

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis: Chapters 1–4 of *Gatsby*

So far we have begun our study of rhetoric, the “visible means of persuasion,” through the lens of the rhetorical triangle and through the various approaches and devices delineated in SPACECAT. We’ve talked about the AP rubric and its emphasis on the thesis, the role of evidence and commentary (including line of reasoning), and the sophistication point.

For Monday’s in-class writing, I will give you a page-long passage from *The Great Gatsby*, from chapters 1–the beginning of 4, and I will ask you to analyze the way that the message is set forth or the way the piece prepares the reader for what happens later in the novel.

In class today, we discussed a number of devices and approaches. You should familiarize yourself with your notes and make sure you have a good sense of the terms listed on the study questions. You are responsible in a way that includes interpretation for chapters 1–3 and the list of names in Chapter 4 and in a general, plot-based way for the novel as a whole.

You should also have a reasonable conversance with the ideas we have talked about that have to do with the literary movement of Modernism, focusing on what we’ve spent more time on: what Imagist poetry does and the devices and goals associated with it. The colorful handout from class today is there for you, but I am not so self-deceived as to think we have talked fully about the material there.

The following is a prompt designed to give you an idea of what I might ask you to analyze; it’s just an example so that you know what kind of question to expect and is **NOT THE PROMPT** you’ll receive in class.

Nick Carraway is the semi-involved first-person narrator of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. In the novel’s opening pages, Nick introduces himself to the reader in a way that suggests he is attempting to establish himself as a credible narrator for the story that follows. Re-read pages 1–2 of the novel and discuss the rhetorical choices Fitzgerald has Nick make to convey this message of his own trustworthiness. In your response, you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes Fitzgerald’s rhetorical choices in writing Nick’s self-introduction.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

more on the next page —————>

In this prompt, the bullet points come from the standard AP Lang Rhetorical Analysis prompt, and you will see them with every RA prompt you encounter.

The key to success with this prompt is **not to recap what Nick says** but to focus on the **way** he tells us about himself: his register (level of formality), any repeated words, the sequence he uses to give information, any metaphors or other figurative language, and so on.

This same prompt might have been given as focused on how his self-introduction prepares the reader for the novel that follows, rather than on Nick's message.