

## HOME READING PREPARATION

### F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* & William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”

**Purpose.** Read the two works separately. We will use different critical approaches for each text. You are not expected to produce a finished interpretation at home. Come to class with textual evidence, observations, and questions that we can investigate together.

**Important:** Your notes may be brief, but you must be able to point to specific passages in the text.

I. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

**Required Reading:** Chapters 1-3.

As you read, investigate the novel through the following three critical approaches.

Critical Approach 1: Narratological Reading

Key Concepts: narrator - focalization - narrative reliability - judgment - narrative mediation

Nick Carraway tells us at the beginning that he is inclined to “reserve all judgments.” Yet almost everything we know about the world of the novel comes through his descriptions and evaluations.

While Reading

Find two passages in which Nick describes himself.

Find three passages in which Nick describes or judges another character.

For each example, distinguish between:

**OBSERVATION:** What does Nick actually see or hear?

**INTERPRETATION:** What meaning does Nick give to what he observes?

**JUDGMENT:** What value judgment does he make?

Questions for Close Reading

1. Does Nick actually “reserve all judgments”?
2. Where does description become judgment?
3. Does Nick present every character in the same way?
4. What does Nick admire, dislike, excuse, or condemn?
5. To what extent can we trust the person through whom we see this world?

Bring to Class

Choose one passage in which the difference between observation and judgment is especially noticeable.

Be prepared to explain:

What does this passage reveal about Nick as a narrator?

## Critical Approach 2: Literary Space and Class

Key Concepts: literary space - spatiality - class - social mobility - social hierarchy

Setting in the novel is not simply background. Chapters 1-3 establish several sharply differentiated spaces, including East Egg, West Egg, the Valley of Ashes, and New York.

While Reading

Create a simple chart with four spaces:

| Space           | Who belongs here? | What do we see? | What social position does the space suggest? |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| East Egg        |                   |                 |                                              |
| West Egg        |                   |                 |                                              |
| Valley of Ashes |                   |                 |                                              |
| New York        |                   |                 |                                              |

Pay attention to:

houses

landscape

work and leisure

transportation

wealth

servants

clothing

movement between places

## Questions for Close Reading

1. Why are East Egg and West Egg geographically similar but socially different?
2. Who is able to move freely between different spaces?
3. Who appears socially or economically trapped?
4. Why must characters pass through the Valley of Ashes on the journey between Long Island and New York?
5. How does Fitzgerald make social inequality visible as geography?

Bring to Class

Select one description of a place that you think carries a social meaning beyond its physical appearance.

Complete this sentence:

This space is not merely a setting; it reveals \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Critical Approach 3: Identity, Performance, and Material Culture

Key Concepts: social identity - performance - self-fashioning - material culture - possession

Characters in the novel frequently express social identity through material objects and social performances.

Pay attention to:

houses

clothing

automobiles

furniture

books and magazines

parties

servants

ways of speaking

Notice especially that before Nick properly meets Gatsby, the reader has already encountered Gatsby's mansion, parties, reputation, possessions, and rumors about him. Myrtle also changes her dress, gestures, language, and behavior when she enters the New York apartment.

### While Reading

Choose one character: Gatsby / Myrtle / Daisy / Tom / Jordan.

Find three details through which that character presents a particular social identity.

For each detail, ask:

Is this something the character is, something the character owns, or something the character performs?

### Questions for Close Reading

1. How do possessions communicate social identity?
2. Can clothes, houses, cars, or speech make someone appear to belong to a different class?
3. What is the relationship between appearance and authenticity?
4. Why are Gatsby's books, house, and parties important before we know much about Gatsby himself?

5. Can social identity be created through performance?

Bring to Class

Bring three pieces of textual evidence concerning one character.

**Do not** decide in advance whether the character is “fake” or “authentic.” We will examine that question in class.

II. William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily”

**Required Reading:** Read the entire short story.

First Reading

Read continuously. Do not stop repeatedly to solve the chronology. Allow yourself to experience the information in the order Faulkner gives it to you.

Second Reading

Return to the story using the following four critical approaches.

Critical Approach 1: Narratology and Narrative Temporality

Key Concepts: narrative order - chronology - anachrony - temporal disruption - delayed revelation

The story begins with Emily's death and then repeatedly moves backward and forward through different periods of her life.

Task

**Timeline A - Narrative Order:** Write approximately 8-10 major events in the order in which Faulkner tells us about them.

**Timeline B - Chronological Order:** Rearrange the same events into the order in which they probably occurred in Emily's life.

**Do not stop there.** The purpose is to investigate what the difference between the two orders does to the reader.

Questions for Close Reading

1. What information does Faulkner delay?
2. Which earlier events become different after we learn something later?
3. How does the ending force us to reinterpret earlier details?
4. What would disappear if the story were told chronologically?
5. How does narrative order shape the reader's knowledge?

Bring to Class

Bring both timelines and write one sentence responding to:

Faulkner's non-chronological structure matters because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Critical Approach 2: Collective Narration

Key Concepts: collective narrator - narrative authority - communal knowledge - inference - reliability

The story is narrated through an unusual first-person plural voice: "we." But the community does not necessarily know everything it claims to know.

### Annotation Task

Find at least six statements made by the collective narrator. Mark each statement using one of these categories:

**K - KNOW:** The community has direct evidence.

**H - HEAR:** The information comes from report or gossip.

**I - INFER:** The community draws a conclusion.

**J - JUDGE:** The community evaluates Emily or says what she should do.

Some passages may belong to more than one category.

### Questions for Close Reading

1. Who exactly is included in "we"?
2. Does "we" always seem to represent the same people?
3. What does the community actually know about Emily?
4. What does it merely assume?
5. How does gossip become part of narration?
6. How reliable is collective knowledge?

### Bring to Class

Bring four particularly interesting examples marked K / H / I / J.

Does the narrator report Emily's story, or does the narrator help construct that story?

### Critical Approach 3: Gender and the Communal Gaze

Key Concepts: gaze - gender norms - social regulation - respectability - communal judgment

Much of what we know about Emily comes from people watching, discussing, interpreting, and judging her.

The town comments on:

her father

her unmarried status

her relationship with Homer Barron

her appearance

her purchases

her behavior

her house

her isolation

While Reading

Find three moments when Emily becomes an object of observation or discussion.

For each example, ask:

1. Who is watching or speaking?
2. What does the community expect Emily to do?
3. What social rule seems to be operating?
4. What would count as “proper” behavior for Emily?
5. Does Emily accept, resist, or evade that expectation?

Main question:

How does the community participate in constructing Emily's social identity?

**Do not begin with:** “Why is Emily psychologically abnormal?”

**Instead ask:** “Who defines what is normal for Emily?”

Critical Approach 4: Southern Gothic and Historical Memory

Key Concepts: Southern Gothic - decay - historical memory - preservation - Old South / New South

Identify Gothic elements in the story, including images associated with:

decay

dust

darkness

smell

closed rooms

the house

bodies

death

secrecy

**But do not stop at identifying Gothic conventions.** The opening already places Emily's old house beside newer structures such as garages, cotton gins, and gasoline pumps, creating a visible tension between different historical worlds.

#### Questions for Close Reading

1. What does Emily's house preserve?
2. Why is decay so important in the story?
3. What parts of the past refuse to disappear?
4. How does the newer generation respond to Emily?
5. What happens when a person becomes a “tradition,” a “duty,” or a “monument”?
6. How does Gothic form turn historical persistence into something disturbing?

#### Bring to Class

Choose one Gothic image and complete:

This image is disturbing not only because \_\_\_\_\_, but also because it suggests \_\_\_\_\_ about the past.

## What You Must Bring to Class

### The Great Gatsby

one passage for narrative reliability

your four-space chart

three pieces of evidence concerning one character's performance of social identity

one question that remains unresolved

“A Rose for Emily”

your two timelines

four examples marked K / H / I / J

one example of the communal gaze

one significant Gothic image

one unresolved question

Important

**You are not expected to arrive with the final interpretation.** The purpose of these tasks is to make you arrive in class with evidence that can be investigated.

**textual observation → critical concept → interpretation**

For every claim you make, be ready to answer:

Where in the text do you see that?