Southwest Licking School District
Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Berry, Lively, McGinnis
School: Watkins Memorial High School
Book Title: *The Great Gatsby*
Genre: Fiction
Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald
Pages: 180
Publisher: Scribner
Copyright: c.1925

**Book Summary and summary citation:** (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Set after the first World War and amid the pomp and glory of the “Roaring ‘20s,” *The Great Gatsby* is a story about the mysterious but newly wealthy Jay Gatsby – his ambitions, motivations, and deceptions. Told through the voice of Nick Carraway, Gatsby’s provincial neighbor, readers are exposed to the superficial world of East Egg wealth, West Egg ambition, and Valley of Ashes’ despair. Readers meet Tom Buchanan, an arrogant bigot, and Daisy, his complicated wife. Adultery, obsession, murder, greed, and carelessness help develop the story’s poignant plot as Gatsby strives for the unattainable while readers ultimately suspect the American dream is, indeed, dead.

**Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the curriculum map(s):** (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

Students will analyze Fitzgerald’s craft in use of imagery and symbolism, examine the influence of setting/time period of the 1920s upon the actions of the characters, distinguish the characteristics of social classes and explain the impact of class upon the characters. Additionally, students will analyze the effects of excessive wealth upon the morality of society, analyze cause and effect of situations, draw conclusions and make generalizations, identify character traits, and analyze Fitzgerald’s use of rhetorical strategies and language.
Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1
By Gary F. Taylor (Amazon.com)
Like most great novels, The Great Gatsby is about a great many things, but it is perhaps most particularly about America's drift into a terrible sort of materialism in which human beings become less valued for their humanity than for what--and in a very real sense--who they own. Almost everything the characters of the novel do, say, or plan is done "for show." Gatsby's parties and his car, Jordan's golf competitions, Tom's mistress, Daisy's child, Nick's job are masks that conceal the screaming emptiness of a world in which what you have has become more important than who you are. "What shall we do with ourselves this afternoon?" Daisy asks at one point in the novel. "And the day after that, and the next thirty years?" Who would you be if you had only yourself? Would you still be what your possessions seemed to indicate--or would you be a different person, perhaps better or perhaps worse?

Although The Great Gatsby has always been admired for the cool, languid beauty of Fitzgerald's language, many felt the core statements of the novel were rendered largely irrelevant by the Great Depression and World War II. But like Gatsby's memories, which he himself cannot lay to rest, the book has a way of resurfacing in our minds in a remarkably disquieting sort of way, again and again with each generation. The great literary diamond of the Deco age still glitters, and it does so all the more in the face of the "on demand" confused consumerism that has arisen in the internet age. We know it should not be like this, and we wish it were not so, but we expect someone else to deal with it--or, as Fitzgerald writes with such profound clarity near the end of the novel, we, in this most American of American novels, are a people prone to smashing up things and creatures and then retreating back into our money and vast carelessness. We prefer to let other people clean up the mess we have made.
A brilliant work.

Review #2
By Thomas Flanagan (The New York Review of Books)
He knew very well that the book in hand was far finer than anything he had attempted before. In April, on the eve of his departure for Europe, he told Perkins that “I cannot let it go out unless it has the very best I am capable of in it or even as I feel sometimes, something better than I am capable of.” He would not be alone in that feelings. Perkins himself would say the novel possessed the Fitzgerald glamour, but also “a kind of mystic atmosphere at times.” He may have been remembering Fitzgerald’s words in that April letter: “So in my new novel I’m thrown directly on purely creative work – not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere yet radiant world.”
What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?
Title:  *The Sun Also Rises*  
Author:  Ernest Hemingway  
Title:  *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Author:  John Steinbeck  
Title:  *The Awakening*  
Author:  Kate Chopin  
Title:  *The Catcher in the Rye*  
Author:  J. D. Salinger  
Title:  *The Bell Jar*  
Author:  Sylvia Plath

Document any potentially controversial content:
Mature subject matter, decadence of the 1920s, violence

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply):  
Regular education

GRADE LEVEL(S):  6 7 8 9 10 11 12

INTEREST LEVEL(S):  6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Date Submitted to Website: 8/10/2011

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:
Characters in Young Adult Literature, Gale research, 1997
Gale Literature Resource Center, overview of The Great Gatsby, 1998
School Library Journal
Library Journal
Publisher’s Weekly
English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)