I. Choose a section of the reading, no longer than one paragraph, that made a deep impression on you. You may choose a section you loved or hated. If you can't decide which section to choose, try thinking about which part of the book you might describe to a friend or which part you might remember six months from now.

II. Find the passage in the book. Reread it at least four times or until you feel you understand the paragraph.

III. Write a four part paper

A. First section.

Explain where your quote is found in the book.

Remember that your readers (the class and the teacher) have read the book, so you do not need to spend time explaining the whole plot or identifying each character.

Your first paragraph might be only a short paragraph of two or three sentences. Perhaps you will write only a few sentences saying something like, "The passage which I have chosen is found near the end of the book when ... At this point in the story, the main character is ... He is talking to ... about ..."

B. Second section.

Copy the passage.

C. Third section.

Explain your reaction to the quote.

There are no right or wrong answers in this section. Of course there are an infinite number of responses to any piece of writing. Perhaps you identified with the character in the situation. Maybe you had a strong emotional response to your passage. Or maybe this quote reminded you of some other book you have read. You might have some criticism of either the style or content of the quote. Just write honestly about your response to the literature.

Most students find this section easy and fun to write. Occasionally students have trouble because they write too little. They assume everyone else had the same reaction to the passage as they did, so there
is not reason to state the obvious. Do not skim over your reaction. Explain thoroughly.

D. Fourth section.

Relate your quote to the rest of the book.

Explain how your understanding of your quote helps you understand the rest of the reading. It is usually true that if you read one-section very, very carefully, the other parts of the book become more understandable.

You must find some connection between the passage you have chosen and the entire book. You must relate the part (microcosm) to the whole (macrocosm). In a well written piece of literature, all the parts fit together.

Remember that you must say something about the literature that would not be evident to every reader. Because you have concentrated on reading and understanding one section, you should be able to write an opinion that we, who have not focused on the one section, will find interesting and enlightening.

Required length: maximum of two pages, excluding the quote.
Reassuring Domesticity

My favorite passage from *The Great Gatsby* is an undistinguished and infamous three sentences. As far as I know, no critic has analyzed it and no lecturer has expounded upon it. But I am moved by the simplicity and, to me, the reality of the scene.

The sentence describes a scene with Daisy and Tom on the night of the car accident. Gatsby has driven Daisy back to her house and he is waiting for her to signal that she needs to be rescued from Tom's brutality. We can assume that Gatsby hopes Daisy will inform Tom that she intends to break up their marriage and run away with Gatsby. When Nick arrives on the lawn, Gatsby asks him to go up to the house and see if there is any commotion.

Nick finds the house quiet and the windows closed. But he peeks beneath a blind and sees not a brutal husband and a furious wife, but a scene of quiet domesticity.

Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, with a plate of cold fried chicken between them and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement. (p. 183)

Perhaps this paragraph is supposed to jolt the reader -- Daisy has just killed someone and now she is callously eating a midnight snack. Nick comments that though they aren't happy, they aren't unhappy either. I think Nick is right, but as usually happens for all of us, he is only partially right and he has read into the situation what he wants to see. Nick makes a sweeping judgment against Tom and Daisy when he says, "anybody would have said that they were conspiring together."

But the reader is given no evidence that they are conspiring -- they just seem to be talking -- so perhaps Nick is projecting his judgment into the scene because he knows what has happened at Wilson's garage.
Because Nick admires Gatsby's dream and hates Tom's crudeness, Nick refuses to see the obvious -- Daisy has chosen to stay married to Tom. She refuses to repudiate her love for Tom, as Gatsby orders her to do, because despite the difficult times, there have been good times together. Despite wild flings and love affairs and murder and chaos, Tom and Daisy are still married. She has had an affair with Gatsby for a month, but she has been married to Tom for four years.

After all the hubub, they still sit together at the kitchen table (not on the "rose colored porch" with the candles and butler) and eat left over fried chicken (a homey, picnic food) and drink two bottles of ale (a nice touch - they don't drink beer, for even at their coziest they remain a bit classy). Tom is not beating her up or even bruising her finger, but his hand has fallen unconsiously over hers, covering it. The gesture is intimate, a gesture of two people who know each other so well that their bodies touch unselfconsciously. It's a loving gesture, more innocent than holding hands in private. And as they sit together in the kitchen late at night, they have a talk. In this tiny scene, I can almost tell why Daisy loves Tom.

Perhaps Nick wants to over-dramatize the scene by calling them co-conspirators because he can not imagine the reassuring domesticity of marriage. Remember that he is a bachelor, and if his relationship with Jordan is any indication, his dealings with women are pretty shallow. Nick can not see that they are an old married couple whose habits have merged over the years, who go out to the kitchen for a talk and some leftovers. It seems to me that Fitzgerald has captured what marriage is all about -- not the romantic ideals of Gatsby or the sordid passion or Myrtle, but the quiet midnight snack, the reassuring touch, and a talk, even when everything has gone all wrong.