

Rubric: The American Dream in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* Essay

Categories & Standards of Achievement

1. Understanding of the American Dream Concept

- **Excellent (4 points):** Provides a comprehensive and nuanced definition of the American Dream, including its historical ideals of **freedom, individualism, self-reliance, equality of opportunity, hard work, and the pursuit of happiness**. Clearly articulates how these ideals evolved or became corrupted during the Jazz Age, often leading to a **vulgar pursuit of wealth, materialism, and pleasure-seeking**.
- **Good (3 points):** Defines the American Dream in general terms and acknowledges its connection to **wealth, success, and happiness** in the novel. Shows some awareness that the dream underwent a transformation or was corrupted.
- **Developing (2 points):** Provides a basic or limited definition of the American Dream, possibly focusing only on **material wealth**. May not fully grasp the concept of its corruption.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks a clear definition or fundamentally misunderstands the American Dream within the context of the novel.

2. Analysis of Jay Gatsby's American Dream

- **Excellent (4 points):** Offers in-depth analysis of Gatsby's **specific, colossal, and illusion-driven dream** to recapture the past, primarily by **winning Daisy's love and achieving social acceptance** through immense wealth. Critically examines his transformation from James Gatz, his relentless **persistence and self-reliance**, and his reliance on **illegal activities (bootlegging)** to amass his fortune. Discusses how his dream ultimately leads to **disappointment, loss of self, and tragedy**.
- **Good (3 points):** Identifies Gatsby's dream as primarily about Daisy and his pursuit of wealth and social status. Explains his efforts and acknowledges some aspects of his self-loss or disillusionment. May briefly mention the ambiguous or illicit nature of his wealth.

- **Developing (2 points):** Briefly states Gatsby's dream, but lacks detailed analysis of his motivations, the means he employs, or the consequences of his pursuit.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Misunderstands or does not address Gatsby's specific interpretation or pursuit of the American Dream.

3. Exploration of the Failure and Corruption of the American Dream

- **Excellent (4 points):** Thoroughly explains how the American Dream fails in the novel due to **materialism, moral decay, and deeply entrenched social stratification** (distinctions between "old money," "new money," and "no money"). Discusses how characters like **Tom, Daisy, and Myrtle** embody this corruption, highlighting their **carelessness, irresponsibility, and pursuit of superficial happiness**.
- **Good (3 points):** Explains that the American Dream is corrupted by materialism and social class divisions. Provides relevant examples of characters demonstrating this corruption.
- **Developing (2 points):** Mentions the failure of the American Dream but provides limited explanation or examples of its causes. May focus only on Gatsby's failure without broader societal context.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Does not address the failure or corruption of the American Dream or presents a superficial understanding.

4. Literary Devices and Contextual Understanding

- **Excellent (4 points):** Astutely analyzes **key literary devices** such as **symbolism** (e.g., the **green light**, the **Valley of Ashes**, cars, houses), **imagery**, and **characterisation** to support the argument. Effectively integrates the **historical context of the Jazz Age/Roaring Twenties** (e.g., economic boom, Prohibition, flapper culture, social changes, income inequality) and its influence on the corrupted dream. Considers the **narrator's (Nick's) perspective and reliability** in presenting the dream.
- **Good (3 points):** Discusses some key literary devices and their connection to the American Dream. Shows a general understanding of the 1920s context and its relevance to the novel. May briefly mention Nick's role.
- **Developing (2 points):** Identifies a few literary elements but provides limited analysis of their significance. Mentions the 1920s but does not fully integrate it into the argument.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Fails to incorporate literary analysis or historical context, or uses them inaccurately.

5. Structure, Cohesion, and Argumentation

- **Excellent (4 points):** Presents a **clear, insightful, and arguable thesis statement** that directly addresses the prompt. Develops a **well-organised and logical argument** with coherent paragraphs, smooth transitions, and a strong introduction and conclusion. All points are relevant and contribute effectively to the main argument.
- **Good (3 points):** Presents a clear thesis statement. The argument is generally logical and organised, though some transitions might be abrupt or some points less relevant to the main argument. Includes an introduction and conclusion.
- **Developing (2 points):** Thesis statement may be present but unclear or too broad. Organization may be loose, with some paragraphs lacking focus or clear connection to the main argument. Introduction and conclusion may be weak.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks a clear thesis or logical structure. Argument is difficult to follow.

6. Use of Evidence and Citation

- **Excellent (4 points):** Integrates **specific, relevant textual evidence** (direct quotes and paraphrases) from the novel and provided sources **seamlessly and effectively** to support all claims. Evidence is meticulously cited using the **[i] or [i, j] notation** as demonstrated in the conversation history. Provides insightful explanation of how the evidence supports and strengthens the argument.
- **Good (3 points):** Uses relevant textual evidence from the novel and provided sources to support most claims. Citations are mostly accurate. Explanation of evidence is present but could be more developed.
- **Developing (2 points):** Uses some textual evidence, but it may be limited, not always relevant, or poorly integrated. Citations may be inconsistent or inaccurate.
- **Needs Improvement (1 point):** Lacks textual evidence or uses it inappropriately. No citations or incorrect citation format.

7. Language and Style

- **Excellent (4 points):** Demonstrates **sophisticated vocabulary, varied sentence structure, and precise academic language**. The writing is clear, concise, engaging, and free of grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and punctuation issues. Adheres to an appropriate academic tone throughout.

- **Good (3 points):** Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. Writing is generally clear and has few grammatical or spelling errors. The tone is mostly academic.
 - **Developing (2 points):** Vocabulary is basic, and sentence structure may be repetitive. Contains several grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, or awkward phrasing that hinder clarity. The tone may be informal at times.
 - **Needs Improvement (1 points):** Frequent and significant errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation that impede understanding. Language is informal or inappropriate for an academic essay.
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Total Score: ____ / 28