

Example 1: Discussing a character

[1] Identify the character to focus on and the character's role / importance in the story.

[2] State your claim about the character.

[3] Present your evidence (with in-text citations: page numbers) to support your opinion: description, actions, character's words.

Make sure to explain how the evidence supports your claim in [2]

[4] Summarize [2] in a concluding sentence and (optional) link to the next topic.

[5] You may also write a transition sentence to suggest the topic of the next paragraph.

Example 2: Commenting on a long quotation

[1] Identify the scene or event in the story (in the plot & in the text)

[2] Explain briefly what is important about the passage.

[3] Copy the passage in block form. Do include quotation marks, except for dialogue.

[4] Comment on the meaning of the passage. Highlight and discuss important words and phrases by "re-quoting" them.

[5] Summarize [2] in a concluding sentence.

[6] You may also write a transition sentence to suggest the topic of the next paragraph.

[1] In *The Great Gatsby*, Tom Buchanan represents the wealthy upper-class of America, the old money of fashionable East Egg. [2] He is rich and arrogant, and he is always trying to control the people around him. [3] Although Tom is "enormously wealthy," as Nick tell us (Fitzgerald 6), Tom doesn't seem to work much. Indeed, he and Daisy appear to be members of the idle rich: those who do not work but live off of their money. As Nick writes, the couple "drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo or were rich together" (6). Tom spends most of his time giving his opinions, judging and controlling others. Tom has "shining arrogant eyes" and "the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward" (6) and shows "paternal contempt" for the people he meets. Nick says that because of Tom's aggressive nature, many men in college "hated his guts" (7). Moreover, Tom is often described in the novel as physically powerful and violent. He has "enormous power" and a "cruel body" (6-7). Daisy, whose finger Tom has bruised, calls him "a brute of man, a great big, hulking physical specimen of a --" (10). When Nick has dinner at Tom and Daisy's mansion, Nick says that "Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker piece to another square" (9). In this scene, Nick is treated like a mere token in Tom's game. [4] Clearly, Tom is not only rich but aggressive and cruel, seeking to manipulate others. Tom's manipulation and violence are used on other characters in the novel, including George and Myrtle Wilson, the poor working-class characters who live in the "valley of ashes."

[1] In chapter 3, Nick meets the mysterious Gatsby for the first time and gives his impression of him. [2] The passage suggests that Gatsby is not what he first appears to be—a charming and sympathetic gentleman.

[3] He smiled understandingly — much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced — or seemed to face — the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care. (Fitzgerald 36)

[4] As we can see, at first, Nick says that Gatsby is charming and sympathetic. He possesses an "eternally reassuring" smile. He calls it a "rare" kind of smile. It is a smile that seems to favor and support whomever it meets over all others. Gatsby seems to understand instantly people just as they hope to be understood. But suddenly, Nick says, this impression "vanished," and Gatsby appears to be an "elegant rough-neck," a man just over thirty "whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd." Indeed, Nick observes that Gatsby seems to be "picking his words with care." Gatsby's "care" in choosing words suggests to Nick that he is working hard to make an impression of sophistication. [5] Thus, this passage shows that Gatsby is not what he appears to be, which seems to deepen the mystery around him: Who is he and where does he come from? [6] The sudden shift in Nick's view of Gatsby can be seen in other parts of the novel. Nick sometimes criticizes Gatsby and at other times he wants to believe in Gatsby's authentic, honest, and sympathetic character.