SAMPLE OUTLINE

The Greatness of a Tragic Mentor

Purpose: to prove the greatness of Gatsby and reveal the lessons of his tragic flaw

Thesis: In *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald, Nick’s estimation of Gatsby provides an example for the reader to follow towards a full understanding of Gatsby’s tragic greatness.

Plan: 1. introduction; importance of a mentor, thesis
2. Nick’s expressed admiration for Gatsby
3. a comparison of Gatsby to other characters in the novel
4. lessons learned from Gatsby’s tragic flaw
5. conclusion; significance of aspiration as a tragic ideal

I. Introduction

A. Admiration for another

B. Gatsby as mentor to Nick and others

C. Thesis

II. Nick’s admiration for Gatsby

A. Gatsby’s parties

1. Sobriety and responsibility for his guests
   a. “he grew more correct” (55)
   b. “Klipspringer . . . the boarder” (64)

2. Generosity and elegance
   [evidence]

3. Revealed purpose of pursuing his dream
   [evidence, etc.]

B. Gatsby’s friendship

1. Nick as a go-between with Daisy

2. Gatsby’s offer to assist Nick in finding a job

3. Gatsby’s desire to be understood by Nick

4. Nick’s farewell compliment to Gatsby
C. Gatsby’s honesty

III. Comparison of Gatsby to other characters

   A. Myrtle Wilson’s striving for social rank and pleasure, a parody of Gatsby
      1. Disregard for husband and marriage vows
      2. Confusion of material wealth with romance
      3. Failure to accept her limitations and resulting death

   B. Daisy’s self-deception and fragile identity
      1. Her claim to sophistication in unhappy marriage
      2. Her failure to be loyal to herself and others
      3. Her option to be protected and controlled by a more powerful person

   C. Tom’s fear of losing status and power
      1. Tom’s domination of Daisy, Myrtle, George, and others
      2. Tom’s double standard of morality and racism
      3. Tom’s contempt for Gatsby and role in Gatsby’s death

IV. Gatsby’s instructive *hamartia* (tragic flaw)

   A. His ability to conceive and pursue an idealized role and identity
      1. His transformation from James Gatz
      2. His realization of the American Dream
      3. Allusion to Jacob’s ladder and implied comparison of Gatsby to Jacob

   B. Gatsby’s *hamartia*
      1. His need to find an incarnation for his dream
      2. His selection of an innocent young woman, a virgin
      3. His failure to acknowledge the weakness of Daisy’s character
4. His failure to accept the irretrievable past

5. His failure to accept the contrast between ideal and real

V. Conclusion

A. Gatsby’s embodiment of the American dream of self-creation and success

B. Delusion created by material wealth and elegance, social rank, propriety

C. Necessity of reaching an accommodation between the real and the ideal

[This outline is based on the work of John Gunn, MBA 1996. Note the noun phrases, sometimes with verbal modifiers, and avoidance of complete sentences. Most evidence has been omitted to discourage direct copying of this material, but the format is indicated for placing specific evidence, including quotations, at the fourth level, as]