Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period:\_\_\_\_\_

**Right Word vs. The Almost-Right Word**

Directions: Please read the following two passages. Compare them, and then respond to the following question.

Actual excerpt from the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

*Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes — a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.*

This second excerpt has been altered with the help of a thesaurus:

*Most of the enormous seaside locations were shut now and there were barely any beams except the faint, transitory radiance of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon mounted higher the useless mansions began to melt away until progressively I became aware of the ancient island here that bloomed once for Dutch sailors’ eyes – a brand-new, emerald chest of the contemporary world. Its lost trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s cottage, had once spoke in whispers to the final and best of all human aspirations; for a short thrilling instant man must have held his breath in the presence of America, brought into a gorgeous reflection he neither comprehended nor wanted, face to face for the last time in history with something equal to his ability for perturbation.*

How do these two passages illustrate the importance of choosing precise words?

Directions: After reading the article, “An Ode to the King of Writerly Tools,” respond to the following questions.

1. Why did the writer write a love poem to her thesaurus?
2. How does a Roget’s style thesaurus organize information differently from an online thesaurus?
3. What advantage does the author see to Roget’s way of organizing synonyms?
4. In what way can a thesaurus be a powerful tool?
5. How can this tool be abused?