

Summer Reading Assignment

Your summer reading assignment is to read *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Besides being widely considered the great American novel and one of the greatest novels ever written, *The Great Gatsby* is often listed as a major work suggested to answer the literary argument essay question on the AP Literature exam. The novel's complexity, poetic language, and reflection of the Jazz Age make it worth a close study. You will need to know the novel well to be able to write about it FROM MEMORY multiple times. For all of these reasons, you will be held accountable for closely reading the actual novel (not a summary of the novel).

AP Lit Summer Reading Assignment:

- Join our AP Lit Summer Google Classroom by May 9, 2025, using the code: eagoudr (This Classroom is ONLY for students scheduled for AP Literature at WMHS.) (10 points)
- Complete the Gatsby historical context assignment in Google Classroom. Due Friday, August 15, 2025. I recommend you complete this BEFORE you begin reading the novel. (50 points)
- As you read *The Great Gatsby*, complete the Summer Reading tracker (100 points) assigned in our summer Google Classroom. The tracker is due Friday, August 15, 2025 and should be turned in to our Summer Google Classroom. Instructions are below.
- You will have a (100 point test) on *The Great Gatsby* on Friday, August 15, 2025. This test is designed to be sure you closely read the novel, and the test cannot be passed by instead reading a summary (Sparknotes, Shmoop, etc.). The test will cover details in the book, rather than deeper meanings and WILL ALSO ASK about the historical context.

Summer Reading Tracker - *The Great Gatsby*

In *The Great Gatsby* choose 5 sections of detailed description, points in the text where the focus is on one element as though a camera is zooming in and lingering there. The narrator might be describing a character, an object, a place, or even himself. This happens throughout the novel, but choose those that most resonate with you, capture your attention, move you, intrigue you, and/or seem to hold a deeper meaning. Then make inferences about each scene by answering one or more of the provided questions, and express those conclusions through commentary on the quote. (The suggested questions are provided below the chart.) You may choose to fill out the tracker as you read, commenting as the events unfold to you, or after you finish the novel, commenting on a section in light of the novel as a whole. I have provided an exemplar for you to give you an idea of the kind of inferences I'd like you to strive for and the format you are to follow. Use Times New Roman 12 point font. Your commentary should be analytical, but it should also be based on the text itself. This assignment is due in GC Friday, August 15, 2025.

Chapter	Description (quote and page number)	Commentary
1	“When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. 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 an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name ‘creative temperament’ - 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” (Fitzgerald 2).	Nick’s first mention of Gatsby, for whom the novel is named, introduces him as the exception to Nick’s disenchantment with the human condition, a disenchantment he associates with his experience in the East and that makes him long for morality. Nick’s yearning for order is reflected in military diction such as “uniform” and “attention,” which also reflects a desire to return to the past since he later says he had served in World War I prior to his sojourn in the East. Nick’s preferential treatment of Gatsby is linked to his characterization of Gatsby’s incredible capacity to dream that sets him apart from anyone else Nick has ever known. Nick is attracted to this quality in Gatsby, and his extreme language such as “extraordinary” and his insistence this ability to hope does not exist “in any other person” sets Gatsby apart as a potential symbol, but also raises the question of whether or not Gatsby’s dream is grounded in reality or attainable. This reference to Gatsby hearkens back to the novel’s title, <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, which conjures images of a magician performing extravagant illusions. Nick’s introductory description of Gatsby combined with the suggestion of magical deception sets Gatsby up as a potential symbol of unbridled hope, while simultaneously suggesting his character might be an elaborate show and his dream an unattainable mirage.

Questions you might consider answering in your commentary:

Who is describing the object (or person or place)?

What does this description reflect about the speaker?

What does this description reveal about a character (his feelings, motives, etc.)?

How does this description contribute to the plot of the novel?

How does this description contribute to the exploration of a thematic idea (hope, dreams, self-invention, classism, idealism, the past, etc.) in the novel?

Is this object a potential symbol? If so, what might it represent?

How does the language of the description (certain diction, syntax, figurative language, etc.) contribute to or support its meaning?

How does this description connect to or shed light on another section of the text?

How does this description connect to or shed light on the work as a whole? What might this description foreshadow?

Note: You don't have to answer all of these questions in your commentary, but this is the level of thinking I'd like you to strive for in your response.

Reminders for commentary:

- Stay in 3rd person (No we, I, our, etc.)
- Do not say "I think" or "I believe." Use a confident voice.
- Avoid "the reader" or "the author" - just talk about the text.
- Stay inside the world of the novel. Don't connect it to outside experiences or events, unless you are connecting it to the historical context of *The Great Gatsby*, which is not a bad idea. Use precise vocabulary (not vague or colloquial words like "bad," "things," "a lot"). Try to use standard conventions of English (grammar, mechanics, etc.).
- If you quote in your commentary to focus on a specific word or phrase, keep the quote very short - 6 words AT THE MOST, and integrate the quote into your own sentence. I am not making a specific length requirement as in a certain number of sentences, but you can tell by the example, you cannot write one brief sentence and expect full credit, so make a point.

PLAGIARISM (using words in the commentary that are not your own) will result in a zero on the entire summer reading assignment and the other consequences for academic dishonesty set forth by the AP program at our school. Your assignment will be checked for plagiarism when you turn it in to Google Classroom and to turnitin.com. We will set up your turnitin account the first week of school. Turnitin will flag plagiarism done by AI.