ENGL 293: American Gilded Ages
Close reading exercise

1. **Summarize** the action of the passage in one informative sentence. Use simple language and state only the bare facts.

2. **Examine** the passage without analysis. Describe the important features. What kind of words does the author use? How are sentences structured—are they long and complicated, or short and to the point? How are characters described? What kind of narrative voice is used—first person, third-person limited, third person-omniscient? Does the narrative focus on one single character or perspective, or does it jump around? What other important features do you notice?

3. **Analyze** the features and details you noticed. Rather than jumping straight to a conclusion or a claim about the text, frame your analysis in terms of *how*, *why*, and *so what* questions. Once you’ve noticed something significant about the text, ask *why* the text does what you’ve noticed, *how* that affects the way we read it, and, most importantly, *so what*—why is what you’ve observed significant? Make sure to keep your questions limited to the text.

4. **Make a claim** about one of the questions you have posed. Use the details you noted in step 2 to answer a question from step 3. Once again, make sure to keep your answer limited to the text. Your claim should be based entirely on what you observed in the story itself, not on speculation, biographical information, or anything not directly related to the text.