Close Reading of The Great Gatsby:

Select a passage from the reading (approximately ½ page or so – **not just one sentence**) that you find particularly relevant to some theme [think of some we have discussed, or others we have not – see below for some ideas] you see developing in *The Great Gatsby*, and consider some or all of the following questions. **Do “step 1,” and any 2 of the other 4 “steps”** (for a total of three steps) to examine the text in detail. In all cases, examine not just what is stated, but how it is stated. Look at specific words or phrases and see what extra meaning they might convey.

**Step 1:**

**Provide a basic context for that passage.** How / where does it fit into the story? By “provide the context” I mean tell me where it is happening / what is happening in the story. For example, you might mention the quote takes place after the five main characters have gone into town, and after Tom has become aware of some affair of some kind taking place between Daisy and Gatsby, and after Gatsby tells Tom Daisy doesn’t love him [Tom} anymore.

**Step 2:**

**Examine the imagery of the passage.**

* What stands out to you? Why?
* Are there things that echo earlier parts of the story or foreshadow later parts (think of poetic refrain)?
* Are there images that seem to compact larger themes into dense moments (think of microcosm)?
* Are there images that are puzzling? Tease them out, see what you can make of them with the information immediately surrounding. When you have seemingly exhausted the possibilities, then move beyond the bounds of your passage to the story at large.
* Specific examples are needed.

**Step 3:**

**Examine the setting of the passage.**

* Where is the passage taking place?
* How does the physical setting affect the action of the story? Does it amplify the action?
* Does it seem to confound (complicate, or impact in some way) the overt narrative?
* Are there peculiarities to the physical context? Are there things you did not notice the first time through?
* How might paying attention to all of this help us to make sense of the story?

**Step 4:**

**Examine the dialogue (if there is any) in the passage.**

* Who is speaking? To whom are they speaking?
* What is the speaker hoping to accomplish in this moment? What tact(s) does he or she take to accomplish that / those goal(s)?

**Step 5:**

**Carefully consider the tone of the passage.**

* What does this particular passage feel like? Where does that feeling come from?
* Is the tone primarily created by diction? by action? by character?
* What importance does the tone have on the story?
* Does it fit in with what surrounds it?
* Specific examples are needed.

***Possible themes in The Great Gatsby:***

*The American Dream (realized or unrealized) meaninglessness of life / death of God*

*Significance of social status / class reality vs. illusion*

*The relentless marching of time …other?*

 *\*feel free to use other themes you may see that are not specifically listed here.*