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Film, Freud and Fitzgerald: A Psychoanalytical Critique of The Great Gatsby and Jazz Age Values

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Background and Relevance

Emeryville

Emeryville, a small city of less than 1,200 residents, rests in the near-center of the Bay Area, a region in California known for its diversity and social politics as much as its wide income gap. Emeryville's location is unique in that it is both the literal and figurative center of the Bay Area with its high-income sister cities, like San Francisco and Marin, to the west and cities better known for their poverty and crime, like Oakland and Hayward, to the east. Due to this distinct location, Emeryville and its school district, is often called home to families and students from a variety of backgrounds.

Emery Unified School District contains only two schools. Anna Yates serves as the district's K-8 school and Emery Secondary School, currently servicing students out of an interim building, as the 9-12 high school. The 2015-16 school year will see the opening of the Emeryville Center for Community Life (ECCL), which will serve as both a K-12 educational facility as well as a community center for the parents and families of Emeryville. Although plagued with set-backs and financial woes, many teachers and families alike are hoping the ECCL will be an opportunity to start fresh as many critics have often argued that Emeryville's educational apparatus lacks the rigor, resources and instruction that is required to ensure that students have a competitive edge in a workforce that becomes more demanding each year.

Author Information and Areas for Professional Growth

After finishing my 4th year teaching 11th and 12th grade English and 10th grade World History I feel I have gained a degree of clarity and insight into my own teaching that I have lacked in prior years. Towards the end of the 2014-2015 school year I was able to take an honest inventory of my instructional capacity and pedagogy as an English teacher and make more informed decisions about instructional gaps that will need my attention before the next school year. As I will outline in more detail below I would like to focus on integrating critical lens theory into my curriculum. For this unit, I will use the psychoanalytical critical lens. Secondly, I would like to meet the needs of my visual learners by integrating film and video into the classroom as a both a viable central and supplemental tool for learning. I believe this unit will allow me to explore both of these areas for pedagogical growth and strengthen my English curriculum.

Student Population

Emery Secondary School's student population has steadily declined from 220 students in 2013 to approximately 160 students as of 2015. According to school-ratings.com, ESS has an API score of 625 and state ranking of 1 (lowest) out of 10. On average, 65% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 10% of students are classified as special education and internal benchmark testing has a significant number of 9th and 10th grade students reading and writing at a 5th and 6th grade level. With regard to student demographics, 63% of students identify as African American and 22% of students identify as Hispanic or Latino. Furthermore, 10% of students identify as Asian, many of whom are of middle-eastern descent.

Areas for Student Growth

Unfortunately, the areas in which students require the most growth are foundational to academic success. These areas include reading, writing and critical thinking. More specifically, the fact that students are often reading below grade level makes asking and expecting students to read classic literature, as suggested by the Common Core appendixes, difficult and arduous at times. With regard to composition, students' macro-level writing is often sufficient, with students demonstrating a basic level of understanding of organization and structure. However, student trends in writing have highlighted a lack of command with grade level writing mechanics and conventions. Lastly, a majority of students often have difficulty with critical thinking and considering thought-provoking prompts. Students generally find more value in obtaining the right answer than in the process of attempting to answer the question. Furthermore, although students can identify evidence, many students frequently have a difficult time utilizing evidence as a means to formulate and defend a claim.

Application and Relevance

Academically, this unit is relevant to my students because it will allow me to improve reading comprehension by varying the medium in which classical literature is usually delivered. By utilizing the 2013 Baz Luhrmann film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* along side the original text, I will also be strengthening my students' ability to effectively analyze the literary elements presented in both text and film. Utilizing film along with text will not only improve student comprehension around the narrative of *The Great Gatsby*, but will also encourage critical thinking in that students will be exposed to a variety of similarities and differences between mediums that will stimulate discussion and deeper analysis of the form, function and intention of the author and director. More so, coupling the text and film with reading and viewing strategies will give students a stronger foundation to record, organize and archive their discoveries as they develop arguments and opinion on the themes found in *The Great Gatsby*. Lastly, by introducing students to the psychoanalytical critical lens theory, students will develop an approach for which to analyze the characters, decisions, actions and desires in *The Great Gatsby*. This will thus strengthen students' ability to make connections to the text on a personal, global and universal level.

Personally, examining *The Great Gatsby* and the value systems that are central to its story will help students wrestle with their own questions surrounding values, morals, ethics and integrity. Students will become more intellectually mature as they make value judgments on characters and deconstruct the decisions, motivations and fears of each character. This process will not only encourage critical thinking, but also illustrate the complexity surrounding what it means to be successful, happy and ultimately, human.

Unit Overview

Primarily, this unit will center on students analyzing the 2013 film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* directed by Baz Luhrmann using the psychoanalytical critical lens theory to consider the values and morality of its characters as products of the Jazz Age. By doing so, students will also learn about film techniques and how film can be a powerful visual medium in storytelling. Students will read the original text concurrently with segmented clips from *The Great Gatsby* film adaptation using reading and viewing strategies as a means to increase comprehension and content mastery. Students will learn how film techniques can reinforce text-based discoveries and inferences using, in this case, a psychoanalytical lens theory. Students will specifically be examining characters' value systems, moral compass, motivations, fears, decisions, actions and destinies in an attempt to draw general conclusions about America in the 1920's, as F. Scott Fitzgerald saw them, and, possibly, compare those findings to similar topics in contemporary America.

However, this unit is primarily concerned with the film component of a larger unit on *The Great Gatsby*. Thus, the strategies and approaches outlined in this narrative may be better relied upon to act as complementary to, rather than sufficient for, a text-based approach to *The Great Gatsby* in its own right.

The length of this unit should cover a span of seven to nine weeks, including assessments, in my 11th grade English class. This includes the time required for students to read the entirety of the text. Students in my classroom will be given approximately four hours per week in block schedule classes that meet Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in intervals of 110 minutes.

Role of Film

For this unit, I will be segmenting the 2013 film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* into "chapter scenes" to be used as a learning tool concurrently while students read the original text.

Specifically, students would use the film to consider a number of topics. For one, students will compare and contrast the characterization and character development as staged by the author and the director. They will examine the ways in which director Baz Luhrmann depicts Fitzgerald's characters' motivations, desires and fears along with their integrity, morality and values. What type of mechanisms, systems and form (specific to film) are used to accentuate and reinforce these traits? How are lighting, focus, camera position, color and direction used in each character? Furthermore, what is the significance of the director's use of film technique and actor's performance when considering these characters' psychoanalytical dossier?

By using the Baz Luhrmann film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* as a vehicle for analyzing the story's themes and underlying social commentary, students will learn how film can be its own medium for effective storytelling. Secondly, using film in conjunction with text will increase students' reading comprehension and content mastery surrounding *The Great Gatsby* and Critical Lens Theory.

Content Objectives

F. Scott Fitzgerald

I believe it to be important for teachers to have some general background information on F. Scott Fitzgerald,

especially his relationships and life experiences related to money and class, in order for teachers and students to make a more informed analysis of both the text and film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*. With that in mind, I have provided a brief biography that will aim to give broader context for Fitzgerald's jazz age drama and thus increase the teacher's ability to guide students towards textual and real-world connections between author and story using the psychoanalytical critical lens model.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's life can easily be seen to be as complicated as that of his novel's characters. The novel was initially received with as much hype as disappointment. Ironically however, 90 years after its publishing in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* is arguably considered to be one of the most important narratives in modern American Literature. Critics often state that Fitzgerald's own life experiences, romantic endeavors and financial woes informed many of his characters including those found in *The Great Gatsby*.

Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota to an upper middle class family on September 24th, 1896. When he was a young boy, Fitzgerald's family moved to New York where, despite having mild difficulties in school, he discovered a love for literature and eventually writing through the encouragement of his mother as well as his English teachers. During his college year, Fitzgerald dropped out of Princeton University after being put on academic probation and joined the Army in 1917, the year the United States entered World War I. Fitzgerald was never able to witness the excitement of battle but instead went on to meet the love of his life before the war had ended. However, Fitzgerald's marriage to Zelda Sayne, the "golden girl" of the New York country club scene, would become a lifelong battle in its own right.

The engagement to Zelda sparked Fitzgerald to find a career in advertising as a means to meet the financial demands of his soon-to-be wife. But fortune and success did not find the couple easily and Zelda chose to break off the engagement. It was only after Fitzgerald published his first story, *This Side of Paradise* that the original plan for marriage was again considered. The stress and uncertainty that stemmed from his need to satisfy Zelda's appetite for money and material luxuries were often represented thematically in Fitzgerald's texts including *The Great Gatsby*. Nevertheless, the newlyweds had their daughter, Frances Scott Fitzgerald, in the fall of 1921. Soon thereafter the family moved to Paris.

Paris was a special time in Fitzgerald's life as he cultivated a wonderful friendship with American novelist Ernest Hemmingway. The two were close there was friction over Hemmingway's disdain for Zelda as he believed she pushed her husband to drink too frequently and, consequently, served as a distraction from his first love, writing. The marriage between novelist and golden girl became toxic as the years went on and was complicated further after Zelda developed schizophrenia and required hospitalization. Medical bills piled up and exhausted Fitzgerald financially. In response, he began writing as quickly and often as possible in an attempt to find relief from the financial and emotional stress plaguing his life.

The destructive effects of wealth and an elitist lifestyle coupled with Fitzgerald's anxiety and internal pressure to be successful took a toll on the writer. After this low point, his relationship with Zelda dwindled, and he moved to Hollywood, where he became romantically involved with gossip writer Sheilah Graham. By 1939, Fitzgerald's drinking had caught up with him and compounded a heart condition and rumored tuberculosis. In 1940, while being confined to a wheel chair, F. Scott Fitzgerald died of a heart attack.

Fitzgerald remains one of the greatest American novelists of the modern period as his profound yet cynical writing effectively mirrors the moral disintegration, hopeless romanticism and jazz age zeitgeist of his own high-pressured environment. The autobiographical aspect of his writing often tackled themes surrounding identity, class, moral ambiguity, financial hardship, and lost love. *The Great Gatsby* is a perfect example of

this tendency and gives plenty of room for students to make inferences and draw conclusions between Gatsby's tragic, materialistic, and morally ambiguous life and Fitzgerald's.

Jazz Age

Teachers and students should consider familiarizing themselves with the Jazz Age because it was both the setting of *The Great Gatsby* as well as the prevailing historical period during the time of its composition. Thus, I have attempted to summarize some of the major social and cultural points of interests concerning the Jazz Age, hoping teachers can use this contextual knowledge to deepen their own understanding of *The Great Gatsby* and, most importantly, feel academically equipped to encourage students to find their own connections between the narrative and the historical time period in which it was written and took place.

The Jazz Age in the United States was a cultural and political turning point in American history as it saw sweeping changes in social systems and power structures. What is referred to as The Jazz Age is the period between 1919 and 1929, virtually spanning the time from the Paris Peace Treaty ending World War 1 to the Black Tuesday stock market crash of 1929. In addition, most of the social phenomena and events that make up the Jazz Age, a term virtually synonymous with the Roaring Twenties, took place in the northeastern parts of the United States, in cities like New York City and Chicago. The Jazz Age is regarded as historically significant because there were a number of racial, sexual and gendered paradigm shifts that challenged the power dynamic and moral fabric of the United States.

Economically speaking, the Jazz Age was unique in that Americans were coming home to a financial and commercial boom that followed World War 1. Secondly, the 1920's were the first time in American history where people living in cities outnumbered people living in farms or rural towns. Because of this shift, business and commerce increased dramatically and between 1920 and 1929 it is estimated that the nation's wealth nearly doubled. Radios were being sold in record numbers, allowing people to tune in with one another and connect with the current of the times. Likewise, automobiles were selling quickly and giving people a sense of freedom.

The boom in automobile production also helped to facilitate The Great Migration. The Great Migration was a phenomenon that saw African Americans relocating in record numbers from the historically oppressive regions of the south to the more progressive cities in the northeastern United States, where they found greater opportunities. As a consequence, African American culture quickly permeated throughout society, often to the dismay of traditional and more conservative white communities.

In addition to African American communities, women were also establishing their independence during the 1920s. In August of 1920 the 19th amendment was ratified giving women the right to vote, a privilege that was conditionally given to African Americans some 50 years earlier. In addition, the advent of birth control gave women the opportunity to take agency over their bodies and thus, offer a degree of sexual freedom never before experienced, while a boom in domestic and household technologies gave many women time to explore other interests. From these changes in women's lives, a new identity emerged known as the flapper girl, a woman who was known as much for her love of dancing as for her willingness to challenge gender norms. Flapper girls had a tendency to engage in worldly pleasures like alcohol and sexual promiscuity, unlike their conservative counter-parts. The flapper girl, like many others that were in tune with the times, found refuge in the perfect environment for such fun- the speakeasy.

In 1919, the 18th Amendment was passed by the government as an attempt to curb the loosening of morality that seemed to be accompanying the modernization of America. Middle class Americans generally saw alcohol

as a symbol for everything that was morally deficient with the modern city. As a result, the Prohibition on alcohol caused a spike in organized crime. Gangsters like Al Capone manufactured and distributed alcohol throughout the urban metropolises of northeast United States. Speakeasies were established as an underground location where people who wanted to escape Prohibition could drink and party throughout the night. Furthermore, music clubs, along side speakeasies, were also attractive meeting spots where the modern man or woman could indulge in dancing and drinking while listening to the unrestrictive, improvised and symbolic music of the time, jazz.

All in all, the Jazz Age was a culturally rich, politically divisive and sexually liberating time for the northeastern cities of the United States. Thus, the Jazz Age should not be overlooked in the larger critique of *The Great Gatsby* as its role as both influential to F. Scott Fitzgerald's own and as a setting of one of the greatest stories in modern American fiction.

Psychoanalytical Critical Lens Theory

Critical Lens Theories are analytical frameworks used to help students critique and decode literature and film in a structured yet creative way. Although there are several Critical Lens models, such as Marxist, feminist, structuralism, post-colonial and archetypal, the model that I believe is most applicable to *The Great Gatsby* is the psychoanalytical model. This model is based upon the psychodynamic work done by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung in the early 20th century, but has continued to evolve due to the work of other academics and scientists in the field since.

Unlike other critical lens theories, the psychoanalytical model focuses solely on the unconscious, microstructures of power and identity, and small-scale domestic environments. Or, in other words, this model focuses on the relationships characters have with themselves and with other characters within their own social systems. From these relationships, conclusions and inferences can be made about larger cultural phenomenon and social trends that occur or exist within a narrative. Thus, I believe a character-driven film such as *The Great Gatsby*, which takes place during the colorful period in history known as the Jazz Age, would lend itself well to the psychoanalytical critical lens theory.

The psychoanalytical critical lens theory primarily rests upon the premise that, like dreams, literature and film are mediums into the unconscious landscape of a text's author and characters. Characters within a given narrative can be better understood through the analysis of their dialogue and actions. The psychoanalytical model asserts that behavior is primarily driven by the unconscious and that a character's fears, desires and motivations are born out of unresolved conflict, sometimes stemming from childhood experiences. Obviously, as readers, we are not privy to characters' childhood experiences (or the insight behind an author's model for creating a particular character). But this model works backwards as well, in that focusing on a character's behavior and decision-making tendencies may shed light upon a character's life "before" they exist in the text. Thus, as critics, we are able to draw conclusions about a character's childhood experience or upbringing using this model- again, with the aim to not only better understand a character but also the significance that character has in the story, as well as what he or she may represent to the author.

At any rate, the conflicts and anxieties of an author and his or her characters are often repressed, unknown and driven by a variety of unconscious systems that manifest themselves through particular behaviors and defense mechanisms that can be classified into a number of categories.

Id, Ego, and Super-Ego

Central to the psychoanalytical critical lens theory is the idea of the id, ego and superego. Each component of this three-layered structure is constantly wrestling with the other two components for dominance. Together, these components govern the behavior and action of a person.

At the deepest level is the id, which represents the location of instinctual drives like the libido. The libido can be best summarized as any desire or impulse, usually sexual, in its most unchecked state. The id and libido exist without any authority present, moral or spiritual. In essence, the id constitutes a person's basic biological needs and appetites in their most natural state of existence. The needs include hunger, thirst, sexual pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Also known as the pleasure principle, the id operates with the aim of seeking instant gratification, regardless of circumstance or consequence. For obvious reasons, the id is usually likened to behavior and needs of a newborn baby or infant and very much requires the help of its more developed counterpart, the ego.

The ego is the counterweight to the id and acts to keep the id in check. The ego is different from the id in that it understands that impulses cannot always be gratified. Hence, the ego works under the delay-gratification premise and understands that actions can lead to harmful consequences and punishment. The ego acts as the conscious self and is aware not only of the needs of the self, but also of the needs of others. In sum, along with managing the demands of the id, the ego is very much aware of the reality principle and has a clear understanding over what actions are deemed appropriate and inappropriate.

The superego supersedes its predecessors as it houses the mechanisms for judgment, morality and ethics. The superego is formulated through the values and morality as taught to an individual by his or her parents as well as by the social environment in which an individual is raised. Ultimately, the superego is the mechanism that determines whether an action is right or wrong.

Defense Mechanisms

Often times, negative memories, along with primitive desires stemming from the id, are relegated to the unconscious if they are deemed unpleasant or too painful. However, these feelings do not simply disappear and instead manifest themselves through behaviors known as defense mechanisms. Behaviorally speaking, defense mechanisms are not under an individual's conscious control and, as Freud believed, function primarily as the ego's attempt to prevent feelings like anxiety, guilt and fear from flooding into the conscious mind. It is important to know that they can manifest themselves in a variety of formations, as I will briefly cover below, but more important to remember that no matter what form they take, defense mechanisms almost always represent an individual's desperate need to compensate for a character deficiency or negative experience in the past. The brief explanations I will provide for each defense mechanism are authored by the publication simplypsychology.org

Projection is a defense mechanism that involves assigning blame surrounding one's own undesirable thoughts, feelings and motives to another person. Consider the following example: Person A feels hatred towards person B. But because the ego informs the conscious mind that hatred is an undesirable feeling, Person A projects feelings of hatred onto person B. Thus, the problem has been "reconciled" as person B hating person A.

Denial involves blocking out events from an individual's conscious awareness that are deemed too stressful or difficult to handle. In essence, denial is a person's refusal to acknowledge or experience a grim reality. For example, a smoker may refuse to admit the harmful health consequences related to smoking.

Displacement is the substitution of an impulse with an object or action. For example, a man who experienced difficulties at work with his aggressive boss would come home and yell at his wife. The opposite of displacement is sublimation, which occurs when an impulse is substituted with an object, or action that is socially acceptable such as exercising or creating music.

Lastly, regression is a defense mechanism that involves moving backwards in psychological development after having a negative experience. For example, after the death of a parent an adolescent child may begin wetting the bed or sucking their thumb as they had when they were much younger.

Oedipus Complex

The Oedipus complex is arguably one of Freud's most interesting ideas relating to psychoanalysis. The Oedipus complex centers around the idealization, fixation and eventual condemnation children feel towards their parents, specifically, boys towards their fathers and females towards their mothers. This theory is unique in that it asserts that as male infants grow older, they develop a desire to possess their mother, both in emotional and romantic terms, and a tendency to show aggressive behavior towards their father, notwithstanding the inclination towards violence or murder. However, long before this climax is realized there exists a deep admiration for one's parents as providers, nurturers and protectors. Freud argues it is for this reason that men often seek women who possess the characteristics and qualities of their mother and possibly friendships with men who possess the qualities of their father. Likewise, women may yearn to possess men who remind them of their father.

Beneath all of this speculation surrounding intimacy and sex lies the assumption that a child's relationship with their parents, or lack thereof, is one of the most important factors in a person's psychological and behavioral development. If anything is taken away from this component of the psychoanalytical model, it is that the relationship between a child and parent in a text should not be overlooked and may be used to reconcile questions or problems surrounding a character's behavior and psychological profile.

Critical Film Analysis

In the section below I will be analyzing scenes from the film adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* with two purposes in mind. First, the instruction of this unit requires teachers to have a fundamental understanding of film techniques and film vocabulary. Generally, film analysis begins with the formal elements of film like sound, color, space, camera position and other components unique to film and exclusive from a story's narrative. Secondly, my scene analysis will serve as a model for instruction and analysis in the classroom.

Like other types of analysis, discussion with students about film should generally start with the most accessible level of content, such as sight and sound, and gradually move into a space where critical thinking and subjective analysis are imperative to understand the 'whys' and 'hows' behind a director's intention and decision. Teachers interested in this unit should also know there are plenty of scenes from the film that are also worthy of rich speculation that were not included on this list. The scenes listed below were chosen primarily because they were representative of some of the broader thematic points addressed by Fitzgerald but also because they are rich with content that speaks to the heavy stylization of Baz Luhrmann's direction and production, the psychoanalytical critique of *The Great Gatsby's* character's and possibly a window in the intention of Fitzgerald's authorship.

Scene - Opening Scene with Nick (00:00:00 - 00:04:05)

The film begins with its opening production credits being visually presented as they would have been during a moving picture from the 1920's. The images are black and white, grainy, heavily spotted and coupled with a melancholy instrumental that permeates the clip. Gradually, there is transition to color that indicates the film's own self-awareness as a modern adaptation of a story that was written in an earlier time. As the frame turns to gold we are pulled into the story's space and the camera finds itself out at sea, slowly moving against the current towards a distant green light atop a lighthouse. Needless to say, this scene mirrors the last lines of the text when our narrator, Nick Carraway, symbolically illustrates how the notion that one can never be emancipated from one's past in the face of progress is similar to being out at sea against a persistent current. Likewise, the fog and snow in the scene may also be interpreted as the distractions in our own lives that impede or distract us on our journey towards achieving our dreams.

We are then introduced to Nick Carraway, our narrator who, while at The Perkins Sanitarium, speaks to his therapist about his experience with Jay Gatsby. The setting of the sanitarium is dark, stale and covered in snow. Its near monochromatic black and white color scheme speaks to the mental turmoil and depressed state of Nick, and functions almost like a visual hangover that Nick has woken up with after his colorful and intoxicating experience with Gatsby in New York City. The close-up on Nick's shadowy unshaven face and unkempt suite further reinforces his own disheveled disposition and mental state.

Psychologically speaking, Nick's dialogue about his father's advice and his relationship with Gatsby is very revealing. Nick's father's advice that was given to Nick regarding the urge to reserve judgment about others is presented as not having been followed as Nick admits his "disgust" with everybody he had come across in New York. Despite acknowledging that even he has "a limit" to his reservation of judgment, Nick seemed to have displaced his feelings of disgust with substance abuse highlighted when the camera focuses on the long list of medical conditions, including "alcoholic" listed on his medical chart. His engagement in this defense mechanisms shows that Nick has a strong ego and secondly, his sentiment towards the moral temperature of the Jazz Age (as revealed in his monologue) shows Nick has a fairly strong superego in that he is able to make moral judgments and understand the consequences of impulsive and decadent behavior.

Nick's feelings towards Gatsby are also revealed during this scene, especially when Nick recollects Gatsby as being "the single most hopeful person I have ever met." Clearly, Nick valued his relationship with Gatsby very much. But, because Nick's story of "the Great Gatsby" is colored by nostalgia and muddied by his consumption of alcohol, students may conclude that Nick should not be considered a reliable narrator. This argument could also be made for Fitzgerald; his own avid drinking and financial struggles may have peppered his regard for the social systems and environments of his time with anxiety.

Nevertheless, the scene ends with Nick's loving sentiment for Jay Gatsby, complemented by the camera's calm movement and slow zooms, juxtaposed with scenes from the busy streets of New York during the Jazz Age. Here we are shown short retro-style takes filled with colorful imagery and fast-moving people, spliced together in quick succession. The scene's use of super-imposition along with the camera's medium and long shots interprets the Jazz Age as hysterical, dangerous, unrelenting and momentous. The scene concludes with the camera hastily descending a skyscraper from a 2-wing plane to the top hat of Nick Carraway where he breaks the proverbial fourth-wall by greeting the audience with direct eye contact and an inviting smile.

Scene - Gatsby Reconnects with Daisy (00:50:42- 01:00:00)

In this scene Gatsby is preparing to be reacquainted with Daisy after five long years. Gatsby claims he has

been in love with Daisy since their meeting prior to his deployment in World War I. Gatsby had asked Nick to facilitate this encounter by inviting Daisy to tea at Nick's home. Visually, Luhrmann wonderfully illustrates the importance this moment is to Gatsby. We are shown dozens of colorful bouquets of flowers as symbols of the love and hope that Gatsby has for Daisy and this moment. The clock on the mantle is central to the room and its ticking reminds the audience that Gatsby has been waiting for this moment and has become apprehensive with each passing second. Gatsby's inadvertent breaking of the clock also hints at his own desire to halt the continual passage of time and instead preserve this moment with his previous lover forever.

The workers Gatsby has hired move busily around the yard, hinting at Gatsby's obsessive need to exert power and control over his life experiences. The number of workers Luhrmann puts on screen simultaneously also symbolizes Gatsby's monetary capital. The pouring rain that occurs moments before Daisy's arrival also plays a significant role. Luhrmann's uses the heavy rain as a way to create tension and a sense of anxiety or dread that the audience feels for Gatsby as he wonders around aimlessly. Last of the props is the boiling tea pot that, like the rain, add to the tension and represents the emotional pressure Gatsby is, and Daisy will be, feeling.

Psychologically, Gatsby is told by Nick that he is acting like "a little boy." It is fair to say that as Gatsby faces this stressful reality he has regressed into childlike behavior. He is obsessive, compulsive, anxious, and doubtful of himself and worried about the future- -all character traits that are confirmed in other scenes from the film, notably his flashback clip. To add to this sense of vulnerability, Gatsby reenters the house with his clothes completely soaked from the rain. This suggests that the anxiety he is feeling, as illustrated by the effect of the rain, has essentially left Gatsby emotionally transparent, or "see-through." On a separate but important note, Gatsby never once acknowledges his meeting with Daisy as being immoral or, at the very least unethical, considering that she is a married woman. Very deliberately, the moral conflict surrounding infidelity is not addressed by anyone throughout the film other than Nick in this very scene. This further cements the notion that, aside from Nick, the characters in *The Great Gatsby*, possibly mirroring Fitzgerald's feelings towards the Jazz Age, lack a moral compass, or in psychoanalytical terms, a superego.

The tension of the scene is finally visually resolved when rain is replaced with sunny blue skies and the boiling teapot is relieved of its duty and used to serve tea. In a stroke of great directorship, Luhrmann shows us the strength and the feeling of intimacy Gatsby and Daisy share when the camera is not invited into the couple's playful and seemingly sensitive conversations. Nick even tests the trance they are in by producing loud noises in the kitchen, possibly in an attempt to disrupt the inevitability of becoming the dreaded third wheel.

The next scene, without diving into detail, excels at showing Gatsby's reliance on materialism to compensate for the insecurities he had about wealth and power as a young child.

Scene - Jordan's Flashback (00:45:15- 00:47:00)

Jordan's flashback while debriefing Nick about Gatsby's plan to meet Daisy is one of two flashbacks that give the audience a visualization of Daisy and Gatsby's dissimilar backstories and through them, a better understanding of their character and psychological profiles. Luhrmann begins with a close-up of Jordan playing golf on what seems to be Daisy's family estate. The scene is washed in vintage pastel coloring that reinforces it as not only a flashback, but also one that is remembered by Jordan as a positive and joyous time in the young women's lives. Daisy sits in the driver's seat of a shiny, expensive car, with a younger, more eager, Jay Gatsby. This imagery suggests her wealth, power and popularity with men. Gatsby is then sent off to war and we are shown historical clips of World War I that end with a shot of Gatsby walking away from the audience into a black backdrop. This illustrates the sense of uncertainty that will plague not only Gatsby's future but

also Daisy's hope for his return. This image is followed by a shot of Tom Buchanan, whose tuxedo represents the contrast between his and Gatsby's background, facing the audience with a super-imposed newspaper clipping behind him highlighting both his fame and wealth. Tom is then shown providing Daisy with pearls and jewelry.

Baz Luhrmann really succeeds in conveying Tom's influence over Daisy in a close-up shot of Tom wrapping his fingers tightly around the pearl necklace on her neck as if to imply his ownership of Daisy by means of money and material things. When Daisy gets cold feet, we see the pearl necklace breaking and being put together by her mother and Jordan Baker. This clip alludes to Daisy's doubts being meticulously managed and "cleaned up" by others, thus further implying Daisy's passivity in that she allows others, including her mother, to determine her major life decisions, possibly out of the pressure the family exerts over maintaining appearances and the integrity of the family name. Lastly, Luhrmann leaves the audience with a sense of curiosity when Daisy rips up her letter from Gatsby and we are shown only pieces of the intimate and mysterious words as they fade into the foreground before getting too close to the camera.

This clip also provides the audience with great insight into Daisy's life and value system. Clearly, Daisy can be said to have a strong ego, in that she is able to set aside her true desire to marry Gatsby- a man with a questionable background. She rationalizes that marrying someone who can provide security, fame and fortune is generally a safe way to insure her own prosperity. This notion is further cemented by her decision to stay with Tom despite his infidelities only weeks into their marriage.

Contrary to Daisy, Gatsby seems to have a strong id in that he is relentless in his obsession with Daisy and his desire to marry her. He has a total disregard for the conventions of society with respect to infidelity, boundaries and realistic expectations. Jordan tells Nick during this scene that everything Gatsby has done, including his rise to wealth and move to East Egg, has been motivated by his need to impress Daisy. Neither Daisy nor Gatsby seem to have a strong superego in that both seem, at best, to disregard how their relations with one another are subject to moral and ethical objections according to mainstream social values. However, it is worth mentioning that the disintegration of American morality during the Jazz Age, as Fitzgerald implies, may partly explain their behavior.

Other Scenes Worthy of Analysis

As much as I would love to provide in-depth film analysis for each of the scenes in Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*, the formal constraints of this unit do not allow that degree of extensive narrative. Rather, I will provide a short list of other scenes from the film worthy of classroom analysis. In this section I will also briefly mention the significance each scene offers with regard to the discussion points they will no doubt provoke.

Tom and Nick's Hotel Party in New York

After taking a train through the Valley of Ashes, Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan rambunctiously party in a New York apartment used by Tom for his affair with Myrtle. This scene gives great insight into the dynamic between Nick and Tom and the behavior Tom and his friends engage in, seemingly, quite frequently and without thought. Psychoanalytically, the scenes serve to demonstrate the strength of the characters' id as they seek pleasure in experience with drugs, alcohol and sex. Significantly, this scene also touches on Nick's moral struggle with this behavior and his fluidity as a narrator.

Gatsby's Party

This scene beautifully demonstrates the length to which Baz Luhrmann went to recreate the vibrancy of the Jazz Age and the opulence of Gatsby's parties. The saturation of color, sound, behavior and personalities makes for remarkable viewing. Here scenes of moral disintegration, pleasing the senses and engagement in pure debauchery and decadence fill the screen. Lastly, we are provided a window into the life of Gatsby, his behavior, motivations and shady secrets.

Gatsby's Flashback

Like Jordan's flashback, Gatsby's is ripe with a cinematic uniqueness that helps it stand out against the rest of the movie. The slow motion, extreme close-ups and dark overlay breathe tension and weight into the hardship of Gatsby's younger years. Furthermore, the flashback helps to redeem Gatsby as a character by illustrating his tenacity, ambition and ability to capitalize on any opportunity. Lastly, the scene confirms to the audience that Gatsby is a self-made man; essentially representing the connection Gatsby's journey has with America's story as a nation.

Tom's Confrontation with Gatsby

This scene centers on the rising action of the story when all of the main characters go to lunch and what is essentially their infidelity is brought to a head. Visually, students will notice the tension through the temperature of the environment. Luhrmann emphasizes this by his use of a warm color palette, overhead shots and abundance of props like water, ice, fans and windows. This scene is also very telling of the characters' psychological profile as Tom and Gatsby, both practicing displacement over Daisy's frustration toward each of them, essentially argue over ownership of Daisy, who seems to be quite fickle with her man, by debating on which of them is the less shallow man.

Instructional Strategies

Essential Questions

The driving questions behind this unit are threefold, and essentially aim to focus student inquiry around the character's relationships and decisions in *The Great Gatsby*, which in turn, act as a window into American values during the Jazz Age. Furthermore, these questions will help to facilitate discussion around how Baz Luhrmann's film techniques as a director accentuated these points.

The essential questions are as follows. First, what do *The Great Gatsby* and its characters tell us about what is most valued in America during the Jazz Age? Second, how does the psychoanalytical critical lens model help us gain insight into the characters' values and morality in *The Great Gatsby*? Lastly, how do the film techniques used in *The Great Gatsby* suggest or reinforce the characters' internal and external conflicts?

Classroom Activities

Film Inventory

A great way to start off any unit involving film is to ask students to take an inventory of their own experiences

with film. Teachers' may open the unit with a simple question: "What makes a great film?" This activity will encourage students to engage with others about their favorite flicks and to think critically about what made them great. Furthermore, it will give teachers a platform to give students general information about the five elements of fiction, film vocabulary and a loose baseline by which all classroom films can be assessed.

Teachers should begin by asking students to make a list of their top five favorite films and eventually ask them to qualify each entry. This will get students excited and ready to share. Next, ask students to share their annotated list with a partner. After five minutes or so, shift the focus from pair sharing to a more collective, classroom discussion. If time permits, each pair of students can share their discussion with the class.

Teachers should then ask students what specifically makes a film great. Is there something unique to all of the films on their list? Is it the characters, plot, conflicts, atmosphere or direction? Give students a few minutes to consider this larger question by asking them to write down their answers under their list. Teachers may want to use a piece of butcher paper to collect the wide array of responses that are sure to come. Once students have finished writing, open the classroom up for a general discussion. In this space, students can share their opinions while the teacher compiles answers on the piece of butcher paper. Teachers should consider asking the students the same question upon completion of this unit as a way to highlight student growth.

Once this activity is near its end, teachers can use the momentum established on the topic of film as a springboard into film vocabulary, the five elements of fiction and the roles of a director.

"I saw, I felt, I thought..."

This activity aims to help students unpack the visual content of a scene upon its completion. Essentially, this activity acts as a framework that can be used after viewing each of the scenes listed in the section above titled Critical Film Analysis. Furthermore, this activity encourages students to synthesize the visual aspects of film with their own emotional and intellectual reactions. Teachers can use this activity as a vehicle for teaching students about a variety of film techniques and the ability film has to evoke emotional reaction within its audience.

Teachers should create a graphic organizer with four columns and three rows. The rows will allow space for two scenes from *The Great Gatsby*, while the columns will be titled, respectively, "I Saw," "I Felt," and "I Thought." If paper space does not permit, students can break down one scene at a time instead of two (it may be helpful to rotate the paper into landscape position).

After a scene, which should require repeated showing, students will be asked what they saw. This first step does not require any deep analysis and should act as a way to ease students into the larger approaches behind film analysis. Students can make lists, shorthand notes or complete sentences on what they visually saw in the clip. What colors were used? What actions were taken? What sounds were made? What music was played? What did the environment look like? What props were used? Sound and music should be considered as well. Teachers can prompt students to share their notes after giving them five minutes or so to write. This activity will train students to become more aware of the film's art direction, spatiality, audio and character consumes.

After showing the clip for a second time, students will then write down how they felt during the scene. Ask students what emotions they felt while the clip was playing. Were they anxious, afraid, joyful, tense, relaxed, confused or indifferent? Students should be encouraged to draw connections from the visual and audio elements of the film to these feelings. Ask students what specifically happened during the scene that

prompted these feelings. Was it something the character did? Was it the mood, tone or atmosphere of the scene? Were your feelings evoked by something situational or something visual? Eventually students will become more aware of the ability film has to evoke emotional reactions in its audience. Reminding students that this relationship exists and is intentional will help students better understand the purpose of film and a film's director.

Lastly, students will offer their own criticisms, discoveries and personal connections to the film in the column titled "I thought." Students can offer their own intellectual commentary surrounding any and all aspects of the film, its execution and their role as an audience member. What parts of the scene did students enjoy? What was the intention of the director in regard to the scene? What connections were made to yourself, other texts or worldly events? In sum, this section is open-ended and a great way to give students the tools to begin their journey into becoming film critics.

Sketch and Shoot

Sketch and Shoot is an activity that allows students to tap into their creative side. Using poster paper, butcher paper or regular printer paper, students should be instructed to create their own storyboard of a scene from *The Great Gatsby*. This activity is accessible to a wide range of learners because students can choose to mirror the scene shot for shot or exercise their own creative side and compile a storyboard that is completely different from Baz Luhrmann's scene. Paper can be folded into squares of four, six or eight depending on its size of the paper and the comfort level of the student.

Teachers should remind students that each detail in camera angle, character detail and sequence should be deliberate. Students should be able to articulate why their storyboard is special or arguably more effective than the film's version of the scene. This can be done through written composition or an oral presentation. Students can also find guidance in the original text by allowing their imagination to inform their storyboard creation.

Lastly, this activity can end with students putting their storyboards to use. If time permits, students can use either their phones or another tech device to act out their scenes in small groups. This part of the activity can really enable students to acquire a deep understanding of the role of a director and the importance of camera angles and movement. Teachers can plan ahead by asking students to bring props and costumes the day before the shoot as a way to increase buy-in with students. The final product can be edited on iMovie and presented to the class as a way to celebrate student learning, creativity and hopefully, their newfound love for film.

Assessment

Character Profile

Asking students to write a character profile on a main character is an effective method for assessing a student's understanding of the psychoanalytical critical lens theory as well as the content of *The Great Gatsby*. Although not explicitly mentioned in the classroom activities section, this assessment should follow an activity that focuses on close analysis of each character from the film, possibly through the use of a graphic organizer or Socratic seminar.

Teachers should ask students to choose their favorite, or possibly least favorite, character from the film. Giving students agency around their subject should increase buy-in and help generate a more interesting

response. Once students have chosen a character they should begin considering the following questions: Who is this person? What type of person is this? What are their motivations, desires and ambitions? What do they fear? What motivates them? What is their primary purpose or goal in the story? This assignment can even allow students to exercise their creativity if asked: What do you think their childhood was like? If this person lived in our world, where would they work, live and play? These questions prompt students to analyze the characters from *The Great Gatsby* in a traditional literary analytical sense with a dimension of psychoanalysis.

This assessment should highlight those students who have a firm grasp on the narrative of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's intention and the psychoanalytical critical lens theory. Moreover, this assignment creates a platform for rich discussion around topics like morality, ethics, love, class and relationships.

Scene Review

One thing that most films have in common is they are often subject to rigorous scrutiny in a film review. Although usually reserved for audience members with a more refined pedigree, film reviews can be done by anyone. Why not start with a scene review written by teenagers?

This attitude of inclusiveness should be communicated to students after they watch *The Great Gatsby*. The idea that students will draft and publish a scene review, possibly through a social media outlet, can be socially empowering as much as it is academically encouraging.

For this summative assessment teachers will first model to students the basics of a film review. Plentiful reviews of *The Great Gatsby*, albeit often times negative, can be found on many major media websites. Printing several out and asking students to read them in small groups can be a great way to illustrate the accessibility of a film review. Students should realize most film reviews are subjective, full of opinion and rife with criticism. They cover topics ranging from the actors performances, the integrity of the story, the deviation of the script or commentary over the costumes and props. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to try and place themselves in the director's chair and determine his or her intention, execution and overall value.

Once students have become familiar with the form and function of a film review, teachers should prompt students to choose one or two of their favorite scenes from *The Great Gatsby*. Encourage students to take copious notes while viewing their designated scene at least three times. Individual scenes can usually be found on Youtube.com.

After students have finished their notation and brainstorming they should develop some degree of organization to what will essentially be an argumentative or narrative essay. Students can arrange their notes around character performance, the elements of fiction; or possibly in narrative form using chronological order or anecdotal viewing experience. What is most important is that students use evidence. Evidence in a film review necessitates predicating a claim using a visual cue, character action, piece of dialogue or any other component that can be seen, heard or felt while watching the film. To support students in their writing- and to make these scene reviews as "realistic" as possibly- teachers should look to the mechanical and stylistic strategies usually found in narrative writing.

When student writing is complete teachers can publish their reviews on a classroom website to further emulate the experience of what it means to be a bona fide film critic. Or at the very least, students can be asked to read their reviews to their classmates.

Appendix

Common Core Alignment

Although this unit touches on multiple Common Core anchor standards, I have listed below some standards that are deemed most relevant to this unit's content, application and student activities. The alignment of the following Common Core standards are also predicated on the assumption that students will be using the original *The Great Gatsby* text in conjunction with the film adaptation, as mentioned both in this unit's synopsis and introduction.

With regard to student writing activities, Common Core English Language Arts anchor standards W.1, and W.4 are most relevant. W.1 asks students to, "Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence." Essentially, any and all activities that ask students to respond to questions and prompts using evidence from the original text to support their claims falls into these parameters. W.4 requires students to, "Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience." This component in student writing can most likely be seen in their scene review, character profile or other writing assignments where they are asked to outline, organize and consider their audience.

If teachers and students decide to publish the students' writing, as may be the case with their scene reviews and storyboarding activities, Common Core ELA anchor standard W.6 becomes applicable. This standard states that students will, "Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others." This standard really encourages students to utilize the Internet for research, inspiration, collaboration and ultimately publication. Students posting, sharing and commenting on each other's scene reviews and character profiles, as published on social media, is a great example of how technology and written composition can complement one another in the classroom.

Lastly, students will be exercising Common Core Reading anchor standards RL.11-12.4 that asks students to, "Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed)." In sum, by students considering the intention of F. Scott Fitzgerald and director Baz Luhrmann, they will be analyzing their decisions surrounding elements of fiction and this particular narrative.

Annotated Bibliography

The Jazz Age. Produced by National Broadcasting Company. Performed by Fred Allen. 2003.

This 60 minute DVD depicts original footage from the Jazz Age as it concentrates on the shift in moral landscape that occurred between the end of World War 1 up to the Great Crash of 1929. Narrated by Fred Allen, this documentary is part of a larger Project Twenty series that won an Emmy and Peabody award for its excellence in visual delivery. This film is accessible to students and can be a great way to illustrate American life and the momentous cultural shifts that occurred during this historic period.

Bloom, Harold. *F. Scott Fitzgerald: Bloom's Modern Critical Views*. New York, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006.

Bloom's text on F. Scott Fitzgerald is as comprehensive as it is meticulous. For teachers who want to really understand Fitzgerald's childhood and personal and private struggles as an adult, Bloom delivers in full. However, due to its density and often dry delivery, this text is not as suited for students as much as for adults eager to dive into the tragic life of Fitzgerald. Nevertheless, it is an interesting read and successful in its intention.

Boundless History. *The Jazz Age*. 2015.

<https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/boundless-u-s-history-textbook/from-the-new-era-to-the-great-depression-1920-1933-24/a-culture-of-change-187/the-jazz-age-1031-1995/> (accessed 2015).

This website offers an accessible narrative on the Jazz Age by focusing on the social and cultural dynamics that were changing during the 1920's. The website in a larger capacity offers short textual vignettes on many other historical moments and movements in the United States. Lastly, the website offers supplementary content to further enrich a student's understanding around the often colorful yet controversial history concerning the United States. It is designed for classroom education in mind.

Lee, A. Robert. *Fitzgerald: The Promises of Life*. London: Vision Press, 1989.

Robert Lee's collection of essays in *The Promises of Life* may be seen as hit or miss in so far as teachers interested in teaching Fitzgerald may have trouble with Lee's specificity of content. Essentially, Lee dissects a number of themes and symbols in Fitzgerald's collection of work in an effort to deconstruct their respective significance with regard to Fitzgerald's own life experiences. Although interesting and informative, this text should primarily be used by teachers interested in drawing broad thematic connections to Fitzgerald's life and his extensive collection of fiction.

Parr, Susan Resneck. *The Moral of the Story: Literature, Values and American Education*. New York City, New York: Teachers College Press, 1982.

In *The Moral of the Story*, Susan Parr approaches several distinguished stories in literature and analyzes them through the framework of morality and their function in academia. Needless to say, I only read the section on *The Great Gatsby* but, nevertheless, was pleased with her commentary on Fitzgerald's masterpiece. Parr illustrates how *The Great Gatsby* can be used in education to highlight the moral dichotomies and shifting values in American culture. In short, *The Moral of the Story* can be used by teachers interested in getting a sense for the thematic and narrative value *The Great Gatsby* has in the modern classroom.

Pick, Daniel. *Psychoanalysis: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)*. OUP Oxford Press, 2015.

Pick's short text on psychoanalysis is part of a larger series titled "Very Short Introductions." It effectively summarizes the basis for, history of and major dimensions of psychoanalysis. This text frames psychoanalysis as a therapeutic approach as opposed to a critical lens theory used in an academic setting. Nevertheless, *Psychoanalysis: A Very Short Introduction* offers teachers detail, context and a deeper understanding of psychodynamics.

Purdue University . *Psychoanalytic Criticism (1930s-Present)*. June 2013. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/722/04/> (accessed 2015).

Purdue Owl is a great resource for teachers interested in using psychoanalytical critical lens theory in the classroom. It offers guiding questions, strategies and approaches to framing texts, characters and other elements of fiction around critical lens theory. Furthermore, this website offers the same amount of detail for a number of other critical lens theories and literary criticisms. It was designed with teachers and students in mind and should not be overlooked if interested in better understanding and practicing critical lens theory.

Sikov, Ed. *Film Studies: An Introduction (Film and Culture Series)*. New York City, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Sikov's introduction to film studies is an accessible text for teachers and students alike. Sikov covers basic vocabulary, concepts and approaches to analyzing a variety of film genres. Moreover, he highlights a number of techniques and strategies directors use by exemplifying a variety of benchmark films revered in film circles.

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