English 351 – The Great Gatsby: Summative Essay

TARGET: Students will evaluate Gatsby as a text fitting with one of the 7 schools of literary criticism. Having decided that school, students will select and analyze a central topic that runs throughout Gatsby. Students will incorporate two outside sources as well as the novel for analysis.

STANDARDS: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information in order to address a question or solve a problem.

- Develop a claim and thoroughly supply the most relevant evidence.
- Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole.
- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS:
- Feminism: “A feminist approach to Gatsby reveals Jordan as a strong independent woman, whereas Daisy is a typically submissive house wife.”
- Psychoanalytic – Lacanian: “The green light across the bay is in the direction of Daisy, and it acts as a Lacanian symbol for hope for Gatsby, whereas the eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg in the Valley of the Ashes represent judgment and doom, a starkly contrasting symbol when compared to the light.”
- New Historicism: “A New Historic approach to Gatsby is Fitzgerald’s commentary on how the Roaring 20s and its shallow immorality led to the downfall of the American Dream.”

*Your essay’s thesis statement must be derived from your topic of choice. It must incorporate the school of criticism as well as your specific topic within that school.

RUBRIC: __/50 TOTAL

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<td>5 Thesis (Fits in school of literary criticism, incorporates an appropriate topic, is highlighted)</td>
<td>3 Topic sentence (Major point that stems from thesis)</td>
<td>5 Reworded thesis (highlighted)</td>
<td>5 Works cited page is properly formatted</td>
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<td>2 Novel title &amp; author mentioned (highlighted)</td>
<td>5 Quotes (Include lead-ins, citations, &amp; analysis sentences – quotes themselves highlighted)</td>
<td>5 At least two more sentences that close out the essay</td>
<td>5 Essay + citations formatted</td>
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<td>3 Introduction includes a hook</td>
<td>2 Summary sentence</td>
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FAQs: Yes, you must quote the book in the paper and in your Works Cited page.
Yes, you must have three sources total (can vary: 1 is the book, and the others may be books, articles, etc. about your literary school or about Gatsby, etc.)
Your font must be 12-size, Times New Roman (also look at the sample paper).
Hook must be a catchy opener to grab the reader’s attention (it “hooks” them).
Total # of quotes needed: 6 (no more, no less). May be direct, partial, paraphrased, but all must be cited.
New Humanism in *The Great Gatsby:

An Exploration of Immorality and the Human Condition

Imagine your life without a conscience to tell you what is wrong and right; perhaps you would blame yourself, or society, or who knows what. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* explores the reckless side of the human condition, the consequences of living life without a moral compass. New Humanism is about ‘spirituality,’ but the characters of *Gatsby*—the Buchanan’s particularly—represent the inverse of an anchored spiritual life.

Tom Buchanan, for instance, is the novel’s proverbial villain: he’s abusive, he’s a drunk, and he’s an adulterer. In her article, “Tom, the Magnificent Brute,” Angela Meher describes Tom as a misguided man incapable of realizing the extent of his depravity (2). Perhaps Tom wouldn’t blame himself; perhaps he’d blame others for provoking his inner turmoil, but Tom alone makes his decision to run around on Daisy, to point George Wilson Gatsby’s way, and to ‘jerkish-ly’ act on impulsive anger (such as breaking his mistress’ nose in an alcohol-fueled argument). Meher goes on to say that “due to Tom’s lack of moral guidance, he allows himself to spiral into his acts of depravity…Tom is reckless, and, though he reveals a sort of sensitivity in chapter seven, he lacks reflection or signs of awareness of how destructive he really is” (4). According to Meher, Tom is the quintessential poster boy for a lack of caring or responsibility for his actions. Though
he is not the only character in Gatsby to portray an inversion of New Humanism’s focus on ‘spirituality’ in a text, Tom, as Nick describes towards the end of the novel, “[retreats] back into [his] money” after smashing up others’ lives (Fitzgerald 255). He is a man who lives in a personal shield, and perhaps that is why he is not held accountable for his actions throughout the novel, and perhaps that is why he has no need for any moral responsibility.

Since this is an essay about the reckless side of the human condition, another character in Gatsby who desperately needs a moral anchor is the other Buchanan, Daisy, and Tom’s unhappy and equally misguided wife. This is seen as early as chapter one when her hypothetical advice for her daughter is to be a “beautiful fool” (Fitzgerald 17). Though some would call ignorance bliss, to live the life of a fool is to live recklessly, to live a naïve and idiotic existence. Daisy is no fool, however (despite the horrible life advice to her daughter), she knows when to play (running around with Gatsby) and when to go home to Tom by the novel’s end:

Is there any female character in American literature more coquettish and coveted than Daisy Fay Buchanan? She’s the most desirable debutante, the ever-evading maid. She’s warm, feverish, thrilling, intoxicating—a siren, an enchantress, a blossoming flower…Carelessness—which is also Nick Carraway’s final assessment of the Buchanans—happens to be among the nicer things that critics have said about Miss Daisy née Fay. Academics have compiled lists of the brackish opprobrium slung at Gatsby’s girl: she’s a woman of “vicious emptiness,” of “criminal amorality,” a “destroyer” and “femme fatale,” the “villain-heroine” who stands as both “Dark Lady and Fair, witch and redeemer.”
Alfred Kazin found her “vulgar and inhuman.” A literary friend judged her “vapid, naïve,” a superficial “Lotus Eater” narcotized on privilege and blind admiration (Baker 1).

_The Daily Beast_ writer Katie Baker’s article, “The Problem with _The Great Gatsby_’s Daisy Buchanan,” represents the ‘problem’ that Daisy has as a character and the ‘problem’ that her reckless actions causes other characters: she is wild, she is ‘cool,’ and she retreats to Tom who retreats to his money at the end of the day. She leads Gatsby on throughout the novel, to the point that he willingly agrees to take the fall for murdering Myrtle Wilson in the hit and run, which he tells Nick at the tail end of chapter 7 (Fitzgerald 142). Gatsby does ultimately take the fall for Daisy, as he is shot in the end by George Wilson himself, an act indirectly caused by both Buchanan’s, the reckless and villainous couple of this Roaring 20-era tragedy.

As a school of literary criticism, New Humanism examines characters’ spiritualties, but _Gatsby_ inverts New Humanism by portraying characters who altogether lack consciences. Perhaps this is too strong a critique for the Buchanan’s, but others like Nick, the morally grey person watcher, or Jordan, the scandalous athlete who prompts Nick to state that he is the only honest person he knows, lack clean slates as well (33). There truly is no hero in _Gatsby_, as the title character is a liar, a bootlegger, and a desperate-will-do-anything-to-get-Daisy individual; he, like the Buchanan’s and the mentioned others, lacks a moral compass and reveals the reckless side of humanity and a lack of a sorely needed spiritual anchor.
Works Cited

