

## Preparing for the *Gatsby* Theme Essay: An MLA Outline for the Exam

In this assignment you will create an outline that is required upon entrance to the exam in order to write the essay on the day of the final.

You will begin preparing for it by composing a thesis statement and a number of topic **sentences that explain** and support it for your essay about *The Great Gatsby*..

1. Choose a theme that you feel prepared to discuss in an essay about the novel. Be committed to using it so that you don't have to change it later on.
2. Now take a look at some of the passages you have recorded from chapters of the book. How do these quotes serve as evidence to something that you might say about one of the five themes we have selected to study?
3. Since an essay is essentially an argument with support, your thesis statement should make a rather bold claim about the author's point of writing the book. The bolder the statement/stronger the argument, the easier it will be to support it with passages from the text and any other commentary you might find from outside research from places like Wikipedia, Spark Notes and other web pages.
4. Write an introductory paragraph that uses the author as the subject and explain what the message of the book is about. Do not use yourself as the subject and avoid using plot details or quotes in this part. What is Fitzgerald saying about the theme and how does he show it to the reader?
5. Structure several (at least three) paragraphs so that the topic sentence makes a statement about a new idea that connects well to your thesis statement. Do not begin with plot summary or an actual quote. Save those items for your support. Use roman numerals to list these topics in an outline form (I, II, III, IV, etc.).
6. Compose a few points that will explain the topic with capital letters after each topic sentence (A, B, C, etc.)

7. List the pieces of evidence (quotes you plan to use from both the novel and outside sources) under the correct point that you wish to make with numbers (1,2,3, etc). Be sure they help to support and illuminate the reader to the topic.
8. When you do use the plot and several quotes, explain how they are appropriate examples that are significant in showing what you mean. Use small letters (a,b,c, etc.) to show this in the outline.
9. Here's an example:

Smart 1

Pat Smart

English 111-77b

Professor Donna Reiss

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No More Traffic Jams on I-64:

Mass Transit for South Hampton Roads

Thesis statement: Instead of further road construction, which will only increase the amount of traffic in South Hampton Roads, the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach should develop a modern mass transit system of light rail and park-and-ride express buses.

- I. Current traffic problems
  - A. Morning rush
  - B. Afternoon rush
- II. Proposed solutions
  - A. More highways and lanes
    - (1) Virginia Department of Transportation
    - (2) City of Norfolk
    - (3) City of Portsmouth
  - B. Light rail
    - (1) City of Virginia Beach
      - (a) City Council
      - (b) Citizens for Rapid Transit
      - (c) Environmental Protection Agency
    - (2) City of Norfolk