

Following the Green Light

Refine a literary question with evidence from different sources.

ELA.11.C.4.1 “Conduct literary research to answer a question, refining the scope of the question to align with interpretations of texts and synthesizing information from primary and secondary sources.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details from primary sources, circle each secondary-source interpretation, and number the moments when Lena narrows or synthesizes her inquiry to trace how literary research builds an answer.

From Broad Question to Synthesis

- ① While researching F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, Lena first asked, “What does the novel say about wealth?” The question could lead almost anywhere, from Tom Buchanan’s inheritance to Gatsby’s parties. She reread the first chapter, where Gatsby reaches toward a distant green light, and the final chapter, where Nick connects that light with Gatsby’s hopes. Those scenes led her to a narrower question: “How does Fitzgerald use the green light to connect Gatsby’s personal desire with the promises of wealth in the 1920s?” Her new question named one symbol, one character, and one historical idea that she could investigate.
- ② Her primary literary source was the 1925 novel itself. Lena recorded precise details: in Chapter 1, Nick sees a “single green light, minute and far away,” and Gatsby stretches his arms toward it. In Chapter 9, Nick recalls the light while describing Gatsby’s belief in a future that keeps receding. She also located a 1920s Long Island real-estate advertisement, a primary historical source, that promoted waterfront property as a sign of status. The advertisement could show language buyers encountered, but it could not prove what Fitzgerald intended. The novel remained her evidence for the author’s artistic choices.
- ③ For interpretation, Lena used a peer-reviewed article in a literary journal. The scholar argues that the green light turns desire into something that seems purchasable, even though Gatsby cannot possess the past he wants. Lena did not treat the article as a replacement for the novel. Instead, she compared its claim with the two scenes and the advertisement’s language about status. Her working answer was that the green light represents Gatsby’s hope, but Fitzgerald makes that hope resemble a consumer promise, attractive precisely because it stays beyond reach. This synthesis joined evidence and interpretation while recognizing each source’s limits.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What was Lena’s broad starting question, and what was her refined research question?

2 Which two moments in the novel led Lena to narrow her question, and what shared focus did they reveal?

3 Why could the real-estate advertisement support Lena’s research but not prove Fitzgerald’s intention?

4 How did Lena synthesize the novel, the advertisement, and the scholarly article in her working answer?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a literary work you have read. In 80 to 100 words, write a research plan that includes a broad starting question, a refined question, one primary-text detail to examine, one secondary source you would seek, and an explanation of how you would combine the sources.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details from primary sources, circle each secondary-source interpretation, and number the moments when Lena narrows or synthesizes her inquiry to trace how literary research builds an answer. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was Lena's broad starting question, and what was her refined research question?	Her starting question was "What does the novel say about wealth?" Her refined question asked how Fitzgerald uses the green light to connect Gatsby's personal desire with 1920s promises of wealth.
2	Which two moments in the novel led Lena to narrow her question, and what shared focus did they reveal?	She used Gatsby reaching toward the green light in Chapter 1 and Nick's connection of the light to Gatsby's hopes in Chapter 9. Both moments focus on the green light and Gatsby's desire or hope.
3	Why could the real-estate advertisement support Lena's research but not prove Fitzgerald's intention?	The advertisement showed status-focused language that buyers may have encountered in the 1920s, but it was not evidence of what Fitzgerald intended when he wrote the novel.
4	How did Lena synthesize the novel, the advertisement, and the scholarly article in her working answer?	She used scenes from the novel to interpret the green light as Gatsby's hope, connected the advertisement's status language to consumer promises, and used the article's interpretation to argue that the promise remains beyond Gatsby's reach.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My broad question is, "How does Macbeth portray power?" I would refine it to ask, "How does Shakespeare use Lady Macbeth's language in Act 1, Scene 5 to question the gendered expectations attached to political power?" My primary evidence would be her request to be "unsex me here." I would seek a peer-reviewed article about gender and kingship in Jacobean drama. I would compare the article's historical framework with her words and actions to argue how the scene makes ambition seem both powerful and socially dangerous.

Accept equivalent descriptions of Lena's question refinement, source roles, and synthesis if they are supported by the passage. For Part 3, accept plans that narrow the question, identify relevant primary and secondary sources, and explain how the sources would work together.