

ANALYTICAL ESSAY OUTLINE TEMPLATE

TITLE

[Your Topic]: [Your Analytical Angle]

Example: "The Great Gatsby: Symbolism and the Illusion of the American Dream"

I. INTRODUCTION

Hook (Choose One Approach)

- ☐ Provocative question: _____
- ☐ Striking statistic or fact: _____
- ☐ Relevant quote: _____
- ☐ Vivid description: _____

Example: "Can wealth truly buy happiness, or does it merely create an illusion of fulfillment? F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby explores this question through rich symbolism that reveals the hollow nature of the American Dream."

Background Information

Provide context about: [text/topic/issue being analyzed]

Key details to include: - Title and author (if applicable): _____
- Publication date/time period: _____ - Relevant historical/cultural context: _____
Brief summary (2-3 sentences): _____

Example: "Published in 1925 during the Jazz Age, The Great Gatsby depicts the extravagant lifestyle of wealthy New Yorkers. The novel follows narrator Nick Carraway as he observes the mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby's obsessive pursuit of his former love, Daisy Buchanan."

Thesis Statement

[Subject] + [Analytical Claim] + [Supporting Points Preview]

Template: In [text/work], [author] uses [analytical focus: literary devices/techniques/patterns] to [demonstrate/reveal/critique/argue] that [your main argument about meaning/significance].

Example: "Through the symbolism of the green light, the valley of ashes, and Gatsby's extravagant parties, Fitzgerald reveals that the American Dream is ultimately an unattainable illusion that leads to destruction rather than fulfillment."

II. BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Topic Sentence

Main Point #1: [First supporting argument that proves your thesis]

Example: "The green light at the end of Daisy's dock symbolizes Gatsby's impossible dream and the illusory nature of his aspirations."

Evidence + Analysis (Repeat 2-3 times)

Evidence #1: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: " _____ " - Citation: (Author
Page#) or appropriate format

Example: Gatsby is described as reaching toward the green light with trembling arms, "stretching out his arms toward the dark water" (Fitzgerald 20).

Analysis: - What does this evidence show? _____
- How does it support your topic sentence? _____
- What deeper meaning does it reveal? _____

Example: "This physical reaching toward an unreachable light represents Gatsby's desperate grasp for a past that cannot be reclaimed. The green light becomes a symbol of hope that remains perpetually distant, much like the American Dream itself."

Evidence #2: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: " _____ " - Citation: _____

Example: Later, Nick observes that the green light's "colossal significance" has "vanished forever" when Gatsby finally reunites with Daisy (93).

Analysis: _____

Example: "Once Gatsby achieves his goal, the dream loses its power, suggesting that the American Dream's value lies only in the pursuit, not the attainment. The disillusionment that follows reveals the emptiness beneath the glittering surface."

Transition Sentence

Connect to next paragraph: While [this point] demonstrates [idea], [next point] further reveals [related idea].

Example: "While the green light symbolizes individual impossible dreams, the valley of ashes represents the broader societal cost of pursuing wealth at any expense."

III. BODY PARAGRAPH 2

Topic Sentence

Main Point #2: _____

Example: "The valley of ashes serves as a powerful symbol of moral and social decay resulting from the reckless pursuit of wealth."

Evidence + Analysis (Repeat 2-3 times)

Evidence #1: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: " _____ " - Citation: _____

Example: Fitzgerald describes the valley as "a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat" and "ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades" (23).

Analysis: _____

Example: "This grotesque imagery depicts the wasteland created by industrial capitalism, where human beings are reduced to grey shadows toiling in the refuse of the wealthy. The valley represents the hidden cost of the American Dream—those left behind in the pursuit of prosperity."

Evidence #2: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: " _____ " - Citation: _____

Analysis: _____

Transition Sentence

Example: "The decay symbolized by the valley of ashes also manifests in the empty spectacle of Gatsby's parties."

IV. BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Topic Sentence

Main Point #3: _____

Example: "Gatsby's lavish parties symbolize the superficiality and moral emptiness disguised beneath the glamorous surface of wealth."

Evidence + Analysis (Repeat 2-3 times)

Evidence #1: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: “ _____ ” - Citation: _____

Example: Despite hundreds of guests attending, Nick notes that “I never met so many celebrities... [yet] nobody knew who Gatsby was” (61).

Analysis: _____

Example: “The parties are filled with people who consume Gatsby’s hospitality yet have no genuine connection to their host. This paradox reveals that wealth creates crowds but not community, spectacle but not substance—an empty version of the American Dream.”

Evidence #2: - Context: _____ -
Quote/Example: “ _____ ” - Citation: _____

Analysis: _____

Transition to Conclusion

Example: “These interconnected symbols collectively reveal Fitzgerald’s critical perspective on the American Dream’s promise versus its reality.”

V. CONCLUSION

Restate Thesis (Use Different Words)

Summarize your main argument: _____

Example: “Fitzgerald’s symbolic framework—the unreachable green light, the desolate valley of ashes, and the hollow parties—exposes the American Dream as an illusion that promises fulfillment but delivers only emptiness and destruction.”

Synthesize Main Points

Briefly recap how your evidence proved your thesis:

- Point 1 showed: _____
- Point 2 revealed: _____
- Point 3 demonstrated: _____

Example: “The green light represents impossible individual aspirations, the valley of ashes illustrates the societal cost of greed, and the parties embody the

superficiality of wealth. Together, these symbols form a cohesive critique of American materialism.”

Broader Significance

Answer: “So what?” Why does this analysis matter?

Consider: - ☐ Contemporary relevance: _____
- ☐ Universal themes: _____ - ☐ Implications
for understanding the text/issue: _____ - ☐
Call to reflection: _____

Example: “Nearly a century after publication, Fitzgerald’s critique remains relevant as contemporary society continues to equate success with material wealth. The Great Gatsby warns us that the relentless pursuit of an idealized future can blind us to the value of the present, ultimately leaving us as empty as Gatsby’s mansion after the parties end.”

Final Thought (Strong Closing)

Leave reader with memorable insight: _____

Example: “In the end, we are all reaching for our own green lights—but Fitzgerald reminds us to question whether what we’re reaching for is real, or merely another beautiful illusion.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Analytical Techniques You’re Using:

- ☐ Symbolism analysis
- ☐ Thematic analysis
- ☐ Character analysis
- ☐ Literary device analysis (metaphor, imagery, etc.)
- ☐ Rhetorical analysis
- ☐ Compare/contrast
- ☐ Cause/effect analysis
- ☐ Historical/cultural context analysis

Key Reminders:

Every paragraph needs: Topic sentence → Evidence → Analysis → Transition
Use present tense when discussing literature (“Fitzgerald reveals” not “revealed”)
Integrate quotes smoothly into your sentences
Analyze don’t just summarize—explain HOW and WHY
Connect everything back to your thesis

Use analytical verbs: suggests, demonstrates, reveals, illustrates, symbolizes, represents

Word Count Goals:

- Introduction: 150-200 words
- Each Body Paragraph: 200-300 words
- Conclusion: 150-200 words
- **Total Essay: 1,000-1,500 words**