Using the DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS Technique for Literature:

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S THE GREAT GATSBY

by Kristina Janeway
Using the Document-Based Questions Technique for Literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*

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# Table of Contents

**About the Author** ................................................................................................................................................. 3

**Correlation to Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards** ......................................................... 4

  - Writing Standards Correlation .......................................................................................................................... 4
  - Reading Standards Correlation .......................................................................................................................... 5
  - Speaking and Listening Standards Correlation .................................................................................................. 6

**About This Book** ....................................................................................................................................................... 7

**To the Teacher** .......................................................................................................................................................... 8

**How to Use This Book** ............................................................................................................................................. 9

**Suggestions for Teaching with DBQs** .................................................................................................................... 11

**Handouts and Activities** ........................................................................................................................................... 12

  - Handout 1: Read More About It! .......................................................................................................................... 12
  - Handout 2: Paragraph Frame for Persuasive Writing .......................................................................................... 13
  - Handout 3: The Persuasive Thesis Formula ........................................................................................................ 14
  - Handout 4: Five-Paragraph Essay: Keyhole Outline Graphic Organizer .............................................................. 15
  - Handout 5: Five-Paragraph Essay: Keyhole Outline Blank Graphic Organizer ...................................................... 16
  - Handout 6: DBQ Writing Rubric .......................................................................................................................... 17
  - Writing, Speaking, and Listening Activities: Picking Up New Diction—For the Teacher ....................................... 18
  - Handout 7: Jazz-Era Lingo ..................................................................................................................................... 23
  - Handout 8: Jazz-Era Lingo Conversation Association Rubric ............................................................................... 26

**Project-Based Learning (PBL) Activity: Escape from Long Island Life:**

  - An Escape Room Activity for *The Great Gatsby*—For the Teacher ................................................................. 27
    - Station Signs ..................................................................................................................................................... 29
    - Answer and Code Recording Sheets ................................................................................................................ 30
    - Station 1 Assignment ....................................................................................................................................... 32
    - Station 2 Assignment ....................................................................................................................................... 33
    - Station 3 Assignment ....................................................................................................................................... 34
    - Station 4 Assignment ....................................................................................................................................... 35
    - Station 5 Assignment ....................................................................................................................................... 36
    - Word Bank for Station 3 .................................................................................................................................... 37
    - Word Bank for Station 4 .................................................................................................................................... 37
    - Escape Passwords Cards .................................................................................................................................... 38
    - Escape from Long Island Life Writing Activity Rubric .................................................................................... 39

  - Activity: Autopsy Analysis of a Character ........................................................................................................... 40
    - Autopsy Analysis of a Character Graphic ........................................................................................................ 42
  - Basic Visual Analysis Outline ................................................................................................................................ 45
Using the Document-Based Questions Technique for Literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby

Author Biography ................................................................................................................................. 47
Setting and Context ............................................................................................................................... 47
Major Characters ................................................................................................................................. 49
Synopsis ............................................................................................................................................... 50

DBQ 1: Class and Society .................................................................................................................... 53
Statement and Unit Question: What does class mean in society, and why is class status so important to some people? ................................................................................................................................. 53
Document B: “The Social Classes,” by Liam Hughes ........................................................................... 56
Document C: “The Butler,” by Roald Dahl ........................................................................................ 58
Document D: The Great GAPsby Society, by Jeff Parker ................................................................. 62

DBQ 2: Visions of America and the American Dream ....................................................................... 63
Statement and Unit Question: People refer to the “American Dream” as if there is one concept, one vision, for an entire nation. But is there only one? If so, what is it? Is there an American Dream any longer? Why or why not? What obstacles are in the way of the American Dream? ................ 63
Document A: “What Happens to the American Dream in a Recession?” by Katharine Q. Seelye .... 64
Document B: “Let America Be America Again,” by Langston Hughes ....................................... 67
Document C: “The American Dream Is Out of Reach,” by Tami Luhby .......................................... 70
Document D: Good News, by Clay Bennett ..................................................................................... 72

DBQ 3: Wealth and Power .................................................................................................................. 73
Statement and Unit Question: Wealth grants privilege and power. Why is it that wealth has the capacity to change people in such significant ways? ................................................................................................................................. 73
Document B: “The Lust for Power and Money,” by Francis Duggan ............................................. 77
Document C: “While the Auto Waits,” by O. Henry ...................................................................... 79
Document D: If U.S. Land Mass Were Divided Like U.S. Wealth, from Occupy* Posters ........ 84

DBQ 4: Gender Roles .......................................................................................................................... 85
Statement and Unit Question: How do prescribed gender roles influence the behavior of men and women? ............................................................................................................................................... 85
Document A: “Jingo Belle,” by Mary Tannen .................................................................................. 86
Document B: “The Soul Selects Her Own Society,” by Emily Dickinson ....................................... 89
Document C: “The Modern Riddle,” by Myrtle Heilman .................................................................. 90
Document D: The King Is Dead—Long Live the Queen!, by Rollin Kirby ....................................... 92

DBQ 5: Lies, Deceit, and Crimes ....................................................................................................... 93
Statement and Unit Question: Does crime ever pay? If yes, how and when? If no, why not? .......... 93
Document B: “Despite the Lies, Deceit and Torment,” by Lawrence S. Pertillar ......................... 97
Document D: Life’s Extremes: Pathological Liar vs. Straight Shooter, by Karl Tate ...................... 102

Answer Key ......................................................................................................................................... 103
About the Author

Kristina Janeway is a Pre-AP®, GT, and PSAT®/Pre-AP middle school English teacher near Lubbock, Texas. In her 23-year career, Kristina has had 20 years’ experience working with gifted and talented students as well as Pre-AP, AP, and full-inclusion students in the West Texas area.

She has written curricula for grades seven through 12, designed an academic vocabulary course for high school, designed a Pre-AP/PSAT English course for eighth graders, designed an SAT/ACT® course for seventh graders in the Duke University Talent Search Program, and designed the seventh- and eighth-grade GT course.

Kristina has presented at numerous state and national conferences, several districts, and various Advanced Placement Summer Institutes for universities while working as a consultant for the College Board®. She has completed a master’s degree in education administration and holds a principal’s certificate.

Kristina was the recipient of the Frank and Nancy Newton’s Excellence in Education Award from the Beaumont Foundation in 2010 and the Panhandle South Plains TAGT Teacher of the Year award for 2014. Most recently, Kristina has published several books on writing instruction, reading materials, and poster projects with Teacher’s Discovery and writing assessments with Kamico®.
About This Book

As English teachers, we want our students to find a way to connect to literature. As we watch our students move vertically through ELA classes, we realize that there needs to be more than just an emotional attachment to the text; there needs to be relevance. Students need to be aware that the events and/or experiences that develop character are not limited to the printed page. The themes, conflicts, and symbols are universal—crossing all boundaries. When students begin to see the connections, book to book or book to self, then the text becomes a living thing and will find a way to hook into a student’s memory.

*Using the Document-Based Questions Technique for Literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby* is designed to aid in developing relevance, in that the students must see connections to the text with items such as news articles, poems, cartoons, and speeches. The main purpose of each document relates to something specific in the novel.

As students work through the documents in order to answer the document-based questions, the goal is for them to see that the literature they are asked to read is relevant in the 21st century. The interaction students must have with the documents and the text will create pathways for long-term memory and give them the tools to continuously look for connections across subject areas as well as in real-life events. Showing them how to discover relevance creates life-long learners.

We want students to be able to answer the question, “Why are we still reading this selection and studying this material?” The variety of genres addressed in the DBQs will heighten interest and lead students to be more engaged, inquisitive learners, while giving you, the teacher, the opportunity to extend assessments from the typical to the exceptional.
To the Teacher

Everyone brings something to the reading of a novel, and after reading, they take away something new to ponder, to consider, and to compare to their own lives. *The Great Gatsby* is a book that addresses, in an accessible way, issues of vast importance to society—class, wealth, discrimination, and the American Dream.

At first glance, students might not think they have much in common with a group of disparate people during the Jazz Age. However, as the story unfolds, students will begin to make some connections with the events, characters, symbols, and themes in the novel.

Using the *Document-Based Questions Technique for Literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby* brings the themes and issues addressed into sharp focus, which will provide students with the tools necessary to understand the connections they have made and the relevance of a novel that was published in 1925. This material encourages students to compare primary sources to the novel and, more importantly, to their own lives and experiences. The outcome will be that students will bring their own viewpoints to the reading of a source, to the discussions, and to the essays they will write. What they will take away from this experience will leave a lasting impression and develop readers who see depth in literature.
How to Use This Book

Using the Document-Based Questions Technique for Literature: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby is divided into eight units:

- a Handout section
- novel background and synopsis
- five DBQ units, each arranged around a thematic question
- an Answer Key

Handouts to copy and distribute include:

- a Paragraph Frame for Persuasive Writing
- a Persuasive Thesis Formula
- a Five-Paragraph Essay organizer and blank version
- a DBQ Writing Rubric
- Writing, Speaking, and Listening Activities
- a suggested reading list to Read More About It!

These are merely suggestions but are provided to streamline the writing and grading process.

The background and synopsis unit includes:

- an author biography
- setting and context
- a major characters list with descriptions
- a synopsis of the novel

These can be copied and used as handouts to aid with reference and recall.

Each DBQ unit focuses on a thematic question based on the novel, and features four documents related to the theme. These documents include:

- editorial/political cartoons
- poetry
- newspaper articles
- blog posts
- speeches
- informational texts
Students read and analyze the documents to make connections and answer the unit question in the form of an essay.

Sections within each unit feature:

- **Guiding Questions for Understanding**, which the teacher may assign to students to answer individually or use for whole-class discussion.

- **Guiding Question Writing Activity**, which allows students to build toward the final five-paragraph essay.

After students have completed the writing activities in the unit, they are to choose the three answers/paragraphs they wrote that they believe provide the strongest support for their position on the unit question. They then write a final essay, incorporating their knowledge of *The Great Gatsby* and the facts and viewpoints they have learned from each DBQ, to make a strong, cohesive argument supporting the theme of their essay.

The **Answer Key** contains possible answers for the **Guiding Questions for Understanding** as well as for the **Writing Activity**. There is also additional information for each document, which may discuss audience, purpose, historical background, and author’s point of view. This additional information may be used by the teacher to help introduce each document.

Use the DBQ units separately or as a whole. Copy the unit and distribute it to the students. Each unit may represent a one- to three-day lesson, depending on how they are used. The analysis of the documents along with the **Guiding Questions for Understanding** may be completed in the classroom and/or as homework. The writing activities should be completed in the classroom. Should you feel some of the selections are too long for your students, use excerpts in order to maintain the DBQ selections.
Suggestions for Teaching with DBQs

There are a number of ways for you to use this book in the context of teaching *The Great Gatsby* to your students.

**Pre-Reading Assessment:**

As a formative assessment, select DBQs to introduce students to the context of the book. The topics of the five DBQs will provide them with a strong context for the plot development of the book:

- DBQ 1: Class and Society
- DBQ 2: Visions of America and the American Dream
- DBQ 3: Wealth and Power
- DBQ 4: Gender Roles
- DBQ 5: Lies, Deceit, and Crimes

**Spiraling the DBQs as Extension Activities:**

Once again, given the topics of the DBQs, you can pause reading and reviewing the novel and do a DBQ as either a summative or formative assessment of student comprehension. If you want to provide a stronger context and create a formative assessment before the section of the novel dealing with a particular topic that correlates with a DBQ unit theme, have the students read up to that section and then have them pause to analyze what they have read and complete the DBQ, before continuing on with the analysis of the book.

If you want to provide the students with the ability to compare/contrast the treatment of the topic in the book to that of the materials in the DBQ as more of a summative assessment, read and analyze the specific section of the novel, complete the DBQ, then discuss the similarities and differences among the selections with regard to the treatment of the topic.

**Post-Reading Assessment:**

As a summative assessment, select DBQs to allow students to connect the context of the book to their own lives. The topics of the five DBQs will provide them with a stronger comprehension of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s perspective at a unique time in history as well as allow them to make different text-to-text and text-to-world connections:

- DBQ 1: Class and Society
- DBQ 2: Visions of America and the American Dream
- DBQ 3: Wealth and Power
- DBQ 4: Gender Roles
- DBQ 5: Lies, Deceit, and Crimes
The Jazz Age had a rich, descriptive slang language, some of which is used in *The Great Gatsby*, with some terms still used today. As defined in Merriam-Webster, slang is:

1. language peculiar to a particular group: such as
   a: argot
   b: jargon
2. an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech

Several class activities to explore the evolution of language are outlined below. They cover slang and jargon. The activities can be used with Handout 7, “Jazz-Era Lingo,” to discover the diction F. Scott Fitzgerald used to create mood and setting in *The Great Gatsby*. Instructions for each activity are included.

**Materials Needed:**
- paper
- pencils
- scissors
- basket
- copies of Handout 7

**Conversation Association**

An activity to bring old words to life

**Directions:**
1. In a class discussion, explain that every era in American society has its own slang.
2. On the whiteboard, create a T-chart. On one side, write “today’s slang.” On the other side, write “yesterday’s slang.”
3. Tell students to work with a partner to recreate a recent or typical conversation, either verbal or via text message, they had with a friend. They should use the exact words and terms they actually did or would use, whether or not they think you will understand them or deem them appropriate.
4. Walk around the room, peering over shoulders, and choose a few of the more appropriate dialogues. Ask a few of these groups to perform their conversations for the class.
5. As students perform, make notes of terms and phrases, including acronyms, they use that are slang on the whiteboard.
Synonyms
An activity to make word associations

Directions:
● Copy the Jazz-Era Lingo list.
● Cut the term section into separate pieces of paper.
● Place the pieces of paper into a basket.
● Use a personal device or a watch with a second hand to allow each student 30 seconds to provide a synonym.

To play: Divide the class into two teams. Students come forward and choose a slip of paper from the basket. They must say a synonym (contemporary or from Gatsby’s time) of the word they chose to gain a point for their team. If they fail to think of a synonym within the allotted time, play passes to the other team.

Antonyms
An activity to make word associations

Directions:
● Copy the Jazz-Era Lingo list.
● Cut the term section into separate pieces of paper.
● Place the pieces of paper into a basket.
● Use a personal device or a watch with a second hand to allow each student 30 seconds to provide an antonym.

To play: Divide the class into two teams. Students come forward and choose a slip of paper from the basket. They must say an antonym (contemporary or from Gatsby’s time) of the word they chose to gain a point for their team. If they fail to think of an antonym within the allotted time, play passes to the other team.

Miscellaneous

● Choose 10 words and associate them with a character from *The Great Gatsby*. Support your choices.

● F. Scott Fitzgerald did not use a lot of Jazz Age slang in *The Great Gatsby*. Discuss the following questions with the class:
  ◊ Why did he choose to limit the slang the characters used?
  ◊ What was the effect of the diction choice?
  ◊ Did this choice differentiate characters?
  ◊ What did it tell you about certain characters?
Project-Based Learning (PBL) Activity: Escape from Long Island Life
An Escape Room Activity for *The Great Gatsby*

For the Teacher

**Note to Teachers:**
Read through Basic Escape Room Setup and How to Play very carefully to make sure you understand how you are setting up the escape room. Also, please make sure that you are reading through the cards carefully before making your copies for the activity so that you understand the role of each one.

**Materials Needed:**
- station signs
- station assignments
- Answer and Code Recording Sheet
- set of Escape Password cards for each student
- Word Bank for Stations 3 and 4—copy the given Word Bank twice, once for each station
- pencil
- locking box that allows you to change the combination

**Basic Escape Room Setup:**
- Set up the five stations around the classroom. Place a Station Sign at each spot along with the Station Assignments.
- Provide each student with an Answer and Code Recording Sheet. Make enough copies of the Station Assignments so that each student will have their own copy.
- The students will need to take their books and/or notes along with the Answer and Code Recording Sheet to each station for the duration of the activity.
- The students will record the letter of their answer as well as the corresponding number for the Escape Code for each station.
- Station 1
  - Station Sign
  - Station Assignment—enough for each student
- Station 2
  - Station Sign
  - Station Assignment—enough for each student
- Station 3
  - Station Sign
  - Station Assignment—enough for each student
**Answer and Code Recording Sheets**

**Directions:** Each student needs this sheet to record answers and code numbers.

As the students complete each station, they will check with you to see if they have the correct code for that station. You may let them go back and figure out which one they have incorrect so that they may escape that station. When they are correct, you will give the Password card.

The goal is to escape each station as quickly as possible in order to Escape from Long Island Life.

**Directions:** At Station 1, the questions are multiple-choice. Students will record the letter of the answer on the “Answer” row on their card. Below it, on the “Code Number” row, they should write the number that corresponds to their answer. That number is part of the escape code.

### Station 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Number</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions:** At Station 2, the questions are multiple-choice. Students will record the letter of the answer on the “Answer” row on their card. Below it, on the “Code Number” row, they should write the number that corresponds to their answer. That number is part of the escape code.

### Station 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Question</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code Number</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Station 1 Assignment

Copy and put a laminated copy at Station 1.

Escape from Long Island Life
Station 1

1. Who says the following? “Can’t repeat the past?... Why of course you can.”
   a. Nick   c. Gatsby
   b. Daisy   d. Tom

2. Most of the novel takes place here:
   a. California   c. New York
   b. Long Island   d. Valley of ashes

3. Jay Gatsby’s real name:
   a. Jay Gatsby   c. Henry C. Gatz
   b. J.B. Gatsby   d. None of the above

4. “About half-way between West Egg and New York the motor-road hastily joins the railroad
   and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of
   land.” What is this area?
   a. Valley of ashes   c. Garbage dump
   b. Landfill   d. Polluted lake

5. Who is Dan Cody?
   a. Gatsby’s mentor   c. A man murdered by Ella Kaye
   b. A rich guy   d. All of the above

6. Wolfsheim’s cuff-links are made out of what?
   a. Ivory   c. Gold
   b. Human molars   d. Jade

7. Who says, “I hate careless people. That’s why I like you.”
   a. Nick Carraway   c. Jay Gatsby
   b. Tom Buchanan   d. Jordan Baker
Author Biography

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896, in Minnesota. His father came from an aristocratic background, and his mother came from a working-class Irish family. He was named after Francis Scott Key, a relative, who composed “The Star Spangled Banner.” Fitzgerald was educated in the East, attending private schools. His early years were characterized by his social awkwardness, his loneliness, and his intense, highly romantic imagination. His first published short story appeared in the school newspaper. He found acceptance and creative success at Princeton University, in New Jersey. There, he made lifelong friendships with other writers and became prominent in the university’s literary scene.

In spite of his literary successes, Fitzgerald struggled with his academic work, and he failed to graduate. He joined the army, and while he was stationed in Alabama, he met his future wife, Zelda Sayre, a Southern belle who came from a prominent family. They married after his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was published in 1920. The book was an instant success.

The couple had a daughter, Frances, known as “Scottie,” and moved to France. In Paris, the Fitz Germans became the center of the crowd that became known as the “Lost Generation,” a group of American expatriates living in France after World War I, pursuing literary and artistic endeavors, and partying every night. Fitzgerald became friends with Ernest Hemingway, who was writing novels while Fitzgerald wrote short stories to support his family. Fitzgerald also worked on what became his masterwork, *The Great Gatsby*. The novel was not well-received at the time but has since been recognized as one of the great works of American fiction.

Not long after the novel’s publication, Fitzgerald began drinking heavily, and that would ultimately be his downfall. Zelda suffered a nervous breakdown and was committed to a mental institution in America. Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood in 1926 and found work as a scriptwriter, but his writing suffered in the haze of alcohol and the chaos of his life.

On December 21, 1940, Fitzgerald suffered a fatal heart attack and left his final novel, *The Last Tycoon*, unfinished.

Setting and Context

*The Great Gatsby* was published in 1925, between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945). At this time, America was experiencing a split with its past, which was characterized by a predominantly agrarian (farming) society quickly becoming urbanized and subject to the
dizzying technological advances (the automobile, the assembly line, radio, movies) that were rapidly transforming all areas of American life.

In 1920, the “great experiment,” Prohibition, began. The Volstead Act, the 18th Amendment, banned the sale, manufacture, and transportation of liquor. But, instead of making the U.S. a more temperate nation, it encouraged thousands of people, who otherwise might not be interested, to try alcohol. Bootleggers made and sold illegal alcohol to normally law-abiding Americans who frequented speakeasies (clubs and bars that sold liquor). Prohibition, which gave a great impetus to organized crime—Al Capone in Chicago and Lucky Luciano in New York City both made fortunes “rum-running”—was finally repealed in 1933.

At the same time, the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, took effect in 1920. It was in some ways the culmination of the efforts of suffragists, who’d been working since the 1850s for women’s equality. Freedom for the “new woman” in the 1920s manifested itself in the sexual and social arena, giving rise to the flappers—young women who bobbed their hair, wore short skirts, smoked in public, and danced the “wild” dances of the time, such as the Charleston and the Black Bottom.

The 1920s were economically prosperous. Money and alcohol flowed. Carelessness, carelessness with money, and—to some extent—carelessness with humanity were the order of the day. F. Scott Fitzgerald chronicled the time and became its voice to many readers. His first collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophies*, was published in 1921.

*The Great Gatsby* falls into the category of modernism. Literally, modernism means something not of “the past.” The focus of fiction of this period moved from plot (outside happenings) to the under-plot (what happens under the surface or inside the mind).

The story takes place on the fictional peninsulas of East and West Egg on the Long Island coast of New York. Daisy and Tom Buchanan live on East Egg. This is a place of lavish homes and extravagant lifestyles. To those who live on East Egg, money is no object. Since many who live there were born into money, this is the only lifestyle they know. West Egg is directly across from East Egg. West Egg is where Nick lives. It is less fashionable; those who live there generally have less money. However, West Egg is also where Gatsby lives.

In stark contrast to East and West Egg is the “valley of ashes,” an area between West Egg and New York City. This is a sad, depressed, and harsh environment. There is nothing beautiful or enchanting about this place. This is where the Wilsons live. The story contrasts the lavish lifestyles of the peninsulas with the gritty reality of the valley of ashes. *The Great Gatsby* highlights the gap between those who are living the American Dream and those who desperately want to.
# Major Characters

**Nick Carraway**  
Nick is the first-person narrator and protagonist; every incident is filtered through and interpreted by him. Nick represents the middle class.

**Jay Gatsby (James Gatz)**  
Gatsby is the supposed hero of the novel. He is a slippery character; his language, home, books, cars, and attire all glimmer like gold, but no one really knows what goes on inside of him or who he is.

**Daisy Buchanan**  
Daisy is a socialite from Louisville, Kentucky, born into tremendous wealth. She is empty-headed, as fake and airy as her voice. She is lovely, slight, and careless. She lacks any substance.

**Tom Buchanan**  
Tom is Daisy’s husband, a native Chicagoan from a hugely wealthy family. He is rugged, gigantic, and brash, as well as racist, arrogant, and adulterous.

**Jordan Baker**  
Jordan is a golfer and a pseudo love interest of Nick’s. Jordan, too, lacks substance.

**Myrtle Wilson**  
Myrtle is a resident of the valley of ashes, wife of George Wilson, mistress of Tom Buchanan. She is desperate to escape her fate.

**George Wilson**  
George is the sad proprietor of the gas station in the valley of ashes. He is the product of his economic hardship. George is Myrtle Wilson’s husband.

**Doctor T. J. Eckleburg**  
T. J. Eckleburg is the doctor whose advertisement—a billboard featuring a pair of gigantic blue eyes behind enormous yellow spectacles—looks down upon the valley of ashes. George Wilson calls those eyes the eyes of God.
Synopsis

The Great Gatsby tells the tale of Jay Gatsby, aka James Gatz, a self-made millionaire whose lavish parties, shiny suits, and magnificent house and car make him the talk of the town.

But Gatsby’s appearance and his motives come into question the more Nick, the narrator, observes his often bizarre behavior. As the story progresses, we learn that there is much more to the characters than what their glistening façades lead us to believe.

The novel begins with the narrator, Nick Carraway, relaying to the reader a piece of advice given by his father, highlighting the fact that Nick has grown up somewhat privileged and need not criticize people. This sets the tone for the chapter and for the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Nick has just arrived in New York and is living in a small house in West Egg, next door to Gatsby’s mansion. One night, Nick attended a dinner party in East Egg, hosted by his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom. Nick attended Yale with Tom, who comes from old, aristocratic money, like Daisy. In attendance is Jordan Baker, a famous golfer and a friend of Daisy and Tom. During dinner, Tom takes a phone call from his mistress. Dazed by the awkward dinner, Nick heads home only to see a figure standing on the lawn with his arms outstretched: the Great Gatsby. He seems to be reaching for the green light at the end of the Buchanans’ dock.

Tom Buchanan invites Nick to go to New York City with him, and they pass through the valley to pick up Myrtle, Tom’s mistress. Myrtle and George Wilson live in the valley of ashes, where George is the proprietor of a gas station. The valley of ashes is a dismal, dusty, decaying wasteland located between West Egg and New York City. The valley of ashes is a “fantastic farm” where ashes take the forms of chimneys and houses and “ash-grey men.” The darkness, the dryness, and the lack of air stand in sharp contrast to the light, breezy, watery world of Tom and Daisy. Above the valley, a grotesque, oversized billboard stands, touting the services of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, an optometrist whose practice is long defunct. Staring out from the billboard is a pair of enormous blue eyes, the distorted eyes of “God,” watching but not seeing the plight of the individuals who live in this squalor.

Tom keeps a flat in New York City for his dalliance with Myrtle. Once there, Tom buys Myrtle a puppy from a man who resembles John D. Rockefeller and keeps the dog in a box hanging from his neck. At the flat that day, a couple—the McKees—and Myrtle’s sister Catherine join the obnoxious group for a day of drinking and gossip. They talk about Gatsby and speculate on who he may really be; Catherine concludes that he is Kaiser Wilhelm, a despised ruler of Germany during World War I.

Bored and getting drunker and agitated, Myrtle sings Daisy’s name and provokes Tom. He hits her in the face so hard that he breaks her nose. Time, perception, and sight all become horribly blurred, and the usually rational Nick narrates a series of surreal situations: first in Mr. McKee’s bedroom, then asleep on the floor of the train station.

We are shown, through Nick’s eyes, one of Gatsby’s lavish parties. The party is peopled by strangers, none of whom seems to be invited, and includes people from East and West Egg as well as New York City. None of them seems to have ever met Jay Gatsby, though many have opinions on who he is: a spy and a murderer. His intrigue is what keeps these people coming to the parties, in addition to his
**DBQ 1: Class and Society**

**Directions:** After reading and discussing the documents, you will compose a final essay that smoothly integrates your interpretation of Documents A through D and your knowledge of the events in *The Great Gatsby* to answer the unit question. Exemplary scores will only be earned by an essay that both cites at least three key pieces of evidence from the documents and draws on outside knowledge of the novel.

Review the following documents, and answer the questions under each to explore different facets of the unit question.

---

“An Oxford man!” He was incredulous. “Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit.”
“Nevertheless he’s an Oxford man.”
“Oxford, New Mexico,” snorted Tom contemptuously, “or something like that.”
“Listen, Tom. If you’re such a snob, why did you invite him to lunch?” demanded Jordan crossly.
“Daisy invited him; she knew him before we were married—God knows where!”

---

**UNIT QUESTION:**

What does class mean in society, and why is class status so important to some people?
“Class and the American Dream”
From The New York Times
Editorial
May 30, 2005

Is the American dream that people can rise from rags to riches with a little grit and imagination—or fall from the top rungs to lesser positions if they can’t cut it—mostly a myth? A series in The Times called “Class Matters” has found that there is far less mobility up and down the economic ladder than economists once thought or than most Americans believe. Class based on economic and social differences remains a powerful force in American life and has come to play a greater, not lesser, role over the last three decades.

A parallel series in The Wall Street Journal found that as the gap between rich and poor has widened in America, the odds that a child will climb from poverty to wealth, or fall from wealth to the middle class, have remained stuck, leaving Americans no more likely to rise or fall from their parents’ economic class than they were 35 years ago.

What fools many Americans is the sight of high achievers vaulting from poor or obscure backgrounds to positions of power and wealth. Witness Bill Clinton, who rose from a humble background to the presidency, or Bill Gates, who rose from the upper middle class to become the world’s richest person. Witness all the self-made billionaires and corporate titans. But beneath this veneer of super-achievers, recent scholarship shows, many Americans find themselves mired in the same place as their parents, with profound implications for their health and education, as well as other aspects of their lives. Those in the upper middle classes enjoy better health and live longer than those in the middle classes, who live longer and better than those at the bottom. That’s partly because money, good jobs and connections help the better-off get the best medical care. Education, supposedly the key to advancement in a meritocratic society, is also heavily dependent on wealth and class. It is thus extremely disheartening to learn that at 250 of the most selective colleges, the proportion of students from upper-income families has actually grown over the past two decades, despite financial aid programs.

There is no sure-fire way to mitigate the deep-seated, multifaceted impact of class. Stronger affirmative-action programs to bring low-income students into colleges would surely help. So, too, would stronger anti-poverty and early-education programs. Tax cuts would be better targeted at the middle class and below, not at the wealthy who already have more than enough advantages. The goal should be a truly merit-based society where class finally fades from importance.

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. In a society where “all men are created equal,” how do we have so many social classes? What are the classes based on today?

2. Why is the gap between the rich and poor widening in America?

3. How did people like Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, Sam Walton, and Walt Disney become the exception and not the rule?

4. How is Gatsby able to break the glass barrier between the social classes? What affectations does he adopt to blend in?

5. Why do people from the upper classes suspect his origins? How do you know?

Guiding Question Writing Activity:

- On a separate sheet of paper, compose a well-developed paragraph to explain the differences between class structure in the editorial and that in *The Great Gatsby*. How are people “assigned” to their respective classes, and why do they appear to struggle to change their classification?
“The Social Classes”
By Liam Hughes

As people hide their evil traits
The darkness in them lies in wait
As rebels aim towards the state
Venom reveals itself as hate
But I do not think that time is late
It’s time to listen to what passes

People who rely on proof
To test the things they know as truth
Will always fear the rising youth
The eagles claw the lions tooth
The devils eyes the horses hoof
As they try to break the social classes

While you cannot clear an empty space
You can read it in the daily race
Though fear is written on your face
All your clothes are made of lace
Not content with setting pace
Your world is full [of] farces

But if this world could be seen
As part of an endless dream
You would wake in your beds and scream
How did this world become so mean
When did we tear the weakened seam
And can we repair the broken system

As trembled voices try to scare
All the time you’re unaware
There’s movement in the crowds that [bear]
The weight of all you tried to share
As you try to avoid their stare
You know you cannot miss them

While workers work to fill your home
They’re picking off an empty bone
But you cannot hear their sickly groan
But you can see they’re forced to roam
But while you’re sitting on your throne
You can’t even say god bless them

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. According to the poem, how is one social class attempting to “break” another almost like a war?
2. What can you conclude to be the motivation for the angst between the classes?
3. Why is the tone of the poem filled with such anger and resentment?
4. How would this poem reflect the lesson learned by Nick Carraway?
5. Why are people from an elite social class so adamant about rejecting those from a lower social station? Use an example from the novel and the poem.

Guiding Question Writing Activity:

- On a separate sheet of paper, compose a well-developed paragraph explaining the line “As they try to break the social classes.” Do you think this means to “break” a person or to break apart the idea of class differences? Does the poem’s message confirm or dispute your opinion about one social class going out of its way to break or exclude another? Be sure to provide textual evidence from the documents to support your observations.
As soon as George Cleaver had made his first million, he and Mrs. Cleaver moved out of their small suburban villa into an elegant London house. They acquired a French chef called Monsieur Estragon and an English butler called Tibbs, both wildly expensive. With the help of these two experts, the Cleavers set out to climb the social ladder and began to give dinner parties several times a week on a lavish scale.

But these dinners never seemed quite to come off. There was no animation, no spark to set the conversation alight, no style at all. Yet the food was superb and the service faultless.

“What the heck’s wrong with our parties, Tibbs?” Mr. Cleaver said to the butler. “Why don’t nobody never loosen up and let themselves go?”

Tibbs inclined his head to one side and looked at the ceiling. “I hope, sir, you will not be offended if I offer a small suggestion.”

“What is it?”

“It’s the wine, sir.”

“What about the wine?”

“Well, sir, Monsieur Estragon serves superb food. Superb food should be accompanied by superb wine. But you serve them a cheap and very odious Spanish red.”

“Then why in heaven’s name didn’t you say so before, you twit?” cried Mr. Cleaver. “I’m not short of money. I’ll give them the best flipping wine in the world if that’s what they want! What is the best wine in the world?”

“Claret, sir,” the butler replied, “from the greatest châteaux in Bordeaux—Lafite, Latour, Haut-Brion, Margaux, Mouton-Rothschild and Cheval Blanc. And from only the very greatest vintage years, which are, in my opinion, 1906, 1914, 1929 and 1945. Cheval Blanc was also magnificent in 1895 and 1921, and Haut-Brion in 1906.”

“Buy them all!” said Mr. Cleaver. “Fill the flipping cellar from top to bottom!”

“I can try, sir,” the butler said. “But wines like these are extremely rare and cost a fortune.”

“I don’t give a hoot what they cost!” said Mr. Cleaver. “Just go out and get them!”

That was easier said than done. Nowhere in England or in France could Tibbs find any wine from 1895, 1906, 1914 or 1921. But he did manage to get hold of some twenty-nines and forty-fives. The bills for these wines were astronomical. They were in fact so huge that even Mr. Cleaver began to sit up and take notice. And his interest quickly turned into outright enthusiasm when the butler suggested to
Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. Why is it that the butler, who is supposed to be of lower class since he is a servant, is much more versed in the finer things of life than his boss?
2. Why is the characterization of Mr. Cleaver ironic when compared to that of the butler?
3. Do the butler and Monsieur Estragon actually get the best of Mr. Cleaver, or is the joke really on the servants? How do you know?
4. What is the theme of the selection? Why?
5. What would you predict to be next for these two servants after they leave their position with Mr. Cleaver?

Guiding Question Writing Activity:

- On a separate sheet of paper, compose a well-developed paragraph where you take on the role of either Mr. Tibbs or Monsieur Estragon and devise the plan to thwart Mr. Cleaver in his endeavor to break through the social classes. Be sure to provide textual evidence from the documents to support your observations.
The Great GAPsby Society
By Jeff Parker

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. What is the tone conveyed by the man in the suit? How do you know?
2. What is the tone conveyed by the man in the fast-food uniform? How do you know?
3. What does the crack between the two men symbolize to the viewer?
4. How does this political cartoon reflect the relationship between Gatsby and Nick Carraway?
5. What phrase does one character use that is directly tied to The Great Gatsby?


UNIT QUESTION RESTATEMENT:

What does class mean in society, and why is class status so important to some people?
# Answer Key

**Escape from Long Island Life**  
**Answer and Code Recording Sheet**  
**Answers**

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**Escape password: Green Light**

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<td>Hopalong Cassidy</td>
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DBQ 1: Class and Society

Document A: “Class and the American Dream”

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. In a society where “all men are created equal,” how do we have so many social classes? What are the classes based on today?
   Students’ answers will vary. Our American society includes all backgrounds, education, faiths, and economic standings, which creates differences and similarities between people.

2. Why is the gap between the rich and poor widening in America?
   Students’ answers will vary. Social and economic obstacles such as educational opportunities and income inequality affect the realities and perceptions of the American Dream.

3. How did people like Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, Sam Walton, and Walt Disney become the exception and not the rule?
   Students’ answers will vary. These men all failed as much as, if not more than, they succeeded. However, they persisted because they had a vision for their future endeavors that others could not see.

4. How is Gatsby able to break the glass barrier between the social classes? What affectations does he adopt to blend in?
   Students’ answers will vary. He attaches himself to a wealthy individual, learns from him, and then creates a persona to cover the illegal means of the wealth. His clothes, speech, home, and parties allow him to blend in with the wealthy. However, he is not able to completely break the barrier due to his “new money” status as opposed to the “old money” status of the people he is trying to impress.

5. Why do people from the upper classes suspect his origins? How do you know?
   Students’ answers will vary. To recall his former relationship with Daisy, he tries too hard to impress with elaborate parties. Despite his attempts to hide his humble background, his demeanor and speech sometimes betray him.

Guiding Question Writing Activity: Compose a well-developed paragraph to explain the differences between class structure in the editorial and that in The Great Gatsby. How are people “assigned” to their respective classes, and why do they appear to struggle to change their classification?

Students’ answers will vary but should include mention of status and the reasons people may want to change their standing in society.

Components of document analysis may include, but are not limited to, the following:


- Purpose: The editorial, an opinion piece, points out the fallacy of the “American Dream” by highlighting just how hard it is to break from the class you were born into in America.

- Historical context: Written in 2005, this editorial piece was published as an accompaniment to a series The New York Times was publishing on poverty in America. It was published at a time when the growing gaps were becoming more apparent and just a few years before the start of the “Great Recession,” which only made the situation worse.
The author’s point of view: The editorial writer believes things are getting worse for the poor and middle classes. Initiatives to alleviate gaps are proposed: “Stronger affirmative-action programs to bring low-income students into colleges would surely help. So, too, would stronger anti-poverty and early-education programs. Tax cuts would be better targeted at the middle class and below, not at the wealthy who already have more than enough advantages. The goal should be a truly merit-based society where class finally fades from importance.”

Document B: “The Social Classes”
Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. According to the poem, how is one social class attempting to “break” another almost like a war?
   Students’ answers will vary. As one group struggles for their piece of the pie, they force the other to face their contempt for them. They “will always fear the rising youth.”

2. What can you conclude to be the motivation for the angst between the classes?
   Students’ answers will vary. The poor see the overabundance while they are suffering. “They’re picking off an empty bone/But you cannot hear their sickly groan...” The lower class sees the upper class as callous towards their struggles.

3. Why is the tone of the poem filled with such anger and resentment?
   Students’ answers will vary. That is how the speaker feels, as it is from the perspective of the poor. It portrays the upper classes as uncaring.

4. How would this poem reflect the lesson learned by Nick Carraway?
   Students’ answers will vary. Nick bore witness to Gatsby’s struggle from poor to wealthy to no avail. Nick realizes that, because of his background, he has no place in the upper-class world and will never be accepted by them, regardless of what he achieves.

5. Why are people from an elite social class so adamant about rejecting those from a lower social station? Use an example from the novel and the poem.
   Students’ answers will vary. Threatened by those trying to better themselves, they fear being exposed as not deserving of their station in life.

Guiding Question Writing Activity: Compose a well-developed paragraph explaining the line “As they try to break the social classes.” Do you think this means to “break” a person or to break apart the idea of class differences? Does the poem’s message confirm or dispute your opinion about one social class going out of its way to break or exclude another? Be sure to provide textual evidence from the documents to support your observations.

Answers will vary based on student perceptions of class and status, and their interpretation of the poem and the novel.

Components of document analysis may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intended audience: anyone interested in finding out more about the thoughts and feelings of those from various social classes
- Purpose: The poem highlights the hostility and struggle between rich and poor.
● Historical context: It was written during a time of growing income inequality worldwide.

● The author’s point of view: Liam Hughes (b. 1991) is a writer from Bedfordshire, United Kingdom. Hughes’ formative years included much of the “Great Recession” during the early part of this century. Hughes is a self-published poet and considers himself to be self-taught and self-educated.

Document C: “The Butler”

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. Why is it that the butler, who is supposed to be of lower class since he is a servant, is much more versed in the finer things of life than his boss?
   Students’ answers will vary. The butler has spent his professional life with the finer things and etiquette, whereas Mr. Cleaver is newly rich and naïve about the aspects of the wealthy class.

2. Why is the characterization of Mr. Cleaver ironic when compared to that of the butler?
   Students’ answers will vary. He relies on the butler for guidance instead of the other way around and doesn’t realize when he is being taken. We often expect people with great wealth to be more intelligent and well-educated. This story shows that this is not always the case.

3. Do the Butler and Monsieur Estragon actually get the best of Mr. Cleaver, or is the joke really on the servants? How do you know?
   Students’ answers will vary. While the servants do achieve some satisfaction in duping their ignorant boss, ultimately it is they who are out of a job and unlikely to find a similar job once word gets out of their behavior.

4. What is the theme of the selection? Why?
   Students’ answers will vary. Wealth and status do not mean everything. Being wealthy is not necessarily a good gauge for intelligence or level of education.

5. What would you predict to be next for these two servants after they leave their position with Mr. Cleaver?
   Students’ answers will vary.

Guiding Question Writing Activity: Compose a well-developed paragraph where you take on the role of either Mr. Tibbs or Monsieur Estragon and devise the plan to thwart Mr. Cleaver in his endeavor to break through the social classes. Be sure to provide textual evidence from the documents to support your observations.

Students’ answers will vary.

Components of document analysis may include, but are not limited to, the following:

● Intended audience: any reader of the short story or those interested in learning how people don’t always fit in our stereotypical boxes.

● Purpose: The story makes a reader think about the influence and effect of money on class and social status. The story illustrates the concept that wealthy does not automatically mean intelligent and well-educated.

● Historical context: Originally published as a short story in 1974, it is really a timeless tale of competition and animosity between the classes.

● The author’s point of view: Roald Dahl (1916–1990) was well known as a children’s author of fantasy stories. Born in Britain to Norwegian immigrants, Dahl seems to be poking fun at Americans with his depiction of Mr. Cleaver in this story. He is saying that money does not make the man and discernment cannot be bought.
Document D: The Great GAPsby Society

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. What is the tone conveyed by the man in the suit? How do you know?
   Students’ answers will vary. The man seems condescending, using the term “old sport.” The issue is not affecting him, so it’s not his problem.

2. What is the tone conveyed by the man in the fast-food uniform? How do you know?
   Students’ answers will vary. He seems frustrated, exasperated; he comments about minimum wage, explaining he has to work two jobs to stay afloat.

3. What does the crack between the two men symbolize to the viewer?
   Students’ answers will vary. It represents the widening gap between the social classes. Job outsourcing is one of the issues making the gap wider for one man to get to the other side.

4. How does this political cartoon reflect the relationship between Gatsby and Nick Carraway?
   Students’ answers will vary. Nick is a poor man; Gatsby is wealthy. Although he was once poor, Gatsby seems to be oblivious to the obstacles Carraway faces.

5. What phrase does one character use that is directly tied to The Great Gatsby?
   “Old Sport.” While it can be a term of endearment between pals, in this case, it’s used condescendingly.

Components of document analysis may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intended audience: any reader of the political cartoon interested in a comical look at a serious growing issue
- Purpose: The cartoon illustrates the troubles between the social classes by pointing out how one side is unaware of issues or doesn’t want to know.
- Historical context: The political cartoon was published in 2004, before the “Great Recession” beginning in 2008 but as the growing trend of outsourcing jobs overseas was becoming more widespread.
- The author’s point of view: Cartoonist Jeff Parker is an award-winning political cartoonist. A resident of Portland, Oregon, Parker has also illustrated comics such as Marvel’s X-Men and DC’s Wonder Woman.

Unit Question: What does class mean in society, and why is class status so important to some people?

Essay: Answers will vary, but students should note that education and wealth are status markers and can give people opportunities while at the same time act as barriers to opportunity.

DBQ 2: Visions of America and the American Dream

Document A: “What Happens to the American Dream in a Recession?”

Guiding Questions for Understanding:

1. According to this article, why do you think that 72% of the people polled still believe in the American Dream and yet only 44% attain some semblance of that dream?
   Students’ answers will vary. Perhaps the majority still have hope of making dreams reality while few people have the opportunity or drive to turn them into reality. “You want to hold on to your dream even more when times are hard […] And if you want to hold on to it, then you better define it differently.”