Lesson Packet

Interviewing Jay Gatsby: A Five-Day Character Analysis Lab

This activity is adapted from a lesson plan published by the author in The Harvard AI Pedagogy Project. For support in experimenting with this plan, please see our assessment redesign services page.

Overview

High-school juniors and seniors will craft, conduct, and analyze a live interview with a Jay Gatsby bot (bot provided by teacher). The sequence builds literary insight, interviewing technique, and critical evaluation of unreliable narration.

Learning Goals (rank-ordered)

1. Character Analysis – Probe Gatsby's motives, contradictions, and inner life with text-grounded questions.
2. Conversational Interviewing – Demonstrate active listening, empathy, flexible thinking, and purposeful follow-ups.
3. Critical Reading of Unreliability – Detect and interrogate wobbles, deflections, and narrative gaps.

Standards Alignment (CCSS ELA 11-12)

STRAND	STANDARD
RL.11-12.3	Analyze how complex characters develop and interact.
SL.11-12.1	Initiate & participate effectively in collaborative discussions.
SL.11-12.3	Evaluate a speaker's (bot's) point of view, reasoning, & rhetoric.
W.11-12.9	Draw evidence from literature to support analysis & reflection.

Schedule at a Glance

DAY	FOCUS	KEY DELIVERABLE
1	Brainstorm & draft interview questions	Draft #1 (8-10 Qs)
2	Peer annotation, revision, optional practice chat	Polished set (6 core + 2 backup)
3	Formal solo interview (graded)	Raw transcript uploaded
4	Annotate transcript, peer comparison	Annotated transcript
5	Write reflective essay, gallery walk	300–400 word reflection

Detailed Daily Plan

Day 1 – Question Brainstorm & Mini-Lesson

1. Hook (10 min) – <u>View exemplar journalist clip</u>; introduce "literary journalism" goal.
2. Mini Lesson (40 minutes) -- Conversational Interviewing Skills
- Model <u>"Build vs. Pivot,"</u> the process of leading an interview through expanding, narrowing, and changing course.
- Model "spotting deflections and wobbles," share <u>exemplar chat and annotations</u> and review key moments.
3. Solo Draft #1 (20 minutes)

Homework: Draft 8-10 open-ended questions for the bot, to be reviewed in class.

Day 2 – Peer Annotation, Revision & Practice Round

1. Round-Robin Annotation (20 minutes + discussion) - Students use "Interview Questions Guide" to provide peer feedback.
2. Revision (15 min) – Polish to 6 core + 2 backup questions.
3. Low Stakes Practice (10 min + class discussion) -- Students interview a personality bot of their choice via a teacher-provided menu. Follow-up short interview practice with discussion.
4. Class discussion – What did you notice about the way the bot interacts? How might that change your interview approach?"

Homework: finalize question set; read excerpt packet.

Day 3 – Formal Interview (Assessment Grade)

1. Setup (5 min) - Remind students that the interview will be graded against the rubric. Encourage students to "slow down" and think through each interview follow-up. Solo Interview (25 min) – Target 10 – 14 total turns.
2. Upload Raw Transcript (10 min) – "Share Chat" if necessary, or teacher views transcript directly on EdTech platform of choice (SchoolAI, Magic School AI, FlintK12, etc.)
3. Quick Reflection Pad (10 min) – Immediate impressions for Day 5 use.

Graded: Rubric sections A & B.

Day 4 – Annotation & Peer Analysis

1. Annotation Legend Review (15 min) – Walk through codes.
2. Solo Annotation (25 min) – Tag at least four moments.
3. Peer Comparison (15 min) – Share insights & biggest wobbles.

Homework: finish annotations.

Day 5 – Final Reflection

1. Warm-Up (10 min) – Revisit quick-reflection pad.
2. Write Reflection (30 min) – Compare/Contrast bot transcript with text from the novel. Write a 400-600 word reflection analyzing the utility, effectiveness, realism, and takeaways from the interview.

   - Guiding Questions: How effective was the bot at mimicking the character from the book? Was this bot useful in furthering your understanding of the character? Why or why not?

3. Gallery Walk (10 min) – Post favorite annotated excerpt; classmates leave feedback.
4. Closure (5 min) – Whole-class debrief on interviewing a fallible bot.

Assessment Artifacts

1. Interview Questions – Draft → Peer-annotated → Revised
2. Raw Transcript – Solo interview
3. Annotated Transcript – Using legend below
4. Reflection Essay – 400-600 words.

Rubric (100 pts)

CATEGORY	POINTS	INDICATORS
A. Character Analysis	40	Text-grounded questions & follow-ups reveal motives, contradictions; annotations cite evidence.
B. Interview Craft	25	Active listening, empathy, creative pivots; purposeful probes.
C. Unreliability & Gaps	20	Accurate identification of wobbles/deflections; thoughtful presses.
D. Reflection Quality	15	Insightful claim about usefulness; concrete examples; metacognitive next steps.

Annotation Legend

- Q – Question strategy (goal in ≤ 6 words)
- BLD – Build move
- FT – Flexible thinking
- P1/P2/P3 – Bot pushback stage (1st/2nd/3rd)
- WB – Wobble flagged
- DFL – Deflection detected
- TF – Timed flashback (note era)
- EW – Emotional-weather mirroring
- GL – Green-light trigger (hope/future/dream)

Students tag both their questions and the bot's replies.

Please see the <u>following sample student chat with annotations</u> for guidance. The sample chat also includes a sample student reflection at the end.

Materials & Prep

- Jay Gatsby Bot – <u>ChatGPT Sample Available Here</u>.
- Programming language is available to clients of AI Literacy Partners. This language can be input into your EdTech platform of choice. <u>Reach out for more details.</u>
- Devices with chat access & copy-export capability.
  1. <u>Interview Question Draft Sheet</u>
  2. Peer Annotation Key
  3. Transcript Upload Guide
  4. Annotation Legend sheet
  5. Reflection Prompt
  5. Reflection Prompt
- Teacher-selected excerpt packet (motives, contradictions, key scenes).
- Optional practice bot (minimal prompt)

Scaffolds & Supports

Pre-Reading Requirement

- Entire novel finished. Excerpts packet aids weaker recall.

Sample Question Starters

These sample questions can be provided to students during the interview preparation stage. They are designed to ask the bot about the "unanswered questions" of the book, thus pushing the bot into uncharted territory and potentially revealing fallibility. This creates opportunity for meaningful student analysis. Consider explaining or modelling one or more questions as a scaffold when students are preparing their interview questions:

- "Now that Daisy turned you away, what are you going to do? What is your plan going forward?"
- "When Daisy hit Myrtle, why didn't you insist she turn herself in?"
- "If it had been Tom driving, do you think Daisy would have taken the blame for him?"
- "When you told Nick about your past, how much of it was true — and how much was invented to impress him?"
- "What really happened the day you decided to stop being James Gatz? Was it sudden, or something you'd been planning for years?"
- "Where exactly were you in those years between leaving the army and showing up in West Egg with a mansion? Who bankrolled the first step?"
- "If you could go back to being James Gatz for one day, what would you do differently?"
- "Do you ever think your dream was really about you — not Daisy — and you just couldn't admit it?"
- "Do you have any regrets? If so, what are they - and why?"

Interview Moves

A. Acknowledge
- (Show the character you've heard them, while signaling you're steering the conversation forward.)
- Template: "You've just said [paraphrase their point]. That's interesting, because it makes me wonder — how does that connect to [new area]?"

B. Pivot
- (Change direction without making the shift feel abrupt.)
- Template: "That reminds me of something else I wanted to ask — can we talk about [different but connected topic]?"

C. Build
- (Take something they've said and expand it into a richer, more complex question.)
- Template: "You mentioned [specific detail]. Could you tell me more about how/why/when that happened?"

D. Deepen
- (Push them into reflection, motives, or contradictions.)
- Template: "Why do you think that was so important to you at the time? Would you see it differently now?"

E. Press
- (Hold them accountable to an answer or call out an inconsistency.)
- Template: "Earlier you said [X], but now you're saying [Y]. How do those fit together?"

Guardrails

- Students may not alter system prompt or parameters.
- Bot wobbles ~25 % by design—probe rather than "gotcha."
- Keep transcripts academic; no personal data.

Differentiation

- Provide structured question frames for support; extension tasks (e.g., triangulate with a "Nick" bot) for advanced learners.
- Allow voice-note annotations converted to text if needed.

Optional Extensions

- Text-Evidence Layer – Add novel line references beside transcript excerpts.
- Seminar Fishbowl – Compare how different interviews created different "Gatsbys."
- Counter-Interview – Short follow-up with a Nick or Daisy bot for corroboration.

Teacher Setup Notes (Bot Mechanics)

- Programming language is available to clients of AI Literacy Partners. This language can be input into your EdTech platform of choice. Reach out for more details.
- Current Setup: Bot is designed not to ask questions but instead provide conversational answers in Gatsby's tone of voice.
- Advise students: Aim for 10-14 turns to deepen and push the conversation into new territory.

Question Quality Checklist (student-facing)

- Interview questions are open-ended. Questions should not be binary Yes/No trivia questions.
- Interview questions push the bot into uncharted territory.
- Interview questions exhibit character understanding; student aims to address unknown character motivations.
- Follow-up prompts treat the conversation as a "real" interaction or interview. Students should not skip over Gatsby responses without (at a minimum) acknowledging what was said in the previous output.