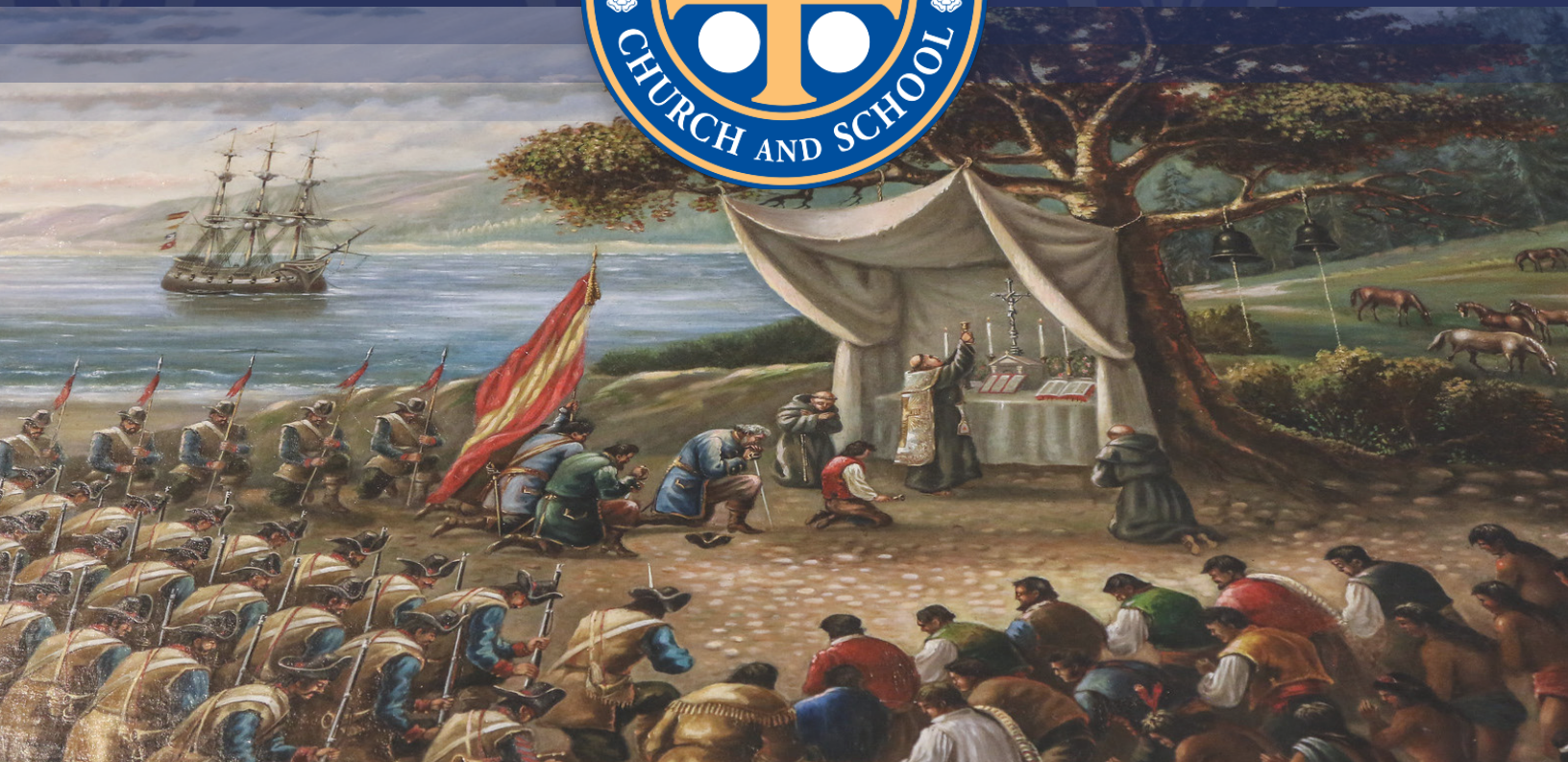




English III Curriculum

Grade 11



Course Overview

Course Description

American Literature explores the emergence, crisis, and reimagining of American identity through its literary canon. Students will examine how a transplanted European tradition took root in the New World, shaping and being shaped by the land, the Puritan imagination, frontier individualism, and the fractured dreams of modernity. Through close reading, shared inquiry, and Socratic discussion, they will trace the themes of order and disorder, exile and belonging, love and loss across the American landscape. The course highlights tragedy, satire, and spiritual longing in texts that span colonial sermons to modern novels. Emphasis is placed on rhetorical analysis, philosophical reflection, and imitation of style, forming students in moral imagination, interpretive charity, and eloquence.

Why We Teach It...

We teach American Literature because to understand our nation, one must trace the soul it inherited—and the ways it has been distorted or forgotten. The story of America is not merely one of progress and politics, but of a people wrestling with exile, redemption, and identity in a land both promised and perilous. By studying the voices that gave shape to the American imagination—from Puritan homilies to modern tragedies—students come to see what is at stake when a culture seeks truth, and what is lost when it rejects it. This course forms students to discern what is noble, to grieve what is broken, and to ask with wisdom and courage what kind of nation we are called to become.

Course Objectives









By the end of this course, students will be able to:



Explain how American literature reflects the development, conflict, and transformation of the national conscience from its Puritan roots to its modern expressions.



Course Objectives | Continued...

-  Explain how American literature reflects the rise, conflict, and transformation of the national conscience, from Puritan roots to modern disillusionment.
-  Analyze the causes and effects of major cultural shifts such as Puritanism, Romanticism, Realism, and Modernism.
-  Compare different visions of love, freedom, and identity through the lens of natural law, classical philosophy, and Catholic teaching.
-  Demonstrate skill in classical rhetoric through Socratic dialogue, formal essays, literary imitation, and public speaking.
-  Discern patterns of cultural strength and decline, especially in how love is ordered or disordered in American life.
-  Evaluate American literature as both a reflection of the nation's soul and a critique of its moral failures.
-  Articulate the meaning of key works, characters, and themes in the larger story of man's search for truth and redemption.
-  Cultivate a love for truth, beauty, and goodness through deep engagement with America's literary tradition.

Source Material |

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

King Lear by Shakespeare

Purgatorio by Dante

Evangeline by Longfellow







Selected Short Stories by Flannery O'Connor

My Antonia by Willa Cather

The Great Gatsby by Fitzgerald



Central Themes

-  American literature is the expression of a transplanted European soul seeking to make sense of the New World.
-  American identity is born in the tension between inherited tradition and frontier individualism.
-  The Puritan imagination shapes the moral and literary foundations of early America.
-  The disintegration of faith and order in American life is revealed through its tragedies and satires.
-  The longing for grace and meaning persists beneath the surface of American realism and modernism.
-  The repeated renewal of American literature comes through its return to the great themes of sin, redemption, and belonging.

Key Concepts

<i>Puritan Imagination</i>	<i>The Great Awakening</i>	<i>The Voice of the Outsider</i>
<i>American Exceptionalism</i>	<i>Democratic Individualism</i>	<i>Violence and Grace</i>
<i>Exile and Belonging</i>	<i>The Noble Savage</i>	<i>Rootlessness and Homecoming</i>
<i>Ordo Amoris (Order of Love)</i>	<i>Innocence and Experience</i>	<i>Southern Gothic and Catholic Themes</i>
<i>Moral Hypocrisy and Hidden Sin</i>	<i>Christian Tragedy</i>	<i>Sin, Guilt, and Redemption</i>
<i>The American Frontier</i>	<i>Spiritual Alienation</i>	<i>Faith and Reason in Conflict</i>
<i>The Lost Eden</i>	<i>Irony and Satire</i>	<i>Nature as Sacramental or Indifferent</i>
<i>Disordered Desire</i>	<i>The American Dream</i>	<i>Immigration and Inculturation</i>
<i>Providence and Fate</i>	<i>Myth and Memory</i>	<i>The Corruption of the Beautiful</i>
<i>Cultural Disintegration</i>	<i>The Problem of Freedom</i>	<i>The Search for Meaning in a Post-Christian World</i>



On Writing

All written work in this course integrates Our Lady's Writing Curriculum, a program rooted in the tradition of the classical oration and the progymnasmata—the ancient exercises that trained students in the art of eloquence, clarity, and persuasion. Students will be guided through structured stages of composition, learning to narrate, describe, argue, and exhort with both precision and grace.

Writing is not treated as a mere skill, but as a moral and intellectual discipline—a means of pursuing truth and communicating it rightly. In keeping with the classical model, students will imitate excellent forms, internalize timeless principles, and ultimately express their own judgments with charity, courage, and rhetorical power.

Assessments

Summative: 45%

- Unit Exams
- Midterm Exam
- Essays
- Recitations

Formative: 35%

- Key Terms Quiz
- Artifacts
- Weekly Writing Assignments
- Expository Essays

Conscientiousness 20%

- Participation
- Homework
- Classwork



Scope & Sequence

Unit 1 | Philosophy of Art & Literature 2 Weeks

Week 1-2 Overview

The students will contemplate the nature of art and the ramifications of particular arts upon a culture.

Theme

Art is an imitation of reality. Art is naturally efficacious; it creates what it reveals.

Central-One-Idea

Art is not merely decorative or expressive—it is a participation in reality itself. By imitating what is, true art reveals meaning, shapes culture, and moves the soul toward contemplation of the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Sources: *Selected Essays by Josef Pieper*

Unit 2 | The Origins of American Identity 4 Weeks

Week 3-6 Overview

The Students will consider *The Scarlet Letter* as an American artifact and contemplate the origins of American identity in New England Puritanism.

Theme

American identity finds its origin in New England Puritanism, which is itself a representative of the English tradition.

Central-One-Idea

The roots of American identity lie in the moral rigor and spiritual vision of New England Puritanism, a tradition that both defines and haunts the American conscience through its struggle with sin, shame, and the possibility of redemption.

Sources: *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *What is America?* Essay by Chesterton



Unit 3 | The American Tragedy

4 Weeks

Week 7-10 Overview

The students will consider *Evangeline* as a work of Christian tragedy.

Theme

Tragedy is an art which reveals a lost had and lost, in Evangeline we had a remnant of the peace of Christendom which is 'Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean. Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.'

Central-One-Idea

Evangeline reveals the uniquely American form of Christian tragedy—a vision of love, loss, and exile in which the remnants of a once-unified Christendom are scattered, and only memory and faith remain to bind the soul to hope.

Sources: *Evangeline*, Longfellow

Unit 4 | The Ordo Amoris

4 Weeks

Week 11-14 Overview

The students will consider *King Lear* as an essential work of the English canon, meditating on the themes of the proper ordering of love and the ramifications of personal tyranny.

Theme

Love properly ordered expands and instils peace upon the world around it. Love whihc is disordered corrupts and shatters reality itself.

Central-One-Idea

King Lear dramatizes the catastrophic effects of disordered love, showing that when affection is misdirected or corrupted by pride, it fractures families and kingdoms—but when rightly ordered, love becomes a source of peace, restoration, and truth.

Sources: *King Lear*, Shakespeare; *Parker's Back*, O'Connor



Unit 5 | American Barbarism

4 Weeks

Week 15-18 Overview

The students will consider *Huckleberry Finn* as an artifact of American realism, in the attempt to distinguish between America as a dream and America as a reality.

Theme

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.

Central-One-Idea

Evangeline reveals the uniquely American form of Christian tragedy—a vision of love, loss, and exile in which the remnants of a once-unified Christendom are scattered, and only memory and faith remain to bind the soul to hope.

Sources: *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *A Good Man is Hard to Find* by O'Connor

Unit 6 | Purgatorio

4 Weeks

Week 19-22 Overview

The students will consider Dante's *Purgatorio* as an essential work of the Christian canon, meditating on the themes of sin, punishment, mercy, and redemption.

Theme

The salvation of others depends upon our relation to God's Divine Will.

Central-One-Idea

Purgatorio reveals that the journey toward redemption is both personal and communal, showing how the soul's ascent depends on rightly ordered love, repentance, and a willing conformity to God's Divine Will—for the sake of one's own salvation and the salvation of others.

Sources: *Purgatorio* by Dante



Unit 7 | Western Inculturation

4 Weeks

Week 23-26 Overview

The students will consider *My Antonia* as a meditation on the immigrant integration into the American Midwest.

Theme

The American Midwest becomes a place of cultural fusion, where the immigrant experience reveals both the hardship of exile and the beauty of belonging through memory, labor, and love of the land.

Central-One-Idea

My Antonia portrays the American frontier as a space where old-world traditions and new-world hopes meet—showing that true cultural integration requires rootedness, resilience, and reverence for place and people.

Sources: *My Antonia* by Willa Cather

Unit 8 | Loss of the American Dream

4 Weeks

Week 27-30 Overview

The students will consider *The Great Gatsby* as a cautionary tale, warning of the loss of the American dream.

Theme

When the pursuit of the American Dream is severed from virtue, memory, and moral truth, it decays into illusion, vanity, and self-destruction.

Central-One-Idea

The Great Gatsby exposes the spiritual emptiness beneath the glitter of wealth and ambition, warning that a dream unmoored from reality and right desire leads not to fulfillment, but to ruin.

Sources: *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald



Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.



Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | Art & Literature

Q: What is art?

A: *Art is the imitation of reality made visible in word, color, stone, or sound.*

Q: What does true art reveal?

A: *It reveals what is and draws the soul toward what ought to be.*

Q: Can art shape a culture?

A: *Yes—what a people contemplate, they become.*

Q: What is the danger of false art?

A: *It flatters the passions and blinds the soul to truth.*

Q: Why begin with the philosophy of art?

A: *Because to read well, we must first learn to see.*



Section II | Origins of American Identity

Q: Where does American identity begin?

A: *In the tension between law and grace, in the shadow of the Puritan meeting-house.*

Q: What does The Scarlet Letter reveal?

A: *That sin cannot be buried by silence, nor redeemed without truth.*

Q: What did the Puritans give America?

A: *A conscience shaped by Scripture and a fear of scandal stronger than a fear of God.*

Q: What haunts the American soul?

A: *A memory of holiness divorced from mercy.*

Q: Why must we study Puritanism?

A: *Because its rigor still echoes in our laws, our literature, and our longings.*

Section III | The American Tragedy

Q: What is Christian tragedy?

A: *It is sorrow touched by hope, and loss illumined by love.*

Q: What is Evangeline a remembrance of?

A: *A peaceful world scattered by exile, where only faith endures.*

Q: Why is Grand-Pré important?

A: *Because it shows what is lost when the sacred is cast aside.*

Q: What does Evangeline teach us about love?

A: *That true love waits, not for its own reward, but for the will of God.*

Q: What does tragedy reveal about America?

A: *That it was born in beauty and brokenness.*



Section IV | The Ordo Amoris

Q: What is the ordo amoris?

A: *It is the right ordering of love, with God as the first and final end.*

Q: What ruins Lear's kingdom?

A: *Love corrupted by pride, and truth sacrificed for flattery.*

Q: What is the fruit of disordered love?

A: *Division, madness, and ruin.*

Q: What restores a broken kingdom?

A: *Humility, repentance, and the embrace of what is true.*

Q: Why read King Lear in American Literature?

A: *Because before we critique a nation, we must examine the human heart.*

Section V | American Barbarism

Q: What does Huck flee?

A: *A world that claims to be civilized but is steeped in cruelty and lies.*

Q: Why is the river sacred?

A: *It offers freedom—but not always truth.*

Q: What does Twain reveal about America?

A: *That the greatest danger is a conscience formed without grace.*

Q: What does Huck teach us?

A: *That virtue without God is not enough.*

Q: What is American barbarism?

A: *It is the rejection of moral order in the name of personal liberty.*



Section VI | Purgatorio

Q: What is Purgatorio?

A: *A song of repentance sung in the key of hope.*

Q: What lifts the soul upward?

A: *Love purified by pain and conformed to God's will.*

Q: Why must Dante climb?

A: *Because holiness is not granted, but chosen and suffered.*

Q: What binds the penitent together?

A: *Shared sorrow and the joy of coming light.*

Q: What does Dante teach America?

A: *That redemption begins with memory and leads to mercy.*

Section VII | American Inculturation

Q: What is the American frontier?

A: *A place where memory meets the land and labor becomes love.*

Q: Who is *Ántonia*?

A: *She is the soul of the settler—wounded, strong, and full of grace.*

Q: What does the immigrant bring to America?

A: *A culture carried in song, in bread, in faith.*

Q: What does *My Ántonia* reveal?

A: *That home is not where you are from, but what you cherish.*

Q: Why is place sacred?

A: *Because God made us from dust—and we long to belong.*



Section VIII | Dates To Live in Our Hearts

Q: What is the American Dream?

A: *A hope that hard work leads to happiness—but not always holiness.*

Q: Why does Gatsby fail?

A: *Because he seeks resurrection through wealth and romance.*

Q: What is the green light?

A: *A symbol of longing—beautiful, distant, and unreachable.*

Q: What does Fitzgerald mourn?

A: *A nation that traded virtue for spectacle.*

Q: What is the cost of forgetting the past?

A: *A future built on illusion, drifting toward ruin.*



Section IX | Recitations

Q: What does America remember in its sorrow?

A: *“Thus was Acadia lost, and with it the hopes of a nation,
Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October
Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o’er the ocean.
Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.
Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman’s devotion,
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest;
List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy.”*

—Evangeline, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Q: What did the Puritans give to the American soul?

A: *“It is to the credit of human nature, that, except where its selfishness is brought
into play, it loves more readily than it hates.
Hatred, by a gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love, unless the
change be impeded by a continually new irritation of the original feeling of hostility.
In the case of an individual, however, the guilt of whose misfortune is to be weekly
dragged out into the public gaze, it is not so.
In Pearl’s young beauty, as in the child herself, there was a sense of inevitable
fate—of something that must be borne.
And thus the child became a living hieroglyphic, a reminder that the human soul,
once marked, is not easily unmarked.”*

—The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne



Section IX | Recitations (Continued...)

Q: What must the soul do to ascend?

A: *“Through me is the way to the city of woe,
Through me the way to eternal pain,
Through me the way among the lost.
Justice moved my high maker;
Divine power made me,
Highest wisdom, and primal love.
Before me nothing was created
That was not eternal, and I endure eternally.
Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”*

*“Here let mistrust be absent,
Here be the memory of sin,
And let the soul rise, purged in flame,
Upward through the stars to the love that moves the sun and the other stars.”*

—Purgatorio, Dante Alighieri

Q: What does America chase—and lose—in the name of the dream?

A: *“He had come a long way to this blue lawn,
and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it.
He did not know that it was already behind him,
somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city,
where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.*

*Gatsby believed in the green light,
the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us.
It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—tomorrow we will run faster,
stretch out our arms farther...
And one fine morning—
So we beat on, boats against the current,
borne back ceaselessly into the past.”*

—The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald



Week 1

Weekly Logos

Why Art Matters

This week, students explore the nature and power of art. They will consider how true art imitates reality, forms culture, and reveals the invisible. With Josef Pieper as their guide, they will reflect on the distinction between real and false art, and how a people's literature reflects their understanding of the world. Students will begin to see that beauty is not a luxury, but a necessity for the soul—and that what a culture makes reveals what it loves.

What Are We Assessing?

The Facts

Art is an imitation of reality and reveals something true about the world.

True art forms culture and teaches the soul to see.

False art flatters the passions and distorts the truth.

Josef Pieper argues that leisure, contemplation, and worship are the roots of culture.

What Are We Assessing?

The Skills

Identify and explain the nature and end of art in classical and Christian tradition.

Distinguish between formative and deformative art.

Analyze philosophical texts for claims, assumptions, and implications.

Apply key ideas from Pieper to a modern cultural artifact.



What Are We Assessing? | The Truths

Beauty is the splendor of truth. A culture without contemplation is a culture in decline.

These truths unify every element of the lesson:

- A society becomes what it loves.
- Worship and wonder are the foundation of all true making.
- The soul craves not distraction, but revelation.

Assessments | Suggested Types

🏛️ Annotate key passages from Josef Pieper’s *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, identifying major claims about art and leisure.

🏛️ Seminar: “Is all art imitation? What distinguishes true art from false?”

🏛️ Reflection Essay: How does what we make shape who we are?

🏛️ Art Comparison: Evaluate one work of modern media through the lens of Pieper’s



Pacing | By Week

<i>Day</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Monday	What is art? What is imitation?	Read selected passages from <i>Leisure: The Basis of Culture</i> , pp. 1–8
Tuesday	Art, Culture, and the Soul	Annotate Pieper’s distinction between work and contemplation
Wednesday	False Art and the Deformation of Culture	Bring in a modern work of art or media for class discussion (music, film, or visual art)
Thursday	Seminar: “Is beauty necessary for a good life?”	Prepare a 1-paragraph written response to share in seminar
Friday	Reflection: What we make reveals what we worship	Write: What kind of art shapes the soul toward truth? (1-page response)



Teacher Tips

Use Art & Artifact: Show examples of sacred art, classical sculpture, or modern media. Contrast a cathedral with a billboard. Ask: What kind of soul made this?

Recite the Text: Assign lines from Pieper or classical definitions of art (e.g., “*Ars est imitatio naturae*”) for memorization and oral recitation to cultivate reverence and clarity.

Ask Moral Questions: What is art for? Can beauty lie? Is all expression valuable, or must it be judged? Does bad art harm the soul?

Link Art to Worship: Discuss how cultures that worship false gods make false art. Ask: What kind of culture arises from right worship?

Highlight Foundations: Trace how leisure, contemplation, and divine order—not utility or productivity—formed the foundation of truly human culture.



Appendix

Essays In This Course...

Each of the three major essays in this course will follow the structure and spirit of our Classical Writing Curriculum at Our Lady of the Rosary. Students are expected to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, employing the Classical Oration form:

- Exordium – The introduction that gains attention and builds ethos
- Narratio – Background/context, statement of facts/narration of events
- Divisio – Outline of major arguments
- Confirmatio – 3 Proofs & Sub-Proofs (body paragraphs)
- Refutatio – Address and refute opposing arguments
- Peroratio – The conclusion: moving the heart, restating the truth

Each essay must be a minimum of 5 full pages, MLA formatted, and include a bibliography with at least five primary sources and three scholarly secondary sources. This level of work prepares students not only for collegiate academic writing, but more importantly, for thoughtful, ordered argument in service of truth, which lies at the heart of classical education.

Prompt I

Is America a fallen Eden or a land of promise?

Objective: Using at least two works from the course, argue whether American literature presents the nation primarily as a lost paradise in need of mourning or as a promised land full of hope. Support your position with close analysis of imagery, character, and theme.



Prompt II

Can a nation survive without rightly ordered love?

Objective: Drawing on King Lear and one American novel or story, argue whether the survival of a people depends upon their ability to love rightly—within families, communities, or nations. What happens when love is corrupted or misplaced?

Prompt III

Does the loss of faith necessarily lead to cultural decay?

Objective: Using The Great Gatsby and one other work from the course, defend or refute the claim that when a society abandons God, it also loses its beauty, meaning, and moral clarity. Use literary evidence to support your case.

