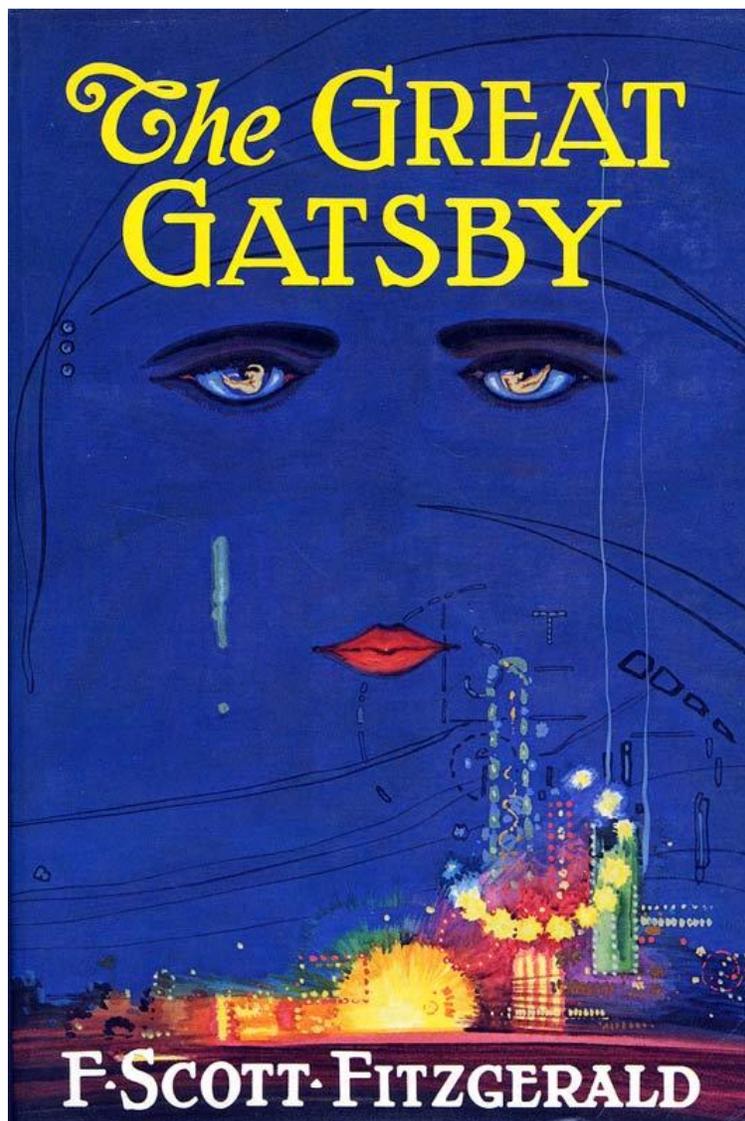


The American Dream in *The Great Gatsby*

Though *The Great Gatsby* is regarded as the classic of what Fitzgerald himself permanently named the Jazz Age, the novel is anything but a “period piece.” Well into the 21st century, the relevance of *The Great Gatsby* increases, because it is the definitive romance of the American dream, a concept or vision that haunts our society. Critics differ as to whether the novel is about “the withering of the American dream,” as Marius argues, or else a celebration of a Romantic hope in America despite all the ugly realities.

After carefully reading the novel, write an essay arguing what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. Is the novel about “the withering of the American dream,” or is it a celebration of a Romantic hope despite all the ugly realities? According to the novel, is the American dream possible? If so, for whom?

Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the novel to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the novel. When you cite passages from the novel, do so explicitly using direct quotations, paraphrases, or summaries.



Scoring Guide

The American Dream *The Great Gatsby*

This score will reflect a judgment of the essay's quality as a whole, with a focus on rewarding students for what they do well. It is not necessary to score a 9 to receive full points for the assignment, but students are encouraged and challenged to perform the best that they can.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features will enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 3.

9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria of a score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in development or impressive in their control of language.

8 Effective

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** argue what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They develop their argument by synthesizing at least three quotes/summaries. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing. Their prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

7 Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for a score of 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development or a more mature prose style.

6 Competent

Essays earning a score of 6 **competently** argue what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They develop their argument by adequately synthesizing at least three quotes/summaries. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient. The language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

5 Essays earning a score of 5 argue what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They develop their position by synthesizing at least three quotes/summaries, but how they use and explain sources is somewhat uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The argument is generally clear, and the sources generally develop the student's position, but the links between the sources and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas adequately.

4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** argue what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They develop their position by synthesizing at least two quotes/summaries, but the evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or less convincing. The sources may dominate the student's attempts at development; the link between the argument and the sources may be weak; or the student may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify the sources. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be less consistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a 4 but demonstrate less success in arguing what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the novel, or their explanation or examples may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control or writing.

2 Redo

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in arguing what *The Great Gatsby* reveals about the American dream. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from the novel rather than citing the novel itself. These essays may misread the novel, fail to develop a position that synthesizes, or substitute a simpler task by merely summarizing or categorizing the novel or by merely responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose of these essays often demonstrates consistent weakness in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control.

1 Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are underdeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, weak in their control of writing, or do not allude to or cite even one source.