

Judgment Under Pressure

Analyze how a precise thesis turns evidence into a defensible judgment.

11.W.1.B.i “Write analyses that: Develop a thesis that demonstrates knowledgeable judgments.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the passage’s central judgment. Then circle three phrases that limit, refine, or qualify that judgment, showing that the writer is making a careful claim rather than an oversimplified one.

Wealth and Responsibility in The Great Gatsby

- ① In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald does not simply condemn wealth; he shows that wealth becomes destructive when people use it to avoid responsibility. Nick Carraway’s final judgment of Tom and Daisy as “careless people” supports this claim, but the novel gives that judgment weight through their actions. Daisy retreats into Tom’s protection after Myrtle Wilson’s death, and Tom directs George Wilson toward Gatsby without admitting his own role in the conflict. Their money cushions them from consequences that fall instead on Gatsby, Myrtle, and George. Fitzgerald therefore criticizes not possession itself, but the social power that lets the Buchanans abandon the damage they cause.
- ② This distinction matters because Gatsby is wealthy too, yet Fitzgerald does not portray him as equally culpable. Gatsby’s parties display extravagance, and his plan to win Daisy back relies on an idealized past. Still, he accepts danger when he waits outside Daisy’s house after the accident, believing he can protect her. That choice does not make Gatsby admirable in every respect, but it separates his flawed devotion from the Buchanans’ deliberate evasion. By contrasting Gatsby’s vulnerability with Tom and Daisy’s security, the novel suggests that privilege is most corrosive when it combines influence with indifference.
- ③ Fitzgerald’s criticism also reaches the culture around the Buchanans, not only two individual characters. Nick attends Gatsby’s crowded parties, where guests consume his hospitality while spreading rumors about their host, then disappear after his death. Almost no one comes to Gatsby’s funeral, a fact that exposes the shallowness of relationships built on spectacle and status. Even so, the novel does not claim that every guest is cruel in the same way as Tom and Daisy. Its sharper judgment is that a society that prizes display over accountability makes such carelessness ordinary. The ending’s image of people striving toward an unreachable past enlarges that critique beyond one household.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is the passage's central thesis? Copy it or restate it accurately.

2 How does the writer use Gatsby to make the thesis more precise?

3 Which detail supports the claim that Tom and Daisy use their privilege to escape consequences? Explain how it supports that judgment.

4 How does the final paragraph expand the passage's judgment beyond Tom and Daisy?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a novel, play, or short story you have read. Write 3 or 4 sentences that make a knowledgeable judgment about a character, idea, or social criticism in the text, using two precise details and at least one qualifying word or phrase such as although, yet, or even so.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the passage's central judgment. Then circle three phrases that limit, refine, or qualify that judgment, showing that the writer is making a careful claim rather than an oversimplified one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the passage's central thesis? Copy it or restate it accurately.	Fitzgerald shows that wealth becomes destructive when people use it to avoid responsibility.
2	How does the writer use Gatsby to make the thesis more precise?	The writer explains that Gatsby is wealthy but not equally culpable because he accepts danger and shows flawed devotion, unlike the Buchanans, who evade responsibility.
3	Which detail supports the claim that Tom and Daisy use their privilege to escape consequences? Explain how it supports that judgment.	Tom directs George Wilson toward Gatsby without admitting his own role in the conflict, and Daisy retreats into Tom's protection. These actions show that they let others suffer the consequences of their choices.
4	How does the final paragraph expand the passage's judgment beyond Tom and Daisy?	It argues that the culture around them values spectacle and status over accountability, making carelessness ordinary rather than limiting it to two characters.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Deputy Governor Danforth is more dangerous than merely stubborn because he values the court's authority above the truth it should seek. He dismisses Mary Warren's testimony that the girls pretended and later presses John Proctor to confess to witchcraft. Although Danforth believes he is protecting public order, his refusal to reconsider the trials makes his power destructive.

Accept thesis statements that make a clear, defensible judgment supported by specific textual details. Strong responses should avoid absolute claims and should acknowledge a complication, contrast, or limitation in the judgment.