

Deerfield-Windsor School
11th Grade AC American Literature and Composition
Summer Reading 2023

This summer assignment is to prepare you for the rigor of AC English III. This book and the accompanying tasks were selected because of their literary merit. By choosing AC English, you are committing yourself to a level of study that will require you to be an independent, connected, and thoughtful reader. This assignment typifies what is expected of you in this class.

Required Summer Reading

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Supplemental articles provided below

Assignment

1) Read and annotate the book.

- a) Annotate your novel, looking for key ideas about America - her values, opportunities and shortcomings. You might use [this reading focus guide](#) as a tool for noticing what is important - this will be a starting point for class discussion and a review aid for the test.

2) Argumentative essays to supplement and extend *The Great Gatsby* - These articles will start our practice of making connection between literary and rhetorical sources; we will look to journalism and social commentary for ideas and evidence that will further our discussion of *The Great Gatsby*

- a) **“The 9.9 Percent is the New American Aristocracy” by Matthew Stewart** Matthew Stewart’s thorough examination of the American Dream appeared in the magazine *The Atlantic* in 2018, and it combines several modes of argumentation starting with his own personal narrative before branching off to economic and sociological ways of looking at the state of American society. It references an economic indicator called the Gatsby Curve if that clues you in on the reason for reading it alongside the novel. It’s long but worth your time. [Click here to download the article.](#)
- b) **“The Crooked Ladder” by Malcolm Gladwell** - In a 2014 *New Yorker* essay, Gladwell examines the relationship between the social mobility at the heart of the American Dream and organized crime. He draws on many historical narratives of mafiosa, and combines these examples with sociological theories and concepts to

examine the paradoxical ways that organized crime operated in fairly lawful ways. Consider how these examples help you think about Gatsby and his goals, and by extension the American Dream. [Click here to download the article.](#)

- c) **“The American Dream: A Biography” by Jon Meacham** - Even though Meacham examined the lifeblood of the American dream in 2012, the parallels between the lingering effects of the recession spurred by the housing crisis of 2008 seem pretty apt with the uncertainty of how and when the American economy and life will return to “normal” after the pandemic this year. [Click here to download the article.](#)

- 3) **ANNOTATE THE ARTICLES** – As you read the articles, make margin notes (not just highlights and underlines) to summarize the author’s claims (main ideas) and subclaims (supporting ideas). Also make notes on effective pieces of evidence. You might also note how the ideas in the articles connect to characters, situations, conflicts and themes in *The Great Gatsby*.
- 4) **WRITE SOCRATIC SEMINAR QUESTIONS** – For each article, write FOUR open-ended discussion questions. These should be typed and in MLA format. Make sure that you can answer your own questions. You should have TWO questions related to your view of the argument and TWO questions that connect passages of the argument to characters, incidents or ideas in *The Great Gatsby*. We will use these annotated articles and questions for a socratic seminar on *The Great Gatsby* and the American Dream in the first week of school.

- a) Here’s an EXAMPLE of each question type

- i) **ON THE ARTICLE’S ARGUMENT** - What does Stewart’s metaphor about the rubberband and the ladder on page 3 tell us about the ways that the economic class into which one is born leads to the ability to either rise or fall in social mobility?
- ii) **ON THE ARTICLE’S CONNECTION TO GATSBY** - On page 2, Gladwell notes that only four members of the fourth-generation sprawling Lupollo-Salemi-Alcamo-Tucci family were involved in organized crime. All the other members had managed to make it into the socially-acceptable middle class. In what ways does Jay Gatsby similarly hide his illegal activities in order to appear acceptable to the elites of East Egg?

- 5) **Essay** - In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Buchanan says that she hopes her daughter will be “a beautiful little fool.” Daisy believes that, in some cases at least, ignorance is bliss. The contradictory attitude is the commonly-stated belief that “Knowledge is power.”

In a well-organized, 2-3 page, MLA formatted essay, take a position on which of these two ideas is the more valid. Your claim should be supported using the text as well as evidence from a variety of sources.

Once School Starts:

1. Reading Test:

- a. During the first week of school, you will take a reading test on the **content** of *The Great Gatsby*.
- b. You will be given a copy of the Honor Pledge and will sign it in order to affirm that all Summer Reading work is your own.

2. Socratic Seminar:

- a. During the second week of school, you will have a socratic seminar.
- b. As a class we will engage in a conversation about the book. Your goal will be to demonstrate that you have read the entire text deeply and thoroughly, that you have reflected on the text and have questions and ideas about it, and that you are familiar enough with the text to move around it easily - finding annotations that you think are especially important.

3. Writing Test

- a. During the first week of school, you will be given a writing test during a class period.
- b. Your goal will be to demonstrate that you have read the entire text deeply and thoroughly and that you have reflected on the text and are familiar enough with the text to express your own evaluation of the content and intended meanings.

What you will turn in on Day 1 Checklist:

- ☐ 3 annotated articles
- ☐ 4 Socratic Seminar questions for EACH article (12 total)
- ☐ 1 MLA formatted essay

**be prepared to provide a hard copy as well as a digital copy of each portion of the assignment*

