

Ideal Destruction:  
Constructing Realistic  
American Dreams

A 7-week Unit Designed by Rebecca Moon

RATIONALE

Idealism: The act or practice of envisioning things in an ideal form.

Ideal: A conception of something in its absolute perfection.

Destruction: The condition of having been destroyed.

Americans constantly search for the American Dream. Though each individual possesses specific connotations of what this "Dream" includes, most would agree that financial stability, owning land and a home, the opportunity to work, and obtaining a quality education comprise important components of the American ideal. These constant aspirations drive Americans to set high goals and work diligently. Unfortunately, many ideals and dreams prove unrealistic and unattainable. Idealism often leads to disappointment and destruction, and sometimes to death.

Most students have some conception of what the American Dream implicates for their family. Many students aspire to become their parents; to be at least as successful as their parents. Other students see their parents' lives and feel unsatisfied. These students aspire to achieve greater dreams in their adult lives. The components of the American Dream vary for each student. Some students desire wealth and independence, while others seek to obtain a good job and start a family. Some students hope to own their own business, yet others pursue a college education so they can work for major corporations. Psychologist Erik Erikson suggests that adolescents, "Tend to want to get to "success" as fast as possible, and yet few of (them) have ever taken the time to figure out what success means to (them)" (Boeree). Whatever their dreams hold, young people must realize that many dreams expose ideals. Mr. Erikson warns that adolescents are prone to fanaticism, and are "Known for their idealism, and for their tendency to see things in black-and-white. These people will gather others around them and promote their beliefs and life-styles without regard to others' rights to disagree" (Boeree). Through writing and discussion, students will show awareness of appropriate, attainable goals, and know that unattainable ideals can be destructive.

Abundant American Literature concerns the ideals of the American Dream. In this six week unit we will read several works by American authors pertaining to Idealism. The students will begin by writing about their opinions of what "the" American Dream includes. Well-renowned educator Peter Smagorinsky suggests assigning, "A writing prompt that will help students think about personal experiences that may contribute to their understanding" of the concepts and problems presented in the literature. (Smagorinsky 156) The first novel we will study, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, presents various dreams through the lives of several different characters. The lead character, Jay Gatsby, aligns his dream to court the affection of Daisy Buchanan, a former love. Jay's ideals lead him to believe that he can regain Daisy's love by obtaining wealth and social prestige. Unfortunately, Jay fails to account for Daisy's existing marriage, family, and comfortable lifestyle. He becomes who he believes Daisy desires, but unfortunately at least five years too late. Jay has fantasizes about Daisy for so long that he molds her into someone she is not - his ideal mate. The time Jay spends with Daisy produces miserable disappointment. He realizes that the Daisy of his dreams represented an ideal. Each character in *The Great Gatsby* possesses different ideals. However, most of their

dreams are plagues with corruption; they all seem to make poor choices. I will lead the students in discussion about constructing good ideals, and how beneficial choices can assist them in attaining their dreams. Students will also ponder, "Systems of beliefs and codes of conduct that enable them to consider themselves a success" (Smagorinsky 414). Students will individually reflect on their American Dream, and the necessary steps toward reaching their ideals. We will also talk about constructing reasonable, attainable ideals. The Great Gatsby will provide an example for the students of what can happen when characters chase unfounded ideals and make poor decisions. Through this study students will explore the concept that ideals can be destructive.

Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* presents another tale of shattered dreams. However, the dreams of Lennie and George are less extravagant than the dreams of Jay Gatsby. Lennie Small and George Milton's American Dream of owning a home and some land sounds like a reasonable goal, yet the life circumstances of the Depression grant it unattainable. Students will write about a frustrating experience where they have failed to meet a goal. George and Lennie face more difficulty working towards their ideals than others because of their identities. We will discuss what oppression means, and how society favors the left side of "either/or binaries," for example, race (white/black), class (rich/poor), gender (male/female), sexual orientation (heterosexual/homosexual), age (young/old), and wellness (able/disable). Students will consider the role society plays in hindering these individuals and groups from attaining their dreams.

To supplement reading about destructed ideals, I will show the movie, *The Piano Lesson*, directed by Lloyd Richards. The movie, produced in 1995, very closely reproduces August Wilson's play. Because most of my students come from Caucasian households, the visual observation of a black household environment will be valuable. Students need to be conscious of the multiple generations displayed in the story. Boy Willie wants to buy land on which enslaved ancestors worked, and sell the family piano, engraved by his grandfather, in the process. Bernice, Willie's sister, understands the hardships and oppression that her grandfather experienced in his life, and she wants to preserve the piano as documentation of family history. The siblings must decide which is more important - family history or material wealth. Students will discuss the difficulty the family faces in deciding if the sale of the piano can be justified, or if Willie only wants land for selfish gain.

"Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave" serves as a foil to the unattainable American ideal. Oppressed by his masters, Fredrick Douglass successfully uses "various stratagems" to attain his realistic goals. In Chapter Seven of Fredrick's autobiography, he describes his endeavors of learning to write. He learns as much as he can from his mistress, and when she decides to end her lessons he gives bread to schoolchildren in exchange for their knowledge. Fredrick uses his literacy to read an article about a slave who convinces his master to free him. This story gives Fredrick a new motivation for learning and forms his American ideal. Fredrick takes initiative for his own learning, and he eventually achieves complete literacy. Fredrick Douglass sets a realistic goal and achieves his unusual dream of becoming a literate slave.

We will supplement the large texts with three smaller pieces of literature. Shelly's "Ozymandius" is a poem about a vain man with ridiculous goals. After discussing this poem, and reading Pat Mora's "A Voice," students will compose poetry about personal, realistic goals. "Through the Tunnel," by Doris Lessing, is a short story about a boy whose goal was to swim through an underwater tunnel. In response to this reading, students will write a short story about a goal they can remember achieving from childhood. Students are more likely to "own" their writing if it is relevant to their lives. "As long as (they're) writing about what's important to (them), then (their) writing is real, it's motivated, and it's likely to improve" (Kirby & Liner 75). We will discuss how setting reasonable goals benefits high school students. Students will realize that setting reasonable goals about completing schoolwork, playing sports, working a part-time job, dating, applying to colleges, etc. will help them achieve their dreams. We will also talk about unreasonable goals, and how unhealthy and devastating unfulfilled goals can become. Students will be aware of idealistic dreams, their attainability, and their possibilities for the destruction of positive attitudes and contentment.

Students will compose a set of goals for their lives. Students will be aware of the difference between idealistic and realistic goals, and they will compare their ideals with their realistic goals. They will write methods for achieving their goals, as well as

possibilities for achieving their ideals. In correspondence with their individual dreams, student will convey their interpretations of the American Dream in the present day. "Good writers care about their writing and take care in writing it," and students will embrace this assignment because of their investment level in their own lives. (Kirby & Liner 107)

Some realists may wonder why students need to consider ideals for a seven week unit. Their pondering can be propitiated by remembering the life situation of the sixteen-year-old. On the verge of becoming adult members of the community, Eleventh grade high school students need to be aware of idealism, realistic goals, and American Dreams. After high school they will make decisions that will shape their American Dreams. They will choose between college and work, and they will be forced to construct short and long-term goals. This study will prevent students from setting unrealistic expectations, for they will realize that ideals can be destructive. "In the writing class our job is to help students write in their own voices about their own areas of authority - their own experiences, feelings, perceptions" (Kirby & Liner 43). Students will be encouraged to set positive goals that will guide their lives successfully.

#### References

Boeree, George C. "Erik Erikson." 1997. Personality Theories, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. 6 October 2002 <http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/erikson.html>.  
Kirby, Dan and Tim Liner. Inside Out. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.  
Smagorinsky, Peter. Teaching English Through Principles Practice. Columbus: Merrill Prentice-Hall, 2002.

#### GOALS AND RUBRICS

##### Goal Number One: The Mini-Research Paper

Assignment: The Jazz Age (1920's) was a time of grand flourish in the United States. Your assignment is to write a research paper concerning the Jazz Age. Focus your paper on one specific aspect of the time period (i.e. The Harlem Renaissance, The Flapper Era, Women's Rights, Automobiles, Movies and Media, Jazz Age Slang, etc.) Your paper should be a minimum of 750 words and must be typed, double-spaced. You need a minimum of three references, and one of them must be from a non-electronic source. Make sure to avoid vague language by using precise nouns and verbs, and strive for grammatical and mechanical excellence.

#### Rubric

An "A" Paper will...

- Be focused on one specific topic from the correct time period
- Specifically describe the key components of the topic
- Have used a minimum of three references
- Be at least 750 words in length
- Follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout

A "B" Paper will...

- Be focused on one specific topic from the correct time period
- Specifically describe the key components of the topic, though maybe in less detail than an "A" paper
- Have used a minimum of three references
- Be at least 750 words in length
- Follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - and errors present do not affect comprehension

A "C" Paper will...

- Attempt to focus on one specific topic from the correct time period, but may stray from topic a little
- Generally describe the key components of the topic, lacks specific detail and descriptive language
- Have used a minimum of three references
- Might be shorter than 750 words in length
- Attempt to follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - yet some errors present effect comprehension

A "D" Paper will...

- Have an unfocused or unclear topic
- Poorly describe the key components of the topic, very little specific detail and descriptive language
- Have used have used less than three references
- Is probably shorter than 750 words in length
- Makes no attempt to follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - many errors present effect comprehension

An "F" Paper will...

- Have an unfocused or unclear topic
- Fails describe the key components of the topic, no specific detail or descriptive language
- Have used have used less than two references
- Is much shorter than 750 words in length
- Is careless with grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - errors make work unreadable or change the meaning of the work

Goal Number Two: Choose a Way to Show What You Know.

Assignment: Choose one of the following options to display your understanding of the Great Gatsby.

Choice Number One: Create a homepage for two of the characters in The Great Gatsby. Select appropriate backgrounds and pictures, and provide information that describes your characters. For each character, create links to five different sites that would interest your character. On the page, display a written explanation for why you picked each link, and how it applies to the character. Four of the ten written explanations must contain a textual quotation supporting your claim. (Preferably two quotations for each character.)

Choice Number Two: Create a musical soundtrack for The Great Gatsby. Choose five songs that represent a character, theme, event, or other relevant component of the novel. Provide a written, 1-page double-spaced explanation for each song telling why you chose the song and how it relates to the book. Include at least one textual quotation to support your claim for each of the songs.

Choice Number Three: Write a letter to one of the characters in The Great Gatsby. The letter can be conversational in tone, and should approach three pages in length. You may want to ask the character questions, give advice, and compare your personal experiences with the experiences of the characters in the book. Make sure to discuss specific events that happened in the book with your character.

Choice Number Four: Write three poems inspired by The Great Gatsby. The poems can be about character, setting, theme, events, etc. Illustrate each poem by creating a visual representation, drawing a picture, or including a relevant picture or clipart that you find. Be creative!

Rubric

An "A" Project will...

- Clearly display that student has read the material, interpreted it, and drawn their own conclusions
- Fulfilled the work requirements of the project, i.e., wrote three poems, three page letter, homepages for 2 characters, 5 songs with 5 explanations
- Display understanding and application of text through quotations or interpretations of meaning
- Achieve the prescribed length requirements
- Obviously have required brilliant effort

A "B" Project will...

- Display that student has read the material, interpreted it, and drawn some conclusions
- Fulfilled the work requirements of the project, i.e., wrote three poems, three page letter, homepages for 2 characters, 5 songs with 5 explanations
- Display some understanding and application of text through possible quotations or interpretations of meaning
- Achieve the prescribed length requirements
- Obviously have required effort

A "C" Project will...

- Display that student has read the majority of the material, interpreted it, and drawn vague conclusions
- Fulfilled the work requirements of the project, i.e., wrote three poems, three page letter, homepages for 2 characters, 5 songs with 5 explanations
- Display minimal understanding and application of text through possible quotations or interpretations of meaning
- May not achieve the prescribed length requirements
- Put forth average effort

A "D" Project will...

- Display that student has read the some of the material, possibly interpreted it, and drawn few conclusions
- Has not fulfilled the work requirements of the project, i.e., wrote three poems, three page letter, homepages for 2 characters, 5 songs with 5 explanations
- Display sub-par understanding and application of text through possible quotations or interpretations of meaning
- Does not achieve the prescribed length requirements
- Puts forth minimal effort

An "F" Project will...

- Display that student has not read the material
- Has not fulfilled the work requirements of the project, i.e., wrote three poems, three page letter, homepages for 2 characters, 5 songs with 5 explanations
- Display abysmal understanding and application of text through possible quotations or interpretations of meaning
- Does not achieve the prescribed length requirements, may be incomplete
- Puts forth no effort

### Goal Number Three: The Question Log

Assignment: As you read *Of Mice and Men*, formulate two good questions from each chapter. Remember that good questions should be focused, open-ended, meaningful, and exact (clearly worded). Make sure that no questions can be answered with yes/no responses. Write the questions on the left side of a two-column chart, and answer your own questions on the right. You should turn in a total of 18 questions with corresponding answers.

### Goal Number Four: The Personal Narrative Essay

Assignment: What is Your American Dream? You are to write an essay that formulates your personal American Dream. You need to include at least five specific goals for your life, and how you plan on attaining these goals. Use specific details to help your reader clearly understand everything your goals include. You may describe short-term and long-term goals, and your paper should be a minimum of 750 words.

### Goal Number Five: The Culminating Text

Assignment: Recall some of the major characters we have encountered during this unit: Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, Nick Carraway, George, Lennie, Jerry from *Through the Tunnel*, Frederick Douglas, Boy Willie, and Berniece. With these characters in mind, choose one of the following projects.

1. Which one of these characters most reminds you of yourself? Choose one character, state similarities, give accounts of incidences that display characteristics you see in

yourself, and use textual quotations to prove your claim.

2. Choose one character that really intrigued you. Create a room (bedroom, kitchen, living room, etc.) for this character. This can be a three-dimensional model, a detailed painting, or any other type of art that I approve. What is on their walls? What is in their closets? Their cabinets? What have they selected to put in this room? Write a two-page explanation of who you designed the room the way you did.

3. Choose a scene that contains your favorite character from a selection we have read and rewrite it. For example: 1. in a different setting (time, place); 2. from a different character's point of view; 3. in the style of a different genre such as science fiction or romance. Another option is to write a rap that re-creates a scene, and submit it both written and recorded on a tape.

4. Choose from *The Great Gatsby* or *Of Mice and Men*. What do you think were the author's intentions of writing this novel, and how did he convey this message? How did your character help to reveal the author's intent?

Adapted from John Waller and Tara Johnson

#### Rubric

An "A" Project will...

- Be focused on one specific character we have studied
- Be well defended and contemplated
- May display creativity
- Demonstrate familiarity with character and story
- Be of reasonable length
- Follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout

A "B" Project will...

- Be focused on one specific character we have studied
- Be adequately defended and contemplated
- May display some creativity
- Demonstrate familiarity with character and story
- Be of reasonable length
- Follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - and errors present do not affect comprehension

A "C" Project will...

- Be focused on one specific character we have studied
- Be vaguely defended and contemplated
- Lacks creativity
- Demonstrate familiarity with character and story
- May display average effort, might be short
- Attempt to follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - yet some errors present effect comprehension

A "D" Project will...

- May not be clearly focused on one specific character we have studied
- Be poorly defended and contemplated
- Lacks creativity
- Demonstrate unfamiliarity with character and story
- May be incomplete
- Makes no attempt to follow rules of textbook grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - many errors present effect comprehension

An "F" Project will...

- Is not clearly focused on one specific character we have studied
- Be poorly defended and contemplated
- Boring to read
- Demonstrate unfamiliarity with character and story
- May be incomplete
- Is careless with grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout - errors make work unreadable or change the meaning of the work

## INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Students will form groups of four or five. Each group will discuss what they think is included in the proverbial American Dream. On one piece of paper the students will list everything that they feel is an important requirement of realizing the American Dream.

15 minutes - One representative from each group will come to the board and write three aspects of the "American Dream" they think are most important. After listing, the group will have to give short explanation to the class as to why they chose each component. This activity will allow students to see how other groups thought similarly or differently, and how the American Dream is different for everyone.

22 minutes - Each student will be asked to free write in his or her own words in response to the following question: What is "the" American Dream? This free write should be at least two pages long and should include detailed description of the student's concept of the generalized American Dream. Another response about what their specific, individualized American Dream is will be required at the end of this unit. As students write I will distribute copies of The Great Gatsby which we will begin reading tomorrow.

For homework students will complete free writings which will be due at the beginning of class on Day #2.

## WEEK 1

Free Writing: What is "the" American Dream?

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 1

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 1/2

[bibliography  
mini-lesson]

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 2

Distribute Jazz-Age Project

Jazz Age Mini-Research Project

(Library)

## WEEKEND

Homework:  
Finish Ch. 3  
WEEK 2

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 4

Quiz Chs. 1-3

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 4/5

[common error  
mini-lesson]

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 5

In-Class Writing

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 5/6

[take ?'s on bibliography]

Jazz Age Mini-Research Project

(Library)

Homework:  
Finish Ch. 6  
WEEK 3

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 7

Research  
Paper Due

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 7/8

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 8

In-Class Writing

The Great Gatsby  
Ch 9

Wrap-Up  
The Great Gatsby

Homework:  
Culminating Project / Text



WEEK 4

Culminating Activity Due

Introduce OM/M

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

Discuss Oppression &  
Binaries

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

The Piano Lesson Movie

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

The Piano Lesson Movie

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

The Piano Lesson Movie

In-Class Writing

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

WEEK 5

Discuss The Piano Lesson

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

Fredrick Douglas

Homework:

OM/M (2wks)

Ozymandius

Homework:  
OM/M (2wks)

"Through the Tunnel"

Homework:  
OM/M (2wks)

"Through the Tunnel"

Write Short Stories

Homework:  
OM/M (2wks)

Homework:  
Finish  
OM/M (2wks)  
WEEK 6

Discuss OM/M

Discuss OM/M

Discuss OM/M

Essay:  
What is Your American Dream?

[grammar  
mini-lesson]

Continue Essay: American Dream

Distribute Culminating Activity Options  
[grammar  
mini-lesson]

Think about Culminating Activities, Choose.  
WEEK 7

Revise American Dream Essays

[grammar  
mini-lesson]

Share American Dreams,  
Turn-In.

Further Discuss Project Options

In-Class Work on Culminating Project

Generate Poetry About Personal, Realistic Goals

Poetry  
Coffeehouse

Culminating Projects Due

Weekend Off

LESSON PLANS

DAY 1

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Students will form groups of four or five. Each group will discuss what they think is included in the proverbial American Dream. On one piece of paper the students will list everything that they feel is an important requirement of realizing the American Dream.

15 minutes - One representative from each group will come to the board and write three aspects of the "American Dream" they think are most important. After listing, the group will have to give short explanation to the class as to why they chose each component. This activity will allow students to see how other groups thought similarly or differently, and how the American Dream is different for everyone.

22 minutes - Each student will be asked to free write in his or her own words in response to the following question: What is "the" American Dream? This free write should be at least two pages long and should include detailed description of the student's concept of the generalized American Dream. Another response about what their specific, individualized American Dream is will be required at the end of this unit. As students write I will distribute copies of *The Great Gatsby*, which we will begin reading tomorrow.

For homework students will complete free writings that will be due at the beginning of class on Day #2.

DAY 2

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

15 minutes - Class discussion about American Dream Papers. Students may share their opinion of "the" American Dream if they wish.

10 minutes - Introduction to the *Great Gatsby* - hand out reading timeline. Discuss reading format: some in-class and some out-of-class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 1 of *The Great Gatsby*. Today I will read aloud to students to introduce the book.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 1 of *The Great Gatsby*.

DAY 3

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Bibliography Mini-Lesson in Preparation for visiting the library on Day 5. Hand out guide to MLA citations and works cited page.

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 1 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 2 of The Great Gatsby. Today students take turns reading aloud in small groups of 4-5.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 2 of The Great Gatsby.

DAY 4

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Distribute Jazz-Age Mini-Research project. Assign individual topics. Discuss requirements of project.

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 2 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From you perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 3 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read "popcorn style" aloud as a group.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 3 of The Great Gatsby. Chapters 1-3 must have been read by Day 6.

DAY 5

5 minutes - Students will meet in the Library today. Extra time for getting to the library and taking role.

10 minutes - Librarian will instruct students about different resources available, how to research, how to find a book, etc.

35 minutes - Students will use resources in the library for information to write their reports. They will be reminded to stay on task as they only have two periods of class time in the library. The next library visit will occur on Day 10, before their paper is due on Day 11. (Complete over the weekend.)

For homework students will continue finish reading Chapters 1-3 of The Great Gatsby (by Day 6). Quiz on Chapters 1-3 on Monday.

DAY 6

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

15 minutes - Quiz on Chapters 1-3 of The Great Gatsby.

10 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 3 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take

questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 4 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read aloud in small groups.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 4 of The Great Gatsby.

DAY 7

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Mini-Lesson on Common Error(s) teacher identified from American Dream Free-writes, using anonymous student examples on board.

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 4 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 5 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read aloud with a partner.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 5 of The Great Gatsby.

DAY 8

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

30 minutes - In-Class Writing - Two page Response Paper - Do you think Gatsby's behavior concerning the meeting with Daisy was strange? How do you think Daisy felt during the meeting? Was it awkward for her? Did she sense Gatsby's anxiety?

17 minutes - Reading Chapter 6 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read silently as they finish their response papers. Students will negotiate a specific page number to reach before tomorrow's class.

For homework tonight students will work on their Jazz-Age research projects.

DAY 9

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Take questions on Bibliography, Research Project, etc.

37 minutes - Finish Reading Chapter 6 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read aloud in small groups.

For homework students will finish reading Chapters 4-6 of The Great Gatsby. Chapters 4-6 must have been read by Day 11.

DAY 10

5 minutes - Students will meet in the Library today. Extra time for getting to the library and taking role.

45 minutes - Students will use resources in the library for information to write their reports. This is their last day to research in the school library, and their papers are due on Monday (Day 11).

For homework students will continue reading Chapters 1-6 of The Great Gatsby (by Day 11). Quiz on Chapters 4-6 on Monday. Research Paper is Due on Monday.

DAY 11

8 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening, Collect Research Projects.

15 minutes - Quiz on Chapters 4-6 of The Great Gatsby.

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 6 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 7 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read "popcorn style" aloud as a group.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 7 of The Great Gatsby.

DAY 12

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Distribute Options for The Great Gatsby final project. Discuss requirements of project. Allow students to ask questions.

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 7 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

22 minutes - Reading Chapter 8 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read aloud with partners.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 8 of The Great Gatsby.

DAY 13

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

30 minutes - In Class Writing - Two page Response Paper - Why did Jay Gatsby's American Dream never become reality? How did facades play an important role in the destruction of his dream? What do you think Gatsby's final thoughts were as he relaxed in the swimming pool?

17 minutes - Reading Chapter 9 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read silently as they finish their response papers. Students will negotiate a specific page number to reach before tomorrow's class.

For homework students will finalize their choice of options for The Great Gatsby project and will begin to form their representation.

DAY 14

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

15 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 8 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? From your perspective after reading this far, what issues does this novel present concerning the American Dream? Take questions/comments from class.

32 minutes - Reading Chapter 9 of The Great Gatsby. Today students will read in small groups of 4 or 5. As students read, I will conference with them individually to find out what option they have chosen for their final project and to monitor their progress.

For homework students will finish reading Chapter 9 of The Great Gatsby. Chapters 1-9 must have been read by tomorrow (Day 15). Quiz tomorrow on Chapters 7-9.

DAY 15

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

15 minutes - Quiz on Chapters 7-9 of The Great Gatsby.

30 minutes - Class discussion of Chapter 9 of The Great Gatsby. What did the students find interesting? Was anything confusing? Take questions/comments from class. What was the students' overall opinion of the novel? What themes or overarching concepts did they see? Was anything ironic to them? Did they identify with any of the characters?

7 minutes - Discuss The Great Gatsby project options, take questions from class.

For homework students will produce a project in response to The Great Gatsby. This is a major grade, and is due Monday (Day 16).

DAY 16

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

5 minutes - Turn-in The Great Gatsby Projects.

15 minutes - Discuss the background of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. Explain how the region Steinbeck grew up in (coastal California) and the time period (the Great Depression era) influence the novel.

Students will be reading Of Mice and Men individually, and are expected to complete the novel by Day 26, which gives them two weeks.

5 minutes - Explain Ongoing Writing Assignment: As you read Of Mice and Men, formulate two good questions from each chapter. Remember that good questions should be focused, open-ended, meaningful, and exact (clearly worded). Make sure that no questions can be answered with yes/no responses. Write the questions on the left side of a two-column chart, and answer your own questions on the right. You should turn in a total of 18 questions with corresponding answers. Your question log is due on Day 26, the same day by which you are to have completed the novel.

22 minutes - Introduce Of Mice and Men by showing a brief (22 minute) clip from the 1992 movie, Of Mice and Men, starring John Malkovich.

DAY 17

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - Today we will discuss oppression and binaries. I will talk with students about what oppression means, and ask them to give examples of people who are oppressed or times that have felt oppressed. We will discuss binaries (white/black, rich/poor,

young/old, male/female, etc.) and how people who fall in the categories on the left side of the binaries usually have an advantage. Students will give examples from popular culture and current political issues that demonstrate binaries in action. I will then mention that several characters in *Of Mice and Men* fall victim to binaries, and ask the students to think about how binaries affect the attainability of the American Dream in this novel as they read.

For homework students will continue reading *Of Mice and Men* and contributing to the question log.

#### DAY 18

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - Today we will begin watching the film version of *The Piano Lesson*, written by August Wilson. Students will be asked to take one page of notes today while watching the movie. Notes should be of examples of binaries they see demonstrated in the film, and of important events that relate to the characters in the play and their individual American Dreams.

For homework students will continue reading *Of Mice and Men* and contributing to the question log.

#### DAY 19

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - Today we will continue watching the film version of *The Piano Lesson*, written by August Wilson. Students will be asked to take one page of notes today while watching the movie. Notes should be of examples of binaries they see demonstrated in the film, and of important events that relate to the characters in the play and their individual American Dreams.

For homework students will continue reading *Of Mice and Men* and contributing to the question log.

#### DAY 20

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Today we will finish watching the film version of *The Piano Lesson*, written by August Wilson.

37 minutes - In-Class Writing - 2 page Response Paper

If you were faced with a situation like the one Willie and Berniece faced in *The Piano Lesson*, which character would you have identified with most? Would you have been like Willie and seen the opportunity for new farmland and family prosperity, or would you have taken Berniece's stance that family heritage and tradition was more important than money?

Think of a situation in your life where you were faced with parting with a material possession that was very important to you. Explain the situation and your feelings about giving up your belonging. Do you now regret it?

For homework students will continue reading *Of Mice and Men* and contributing to the question log.

#### DAY 21

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening



5 minutes - Each student will write one question, statement, or topic that they would like to discuss in class concerning the movie The Piano Lesson. I will lead the discussion by reading a student-generated observation and asking for class response.

42 minutes - Class discussion of the movie The Piano Lesson.

Possible discussion topics: What would the students have done if they were in a situation like Willie and Bernice? Did they agree with the outcome of the play? How did binaries and oppression play a role in this play? Did Willie need to sell the piano to achieve his American Dream, or was Bernice attempting to preserve her American Dream by saving the family piano? How were Willie and Bernice's American Dreams different? How did the issue of race factor into this play? If you had to write a topic sentence for this movie, what would you write? Do you think that your topic sentence would be parallel with the August Wilson's intended message?

For homework students will continue reading Of Mice and Men and contributing to the question log.

DAY 22

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

25 minutes - Today students will individually read Chapter Seven from Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave. This is a first-person account by Fredrick Douglass of his struggles to achieve his American Dream as an uneducated child slave.

22 minutes - Students will choose partners and will be given a piece of white paper and a box of colored pencils. Partners will be told to discuss the narrative and the obstacles Fredrick Douglass faced in realizing his dream. Partners will be asked to create a picture that captures a theme, topic sentence, important event, or monstrous achievement in Fredrick Douglass's life. If you choose to display a theme or topic sentence it should be written somewhere on the page. For example, if I wanted to depict the way that Fredrick Douglass learned how to read, I would draw a picture of little Fredrick bringing a loaf of bread to a couple of little white boys with some books and pencils. (See example in Materials Section)

For homework students will continue reading Of Mice and Men and contributing to the question log.

DAY 23

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Today students will work with a partner and read "Ozymandius" by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

15 minutes - For class discussion we will walk through a close reading as a group. I will read one line of the poem, and ask the students what they think the line means. We will continue this pattern until we complete the poem. Students will discuss what meaning they derived from the poem (Man builds a monument to himself, and it crumbles away miserably.) What do the lessons from "Ozymandius" tell us about the importance of setting realistic and meaningful American Dreams?

22 minutes - Resume partners and write a poem modeling Shelley's "Ozymandius." Poems should begin with "I met a traveller..." but tell a different story. Students need to make sure that there is a lesson to be learned from reading their poem.

For homework students will continue reading Of Mice and Men and contributing to the question log.

DAY 24

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

30 minutes - Today students will take turns reading "Through the Tunnel" by Doris Lessing aloud in class.

17 minutes - As a class we will discuss "Through the Tunnel." Was Jerry's dream attainable? What danger did Jerry face in reaching his dream? What types of obstacles do average Americans face in attaining their dreams? What types of risks do they take? After Jerry reached his dream he was uninterested in going back to swim. Was swimming boring once he reached his goal? This considered, what is the danger of fully attaining an American Dream?

For homework students will continue reading Of Mice and Men and contributing to the question log.

DAY 25

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - Today students will write a short story in class about an adventure with a goal. Students can write about any type of adventure they want, but the story must include a character who overcomes adversity to reach a goal.

For homework students will continue reading Of Mice and Men and contributing to the question log.

DAY 26

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

2 minutes - Students will turn in Of Mice and Men questions logs.

10 minutes - We will begin today by reviewing the happenings of Section 1: From the opening of the novel to George instructing Lennie in preparation for their arrival at the ranch (nightfall) And Section 2: From Lennie and George's arrival at the ranch to an unpleasant encounter with Curley

35 minutes - We will discuss Sections 1 & 2 as a class using the fishbowl method for discussion. Students will talk about the way characters handled situations, events they liked/disliked, characters they identify with, etc. Students will also discuss the prospects of George and Lennie attaining their American Dream.

DAY 27

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - We will begin today by reviewing the happenings of Section 3: From Slim and George returning to the bunkhouse to George comforting Lennie after the fight with Curley And Section 4: From Lennie talking to Crooks in the harness room to after Curley's wife threatening Crooks

35 minutes - We will discuss Sections 3 & 4 as a class using the pass-the-talking-stick method for discussion. Students will talk about the way characters handled situations, events they liked/disliked, characters they identify with, etc. Students will also discuss the prospects of George and Lennie attaining their American Dream.

DAY 28

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - We will begin today by reviewing the happenings of Section 5: From Lennie stroking his dead puppy in the barn to Curley leading a mob of men to find and kill Lennie And Section 6: From Lennie's arrival at the riverbed to the end of the novel

35 minutes - We will discuss Sections 5 & 6 as a class using the student-led method for discussion. One student will be chosen to facilitate the discussion by deciding who is allowed to speak. Students will talk about the way characters handled situations, events they liked/disliked, characters they identify with, etc. Students will also discuss the prospects of George and Lennie attaining their American Dream. This novel has been described as "a novel of defeated hope and the harsh reality of the American Dream." How is that so?

DAY 29

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

5 minutes - Grammar mini-lesson: Commas and Comma Splices

42 minutes - In-class personal narrative essay: What is Your American Dream? You are to write an essay that formulates your personal American Dream. You need to include at least five specific goals for your life, and how you plan on attaining these goals. Use specific details to help your reader clearly understand everything your goals include. You may describe short-term and long-term goals, and your paper should be a minimum of 750 words.

DAY 30

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

5 minutes - Grammar mini-lesson: Getting rid of "got" and other vague words

40 minutes - Continue to work on personal narrative essay about your American Dream. As students read, I will conference with them individually to answer any questions about their essays and to evaluate progress. I will skim their papers and look for repeated grammatical and mechanical errors.

2 minutes - Distribute Culminating Project Options handout, tell students to look over it for discussion on Day 32.

For homework students will type a final draft of their essay to bring to class on Day 31 for an in-class editing session.

DAY 31

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Grammar mini-lesson: Common errors I found from skimming the students' papers

37 minutes - Today students will divide into groups of three to edit and revise their American Dream essays. Students will read their essays aloud to their group members. Then they will rotate papers and specifically look for grammar and mechanical errors, vague language, and boring words.

For homework students will revise the final draft of their essay and take their peers' suggestions into consideration in order to produce a final copy. The essay is due tomorrow, Day 32.

#### DAY 32

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

15 minutes - Today we will begin by discussing the options for the Culminating Activities for this unit. All of the options for the Culminating Activities include a combination of works studied in this unit. I will field questions about the different project options and their requirements.

32 minutes - Each student will stand and give a synopsis of their American Dream. As a class, we will compose a list and keep a tally of all the different components of students' American Dreams. The purpose of this activity is for the class to realize how different each individual's American Dream is, and recognize that everyone's dreams are valid.

For homework students will finalize their choice for Culminating Activity.

#### DAY 33

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - In-class work on Culminating Project. I will be available for questions and will be circulating around the room.

For homework students will continue working on Culminating projects.

#### DAY 34

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

47 minutes - Today each student will write a poem about personal, realistic goals. Their poems may be free verse, or they may look as examples in the room of various poetic formats.

For homework students will finish their Culminating Projects.

#### DAY 35

3 minutes - House Keeping and Tool Sharpening

10 minutes - Turn in Culminating Activities and Copies of Of Mice and Men.

37 minutes - Poetry coffee house. Today I will bring cookies, coffee, and juice for the students to snack on while they listen to poetry. I will dim the lights and play music to create a coffeehouse environment. Students will voluntarily read the poetry they wrote the day before and the class will verbally respond. Through this poetry we will hear about the American Dreams and personal goals of individual students. This poetry will also give me an idea of where we are starting from as I begin a unit on Poetry next week.

#### MATERIALS

Books, Media, and Materials

Douglas, Fredrick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Somin & Schuster, 1925.
- Lessing, Doris. "Through the Tunnel." *My Own Resources ESL/EFL*. (1957). 27  
September 2002. <<http://www.miguelmlllop.com>>.
- Of Mice and Men Movie. Director. Gary Sinise. Videocassette. 1992.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Ozymandius*. 1817.
- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin Books, 1937.
- The Piano Lesson Movie. Director. Lloyd Richards. Videocassette. 1995.

#### Handouts

#### Jazz Age Mini-Research Paper

The Jazz Age (1920's) was a time of grand flourish in the United States. Your assignment is to write a research paper concerning the Jazz Age. Focus your paper on one specific aspect of the time period (i.e. The Harlem Renaissance, The Flapper Era, Women's Rights, Automobiles, Movies and Media, Jazz Age Slang, etc.) Your paper should be a minimum of 750 words and must be typed, double-spaced. You need a minimum of three references, and one of them must be from a non-electronic source. Make sure to avoid vague language by using precise nouns and verbs, and strive for grammatical and mechanical excellence.

#### MLA Style Citation Examples

##### Books

Levine, Herbert M. *Political Issues Debated: An Introduction to Politics*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1982.

##### Journal Articles

Hamilton, David E. "The Causes of the Banking Panic of 1930: Another View." *Journal of Southern History* 51 (1985): 581-608.

##### Online Journal Articles

Evnine, Simon J. "The Universality of Logic: On the Connection between Rationality and Logical Ability." *Mind* 110.438 (2001). 31 July 2001  
<<http://www3.oup.co.uk/mind/>>.

##### Magazine Articles

Eberhart, Jonathan. "Watching Comet Halley Come to Life." *Science News* 20 July 1985: 38.

##### Well-Known Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, etc.

"Dance, History of Western." *The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*. 15th ed. 1986.

#### Article from a Newspaper

Jereski, Laura. "Entertainment Stocks: Is a Boffo Performance Over?" *Wall Street Journal* 1 Aug. 1995, eastern ed.: C1+.

#### Personal or Professional Web-site

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site. 3 Oct. 2001.  
National Park Service. 19 Oct. 2001 <<http://www.nps.gov/abli/>>.

#### Movie

Platoon. Prod. Arnold Kopelson. Dir. Oliver Stone. Perf. Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, and Charlie Sheen. Videocassette. Hemdale Film Corporation, 1986.

In-class writing: A reflection on *The Great Gatsby* Chapter 5  
Please write a 2 page response.

Do you think Gatsby's behavior concerning the meeting with Daisy was strange? How do you think Daisy felt during the meeting? Was it awkward for her? Did she sense Gatsby's anxiety?

In-class writing: A reflection on The Great Gatsby Chapter 8 Please write a 2 page response.

Why did Jay Gatsby's American Dream never become reality? How did facades play an important role in the destruction of his dream? What do you think Gatsby's final thoughts were as he relaxed in the swimming pool?

The Great Gatsby:  
Choose a Way to Show What You Know.

Choose one of the following options to display your understanding of The Great Gatsby.

Choice Number One: Create a homepage for two of the characters in The Great Gatsby. Select appropriate backgrounds and pictures, and provide information that describes your characters. For each character, create links to five different sites that would interest your character. On the page, display a written explanation for why you picked each link, and how it applies to the character. Four of the ten written explanations must contain a textual quotation supporting your claim. (Preferably two quotations for each character.)

Choice Number Two: Create a musical soundtrack for The Great Gatsby. Choose five songs that represent a character, theme, event, or other relevant component of the novel. Provide a written, 1-page double-spaced explanation for each song telling why you chose the song and how it relates to the book. Include at least one textual quotation to support your claim for each of the songs.

Choice Number Three: Write a letter to one of the characters in The Great Gatsby. The letter can be conversational in tone, and should approach three pages in length. You may want to ask the character questions, give advice, and compare your personal experiences with the experiences of the characters in the book. Make sure to discuss specific events that happened in the book with your character.

Choice Number Four: Write three poems inspired by The Great Gatsby. The poems can be about character, setting, theme, events, etc. Illustrate each poem by creating a visual representation, drawing a picture, or including a relevant picture or clipart that you find. Be creative!

Of Mice and Men Ongoing Writing Assignment

As you read Of Mice and Men, formulate two good questions from each chapter. Remember that good questions should be focused, open-ended, meaningful, and exact (clearly worded). Make sure that no questions can be answered with yes/no responses. Write the questions on the left side of a two-column chart, and answer your own questions on the right. You should turn in a total of 18 questions with corresponding answers.

In-class writing: The Piano Lesson

Please write a 2 page response.

If you were faced with a situation like the one Willie and Berniece faced in The Piano Lesson, which character would you have identified with most? Would you have been like Willie and seen the opportunity for new farmland and family prosperity, or would you have taken Berniece's stance that family heritage and tradition was more important than money? Think of a situation in your life where you were faced with parting with a material possession that was very important to you. Explain the situation and your feelings about giving up your belonging. Do you now regret it?

The Personal Narrative Essay

Assignment: What is Your American Dream? You are to write an essay that formulates your personal American Dream. You need to include at least five specific goals for your life, and how you plan on attaining these goals. Use specific details to help your reader clearly understand everything your goals include. You may describe short-term and long-term goals, and your paper should be a minimum of 750 words.

#### The Culminating Text

Assignment: Recall some of the major characters we have encountered during this unit: Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, Nick Carraway, George, Lennie, Jerry from Through the Tunnel, Frederick Douglas, Boy Willie, and Berniece. With these characters in mind, choose one of the following projects.

5. Which one of these characters most reminds you of yourself? Choose one character, state similarities, give accounts of incidences that display characteristics you see in yourself, and use textual quotations to prove your claim.

6. Choose one character that really intrigued you. Create a room (bedroom, kitchen, living room, etc.) for this character. This can be a three-dimensional model, a detailed painting, or any other type of art that I approve. What is on their walls? What is in their closets? Their cabinets? What have they selected to put in this room? Write a two-page explanation of who you designed the room the way you did.

7. Choose a scene that contains your favorite character from a selection we have read and rewrite it. For example: 1. in a different setting (time, place); 2. from a different character's point of view; 3. in the style of a different genre such as science fiction or romance. Another option is to write a rap that re-creates a scene, and submit it both written and recorded on a tape.

8. Choose from The Great Gatsby or Of Mice and Men. What do you think were the author's intentions of writing this novel, and how did he convey this message? How did your character help to reveal the author's intent?

Adapted from John Waller and Tara Johnson