

**A Typical Answer to the Second Term Exam in American Literature**

**Students are asked to choose ONE topic and discuss it in a well-thought ESSAY.  
(The essay should not exceed 300 words)**

**Points to be assessed:**

- The structure of the essay (Introduction, through which the problematic is stated, development section, and conclusion) 2pts
- the topic or theme asked for and the way it is being developed. 8pts
- the ideas should be communicated in an organized manner 1.5pts
- there should be a link between the ideas via the use of the coordinating conjunctions 1.5pts
- grammatical mistakes, and well as spelling mistakes. 1.5pts
- the use of punctuations 1.5pts
- illustrations from the novels 4pts

**Question One:**

In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald uses characterization to reveal the internal personalities of the characters. Through their thoughts, feelings, and actions, the characters in the novel are depicted as complex and multifaceted individuals with their own distinct personalities, motivations, and flaws.

***Counting on the above statement, try to depict the ways through which the novel reflects a modernist preoccupation with the relationship between the individual and society, particularly through its portrayal of the tension between the individual desires and societal expectations.***

***A Proposed Outline for the Essay: A Modernist Reading***

- I. Introduction: 2pts
  - 1- Discussing the way Modernism, as a prominent literary and artistic movement that emerged in the early 20th century, sought to challenge traditional norms and conventions, particularly in relation to the individual and society.
  - 2- The way Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* exemplifies this preoccupation, as it portrays the tension that arises from the clash between individual desires and societal expectations.
  - 3- The way Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, characterization serves as a powerful tool through which the internal personalities of the characters are revealed.
- II. The Analytical Part: 6pts
  - I. Characterization and Complex Individuals (2pts)
    1. Thoughts and Inner World (highlight the importance of the use of the stream of consciousness technique and the way it reveals more about the characters' personalities)
      - 1.1. Introspective moments and reflective thoughts
      - 1.2. Revealing true personalities and desiresExample: Nick's contemplation on the allure of the American Dream and the corruption of society as well as his reflections on the true nature of Jay Gatsby's character and motivations
    2. Feelings and Emotions
      - 2.1. Emotional reactions and responses
      - 2.2. Insight into motivations and conflicts

Example: Daisy's conflicting emotions towards her husband Tom and her lover Gatsby, and her internal struggle between societal expectations and personal desires

### 3. Actions and Behaviors

#### 3.1. Choices and decisions

#### 3.2. Reflection of individual personalities and aspirations

Example: Jordan's nonchalant attitude and her morally ambiguous actions, and her calculated behaviors that mask her vulnerability and desire for independence

## II. Individual Desires vs. Societal Expectations 2pts

### 1. Individual Desires and Autonomy

#### 1.1. Personal goals and aspirations

#### 1.2. Pursuit of happiness and fulfillment

Examples: 1. Gatsby's desire for wealth and status as a means to win Daisy's love

2. Nick's aspiration for personal fulfillment and authenticity in a society driven by materialism

### 2. Societal Expectations and Conformity

#### 2.1. Social norms and conventions

#### 2.2. Struggles to conform to societal ideals

Examples: 1. Daisy's obligation to uphold her social position and marry for wealth rather than love.

2. Tom's adherence to societal norms and the preservation of his privileged lifestyle

### 3. Tension and Conflict

#### 3.1. Clash between individual desires and societal expectations

#### 3.2. Consequences on characters' lives

Examples: 1. Gatsby's struggle between his idealized vision of Daisy and the reality of their relationship

2. Nick's conflict between his loyalty to Gatsby and his growing disillusionment with the wealthy elite

## III. The Modernist Lens: Individual and Society 2pts

### 1. Overview of Modernism as a Literary Movement

#### 1.1. Key features and concerns

#### 1.2. Challenge to established notions of the individual and society

1. Rejection of traditional values and conventions

2. Focus on subjective experiences and individual perspectives

### 2. The Great Gatsby as a Modernist Work

#### 2.1. Stylistic and thematic elements aligned with modernism

#### 2.2. Reflection of modernist preoccupations with the individual and society

1. Characters embodying the complexities and contradictions of the individual in a changing society

2. Exploration of the tension between personal desires and societal expectations

## **Illustrations 4pts**

### III. Conclusion 2pts

### **Question two:**

O'Connor's *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, is often seen as an ironic commentary on the characters' search for a "good man" in a world that is marked by violence, moral ambiguity, and cultural dislocation. The story's complex narrative structure, which includes multiple narrators and shifts in point of view, adds to its postmodern sensibility and highlights its self-

awareness as a text. This contributes to highlight the postmodern sense of fragmentation and cultural dislocation, particularly in the way the story portrays the characters' rootlessness and lack of a stable sense of identity mainly *the Grandmother* and *the Misfit*.

*In this regard, explain how the story challenges traditional narrative structures and plays with literary conventions, particularly in its use of multiple narrators and its blurring of the line between reality and fiction as well as using humor and irony to subvert traditional notions of morality and ethics.*

**A proposed Outline:    *A Postmodern Reading***

I. Introduction    2pts

- Briefly introduce Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
- Mention its ironic commentary on the characters' search for a "good man" in a violent, morally ambiguous, and culturally disconnected world
- State that the story's complex narrative structure and postmodern sensibility contribute to its exploration of fragmentation and cultural dislocation

II. Challenging Traditional Narrative Structures    2pts

- Discuss the use of multiple narrators in the story
  - Example: The Grandmother serves as a narrator, providing her perspective and shaping the reader's understanding of events
  - Example: The Misfit's narrative voice offers a contrasting viewpoint and challenges the traditional notions of morality and ethics
- Highlight the shifts in point of view
  - Example: The story shifts between the Grandmother's limited perspective and the broader omniscient perspective, creating a sense of uncertainty and disorientation
  - Example: The Misfit's perspective challenges the readers' moral judgments and blurs the line between reality and fiction

III. Blurring the Line Between Reality and Fiction    2pts

- Discuss how the story plays with the boundary between reality and fiction
  - Example: The Grandmother constructs a fictional world in her mind, contrasting with the harsh reality she encounters
  - Example: The Misfit's existence as a character blurs the line between the fictional world and the real world
- Explore the role of humor and irony in subverting traditional notions of morality and ethics
  - Example: The Grandmother's comic and ironic traits highlight her moral shortcomings and hypocrisy
  - Example: The Misfit's dark humor challenges conventional ideas of good and evil, suggesting moral ambiguity

IV. Portrayal of Fragmentation and Cultural Dislocation    2 pts

- Discuss how the story portrays the characters' rootlessness and lack of stable identity

- Example: The Grandmother's nostalgic yearning for the past and her attempts to hold onto traditional values highlight her disconnection from the changing world
- Example: The Misfit's sense of displacement and his rejection of societal norms reflect a broader cultural dislocation
- Analyze how the narrative structure and postmodern elements contribute to the portrayal of fragmentation
  - Example: The fragmented narrative reflects the characters' fragmented sense of self and the fragmented society they inhabit
  - Example: The story's self-awareness as a text emphasizes the postmodern sense of uncertainty and dislocation

### ***Illustrations 4pts***

V. Conclusion 2pts

### **Question Three :**

Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* can be interpreted as a critique of traditional gender roles and a reflection of the changing role of women in society during the 1920s. Lady Brett Ashley, the female lead in the novel, is a symbol of the "new woman" of the time period - independent, sexually liberated, and unafraid to challenge traditional gender roles. Ashley tends to question all societal convictions; "*Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bullfighters*", yet she somehow questions her own self and the way she is perceived by others; "*Do you think I am an awful fool?*"

***In reflecting upon the contradiction presented within the statement, explain how the novel uses symbolism and imagery to explore larger cultural and social themes, such as the breakdown of gender roles and traditional power structures, the role of religion in modern life, and the influence of American culture on European society.***

### **A Proposed Outline:     *A Feminist Reading***

I. Introduction: 2pts

1. Brief overview of "The Sun Also Rises" by Ernest Hemingway
2. The way the novel serves as a critique of traditional gender roles and reflects the changing role of women in 1920s society.

II. The Analytical Part: 6pts

1- Lady Brett Ashley as the "new woman" 2pts

- 1.1. Description of Lady Brett Ashley as an independent and sexually liberated character
- 1.2. Quoting Brett's questioning of societal convictions and self-perception

*Example: One instance in which Lady Brett Ashley questions societal convictions and her own self-perception is when she asks, "Do you think I am an awful fool?" This statement reflects Brett's inner conflict and her struggle with societal expectations and judgments.*

*Brett's question demonstrates her self-awareness and uncertainty about how others perceive her. Despite embodying the "new woman" of the 1920s—confident, independent, and sexually liberated—she still grapples with doubts and insecurities. She questions whether her actions*

*and choices align with societal norms and whether she will be judged negatively for deviating from traditional gender roles.*

2. Symbolism and imagery in exploring cultural and social themes 2pts

2.1. The bullfighting as a metaphor for gender roles and power structures

2.2. The bullfighter as the epitome of masculinity and traditional gender expectations

2.3. Quoting Brett's remark about bullfighters and its implications

*Example: Ashley says, "Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bullfighters." This statement carries several implications regarding gender roles and societal expectations; it is a critique of traditional gender roles. It underscores the desire for women to break free from societal expectations and live their lives authentically, challenging the notion that their existence should be limited or confined.*

3. The motif of religion and its relevance to modern life 1.5pts

3.1. The characters' disillusionment with traditional religious beliefs

3.2. Quoting scenes that depict the characters' skepticism towards religion

*Example: The Lost Generation complete loss of faith, which highlights the disillusionment and skepticism towards traditional institutions, including religion, as people grappled with the aftermath of World War I and sought new meanings and truths in a rapidly changing world.*

4. The influence of American culture on European society 1.5pts

4.1. American characters as agents of cultural change and liberation

4.2. Quoting instances showcasing the clash between American and European values

*Example: In the novel, Cohn, an American writer, is portrayed as more idealistic and romantic in his approach to relationships. He believes in the concept of true love and is deeply infatuated with Brett Ashley. In contrast, Jake, who has lived in Europe for a while, has adopted a more cynical and non-committal attitude towards relationships due to his impotence.*

### **Illustrations 4pts**

IV. Conclusion 2pts