

TASK 1: PLANNING COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (**no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts**) by typing your responses within the brackets. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored.

1. Central Focus

- a. Describe the central focus and purpose of the content you will teach in the learning segment.

[The central focus of this learning segment is 1) Learning to identify and analyze literary elements in *The Great Gatsby* 2) identifying symbols and themes in the text; 3) supporting one's claims with evidence. Related learning targets are: 1) Students read all of *The Great Gatsby*; 2) Students participate in discussions about the text; and 3) Students can form an argument using the text. The purpose is to teach students to be able to analyze the text, form arguments, and support them, all critical-thinking skills.

These three lessons build on each other. In Lesson 1, students practice analyzing symbols that have occurred in the first several chapters of the book. They look at quotations and appearances of these symbols and assign meaning to them. In the second lesson, they get explicit instruction on how to analyze the text, and they practice applying these skills through discussing Chapter 6 and looking for themes, building on the previous lesson. In Lesson 3, students look at Modernism and the theme of The Past, working as a group to derive meaning from Chapter 7.]

- b. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph in length) of salient features of the text(s) that a reviewer of your evidence, who is unfamiliar with the text(s), needs to know in order to understand your instruction. If there is more than one text, indicate the lesson(s) where each text will be the focus.

Consider including the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

[**The Text.** *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a Modernist novel set in the 1920s, is part of the standard 11th grade curriculum in many schools. It features themes such as the American Dream (the ability to improve one's life through hard work and ingenuity) and the Corrupted American Dream (cheating to get ahead, the endless acquisition of wealth), idealism and the past, and social class (old wealth, new wealth, and the poor). This novel contains the skillful use of literary symbols such as a faded billboard of an eye doctor to represent the retreating role of morality during this era. It represents a slice of American life in the 1920s through the story of Jay Gatsby, a mysterious but self-made man, who throws lavish parties. He is an example of the American Dream realized, as he has amassed a huge fortune and lives an impressive lifestyle. It is all to woo a former lover, Daisy, but his attempt to win her heart is complicated by class (new money vs. old money), her marriage, and his idealism.]

- c. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address students' abilities to use the textual references to
 - construct meaning from, interpret, or respond to complex text
 - create a written product, interpreting or responding to complex features of a text

[Given the standard CCSS.ELA.-LITERACY RL 11-12-1 “Students will demonstrate the ability to use textual references to construct meaning from complex text,” I have designed these three lessons to allow the students opportunities to analyze the symbolism and thematic elements in *The Great Gatsby*.

The central focus of these three lessons is to develop their analysis skills in several ways while reading F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*:

In Lesson 1, the main objective is to identify and analyze Fitzgerald’s use of symbols in the text. They are to identify and study a particular symbol (the colors green and gold, houses, Valley of Ashes, cars, West Egg, and East Egg, etc.), find at least two quotations, and assign meaning to those, analyzing how the author uses those symbols to represent complex ideas.

- They have the activity of designing a “symbol slide” where they describe and define their symbol, post two quotations from the text, and analyze that symbol in the first half of the book.

In Lesson 2, the students continue looking for meaning by studying Chapter 6 of the text, adding to their knowledge of symbols, and studying themes of Modernism and the American Dream. Students are to find evidence from the text in forms of quotations, properly embed them, and answer questions that help them form an argument and assign meaning to what they find.

- They practice analysis by answering questions designed to lead them to analysis
- They practice analysis in both written responses to the discussion questions and by small and large group discussion

In Lesson 3, students discuss “the Past” as a central theme of the text. Students analyze a different Modernist work (Salvador Dali’s *The Persistence of Memory*) to compare and contrast Modernist themes.

- A. Students are introduced to the theme of the Past
- B. Students compare and contrast two Modernist pieces, *The Great Gatsby* with *The Persistence of Memory*
- C. Students work cooperatively to uncover the theme of the past in the text in small discussion groups
- D. Students are given a quotation and have to practice analyzing it together.

Moreover, given the CCSS.ELA – LITERACY.RL.11-12.2) Learning objective 2, “Students will demonstrate the ability to create a written product interpreting or responding to literature,” I assigned a written summative, a “Perfect Paragraph” writing assignment to help them demonstrate their ability to analyze a text using skills they have developed through the course of these lessons.]

- d. Explain how your plans build on each other to help students **make connections** between textual references, constructions of meaning from, interpretations of, and responses to a text to deepen their learning of English Language Arts.

[The three lessons help the students read the text with understanding, form an argument, and be ready to back up their claims with evidence.

In Lesson 1, the learning objectives are: 1) Students will be able to identify symbols encountered so far in our text and wrestle with their meaning and interpretation. And 2) Students will construct an argument and produce textual evidence to support their argument.

Here's how we teach complex text in this lesson.

- Students document symbols in the first half of the book, discussing their develop and potential interpretations.
- Students are recording and discussing quotations, analyzing word choice, allusions, and other literary features in our text.

Here's how we teach literary analysis and interpretation of meaning in this lesson: We also introduce Step 1 and 2 from the lesson plan.

- We are looking at **symbols** in *The Great Gatsby*
- Students work in groups on their symbols, discussing and debating the interpretation of them (Form an argument and find evidence for it).
- Students practice their analysis skills through looking at a symbol in this assignment. They have to make an argument, support it with evidence, and find evidence for it.

In Lesson 2, the learning objectives are:

Given the text *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Chapters 6-7,

- Students will be able to construct meaning from particular quotations, practicing their analytical skills.
- Students will analyze Daisy's reaction to Gatsby's wealth.
- Students will be able to produce textual evidence to support their argument.

Here's how we teach complex text in that lesson. We go deeper in what we introduced in Lesson 1.

- We use discussion questions to help them get to the subtle meanings beyond a surface-level reading of the text.
- We employ written questions and use small and large group discussions to bring out insights.

Here's how we teach literary analysis in this lesson:

- We encourage students to think critically about literature by asking open-ended questions, challenging assumptions, and considering multiple perspectives., with the intention of teaching them that there can be several interpretations of a text and that analysis requires their own interpretative work and judgment on which explanations they accept.
- This sets the groundwork for additional practice of deriving meaning in the text from one's interpretation.

In Lesson 3, the learning objectives are:

Given the text *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Chapters 7-9,

- Students will be able to identify and define Fitzgerald's theme of Idealism & The Past.
- Students will construct meaning from a particular quotation, practicing their analytical skills in a group context
- Students will be able to produce textual evidence to support their arguments.

We also introduce these concepts of literary analysis:

- Writing a thesis statement
- Providing a quotation as evidence (properly embedding it)
- Analyzing it – answering the how and so what?
 - How do we answer the question of “why?” and “so what?”
 - How do we make sure we are supporting our thesis (our conclusion about what the text means)

Here’s how we teach complex text in that lesson. We make a link between the elements of time in a modernist painting and a modernist work of literature. We have students then discuss a theme (The Past), and work in a group to analyze a quotation.

The culminating project of all three lessons is to write a “Perfect Paragraph.” In this assignment, students take the elements of literary analysis they have been developing and put them all in practice, is an 8-sentence paragraph the students write that contains the following elements:

1. A thesis statement
2. Two quotations that support / illustrate their point that are properly embedded and situated in their context
3. Four pieces of analysis that support their argument, deal with the text, and derive meaning from it.

2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching

For each of the prompts below (2a–b), describe what you know about **your** students **with respect to the central focus** of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

- a. Prior academic learning and prerequisite skills related to the central focus—**Cite evidence of what students know, what they can do, and what they are still learning to do.**

[Students in 11th grade have been learning analysis skills, continually being asked to analyze the text and form an argument, citing evidence for their claims in their prior ELA education. Analysis is a higher-level skill, however, and these students are struggling to move beyond summary and paraphrasing and originate insights in to the text. Finding evidence and supporting their ideas with quotations is also a weak spot. It is far easier for these students to summarize and generalize, rather than successfully *analyze* and reference the text. They have worked on this through 9th and 10th grades already, but it is a higher-level skill that not many have perfected.

Lesson 2 in particular gives them explicit instruction about how to analyze and construct meaning from a text, and they get the opportunity to practice that skill in all three lessons. The intent is for them to stop generalizing and opining and back up their claims.]

- b. Personal, cultural, and community assets related to the central focus—**What do you know about your students’ everyday experiences, cultural and language backgrounds and practices, and interests?**

[Everyday experiences. The students in this classroom are busy with extracurricular activities. Many participate in sports, robotics club, leadership, music, and art. I will leverage my knowledge of their social connectivity and how they love to interact with each other by giving them assignments that permit them to collaborate. Using their peers as a resource for discussion allows them to try out ideas and gain understanding as they interact socially and academically around *The Great Gatsby*.

Students have opportunity to develop their analytical skills and use their academic vocabulary by having opportunities to discuss in small group settings. They get the opportunity in Lesson 1 to work with new groups as they find symbols, and present them as a group. In Lesson 2, they get to discuss questions at their tables, and then report; and in Lesson 2, students can practice analysis of a quote and select one member of the team to report to the class.

Prior academic learning. These students have been progressing in their understanding of American literature throughout the year. They have been working on the skills of writing a thesis, embedding quotations, and performing analysis on “textual evidence.” This lesson allowed them to practice those skills in the context of a new-to-them theme, “The Past” as we discussed a particular portion of the book. We have been teaching about Modernism for several weeks, and this allowed them to make a text-to-text connection.

Personal assets. Many of these students have interests in fields other than literature. Several of them take art classes and/or enjoy sketching, I decided to bring in a Modernist painting to allow students to compare symbols and ideas in our text with the painting. By bringing in a piece of art to discuss and make relevant to our learning, I was able to tap into some other area of their interest besides literature and attempt to draw connections there. It was also helpful for less-literary students to be able to visualize some of the Modernist concepts.

Cultural assets. (Described in 3a below.)]

3. Supporting Students’ English Language Arts Learning

Respond to prompts 3a–c below. To support your justifications, refer to the instructional materials and lesson plans you have included as part of Planning Task 1. **In addition, use principles from research and/or theory to support your justifications.**

- a. Justify how your understanding of your students’ prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets (from prompts 2a–b above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students’ prior academic learning, their assets, and research/theory.

[Cultural assets. Although we are reading Western literature, this allows students to compare the work of artists across cultures. Because several of the students are from a Hispanic background, choosing a piece of art from the Spanish-speaking world allows all our students to see cultural contributions made from an under-represented culture in our curriculum, important in building a sense of value and commonality with those students (Subero, Ignasi, and Esteban-Guitart, 2015). In a classroom where the curriculum emphasizes American literature for the year but has a diverse student body, it is necessary to bring in the assets of other cultures to inform our curriculum (Rooney, 2013). Looking at Modernism in the work of a Spanish painter and an American novelist

allows the students to make comparisons between how literature and art displays similar themes and gives several students a link to an artist from a similar culture.

Personal assets. The concept of students' "funds of knowledge" is that students not only carry cultural knowledge, but also have a working body of knowledge that is a personal asset that comes from their cultural background (Subero, Ignasi, and Esteban-Guitart, 2015). Our frequent small-group and large-group discussions allow *all* students the ability to bring their cultural perspectives and individual knowledge to bear on our subject matter. In an American-based curriculum, it allows our students, including those from India and East Asia, the ability to tap into that "fund of knowledge" and share with the classroom their insights. (Rooney, 2017) Their peers are considered a "resource" in the classroom, and these students like to work together. This fosters a collaborative approach to learning, and using their peers as a resource for discussion, for trying out ideas, and for gaining understanding enables students to have support and belonging, as well as academic discussions.]

- b. Describe and justify why your instructional strategies and planned supports are appropriate for **the whole class, individuals, and/or groups of students with specific learning needs**.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

[It is important for students to have multiple means to exhibit their learning (Flanagan, Liebling, and Meltzer, 2013). Recognizing this, I have provided a variety of ways for them to learn and demonstrate their learning.

Lesson 1 allows students to study in-depth one symbol that the author used. They got to find quotations that showed how the author used those, do some research in a group, and then have the ability to artistically demonstrate their learning, accompanied with the opportunity to verbally explain their findings.

Lessons 2 and 3 allow for small-group and large-group discussion as well. Having frequent "talk at your table" moments for students to first discuss among themselves before sharing their ideas with a large group fosters independence, increased participation, and collaboration. This allows shy students a less formal place to answer or hear answers before sharing with the large group. Evidence shows that, combined with explicit vocabulary instruction and practice, this is effective at increasing content retention as well (Swanson et. Al., 2017).

Lessons 2 and 3 have a variety of writing projects that support the goal of students identifying themes and symbols in the text, then writing about it. All the lessons are in preparation for an 11th Grade School Standard of a "Perfect Paragraph" writing assignment. These lessons give students multiple opportunities and formats to develop those skills.

Strategies and supports (IEPs/504s, EL, struggling readers, underperforming or gifted students): A recording is made available for students who find reading difficult, so they can listen to the text being read during class reading time. Most assignments are given class time to complete, and I monitor the students during that time, checking on students work and helping when they are stuck.

Offering opportunities to work collaboratively or independently affords struggling students the ability to partner with a stronger student for additional support.]

- c. Describe common student errors or misunderstandings within your central focus and how you will address them.

[Students struggle with coming up with an argument. They can find evidence in the text, but constructing meaning from it (making an argument) is challenging. It is a higher-level skill, and they have a hard time successfully moving beyond summary. I will address this through soliciting answers beyond “what happened in the text” to “why” questions in our class discussions and feedback on their writing formative assessments.

I address the difficulty with analysis explicitly in Lesson 2 with some explicit instruction on techniques and tools to successfully ask questions of the text and develop some analytical ideas. In Lesson 3, I model asking questions of the text in the lecture portion of the class period, then give them a group project where they get the support of their peers while they attempt their own analysis.]

4. Supporting English Language Arts Development Through Language

As you respond to prompts 4a–d, consider the range of students’ language assets and needs—what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them?

- a. **Language Function.** Using information about your students’ language assets and needs, identify **one** language function essential for your students to construct meaning from, respond to, or interpret text. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate for your learning segment.

Analyze	Argue	Describe	Evaluate
Explain	Interpret	Justify	Synthesize

[Students will perform **language function analysis** during these three lessons. They will practice identifying symbols and themes in the text, then constructing meaning from it through analysis. Analyzing a complex text is a higher-level skill, and they struggle with this. They need to be able to think beyond *what* happened, and provide an explanation as to why the author had that happen, and what he is trying to say through that choice. We approach this in two ways: 1) by starting with a symbol and deriving meaning, making the students search for evidence; and 2) by starting with quotations and have them construct a meaning from that.

Language function analyze. One of the language functions is “students will analyze how the author uses language to develop symbols, themes, and characterization and cite evidence from the text.” The assignments given to the students (making a symbol slide in Lesson 1, analyzing a painting in Lesson 2, and discussing questions and writing an essay in Lesson 3) are crafted to help students: 1) form an argument; 2) find a passage that illustrates their point; and 3) look at the author’s word choices and language to develop their ideas.

Academic terminology used: *analyze, compare, contrast, and evaluate*. Those terms are regularly used in the classroom and in our assignments, and the students demonstrate their understanding of those words as they perform all their functions.

Other vocabulary words that were specific to this text are the concepts of the symbols, individuality, identify, the American dream, the corrupted American dream, and modernism. In choosing their symbols, analyzing the text, locating context for quotations, and answering questions, students have opportunity to define and gain understanding of those terms.

Discourse objectives are “citing evidence through providing quotations; analyzing narrative text, and identifying key ideas and details.” In Lesson 2, the students are allowed to select two passages directly from the text, properly place them in context, and demonstrate that they knew how to properly cite them.]

- b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides students with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson day/number.)

[The opportunity to practice discussion in small groups allows students to put into use their academic vocabulary with their classmates. They are collaborating to find an answer, able to bounce their ideas off each other, and share the product of their thoughts with others at their table. “In fact, helping students practice collaborative skills using methods such as Jigsaw or Numbered Heads allows students the opportunities to teach their peers and to gain a better grasp on the subject, while concurrently developing collaborative skills useful in all of life (Jacobs and Liu, 1996). Students have opportunity to practice analysis in Lesson 1 by analyzing symbols in the text; in Lesson 2, they practice analyzing quotations in the book; and in Lesson 3, they analyze a particular theme in the text. They are supported in their language function analysis by learning three steps to analyze in Lesson 1.]

- c. **Additional Language Demands.** Given the language function and learning task identified above, describe the following associated language demands (written or oral) students need to understand and/or use:

- Vocabulary
- **Plus** at least one of the following: Syntax & Discourse

[Vocabulary: Students need to know these vocabulary terms during this lesson: symbols, themes, characterization, imagery, irony, metaphor, flat character, foreshadowing, development, and climax. They are words we have already described and defined this year, and are located in a word bank in their notes. They will have the opportunity to use the vocab words symbols and imagery during Lesson 1 as they create their slide and talk about Fitzgerald’s use of various symbols in the text. As they discuss the unfolding of plot and the development of characters, they will use characterization, flat character, developing. We frequently refer to the “climax” of the book in our literary discussions.

Discourse: Students get to construct arguments and analyze a literary text in discussion and writing (Lesson 3) throughout these lessons. Moreover, they practice note-taking during the instructional portion of the lessons. .]

- d. **Language Supports.** Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt.
 - Identify and describe the planned instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) to help students understand, develop, and use the identified language demands (language function, vocabulary, discourse, or syntax).

- **[A Quotation Bank.** Students are encouraged to record and post salient quotations from the text and post them in their notes, so they can easily access them as they are performing their analysis.
- **LiteraryTerms.net.** This is a resource that students have bookmarked so that they can easily and quickly find definitions to terms that are unfamiliar.
- **Peers as a Resource.** Students are grouped in fours, researching the same symbol with others. This allows them the ability to use others' insights and to try out ideas in a small, lower-stakes setting before sharing their findings with the class.]

5. Monitoring Student Learning

In response to the prompts below, refer to the assessments you will submit as part of the materials for Planning Task 1.

- a. Describe how your planned formal and informal assessments, including a written product, will provide direct evidence of students' abilities to construct meaning from, interpret, **OR** respond to a complex text **throughout** the learning segment.

[Informal Assessments. I will gauge students developing understanding of how to continually refer to the text in forming arguments during small group and large group discussions.

Formal Assessments (Formative).

1. **Creating a slide and presentation. (Lesson 1)** By submitting a slide based on a symbol, they have to find this symbol in the text, provide quotes, and tell what it means. They are going to the text for evidence.
2. **Analyzing two quotations (Lesson 2).** In this, I will judge how students are forming arguments based on the quote provided (I provide the evidence for them, so they don't have to search for it).

Formal Assessments (Summative). Students demonstrate their mastery of citing evidence in a timed-writing project called "Perfect Paragraph", where they have the assignment of writing a paragraph making an argument and providing two pieces of textual evidence, plus four sentences of analysis.]

- b. Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows students with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

[Adaptation of assessments for students to demonstrate their learning. A student who is a struggling writer but a good verbal processor are both given ways to demonstrate their learning, both in the form of writing and presenting their slide in Lesson 1; and in Lessons 2 and 3, students are permitted to pair with another student for more ideas and insight. The final assessment, too, is laid out in a graphic organizer to help struggling students structure the product of their learning.]

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