No grade.

This assignment will include:

- No less than 2 pages double spaced
- You may combine options in order to achieve the 2 page minimum. For example, one diary entry to accompany a scene told from Daisy's perspective.
- Appropriate use of character, setting, and events. Points will be deducted for gross deviations from character, etc.
- Evidence from the text to substantiate new material
- A demonstration of how different perspectives create new meanings and truths behind events and attitudes

\*\* Over for rubric \*\*

**Rubric for In-Role Writing:**

In-Role Writing receiving an A will:

- Be a minimum of 2 full pages double-spaced. You can choose to fill the two pages with a combination of ideas. For example, a diary entry can be one page and the next page can be a re-told scene that pertains to the diary entry.
- Use a voice that is distinct to the character from whose perspective you are writing. For example, if you are writing a scene from Jordan's perspective, a detached "too cool for school" tone might be appropriate.
- Stay true to the character and events of the novel AND add a deeper meaning to the character and events. For example, you write a diary entry that offers an explanation of why a character has done something and acted a certain way – but only when an explanation has not been already offered by the text.
- Offer new insights into the text. For example, you write a scene that takes place after the story ends that shows how the characters have changed/grown because of their experiences that we witness in the novel.
- Show a plausible yet different perspective than Nick's – one that makes sense with the information presented in the text but contradicts what our given narrator believes to be the truth.

In-Role Writing receiving a B will:

- Be less than 2 pages double-spaced
- Use a voice that is not immediately and clearly identifiable as the character from whose perspective you are writing. For example, you portray Jordan as too upbeat and perky.
- Stay true to character for the most part but maybe once or twice I go "Wha? Would Jordan Baker really run naked in a rainstorm?"
- Be plausible and interesting but do not offer any new insights into the characters and events of the novel. For example, you re-write a scene from Jordan's perspective, but all you really do is re-tell the same events with a detached, "over it" tone. An A paper might include Jordan's inner monologue.

In-Role Writing receiving a C will:

- Be no more than 1 page double-spaced
- Make obvious and/or extreme deviations from character.
- Include writings that are completely implausible given our understanding of the text.

In-role Writing receiving a D will:

- Makes me wonder if you have ever even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.
- Be written from the perspective of a character I have never heard before. I might really enjoy it but I will not be able to honor its brilliance with a grade it deserves if it does not pertain to *The Great Gatsby*.
- Be significantly less than 1 page double-spaced.

In-role Writing receiving a Failing grade will:

- Contain words that are gibberish, or the same word typed over and over again. In other words, if you make an honest attempt to complete this assignment, you cannot fail.

### Appendix C

#### **Design Project with accompanying Rationale**

##### **Due Friday – week 3 of the unit**

You will create a design that is a reflection of your perception of *The Great Gatsby*. Pretend that we are putting on some type of production of the novel, you will produce some aspect of the production, which includes but is not limited to a movie poster, costume, setting, performance of a scene, soundtrack, etc. You will also provide a two page, double spaced rationale for your product, which will include cited evidence from the text and one secondary research source. You may work in collaborative pairs or groups, but each one of you must create an individual design and rationale. For example, three of you might want to design the sets, costumes, and lights for the same scene of the same production of *The Great Gatsby*.

I want you to present your own perception of *Gatsby*. Therefore, you should use the new knowledge discovered during the research portion (time period, etc) to construct a creative representation of his or her perception of the novel – whether or not the creative product is a reflection of the actual time period. For example, if you design costumes, you might research fashion of the 20's and either use your findings to design period costumes or use your findings as inspiration to create costumes for a modern production. Using production aspects is, more than anything, an idea generator. If you want to come up with another similar idea, then you may do something different, but you must obtain approval. Remember: No approval = No grade.

This assignment should include the following:

- A creative product based on your design concept which is a reflection of your perception of the characters, time period, character perspectives, tone, and/or imagery of the novel
- 2 page rationale which explains the design concept and uses evidence from the text/cursory research to support the design
- Emphasis will be placed on the creative product. The rationale is merely a means for me and to better understand the thought process that went into creating the product.
- To reflect the weight of the product and rationale, on a 100 point scale, the creative product will be worth 75 points, and the rationale will be worth 25.

\*\* over for rubric for assignment \*\*

Rubric for Design Project:

Designs receiving an A will:

- Be well thought out and reflect a clear, cohesive perception of some aspect of the novel. For example, if you are designing a costume, don't just copy a dress from the 20's, design a costume for Daisy for a specific scene in the novel.
- Use evidence from the text to support your concept and explain it in your rationale. For example, if you put Daisy in an exquisite gown for the party, the evidence could be that she is a member of high society so she would wear something exquisite.
- Show an obvious connection of the design to the text. For example, if the text describes an actual costume, you might use details from the description.
- Honor creativity and thinking outside of the box. For example, instead of merely coloring Daisy's costume on a paper, include sample material or inspiration photos from the internet/magazines.
- Have a rationale that clearly explains the thought process of your design. It answers the questions of why you chose this design and the steps you took to execute it. Your rationale includes quotes from the text as evidence and employs a secondary source to aid in inspiring and informing your design.

Designs receiving a B will:

- Be creative and interesting, but maybe little thought was given to the text. For example, if you are creating a soundtrack, you use all jazz tunes, but one or two songs do not relate to the events of the novel.
- Show obvious connections to the text but maybe little thought was given to the creative product. For example, the songs of your soundtrack are all jazz tunes about unrequited love. What about the rest of the novel?
- Have ideas that are creative, but maybe you didn't go the extra mile in the execution of the product. For example, you wrote down all of names of the songs, the artist, and sample lyrics, but you did not provide audio samples.
- Have a rationale that explains your choice of design but does not clearly define your thought process in creating it, or vice versa. You use quotes from the text but not a secondary source, or vice versa.

Designs receiving a C will:

- The product mostly connects to the text.
- Have evidence or details from the text that do not clearly support your design.
- Contain ideas that are somewhat creative but fall short of thoughtful execution. For example, your movie poster is drawn with a pen on loose-leaf paper.
- Have a rationale that does not clearly define why you selected your design or how went about creating it. You do not use quotes from the text or a secondary source.

Designs receiving a D will:

- Make me wonder if you have even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.
- A rationale that makes me wonder if you have even heard of *The Great Gatsby*.

Your design will receive a Failing grade if:

- You do not turn in a design and/or rationale. In other words, if you make an honest attempt at doing this assignment, you cannot fail.