

AP English Language and Composition  
Research Paper Sequence: *The Great Gatsby*

In order to build and cement skills relevant to AP Lang, we are going to embark on a paper-writing sequence. My hope is that you will find this sequence not only worthwhile but also fun, as you learn about your chosen topic, become something of an expert, and finally set forth your own view.

First, you need some skills you can employ in reading scholarly sources. You have all found the SOAPSTone analysis useful and have gravitated toward it as a tool; you understand to a reasonable degree the way the rhetorical triangle works; you have a working knowledge of Aristotle's rhetorical appeals. Good! Now, we will add stasis theory and get some practice working with more sophisticated non-fiction texts.

Step #1: Academic Summary

We will read Jane Tompkins' "'Indians': Textualism, Morality, and the Problem of History" and write a 300-word academic summary of it. Being able to encapsulate complex texts entails being able to see what is most important in the text, what information is supporting the main idea, and so on. Being able to prioritize enables us to work with a writer's arguments without distorting them.

Step #2: Arriving at a research topic

We will contemplate themes and ideas from *The Great Gatsby* in conjunction with stasis theory and an exploration of stakeholders in the topic to come up with sociological or literary research questions we would like to explore.

\*Once you have arrived at a research question, all of the papers in the sequence pertain to that question. You may adjust your question in consultation with me.\*

Step #3: Research

We will do preliminary work (differentiating between popular and scholarly sources, identifying credible sources of both kinds, basics of using the databases) and then travel to the University of Maryland library to learn to use scholarly databases and find other sources to develop your question. You will write a preliminary bibliography in MLA 8 to show your progress.

Step #3: Argument of Inquiry

The hardest paper of the sequence to understand conceptually, the Argument of Inquiry asks you to argue for the validity of your question without answering it. The Tompkins article has a relationship to this approach but is not a one-to-one match. You will use a handful of sources to support your argument of inquiry.

Step #4: Stasis Grid and Annotated Bibliography

Now that you have some sources and a more refined sense of your research topic, you will work out the relationship of key sources to the stases and also write an annotated bibliography that connects your sources to your research question.

#### Step #5: Rhetorical Analysis

After some work on logical fallacies, you will write a rhetorical analysis—an exploration of how the rhetoric of an argument works—of a popular source on your topic.

#### Step #6: Rogerian Letter

The Rogerian Letter, which features active listening, is an exercise in acknowledging the value of the other side. It can give you an opportunity to get inside one of your sources and to see a point of view different from yours.

#### Step #7: Sourced Argument Paper

This is an 8–10 page research paper in which you set forth an argument (causal, proposal or a combination) using sources to support your ideas.