

The American Dream: Fact or Fiction?

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Texts (listed in order of use during unit):

1. “A Wagner Matinee” by Willa Cather
2. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot
3. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
4. *Of Mice and Men* (I am going to show a film based on the novel of the same name by John Steinbeck. The particular version that I’m using is the 1992 adaptation starring John Malkovich and Gary Sinise.)
5. “The Weary Blues,” “Harlem,” and “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes
6. “A Raisin in the Sun” by Lorraine Hansberry

Context:

I will be teaching this nine-week unit on American Moderns to eleventh-grade, honors students. Central Gwinnett High School, while boasting that it has the most diverse student body in Gwinnett County, shows relatively little diversity in honors classes: Ninety percent of my students are white and the remaining ten percent are African American and Asian American students. All of the honors students appear to come from conservative, middle-class families. There is a 3:1 ratio of females to males in both of my honors classes.

Rationale:

Our country is founded on our forefathers' dreams of freedom and material prosperity. Many early American colonists believed that with hard work any individual could succeed and attain the "American dream." This dream included owning both home and land, living a comfortable lifestyle, and having the opportunity to attend universities. Indeed, the American dream was not out-of-reach for colonists because our country was new and there were jobs for all who wished to work. Most of the people who lived here were of the same race and ethnic background, so there was no discrimination on those counts. Not every colonist, however, had an easy life or attained the American dream. The concept of the American dream evolved and became widespread because the people who had money to publish their own stories chronicled rags-to-riches accounts of their lives. One example of this is Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*.

Unfortunately, the American dream eludes most citizens who live in the United States today. This fact does not stop people from immigrating to the United States because conditions are frequently worse in their native countries, and the image of America—as "a land full of milk and honey whose streets are paved with gold"—persists. I maintain that it is important to deconstruct the myth of the American dream in order to provide a well-balanced and realistic picture for adolescents.

Many minority students and immigrants already know that the American dream does not include them; their daily struggles are testimony to the fact they have been excluded from the advantages that most white students take for granted. Because my honors classes are comprised of white students, I think that it is important to educate students about white privilege as that is something they do not even recognize. An

uneven playing field exists in our society and in order to promote a better understanding between races white students must strive to see the American dream from the perspective of a minority or immigrant.

The contributors to *Elements of Literature* (1997) say, “Dreams may take many forms—wistful expectations for the future, nostalgic longings for the past, escapist fantasies about the present—but all dreamers eventually find that they must reconcile their dreams with the facts of the real world” (p. T582A). The fact is that many citizens, including whites, will never achieve the American dream. I do not mean to suggest that students should lower their sights, but should see through the myth and create their own vision of happiness and definition of success. The noble struggle to achieve our dream is where real courage and beauty may be found. I wish to place the emphasis, where it correctly belongs, on the striving rather than on the end result.

Some conservative families may argue that the American dream is their right (a better word is “privilege”) and may not want their children to become disillusioned or begin to question their inheritance or destiny. My argument is that, as a nation, we need to be accurately informed about our past before we can make decisions about where we are headed; otherwise, we will wind up passing on the hollow dreams of the characters in many American Modern texts to our children. We live in a remarkable time. The September eleventh terrorist attack on our nation has caused Americans to lose their innocence, once again, and sense of security, much like the loss of human life in World War I caused writers of that era to question their foundations. We need to reevaluate what the American dream is and who it’s for. We stand at the precipice of a new era—will it be constructed soundly, equitably, or will it be business as usual?

A secondary goal of this unit is for students to be able to make connections between music and language. One of the things that ties many American Modern works of literature together is the emphasis placed on music, particularly a new type of American music that was sweeping the nation during the 1920s—jazz. Authors responded to this new art form and began to produce literature that picked up on jazz rhythms. No literary period, to my mind, expressly focused as much attention on music than the era known as the American Modern. If students are unable to approach the literature through words they may be able to appreciate the music of the era and enter literature through the back door.

I begin my unit with Willa Cather's short story "A Wagner Matinee." In this short story an elderly woman named Georgiana, who has lived most of her adult, married life out west, returns to Boston, her birthplace, to collect a legacy left to her by a relative. The narrator of the story is Georgiana's nephew, Clark. Clark was raised by Georgiana and her husband, so he has great affection for his aunt. He meets his aunt at the train station and gives her a place to stay while she takes care of her business in Boston. Clark arranges a special treat for his aunt Georgiana. He takes her to the Boston Conservatory for a concert of opera interludes. At the concert Georgiana weeps for what she has lost by marrying a man she thought was the love of her life. In this short story we see that a person's dream entails other personal sacrifices and, in the long run, may not be worth those sacrifices. The American dream backfires horribly for Aunt Georgiana. Students who read this short story will be forced to weigh evidence in their own lives of whether a particular dream is worth pursuing. Here is an educated white woman who gives up a potentially fulfilling career as a pianist to marry. Love interferes with her career plans.

The romantic notion of moving west proves to be a constant struggle for survival. The music mentioned in Willa Cather's story is integral to understanding Georgiana's emotions. The plots of the operas provide textual clues to Georgiana's feelings. By giving students access to these allusions and allowing them to draw meaning from them, I will prepare them for the greater challenge—reading T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

Eliot's poetry is difficult to read for a person of any age, but I think that it is worthwhile to expose high school students to his poetry. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" presents an anti-hero in its title character. "Prufrock" shows what can happen when a person is so wracked by indecision that he is unable to move at all. Prufrock says, "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons." In a sense, this poem serves as a warning to students who are afraid to take chances and go after what they want in life. Georgiana in "A Wagner Matinee," Prufrock, and Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* are characters who equate the American dream with the attainment of love in the form of a spouse. All three characters are shortsighted individuals who fail to see the larger picture—persons who are unable to look past the façade or see the object of their affection for what she/he is.

The Great Gatsby introduces another anti-hero in the title character. Reading *The Great Gatsby*, the quintessential book about the American dream, allows students to evaluate the dreams of each of the characters, and in so doing, provides an opportunity for them to work through their own dreams. Each character in *Gatsby* is a flawed individual who makes poor choices. All of the dreams are tainted and corrupt—all except those of Jay Gatsby. Gatsby's downfall, as previously hinted, is in equating the

American dream with Daisy. The people who attend Gatsby's jazz parties are hollow characters who seem destined to dance their way through life in an alcoholic haze. The spoiled characters in the novel make it apparent why students should learn to take responsibility for their actions and their dreams. I intend to intersperse sections of the opera, *The Great Gatsby*, to accompany the novel. The music helps to convey the mood of particular scenes and shows how the frivolity and absurdity of the jazz music matches the emptiness of the characters' lives.

All of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* have shattered dreams. Lennie Small and George Milton are two men who are bound together in pursuit of the American dream—the prospect of owning their own home, ranch, and land. This dream is echoed throughout the Steinbeck's novel in the retelling of the story about living off the “fatta the lan’,” and Lennie being able to keep and raise rabbits. The backdrop of this novel is the Depression and George's and Lennie's dreams are scaled down to what seems a reasonable goal. Nevertheless, the dream is too great to be attained under the circumstances. In this story society is seen as an oppressive factor that prevents people in the “other” category—mentally retarded individuals, the elderly, African Americans, women--from achieving their dreams. Students will be asked to consider the role society plays in hindering these individuals and groups from attaining the dream. I have chosen to let students watch the movie rather than read the novel because I feel that this particular version of *Of Mice and Men* is true to the novel and because watching the film makes Steinbeck's language more graphic. Steinbeck originally designed this story as a play so the movie is an appropriate and natural alternative to reading the novel. In

contrast to *The Great Gatsby*, *Of Mice and Men* shows poor white people trying to survive.

Langston Hughes' poems, "The Weary Blues" and "Harlem," depict the hard times of the Depression era and how it affected African Americans. As difficult as times were for white people, black people had fewer opportunities due to discrimination. Unemployment created an environment that was ripe for a new form of personal expression that evoked the misery of a people—the blues. In Hughes' poems we see musical rhythm spilled onto the page in the language of his poetry. "Mother to Son" presents an optimistic message to African Americans in that after everything that race has been through there can be no giving up or turning back. The future is about the progress of a race of people. It is important for teachers to talk about the difference in the attainment of the American dream for whites and blacks. In order for changes to occur in society white students, especially, need to be educated about this injustice.

"A Raisin in the Sun" was first performed in 1959. It is not classified as an American Modern, however, it does show the progression of the dream for African Americans and how time has not made things significantly better for them. The younger generation is impatient and wants to move upward economically. The play gives a full picture of what average African Americans faced in terms of housing and education opportunities during the late fifties. The perspective of several generations of the Younger family is important because it allows the reader a sense of what the family has struggled through and where they might be headed. How long must a dream be deferred before it withers like a raisin in the sun? The title of the play, by the way, comes from a poem by Langston Hughes called "Harlem." (Langston Hughes wrote several poems

called “Harlem.” This poem is not the one that was discussed earlier.) For a synopsis of “A Raisin in the Sun” please see page 43.

Goals and Rubrics:

Reading journals (see page 12) provide an on-going activity for students throughout most of this unit. They allow students the freedom to explore sections of a text that interest them while focusing their attention on the American dream. I am permitting students to write in a conversational, first person narrative, but I am looking for a logical entry. My mentor remarked to me that her honors students did not write in cohesive paragraphs, so I wish to give these students the opportunity to practice their writing skills. Although I am not grading for grammar and mechanics, I expect their organizational skills to improve.

The traditional culminating assessment is a formal essay (see page 13) that asks students to define what the American dream means to them and take a stand on whether they think the dream is a myth or a reality. Students are asked to support their argument with examples and counterexamples from the literature we have read and also from current events articles that they have collected and read throughout the unit. The reading journal entries will have provided scaffolding and practice for the type of organized, well developed, clear writing that I expect them to produce in this final unit assessment.

My multi-intelligence assessment is a multi-genre culminating activity for *The Great Gatsby* (see page 15). This activity forces students to synthesize what they have learned about the 1920s and produce an authentic text about the American dream from that era. A wide variety of creative options is provided for students. All student works will be performed or shown and explained to the entire class.

Name _____

American Literature

Spring 2002

Ms. Howell

Reading Journals

For the next five weeks we will be reading a variety of “texts”—a novel, several poems, and a film—that explore the concept of the American dream. Each week you will be asked to write and submit a journal entry (minimum of 500 words) that has to do with the particular text that we are discussing in class. You may want to select a passage or a line within a text and respond to it. *Your discussion should include questions, analysis, reflection, and evaluation.* Please keep in mind that your journal entry **must** have something to do with the author’s treatment of the American dream, how that sentiment or belief is represented in today’s society, and, hopefully, how it relates to you. Do not summarize what you read, rather explain how your vision of the American dream has expanded or contracted. Remember to include quotations and examples from the texts to support your ideas.

Since this is a personal, reflective journal, the tone of your writing can be informal and conversational. The best way to convey your feelings and experiences is through a first-person narrative. Make sure you fully explore and develop your ideas as this is what I will be weighting in grading these entries. Please type your entries and conform to standard format (12-pt., Times New Roman font, double-space). Your name, class period, and the date should be across the top of your paper. I will try to allow for you to have some computer lab time on Thursdays so that you may type your entries then. However, I cannot guarantee that this will always be the case, so please plan ahead. **Entries are due at the beginning of class every Friday.**

Finally, please be aware that *I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*

Your entries will be graded as follows:

- 1) Punctuality – 20 pts. Students who turn their journals in on time will be rewarded! Every day that a journal is late, five points will be deducted.
- 2) Content/Ideas – 30 pts. Try to be creative and original.
- 3) Well-developed ideas – 30 pts. Your entries must show evidence of reflective thought and the ability to relate the concept of the American dream in the text to contemporary society and/or your life experience.
- 4) Organization – 20 pts. You need to have a thesis sentence in your introduction and topic sentences with supporting evidence for all of your paragraphs. Your paper should seamlessly flow from one idea to the next in a logical, linear fashion.

TOTAL: 100 points

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American Literature

Spring 2002

Ms. Howell

The American Dream: Myth or Reality?

Throughout the unit we have discussed the foundations of the American dream and the corruption and/or disillusionment of that ideal. Is it still possible for us to refer to the “American dream” when there seem to be so many different ideas of what that is and when we know that this dream has not traditionally been accessible to people of color? Your task is to write an essay (four pages, double-spaced) in which you take a stand on whether you believe the American dream is a myth or a reality in today’s society. In your essay please include the following:

- A definition of what you perceive the American dream to be.
- An introduction with a clear thesis sentence that states your position.
- Provide three reasons why you have taken this position.
- For each reason, provide an example from the literature we have read, current events, and your personal experiences that illustrate your belief.
- For each reason, provide a counterexample from the literature we have read, current events, and your personal experiences.
- For your whole argument, a counterargument expressing the viewpoint of someone who might disagree with you.
- For the counterargument, a rebuttal in which you defend your position.
- Conventional grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage throughout your essay.
- Evidence of having written at least one rough draft that has been submitted for peer evaluation.
- Use standard format procedures: 12-pt., Times New Roman font.
- A reference page listing your newspaper/internet articles. Follow APA guidelines. (This would be the fifth page.)

Grading:

Presence of required elements—70 points maximum

Definition, thesis sentence, reasons, examples, counterexamples, counterargument, and rebuttal are required elements that count for 10 points each. Points will be deducted if these elements are not explicitly and clearly stated. Missing elements will result in zero points awarded for that category.

Ideas—10 points maximum

Original argument is presented. You provide thoughtful reasons for your position and creative and carefully selected examples to support your reasons.

Organization—10 points maximum

Your argument is persuasive because your organization is logical and makes sense.

Conventions—10 points maximum

No errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.

This essay is due Friday, March 22, 2002 at the beginning of class.

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American Literature

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Selling the American Dream: A Multi-Genre Project

The 1920s seen through the prism of Fitzgerald's novel becomes a strange distillation of unlimited wonder and opportunity foundering on human excess and waste, a heightened and yet insubstantial carnivalesque moment in which personal and national desire give way to resplendent emptiness; indeed the twenties may in many ways be thought of as Gatsby's America.

--From *The Great Gatsby: The Limits of Wonder* by Richard Lehan

The loss of life in World War I caused people to live in the moment. Many persons abandoned moral attitudes and participated in nefarious activities with little or no remorse. This was an era of extremes—extreme wealth for some, extreme poverty for others—and there was a nervousness or excitement about the freedom that money could buy. Individuals were willing to risk anything to get rich quick. Persons who were already wealthy were willing to do anything to keep their lead over the competition or social upstarts. The morally bankrupt continued to sell the American dream while knowing that there was a false bottom to it.

Business was everything and the one thing that sold better than any other commodity was the American dream—the promise that one could get rich quick, that wealth was waiting just around the corner. (Of course, what was just around the corner was the Depression.) At times it seemed as if the only thing that could sell was a dream because nothing was real.

Your task is to sell the American dream to other American citizens. Situate yourself in the 1920s and create a text that will persuade other Americans that the dream is attainable. You may select from one of the following formats:

- Advertisement (slogan and artwork)
- Radio script (drama designed to be performed on the radio)
- Short, silent film clip
- Song
- Newspaper editorial

You have the option of working in pairs or by yourself. If you choose to work in a pair please remember that this project will need to be completed outside of class.

Rubric for Multi-Genre Project

Advertisement—(If working individually, one advertisement. If working in a pair, submit two advertisements.)

- * Creative, original ideas that are captured by a simple, but memorable slogan. 30 pts.
- * Artwork that symbolizes/represents your slogan and the American dream. 30 pts.
- * High quality design work. Attention is paid to minute details, including color, texture, graphics. 20 pts.
- * Authenticity to the period. 20 pts.

(You will be asked to show and explain your advertisement(s) to the class.)

Radio Script—Duration: 8-10 minutes

- * Creative, original ideas that are conveyed either through an announcement or radio drama. You should define your idea of the American dream in your text. 30 pts.
- * Use language and colloquialisms that are appropriate to the period. 30 pts.
- * Sound effects, dialects, and professional polish. 20 pts.
- * Perform your script for the class. You may ask your classmates in advance if they will participate in reading your script. You might wish to have a rehearsal. See me. 20 pts.

Short Silent Film Clip—Duration: 5-8 minutes

- * Creative, original ideas conveyed through symbolic body language. It should be clear to viewers what your definition of the American dream is. 30 pts.
- * The text that accompanies the film should be accurate to the period in terms of the language and colloquialisms employed. 30 pts.
- * Attention is paid to the setting, costumes, backdrops, props and professional polish. 20 pts.
- * Silent films were always accompanied by live orchestra music. Select music to accompany your film. Make sure that your selection is authentic to the period and helps to convey the message of your film. 20 pts.

(Film clips will be shown in class.)

Song—Duration: 5-8 minutes

- * Creative, original ideas conveyed through catchy lyrics. Your idea of the American dream is clear to your audience. 30 pts.
- * Language and colloquialisms are appropriate to the era. 30 pts.
- * Original music or at least a melody is written down on sheet music. 20 pts.
- * Perform your song for the class. 20 pts.

(You have the option of videotaping yourself and playing that tape for the class if you prefer not to perform live.)

Newspaper Editorial—Minimum: Two, typed, double-spaced pages

- * Creative, original ideas conveyed persuasively to your audience. 30 pts.
- * Language and colloquialisms are appropriate to the era. 20 pts.
- * Your argument is well organized and detailed. 30 pts.
- * Grammar/Conventions 20 pts.

You will be asked to read your editorial to the class.

Introductory Activities:

To introduce my unit on the American dream I will allow my students to play a modified version of Monopoly (see page 18). Monopoly was invented by a man who was unemployed during the Depression. So, the game is authentic to the period of literature that my students are reading. This board game is about amassing the most cash and properties within a given time limit. I'm sure that a lot of people dreamt of being wealthy during the Depression. Playing this game at least afforded people the opportunity to play/pretend at being wealthy. My version of the board game will introduce some new categories that the Parker Brothers' version lacks. In addition to "Chance" and "Community Chest" cards, there will be "Criminal Justice," "Cheater," and "Welfare" cards that players will follow. The deck will be stacked against the players; I want students to learn about the numerous obstacles that prevent citizens from attaining the dream. From participating in this game students should begin to think about how much control they have over their own futures, the types of misfortunes that can befall individuals who are in pursuit of the dream, and what they must do in order to succeed in life. Monopoly equates the American dream with wealth. The modifications that I devise will allow students to consider a broader definition for the American dream. This game provides a platform from which I can begin to get students to question the validity of the dream. Does money provide happiness? Do all people have access to the dream? Does everyone agree on what the American dream is?

The Great Gatsby is a novel that contains much symbolism. While I do not want to make reading *The Great Gatsby* a symbolism quest, I do want students to be aware that the author used symbols in his novel and to read with this heightened awareness. Color

symbolism is the most obvious employed by Fitzgerald. By asking students what qualities or concepts they associate with numerous colors, I am preparing them for what they will encounter when they read *The Great Gatsby*. Green—a color that represents hope—is the color Fitzgerald uses to represent Gatsby’s dream. This introductory activity allows students to activate pre-existing schema that they can then apply to their reading of the novel (see page 19).

Finally, I devised an opinionnaire to be used with “A Raisin in the Sun” (see page 20). The types of statements that I ask students to respond to will force them to reevaluate their position on the American dream and consider whether or not minorities have equal access to the dream. All of my statements stem from important concepts touched upon in “A Raisin in the Sun.”



The object of the game is to become the wealthiest player in 45 minutes.

Directions:

- Assemble in five person teams.
- Each person needs to select a token.
- Select one team player to be the Banker.
- Each player is given \$1500 divided as follows: 2 each of \$500's, \$100's and \$50's; 6-\$20's; 5 each of \$10's, \$5's and \$1's. All remaining money and other equipment go to the Bank.
- To determine who gets to go first, each player in turn throws the dice. The player with the highest total starts the play.
- To begin place your token on the corner marked "GO." Throw the dice and move your token in the direction of the arrow the number of spaces indicated by the dice. After the player has completed his turn, the player on the left goes next.
- Players must follow the instructions on the board. You might be entitled to buy real estate, pay rent, pay taxes, draw a Chance or Community Chest card, "Go to Jail," etc.
- "GO"...Each time a player's token lands on or passes over "GO" the Banker pays him \$200 salary.
- Buying Property...Whenever a player lands on an unowned property he may buy that property from the Bank at its printed price. He receives the Title Deed card showing ownership and places it face-up in front of him.
- If a player does not wish to buy a property it is sold at auction by the Banker to the highest bidder. Bidding may start at any price. The buyer pays to the Bank the amount of the bid in cash and receives the Title Deed card for that property.
- Paying Rent...When a player lands on property owned by another player the owner collects rent from him in accordance with the list printed on the Title Deed card applying to it.
- If the property is mortgaged, no rent can be collected. When a property is mortgaged its Title Deed card is placed face-down in front of the owner.
- It is an advantage to hold all the Title Deeds in a color-group because the owner may then charge double rent for unimproved properties in that color-group.
- "CHANCE," "CHEATER," and "COMMUNITY CHEST"...When a player lands on either of these spaces he takes the top card from the deck indicated, follows the instructions and returns the card face-down to the bottom of the deck.
- If a player land in JAIL he must draw a card from the "CRIMINAL JUSTICE" deck and follow the instructions.
- "Income Tax"...When a player lands on "Income Tax" he has to pay \$200 to the Bank.
- Bankruptcy...If a player becomes bankrupt he goes on welfare and draws a card from the "WELFARE" deck.

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American Literature

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Ms. Howell

What is a symbol?

Your *Elements of Literature* textbook says a symbol is:

A person, place, thing, or event that has meaning in itself and that also stands for something more than itself. We can distinguish between **public** and **personal symbols**. The dove, for example, is a public symbol of peace—that is, it is widely accepted the world over as such a symbol. Uncle Sam is a public symbol that stands for the United States; a picture of a skull and crossbones is a public symbol of death; two snakes coiled around a staff is a widely accepted symbol of the medical profession.

Most symbols used in literature are personal symbols; even though a symbol may be widely used, a writer will usually adapt it in some imaginative, personal way so that it can suggest not just one, but a myriad of meanings. One of the most commonly used symbols in literature, for example, is the journey, which can stand for a search for truth, for redemption from evil, or for discovery of the self and freedom. (p. 1202)

How do you know when an author is using symbolism?

To be honest, there is no precise way to tell if an author is deliberately using symbolism. If an author, however, repeatedly mentions the same person, place, thing, or event it is usually for a reason. Your job, as the discerning reader, is to figure out what the symbol means in the context of the book. The reason why we need to attend to symbols is because they can enrich or alter the meaning we make of a book.

Symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*

The Modern Period, in the decades after World War I, was a notable era of symbolism in literature. F. Scott Fitzgerald, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, e. e. cummings, and Hart Crane used symbolism in their poems and novels. As you read *The Great Gatsby* you will become aware of the fact that Fitzgerald uses colors as symbols.

Directions: Working with a partner, use the back of this paper to list five things or concepts that you associate with each of the following colors: white, green, yellow, blue, gray, and red. Knowing that this unit is about the American dream, how do you think Fitzgerald might use these colors in *The Great Gatsby*?

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American Literature

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Opinionnaire

The statements below reflect values concerning the American dream. You will be asked to consider and revisit your opinions on these issues throughout your reading of "A Raisin in the Sun." Please circle the response that is closest to your current opinion and be able to defend your answer. Choose among "strongly agree" (SA), "agree" (A), "disagree" (D), or "strongly disagree" (SD).

- 1) The American dream is supposed to be for everyone, but it only seems to apply to white people.

SA A D SD

- 2) It is more important to strive for a goal, even if you know that you have little chance of succeeding, than to accept reality and choose a path of less resistance.

SA A D SD

- 3) The needs of your family should come before personal desires or self-fulfillment.

SA A D SD

- 4) Money is the key to life.

SA A D SD

- 5) Attainment of your dream is more important than the process used to get there.

SA A D SD

- 6) Assimilation is okay if it means that you will be able to share in the American dream.

SA A D SD

- 7) Owning a house is the American dream.

SA A D SD

- 8) Dreams are illusory and intangible.

SA A D SD

Daily Lesson Plans:

These lesson plans are constructed for a conventionally scheduled, 55-minute class period. This unit comes in the middle of the spring semester. These students are well familiar with classroom procedures, like getting into peer discussion groups and working in the computer lab—I don't need to give them instructions for how to do these things. There are some features that you will find constant throughout the nine-week unit. The first feature is the mandatory requirement that I use a particular set of words from an SAT vocabulary book. New words are always introduced at the beginning of the week. I will try to pull words from the SAT book that appear in the texts that we are reading as a class. A vocabulary quiz is given every other Friday. I feel that I also need to mention that my mentor always assigns the introductory chapter pertaining to whatever literary period she is going to visit as well as the author biographies in *Elements of Literature*: It is expected that I follow suit. Another regular feature is my current events discussions that will occur every Friday. I want students to look at how the American dream is playing out in the lives of real citizens. Students will bring in a newspaper/Internet article with a short summary and explanation of what that article has to do with the American dream.

My mentor did a two week grammar unit at the beginning of the school year. She does not expect me to teach grammar this spring. After conducting student interviews for a research project, however, many students said they wanted more grammar instruction. During the first week I will ask students to write a short essay. I do not intend to grade this essay; instead I will evaluate the types of grammar errors that these students make. The topics of my mini-grammar review sessions (a la Constance Weaver) will be based on

the errors that I find in my students' writing. I will create a transparency with student writing errors (only after I have received their permission) or create examples with mistakes for students to correct (similar to a DOL). If I don't have many errors to address I might choose to discuss how students can bolster their writing (a la Harry Noden) with participles, absolutes, appositives, etc. I will take my cues from my students. The grammar/language review sessions will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays for fifteen minutes. Toward the end of the unit you will notice that I discontinue this practice to allow students time to work on their projects.

The discussion questions that I have listed in the daily lesson plans are not complete, nor are they properly sequenced with transitions. They are just a random sampling of the questions that I might ask on a given day. Most of the questions will lead to a discussion of the American dream.

When I began this unit I envisioned that it would last ten weeks. Such is not the case with the current design. I think that it is possible, however, that this unit might spill over into a tenth week. I might wish to expand discussion of *The Great Gatsby*, for example, in which case I have the latitude to do so. At any rate I am confident that I will finish within ten weeks.

Week One:**Day One – Tuesday, January 22, 2002**

5 min.—Take attendance, housekeeping.

5 min. – Distribute syllabus (see page 36) and discuss goals and expectations.

35 min. – Introductory activity to unit on the American dream (see page 18). Play monopoly.

10 min. – Discuss what was different about this version of monopoly.

Homework: Read the introduction to *The Moderns* in *Elements of Literature* (Fifth Course), p. 524-536, and the short biography of Willa Cather on p. 538.

Day Two – Wednesday, January 23, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

10 min. – Introduce and define mandatory vocabulary words from SAT book, give synonyms, and use the words in sentences.

15 min. – Review the reading about *The Moderns*. Ask: How did our forefathers define the American Dream? What did the American Modern authors think of the American dream? Talk about sacrifices? What do the authors mean when they say on p. 524, “Americans’ sense of a connection to their past seemed to be deteriorating”?

What worked before no longer seems to be working. People are going to forge a new life for themselves. The bridge—Most people can name at least one thing they enjoy that’s a source of personal “bliss”—something they’d rather see, do, own, or listen to than anything else in the world. Sometimes circumstances in life force people to give up that beloved source of pleasure. Here is the story of a woman who has had to go without something important to her. As you will see, although Cather believed that Midwestern farm life fostered essential values, she was hardly a romantic who underestimated the hardships of that life, or the lost opportunities for some of the people who lived that life. Discussion of the setting of the novel—What was life like in rural Nebraska at the turn of the century in comparison with life in Boston? What does the title mean/refer to?

30 min. – Start reading “A Wagner Matinee” by Willa Cather. Ask for volunteers to read paragraphs aloud in class. Since I am reading this story with them, I intend to stop their reading periodically and ask questions.

1. After the second paragraph—Who is the narrator of the story? What have we learned about the narrator to this point?
2. After the fourth paragraph—How is Georgiana’s story told? At the time Georgiana married how old was she? How old was her husband? What do you think society thought of an older woman marrying a younger man? What was their life like on the Nebraska frontier? Do you think that Georgiana knew what her life would be like when she married Howard Carpenter?
3. After the sixth paragraph—The narrator says: She would sit beside me by the hour, darning and counting while I struggled with the “Joyous Farmer,” but she seldom talked to me about music, and I understood why. She was a pious woman; she had the consolations of religion and, to her at least, her martyrdom was not wholly sordid.” What does Cather mean here? How do you interpret this? (Clark seems to think that Georgiana’s religion was a comfort to her. He considers her a martyr. Connection to Joyous Farmer.) What is Georgiana’s

attitude toward music? Two pieces of music have been mentioned or alluded to in this paragraph, Joyous Farmer and Euryanthe. Distribute handout (see page 37) that has information about these compositions. How does knowing this information enrich your understanding of the paragraph?

Day Three – Thursday, January 24, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

50 min. – Continue reading “A Wagner Matinee.” Have students refer to the plot summaries of the operas and ask them if they can explain how knowing this information changes how they feel about Georgiana. I will play a few excerpts from these operas. What does hearing this music communicate to you about Aunt Georgiana’s character/personality? As you listen to the music, jot down notes about the music and the emotions associated with the music.

Before I play the music I will create a transparency for students based on what they tell me they listen for in music. I will ask students to list adjectives that can describe music (e.g., discordant, strident, mellifluous, smooth, choppy). Additionally, I might ask students to consider the following: What is the tempo? Does the music possess a continuous melody or harmony? Does the music build to a crescendo/climax? What instruments are used and why? Can you tell whether the music is in a major or a minor key? What does this communicate about the mood of a piece of music? Does the music paint a picture in your mind of any particular action or even? The transparency will be kept on the overhead, while the students listen to the musical excerpts, to guide their note taking.

Homework: Write a short one page essay discussing how Cather’s language fits the music that she is describing. How would you describe the music that you love to listen to? What method of writing would best describe the music that you listen to? (I am not going to grade this essay. I want to see what writing problems students have. I will evaluate these short essays and do grammar reviews based on the types of errors that I find in these essays.)

Day Four – Friday, January 25, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

10 min. – I will show students examples of newspaper clippings and Internet stories I have found this week regarding aspects of the American dream. I will check to see that they brought in an article and have written a short paragraph about how the article concerns the American dream.

10 min. – Finish reading short story.

10 min. – Group discussions. What does this story tell us about the American dream?

10 min. – One team member can present findings during a whole class discussion.

10min. – Language Talk. Using sentences from Cather’s story discuss grammar and techniques that she uses in her writing. Who is Cather’s audience? What makes you think that she is writing for an educated audience?

Cather’s writing style includes placing adjectives after the noun they modify and this usage requires commas to set off the adjectives. Example: “This communication, worn and rubbed, looked as though...” (Sentence 2, Paragraph 1). Find other examples of this in the short story. Write a paragraph and use this syntax style in your writing.

Week Two:**Day One – Monday, January 28, 2002**

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

10 min. – Introduce vocabulary words, etc.

5 min. – Read the short biography of T.S. Eliot on p. 661-662. What do we learn about Eliot that might prepare us to read his poetry? I will read the paragraph on p. 663 about the characters in modern literature. We will construct a definition of the anti-hero. What does the title of the poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” suggest? In introducing this poem I will explain what a dramatic monologue is. I will also discuss the importance of the epigraph before they read the poem.

15 min. – Following a suggestion that is in their textbook, I will ask students to read the poem and just get a general sense of Prufrock’s thoughts.

20 min. -- Since Eliot himself was a New Critic, I advocate doing a close reading of the poem. This might help students who are hopelessly confused and don’t know how to begin to make sense of the poem. I would ask a series of questions about the setting. Who is Prufrock speaking to or about and how do we know this? Distribute handout about images (see page 38). Have students go through the poem and make a list of the images that are juxtaposed. What is Eliot trying to do by using this technique called metaphysical conceit? Also list the metaphors, similes, instances of alliteration, etc.

Project due Friday – Make a cartoon or drawing of a series of images that are in Eliot’s poem. Or, create a found poem using sensual images from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” (Note: There is no handout for this assignment. I will explain thoroughly to students what I wish them to do. I will model how to do a found poem on Tuesday. This warm-up assignment will help students pay attention to imagery and language. This skill will be crucial for students to do when we read *The Great Gatsby*.)

Day Two – Tuesday, January 29, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

10 min. – Review grammar topic. I will use the students writing samples from the previous week to guide what particular topic I tackle. My mini-lessons will be based on what I feel are their weaknesses.

15 min. – What is a found poem? How do you begin to construct a found poem?

20 min. – Discuss Prufrock, specifically to what purpose does Eliot use the images he juxtaposes. What do we learn about the speaker and his character from the images that Eliot has Prufrock describe.

Day Three – Wednesday, January 30, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

25 min. – Examine the diction in Prufrock. What are some of the unusual word choices in Prufrock? Examine the structure of the poem.

10 min. – The class will listen to a recording of T. S. Eliot reading “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” I will ask them to jot down what words or phrases Eliot emphasized in his reading. Also, I will ask them to think about how the emphasis might have changed their interpretation of the poem.

15 min. – Go over the interesting observations made by the students. Weave into the discussion how Eliot uses alliteration and assonance.

Day Four – Thursday, January 31, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Do another mini-lesson on another grammar topic.

40 min.—Putting everything together. What is the big question that Eliot says we shouldn't ask? Whole class discussion on how Prufrock exemplifies the anti-hero. What might Eliot be trying to say about the American dream with this type of character? Do we have anti-heroes in our society today?

Day Five – Friday, February 1, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

5 min. – Check newspaper/Internet clippings and student analysis of article.

10 min. – Quiz on vocabulary words.

10 min. – Clear up any questions that remain about Prufrock.

25 min. – Have students share their found poems and cartoons/sketches with the rest of the class. Students will be asked to explain what images they concentrated on for their poems. If they drew a sketch students will be asked to provide an interpretation of the drawing.

Week Three:

Day One – Monday, February 4, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Distribute copies of *The Great Gatsby*.

10 min. – Define vocabulary words and give examples. The vocabulary words for the next three weeks will come from *The Great Gatsby*.

30 min. – Introductory activity for *The Great Gatsby* (see page 19).

10 min. – Distribute Reading Journals (see page 12). Read and answer any questions about this assessment. Also distribute multi-genre project assignment (see pages 14-15). In the remaining time, students may choose partners for the multi-genre project or simply decide what option interests them.

Homework: Read chapter one, p. 5-26. Ask students to jot down suspicious symbols and what they think they might mean. (See page 36.)

Day Two – Tuesday, February 5, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

15 min. – Grammar Review.

35 min. – Discuss chapter one. Revisit the dinner party at the home of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Ask students to recap what happened. Have students describe the setting from memory. What colors are used in chapter one? Are certain characters associated with certain colors? What does the green light at the end of the pier represent? What might Gatsby be wishing for? I will let students tell me what they thought of the color symbolism in chapter one. What do you think about the narrator, Nick? What character assessments have you made by the end of chapter one?

Homework: Read chapter two, p. 27-42

Day Three – Wednesday, February 6, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance, housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss chapter two. Go over the geography of the novel. I will provide a transparency that shows a map of Long Island, Flushing, and Manhattan. I will ask students to locate the Eggs and the Valley of the Ashes. Since chapter two starts with a description of the Valley of the Ashes I will create another transparency with an excerpt from T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and ask students to make comparisons between the locations and characters in each text. I will ask students to comment on the billboard. What is God doing in the middle of the Valley of the Ashes? What might Fitzgerald be suggesting? What are the morals of the inhabitants of East Egg, the Valley of the Ashes, and Manhattan?

Homework: Read chapter three, p. 43-64

Day Four – Thursday, February 7, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Discuss chapter three. What is the world of West Egg like in comparison with the world of East Egg? Do the people who live in West Egg seem more real? Are these characters living the American dream? Why or why not? Why is the host of the party conspicuously absent? Look at the scene in the library. Have students read that scene out loud. Why does Owl Eyes comment on the books being “real?” Are Nick and Jordan Baker going to become involved?

20 min. – Computer lab. (The lab is directly across the hall from my classroom.) Allow students to type their reading journal entries on the computer.

Day Five – Friday, February 8, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect journal entries.

5 min. – Check newspaper/Internet clippings.

45 min. – Listen to Harbison’s opera, *The Great Gatsby*. I will stop the music periodically and ask the students to tell me about the mood of a particular scene and how Harbison achieved that effect? Does the mood in the opera match that in the novel? What, if anything, gets left out of the opera? What do the jazz tunes interspersed in the opera do to the mood of a scene? Is the jazz music able to lighten the atmosphere or is it a false happiness? What happens to the mood of the scene when the jazz music isn’t playing?

Week Four:**Day One – Monday, February 11, 2002**

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Define vocabulary words and give examples.

10 min. – Hand back reading journals and discuss my impressions of them. If there were major problems that everyone had in common, I would try to give students guidelines and examples to help them with their next journal entry.

30 min. – Discuss how jazz music is a perfect foil for the story that Fitzgerald constructs and how his language was shaped by the music of the era. I will prepare a transparency

that displays several paragraphs from the first three chapters of *The Great Gatsby* and ask students how the language in those passages and sentences matches the mood, intensity, and rhythms of the music of the era.

Homework: Read chapter four, p. 65-85.

Day Two – Tuesday, February 12, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

15 min. – Grammar Review

35 min. – Discuss chapter four. Questions: Show the *Democracy in America* transparency (see page 40). Does this depiction of Americans fit any characters in *The Great Gatsby*? Why does Fitzgerald include such a long list of names in this chapter? Do you notice any similarities in the names? Can you tell anything about the backgrounds of these individuals from their names? What do we learn about Gatsby? Why do you think Gatsby feels the need to tell a yarn about his origin and educational background? Meyer Wolfsheim is a rather unsavory character. Does Gatsby's association with Wolfsheim change your opinion of Gatsby? Why does Nick continue to keep company with Gatsby? We will look at the passage where Jordan tells Nick about Daisy and Gatsby. What is Gatsby's dream? Do you think that Gatsby is a romantic hero? Does Gatsby fit the portrait created by de Tocqueville? Why or why not?

Homework: Read chapter five, p. 86-102.

Day Three – Wednesday, February 13, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss chapter five. Questions: What do you make of the contrived set-up for Gatsby to meet Daisy? Why is Gatsby so nervous? Is Daisy worthy of Gatsby's admiration? Does Gatsby have a realistic picture of Daisy? Can Daisy live up to Gatsby's dream? Is "Ain't We Got Fun?" an appropriate song for this scene? What might Fitzgerald be suggesting?

Homework: Read chapter six, p. 103-118.

Day Four – Thursday, February 14, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Discuss chapter six. Questions: What types of lessons did Gatsby learn from his mentor, Dan Cody? What types of differences do you see between the behavior of Gatsby (& the people of West Egg) and the behavior of Tom (& the people of East Egg)? Why does Nick want to repeat the past? Is Nick capable of living in the present?

20 min. – Computer Lab. Allow students time to type their journal entries.

Day Five – Friday, February 15, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect reading journals.

10 min. – Discuss current events, check newspaper/Internet clippings.

10 min. – Vocabulary Quiz

5 min. – Ask students to briefly write a teacher evaluation. What do they like about this class? What do they dislike and why? Is there anything they do not understand or feel they need help with?

25 min. – Allow students class time to work on their multi-genre project. If students need to go to the library to research the 1920s I will give passes so that they may do so.

Week Five:

Day One – Monday, February 18, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Define vocabulary words, etc.

5 min. – Hand back journal entries and make comments.

35 min. – Play another excerpt from Harbison’s opera. Are the characters being faithfully portrayed in the opera? How does the music contribute to the meaning of the text? (Sometimes music can convey that which cannot be spoken.) How does the music fill in the gaps in Fitzgerald’s novel? Do you think that this opera was an appropriate way to represent Fitzgerald’s novel? Are opera and literature compatible?

Homework: Read chapter seven, p. 119-153.

Day Two – Tuesday, February 19, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

15 min. – Grammar Review.

35 min. – Discuss chapter seven. Questions: Are you surprised that Daisy flaunts her relationship with Gatsby in front of her husband? What goes wrong at the Plaza? Why is it so important to Gatsby that Daisy say she never loved Tom? Why does Daisy flee the room? How has Gatsby past’s and business dealings hurt his future with Daisy? What do we learn about Daisy’s character from her actions? Why does Gatsby cling to Daisy? What does Daisy represent to Gatsby? Which characters do you feel sympathy for? How do you feel about Myrtle’s death?

Homework: Read chapter eight, p. 154-170.

Day Three – Wednesday, February 20, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss chapter eight. Questions: The story of Gatsby’s past and his involvement with Daisy is retold. Why? What new information does this yield? Are you surprised by Gatsby’s death? At some point during the period I might form small discussion groups and ask students to think about why Fitzgerald kills off the title character? When the whole class reconvenes I might ask what happened to Gatsby’s dream?

Homework: Read chapter nine, p. 171-189.

Day Four – Thursday, February 21, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Discuss chapter nine. Questions: Were you surprised that the man who hosted all these lavish parties had no friends who would come to his funeral? What did you make of the appearance of Owl Eyes at the gravesite? What about Nick’s dream? Has Nick’s dream changed? Is his dream irretrievably broken, like his relationship with Jordan? We will read the end of *The Great Gatsby* together and talk about the reference

to the early settlers. According to Nick, what has gone wrong with America and the original dream of the settlers?

20 min. – Computer lab. Students will have time to type their journal entries.

Day Five – Friday, February 22, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect journals and multi-genre projects.

10 min. – Discuss current events, check newspaper/internet articles.

45 min. – Ten student presentations will occur today.

Week Six:

Day One – Monday, February 25, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Define vocabulary words, etc.

40 min. – 10 student presentations.

Day Two – Tuesday, February 26, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – 10 student presentations.

Day Three – Wednesday, February 27, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Watch *Of Mice and Men*.

Day Four – Thursday, February 28, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50min. – Watch *Of Mice and Men*.

Day Five – Friday, March 1, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect journal entries.

10 min. – Discuss current events; check newspaper/Internet articles.

10 min. – Vocabulary quiz.

30 min. – Ask students to share with the class what they chose to write about in their journal entries and go further in depth. In other words, I will let the students steer the conversation and I will act as a moderator or guide if I have to.

Week Seven:

Day One – Monday, March 4, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Introduce and define vocabulary words.

35 min. – Finish discussion of *Of Mice and Men*. I will try to cover topics that were not explored in our conversation on Friday, making sure that students consider the dreams of

all the characters in *Of Mice and Men*. Do you see any similarities/differences in the treatment of the American dream between Fitzgerald and Steinbeck?

5 min. – Hand out traditional culminating assessment (see page 13) and go over the assignment.

Day Two – Tuesday, March 5, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

15 min. – Grammar Review

5 min. – Let students silently read the Harlem Renaissance introduction (p. 734-735) and the short biography of Langston Hughes (p. 760) in *Elements of Literature*.

15 min. – Discussion of rhythm and blues. What is the blues? What are some topics of blues songs? What qualities constitute a blues song? How has contemporary music been affected by the blues? What music that you like to listen to has blues rhythms in it? What effect does this type of music have on the performer and on the listener?

15 min. – Let students read aloud “The Weary Blues” on p. 761. Ask students to identify the words or phrases that they feel make this poem sound like the blues.

Homework: Read the Birth of the Blues on p. 763. Write a paragraph about why you think the singer in “The Weary Blues” has the weary blues. Ask students to bring in cassettes or CDs of contemporary music that has blues rhythms, specifically songs that tell of a person’s woes.

Day Three – Wednesday, March 6, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

10 min. – Go over responses to the homework assignment.

15 min. – Play some traditional blues tunes.

25 min. – Play some student selections and intersperse with discussion about why blues rhythms were employed. What types of problems do contemporary singers sing about that cause them to use the blues? Is there a significant difference in the types of problems people have today compared to the problems citizens faced back in the twenties and thirties? How are things the same? How are things different?

Day Four – Thursday, March 7, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Compare and contrast “Harlem” and “Mother to Son.” Have students read aloud “Harlem.” Discuss the tone of the speaker in the poem. What was happening in America at the time this poem was written? Next, let students read aloud “Mother to Son.” How does the attitude of the speaker in this poem differ from the tone of the speaker in “Harlem?”

20 min. – Computer lab. Students will have time to type journal entries.

Day Five – Friday, March 8, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect journal entries.

35 min. – Let students do the opinionnaire for “A Raisin in the Sun” (see page 20). Discuss their responses. While students are completing the questionnaire I will check newspaper/ Internet articles.

5 min. – Let students read the short bio of Lorraine Hansberry on p. 826.

10 min. – Discuss the epigraph to “A Raisin in the Sun.” The epigraph happens to be a poem by Langston Hughes called “Harlem.” What does the epigraph suggest will happen in the play?

Homework: Read Act I, scene 1 (p. 829-841) of “A Raisin in the Sun.” Fill in character sheet (see pages 41-42). Outline for final essay is due Monday.

Week Eight:

Day One – Monday, March 11, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Check outlines.

15 min. – Introduce and define vocabulary words.

10 min. – Discuss the setting of the play. Is the Younger family well to do? How do we know that they are poor? Do they accept their condition? What are their attitudes toward their position in society?

25 min. – Go over character sheet. What are the dreams that each of these characters has? What obstacles stand in their way? How does their color affect their ability to move up the ladder?

Homework: Ask students to read Act I, scene 2 (p. 842-850). Preliminary rough draft of final essay should be completed by Thursday.

Day Two – Tuesday, March 12, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

15 min. – Grammar Review

35 min. – Allow student to read certain passages from the play. Intersperse with questions, such as: Why is Beneatha’s boyfriend a Nigerian? Would his remarks to Beneatha have been different if he were an American? How does Beneatha’s view of women differ from that of Ruth’s and Mama’s? What is happening to Walter? Is Walter justified in his anger and frustration?

Homework: Read Act II, scene 1 (p. 852-859)

Day Three – Wednesday, March 13, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Discuss Act 2, scene 1. Questions include: How do George’s and Beneatha’s views of assimilation differ? If the American dream is founded on conquering Africans and using them to make white people wealthy, then how can African Americans participate in this dream? What is the heritage of African Americans? If a race of people doesn’t know about its past then how can they move forward? What constitutes progress and who should be allowed to set these goals? How does the Yoruban song underscore Walter’s description of the dignity of the African man? Do you agree with Mama’s decision to buy a house?

20 min. – Allow students to type their rough draft onto the computer.

Day Four – Thursday, March 14, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

30 min. – Peer group discussions about essays. Students will be asked to read their paper aloud to other group members. Classmates will then make comments about the organization of the paper. I will provide students with a list of questions that they should answer for every peer in their group. Sample questions include: Did the essay flow? Did the essay make sense? What was confusing? Were there any inappropriate words or language used? Was there a thesis sentence? Did the examples support the reason in each paragraph? Was there a counterargument? A rebuttal? Additionally, students will swap papers with another student and check each other’s papers for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

20 min. – Students make revisions on the school computers and take their papers home, if necessary, to work on them. I will tell students to bring both their rough draft and revision to school tomorrow.

Day Five – Friday, March 15, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Ask students to pass forward their rough draft and revision.

10 min. – Discuss current events.

40 min: Sustained silent reading of Act 2, scene 2 (p. 860-865). While students are reading I will have individual conferences with those students whose essays need the most revision and/or those students who need to ask me questions. When students finish reading Act 2, scene 2 they will answer some questions that I prepare on a handout about that scene.

Week Nine:

Day One: Monday, March 18, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss Act 2, scene 2. Go over the answers that students wrote down to my questions on Friday. Discussion questions: How do other African Americans, like Mrs. Johnson react to the Younger’s good fortune? Are African Americans typically welcomed into white neighborhoods? Why? What are some stereotypes, mentioned by Hansberry, that white people have of African Americans? Why are African Americans denied the American dream, even when they have “earned” it according to the white man’s rules? (This question refers to the bombing of an African American house in a white neighborhood.) Do you think that Mama is right to give Walter her money? What do you predict will happen to the money?

Homework: Read Act 2, scene 3 (p. 865-875)

Day Two: Tuesday, March 19, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss Act 2, scene 3. What do you make of the Clybourne Park “welcoming committee?” How does Lindner define the American dream? Isn’t this the same thing

that the Younger's want? Are we to have a segregation of the American dream too? What is the difference between a Black man's dream and a white man's dream?
Homework: Read Act 3 (p. 877-886)

Day Three: Wednesday, March 20, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Discuss Act 3. Have students read the interchange between Beneatha and Asagai. Do you agree with Asagai when he says: “Then isn't there something wrong in a house—in a world—where all dreams, good or bad, must depend on the death of a man?... You talk about what good is struggle, what good is anything! Where are we all going and why are we bothering?” Discuss Asagai's dream for mankind. Do you think that Walter made the right decision not to take Lindner's money? Are the Youngers any closer to achieving the dream by the end of the play?

Day Four: Thursday, March 21, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping.

50 min. – Allow students to use the computer lab to make any changes they need to make in their papers.

Day Five: Friday, March 22, 2002

5 min. – Take attendance and housekeeping. Collect essays.

35 min. – Whole class discussion about the state of the American dream today. Poll students as to whether or not they believe in the American dream. Ask them what they learned from having to do the final essay. Did their opinions change throughout the unit on the American dream?

15 min. – Have students write evaluations:

1. What did you think about me as a teacher?
2. What did you like/dislike about the unit. Please comment on the assigned texts and assignments.
3. Did you feel that we covered each and every text adequately? Does anything about what we read still confuse you? If so, what?
4. Please give me any suggestions you have for how I could improve this unit.
5. Any additional comments.

APPENDICES

American Literature
Name _____

Ms. Howell
e-mail address

Syllabus for January 22, 2002 – March 22, 2002

Course Description: This spring we will study a period of literature called American Moderns. Attention will be paid to the concept of the American dream. In addition to reading literary texts, we will discuss current events and evidence of the failure/success of citizens in achieving the American dream. For this reason you will be asked to bring in one newspaper/Internet article every Friday along with a short summary and explanation of how the article affirms or shows the breakdown of the American dream. You will need to keep these articles and summaries for a project at the end of the unit. All articles should be carefully documented and listed in a log.

In order for you to succeed in the next ten weeks, it is imperative that you do three things:

1. SHOW UP TO CLASS
2. BE ON TIME
3. REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR *ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE* BOOK EVERY DAY

You will have occasional reading assignments for homework. I expect you to do this reading as it is assigned. If you fall behind in the reading it will be extremely difficult for you to turn in the Reading Journal entries that are due every Friday throughout most of this unit as the entries will be based on your reading.

Your grade will be based on the following: The writing assignments will all be based on 100 points as will the multi-genre project. For every day that an assignment is late five points will be deducted. (Handouts about the writing assignments will follow.) Vocabulary quizzes will continue every other week and will count in your class average. Seven weekly newspaper articles and short summaries will be worth 100 points. I will also keep track of your participation in class. You can boost your grade by contributing to classroom discussions.

What you can expect of me: 'Tis true that I am a lowly student teacher, but I am not your average student teacher. I welcome relevant questions and comments about the texts we are reading at all times. Furthermore, I am available for help if you have questions that you would prefer not to discuss in class. Just see me at the end of the class period and we will make an appointment. If you have an emergency and need to get in touch with me you may use the above e-mail address.

Absence policy: If you are absent it is your responsibility to get the notes from a classmate and find out about any reading assignment/homework. Please make sure that you have the telephone numbers of at least two classmates.

Name	Telephone Number
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____

Musical Allusions in Cather's "A Wagner Matinee"

1. "Joyous Farmer" (p. 542) – a title often translated as "The Jolly Farmer," is one of a series of children's pieces composed by Robert Schumann (1810-1856). Students who have studied piano may have learned this or other Schumann pieces.
2. *Euryanthe* (p. 542) – an opera composed by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826), whose work was an early influence on Wagner. In the opera, the relationship between Euryanthe and her lover Adolar is nearly destroyed by a conniving count and Euryanthe's jealous companion Eglantine.
3. *Tannhauser* (p. 544) – Wagner's opera *Tannhauser* (1845) is based on the adventures of a legendary German poet and minstrel of that name. Tannhauser has been enticed to the Venusberg, a mountain, by the charms of Venus, the goddess of love. He longs to return to the real world and to his lover, Elisabeth. He wants to join the chorus of pilgrims on their way to Rome and to repent of allowing himself to be enticed into the Venusberg. The two motifs are the Pilgrim's chorus and the Venusberg theme.
4. "Prize Song" (p. 544) – The "prize" of the midsummer singing festival is the hand of the coveted Eva. The tenor Walther defeats a rival by singing a song that takes music in a new and elevated direction.
5. the *Ring* (p. 546) – In *Twilight of the Gods*, the last part of the *Ring* cycle, Hagen plots against Siegfried, giving him a potion that makes him forget his bride Brunnhilde and think only of Gutrune. Hagen turns Brunnhilde against Siegfried, and she tells him Siegfried's back is unprotected by magic. In a cruel act, Hagen gives Siegfried a potion that restores his memory of Brunnhilde and his love for her. When Siegfried tells Hagen how he won Brunnhilde, Hagen stabs Siegfried in the back. Brunnhilde sacrifices herself on Siegfried's funeral pyre.

Richard Wagner's operas, which were called "music dramas," expanded the music world's conception of opera. Wagner rejected the traditional Italian pattern of set arias separated by recitative, speechlike passages for exposition and advancing the plot. He substituted "endless melody"—that is, melody molded to the words of the libretto. Wagner also originated the leitmotif—a recurring musical phrase that symbolizes a character, emotion, or event in the musical drama.

(These summaries are taken from the teacher's annotated edition of *The Elements of Literature*, Fifth Course.)

Name _____

American Literature

Spring 2002

Ms. Howell

Imagery

An image is frequently said to be a “picture made out of words.”

Directions: Keep a running list of all the images you find in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

Page No.	Line No.	Image	What you think it means in the context of the poem
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Name _____

American Literature

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Symbols

As you read *The Great Gatsby* use this sheet to jot down things or objects that you suspect Fitzgerald is using as symbols. Make a prediction about what you think the object represents.

Page No.	Object	What does the symbol mean?
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It is strange to see with what feverish ardor the Americans pursue their own welfare and to watch the vague dread that constantly torments them lest they should not have chosen the shortest path which may lead to it...A native of the United States clings to this world's goods as if he were certain never to die: and he is so hasty in grasping at all within reach that one would suppose he was constantly afraid of not living long enough to enjoy them...If in addition to the taste for physical well-being a social condition be added in which neither laws nor customs retain any person in his place, there is a great additional stimulant to this restlessness of temper. Men change their track for fear of missing the shortest cut to happiness.

--from *Democracy in America* (1835) by Alexis de Tocqueville

Who's Who: A Character Directory for "A Raisin in the Sun"

Name of Character	Relationship	Character Traits	Feelings about the American dream at outset	What changes does the character go through?
Ruth Younger				
Walter Lee Younger				
Lena (Mama) Younger				

Who's Who: A Character Directory for "A Raisin in the Sun"

Name of Character	Relationship	Character Traits	Feelings about the American dream at outset	What changes does the character go through?
Beneatha Younger				
George Murchison				
Joseph Asagai				

“A Raisin in the Sun”

This drama is about the Younger family’s struggle to achieve the American dream. The story hinges around a life insurance policy payment of ten thousand dollars that has been left to Mrs. Lena Younger, also known as Mama, due to her husband’s untimely and early death. When the play opens the extended family is shown living in a cramped, bug infested apartment in a run-down section of Chicago. Everyone is on edge expecting the delivery of the life insurance check and everyone has plans for how he is going to spend that money. Walter Lee Younger, Mama’s son, is a chauffeur for a white man. He yearns to start his own business and has discussed starting a liquor store enterprise with two other African American men, Bobo and Willy. Beneatha Younger, Mama’s daughter and Walter’s sister, wouldn’t mind if her mother helped to finance her dream to become a doctor.

Beneatha has two beaux—one a rich American named George Murchison and the other an African named Joseph Asagai. Beneatha is attending college and she has already started to question the values of George who has sold out to the white man by going after the American dream. Joseph helps Beneatha begin the search for her identity and African roots.

Ruth Younger, Walter Lee’s wife, is pregnant with her second child and is unhappy with her husband’s irresponsible behavior and drunken episodes. She loves her husband but is powerless to help Walter find his way back to her. Mama trusts Ruth’s moral compass more than she does that of her own children.

Mama, a devoutly religious woman, does not approve of Walter’s scheme to open a liquor store. Walter, an insufferable lout at the beginning of the play, whines and

complains that his mother favors his sister. He becomes terribly depressed when his mother takes part of the insurance money and puts a down payment on a house that happens to be in a white neighborhood. Walter feels that life has passed him by and that his mother has seen to it that he will never get ahead in life.

In an act of love and trust Mama gives Walter the remaining money and tells him to be the head of the family and manage the account. Walter decides to enter the liquor store business, without telling his mother or his sister, and loses everything when Willy runs off with the money that Walter has given him to purchase a liquor license. The loss of the money is a terrible blow to the Younger family: everyone is affected by the downturn of events. Mama loses hope and tells the family that now they cannot afford to move into the house that she purchased with a mortgage.

Walter's only solution is to go to the white man on the "welcoming committee" for Clybourne Park and accept his offer to purchase the house from the Younger family for a profit. (Mr. Lindner, the representative from Clybourne Park, had come to the Younger home earlier in the play with an offer to buy off the family so they would not move into this white neighborhood.) Mama tells Walter Lee that he is no son of hers if he would do such a thing. The Younger family has always retained its pride and dignity throughout their strained living conditions. Walter finally acts like a man and the head of the family when he tells Mr. Lindner that he will not accept the offer. The family forges ahead and moves into their new home, although the future is doubtful because they may not be able to make the mortgage payments and Black homes are being bombed by whites who don't want Blacks moving into their neighborhoods.