*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

**Assignment:**

* Compose a well-constructed essay examining one of the options below.
* Your essay should be at least four paragraphs in length, adhere to all MLA submission guidelines, include a minimum of one supporting quote per paragraph, completely answer the prompt, and display a sophisticated writing style representative of Honors-level work.
* It is highly recommended that you immediately begin organizing your thoughts and textual support. An essay written in haste is almost always a poorly written essay.
* You will type your rough draft in class on Wednesday, March 27
* Your final draft will be due to turnitin.com at a date TBD following Spring Break.

**Prompts:**

**1. The American Dream:**

James Truslow Adams, writing in *The Epic of America* (1931), coined the term “The American Dream,” and said this:

*“The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are,regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.”*

The Great Gatsby has long been considered “a novel about the death of the American Dream.” Explain how the novel does or does not demonstrate the death of the American Dream. Is the main theme of Gatsby indeed “the withering American Dream”? (Reference the characteristics of the American Dream within the body of your paper.) Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**2. Gatsby’s Greatness:**

In the first chapter, Nick says:

“Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—

Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is a series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him…it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end. It is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and the short-winded elations of men.”

Consider this passage and write an essay analyzing the title of *The Great Gatsby*. Is Gatsby great? If he is, what has he done to earn this title? If not, is Fitzgerald being literal or ironic? This is a literary analysis topic – so you must show depth of thought in your work. Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**3. Nick’s Role in the Novel:**

In a novel or play, a confidante is a character, often a friend or relative of the hero or heroine, whose role is to be present when the hero or heroine needs a sympathetic listener to confide in. Frequently the result is, as Henry James remarked, that the confidante can be as much "the reader's friend as the protagonist's." However, the author sometimes uses this character for other purposes as well.

Write an essay in which you discuss the various ways Nick functions in *The Great Gatsby*. What purpose(s) does he serve? Why is he important? (You may wish to trace the development of his character in order to track how he changes and how these changes are significant to the development of Gatsby’s story.) Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**4. Symbols**

*The Great Gatsby* contains several different symbols – the Valley of Ashes, the green light, the billboard of Dr. TJ Eckleburg, Gatsby’s car, colors, Gatsby’s shirts, and others. Choose ONE significant symbol and explain its metaphorical importance in the novel overall. Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**5. Money:**

Analyze the portrayal of wealth in the novel—the difference between “old money” and “new money” as well as the things that money can and cannot buy. How does the novel exemplify the dehumanizing/corrupting nature of wealth (consider examining characters, plot, symbols, etc.). Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**6. The Women:**

Compare and contrast the major female characters in the novel: Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle. What are their motivations/goals/interests/values? Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.

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**7. Carelessness:**

In reference to Tom and Daisy, Nick remarks, “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy; they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made” (180-181).

The word “careless” sums up one of the most important ideas in the book. Nick refers to Jordan, Tom, and Daisy as careless in one form or another. Analyze this idea of carelessness and what it signifies in the book. Use multiple examples from the novel to support your assertions and avoid excessive plot summary.