

**Unit Topic: The Great Gatsby: Characterization, Narration, and the American Dream**

**Subject Area Essential Question(s):**

- How does analyzing literature allow us to access and learn from deeper meanings of texts?
- How can we learn more about the past and present by connecting historical and current events to literature?
- How can we use literature to develop and support arguments about themes, conflicts, characters, and larger world connections?

**Unit Level Essential Question(s):**

- How does narration style impact our understanding of events and characters in a text?
- What was the social and political climate of the 1920s, and how are these ideas reflected in *The Great Gatsby*?
- What qualities allow a novel to endure over time, and why do we still read *The Great Gatsby* today?
- What is the American Dream, and how is this trope seen in the novel?

**Goals**

**A: Skills**

- Trace symbols in the novel to support themes and character development
- Analyze how an unreliable narrator impacts the understanding of a novel's plot and characters
- Apply knowledge of the 1920s (social, economic, political) to the novel and discuss how the time period impacts/ is reflected in the work
- Discuss the nature of the American Dream in the novel using textual evidence
- Evaluate why the novel is still read today based on themes and character motivations that carry over into modern society
- Make predictions about the novel based on analysis of cover art and images

**MA Frameworks**

- MA-W-1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
  - a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - b. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
  - c. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
  - d. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- MA-W-5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

- MA-SL-1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
  - b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
  - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
  - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- MA-RL-1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- MA-RL-3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- MA-RL-5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

#### **Schoolwide Objectives and Benchmark Skills**

- Communicator - Expressive and Receptive
  - Comprehends an overall text, including: vocabulary, main idea, supporting details, conflict/plot, theme, thesis, text structure
  - Engages in a range of collaborative discussions.
  - Acknowledges new information and various perspectives.
  - Develops and strengthens ideas by producing multiple drafts and going through the stages of the writing process.
- Investigator - Inquiry and Innovation
  - Determines an author's purpose or point of view.
  - Assesses how point of view shapes a text.
  - Cites evidence from a text to support one's own analysis, reflection and research.
  - Analyzes word choice, idea development, reasoning, relevance and text structure.
  - Uses valid reasoning and relevant, sufficient evidence.
- Self-Directed Learner - Self Awareness Skills and Skills in Taking Responsibility
  - Seeks out help when needed.
  - Uses feedback to improve/refine skills.
  - Connects and compares the text to self.
  - Edits and revises own writing.
- Community Steward - Skills in Awareness of Others and Collaboration Skills
  - Empathizes with others' point of view, even if separated by time period, issue or experience.
  - Connects and compares the text to society, and text to world.
  - Considers and references the ideas of others during discussions and group work.

- Provides clear and appropriate feedback during peer-editing activities.

*What specific skills, related to this topic, are stated or implied in the MA Curriculum Framework? In our Schoolwide Objectives and Benchmark Skills? Are there any other specific skills that should be introduced or practiced in this unit?*

### **B: Content Knowledge**

- Historical context about the 1920s in the United States (the role of women, prohibition, cultural changes such as the Harlem Renaissance, etc.)
- Definition of the American Dream and its accessibility for different groups of people
- Definition and characteristics of an unreliable narrator
- Steps to develop a thesis statement and analyze quotes

### **C: Understandings**

- How the social changes of the 1920s influenced the characters and plot of the novel
- How to recognize, analyze, and speak back to forms of covert racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination in the novel (Wolfsheim and antisemitism, black characters, etc.)
- How symbols in the text (the yellow car, the green light, weather and seasons, Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, etc.) contribute to a deeper understanding of the work
- How an unreliable narrator shapes one's understanding of events and characters, and how to be productively critical of narration styles
- How to use evidence effectively to respond to different writing and discussion prompts
- How writing from a character's point of view can enhance one's understanding of characters and key plot points
- How to construct a thesis statement that responds to a multi-question prompt, and how to support this claim with textual evidence
- How to introduce, cite, and analyze quotes from a text

### **Evidence of Students' Reaching Goals:**

- Daily Work
  - Class and group discussions (assigned discussion questions)
  - Journal Prompts allowing for connections to characters and situations
  - Re-writing important scenes from different characters' perspectives
  - Intertext work using historical background readings, literary criticisms, etc.
  - Homework - double sided notes using textual evidence, marking for literary elements in the text
- Assessments
  - Research project and presentation on the 1920s (pre-reading assessment)
  - Re-writing of a pivotal scene, dramatic production of that scene, and interviews conducted from the perspective of the characters
  - Socratic Seminar

**Inquiry - and Skill-Based Teaching and Learning Ideas:**

- Entry points: Powerpoint with novel covers, reflecting on color, imagery and themes
- Clear information: Presentations on history of the 1920s by fellow students
- Model skills, skill instruction, and practice skills: close reading modeling and work on select passages
- Feedback: on-going verbal feedback to small groups and individuals during classwork, written feedback on interview drafts and two-sided note analysis.
- Individual, small group, and whole class work with discussion questions; socratic seminar
- Video clips from the 1974 and 2013 movies, discussion questions, graphic organizers, taking notes from slides, discussing with peers
- Moving around room to discuss with various classmates
- Teacher chosen groups and student chosen groups

**Key Texts and Resources:**

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Images of previous editions of the novel for comparison

Graphic Organizers, Character Maps and Two-Sided Notes Handouts

Google Classroom Sources for small group research projects on Fitzgerald and the 1920s

Clips from the 1974 Film and the 2013 Film