

**WOLFNOTE SUMMARY OF...**

**F. SCOTT FITZGERALD**

**THE GREAT GATSBY**



**CONTEXT**

Nick Carraway, a young man from Minnesota rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island. It is the summer of 1922 and he has come to New York to learn about the bond business. West Egg is the unfashionable area of Long Island where the 'new money' live, those who have made their fortune quickly.

Jay Gatsby, Nick's next-door neighbor lives in a Gothic mansion and is renowned for his lavish lifestyle with parties every Saturday night, which are the talk of the neighborhood.

Yale educated Nick has his own social connections in East Egg, the fashionable part of Long Island. He visits his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, who married a former classmate of his at Yale, Tom. Nick is introduced to Jordan Baker, a beautiful golfer with whom Nick soon becomes romantically involved. Jordan reveals that Tom is having an affair with a Myrtle Wilson who lives in an area called The Ash Valley, which lies between Long Island and New York. As the summer of 1922 progresses, Nick finds out more about Gatsby who has been in love with Daisy since their first meeting in 1917. His showman-like life is just to impress Daisy and Nick decides to act to rekindle the romance. He succeeds and an affair follows. Tom, of course, finds out and confronts Gatsby at the Plaza Hotel in New York. Tom believes that his relationship with his wife is so special, beyond anything that Gatsby could imagine, because they have a baby daughter. Daisy soon realizes where her loyalties truly lie and Tom is so confident about his relationship with Daisy that he allows the two to return from New York to Long Island alone.

Gatsby's car is involved in an accident where Myrtle, Tom's lover is run over and killed. Although Daisy was driving the car, Gatsby covers for her and decides to take the blame for the accident and tells Nick about this. Meanwhile Tom tells Myrtle's husband George that the car involved in the accident belonged to Gatsby and George is convinced that the owner of the car is Myrtle's lover. George goes to Gatsby's home and finds him in his swimming pool where he shoots him dead, and then shoots himself.

Nick organizes the funeral for Gatsby attended by very few and then ends his relationship with Jordan, moving back to the mid-west in an attempt to escape the guilt and disgust he feels regarding the characters that surround Gatsby. Nick disapproves of the lifestyle led by Gatsby, but admires him for the way in which he pursued his dream.

**The Author – his early years**

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1897 and is named after Francis Scott Key who wrote 'The Star-spangled Banner'. He was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota and although a bright, artistic child, did poorly in school, and was eventually sent to a New Jersey Boarding School in 1911. He was an average student, but did manage to enroll at Princeton in 1913. He had problems with the work at the College and never managed to graduate, and escaped this environment by enlisting in the army in 1917 towards the end of World War 1.

Fitzgerald rose to the rank of Second Lieutenant, stationed at Camp Sheridan in Alabama. There he fell in love with a Zelda Sayre, a vibrant 17 year-old beauty who finally agreed to marry him, putting aside her desire for wealth, fun and leisure. The wedding took place only after Fitzgerald had his first book published in 1920. Many of the events from Fitzgerald's early life appear in *The Great Gatsby*, which was published in 1925. It is no coincidence that Nick Carraway also comes from Minnesota and moves to New York after the war. Like Fitzgerald, Gatsby is a sensitive man who worships wealth and opulence and falls in love with a beautiful young woman whilst stationed at a military camp.

Fitzgerald soon became a celebrity after the publication of his first novel, and indulged in a wild and reckless lifestyle, all the while trying to please Zelda with decadent parties. Gatsby also amasses a

great deal of wealth at a relatively young age and is obsessed in obtaining possessions and throwing parties in order to impress and win Daisy's love.

Arguably Fitzgerald is one of the best narrators of America in the 1920's, this decade being called 'The Jazz Age'. *The Great Gatsby* is therefore, one of the great Jazz Age novels, a time when the American economy soared to new heights of prosperity, a time when the nation was experiencing a high level of affluence. The American Constitution introduced the prohibition, making alcohol an illegal drug, but this failed to eliminate its use and instead encouraged a genre of revelry, which enabled bootleggers to become criminal millionaires. Secret clubs or 'speak-easies' sprung up everywhere making alcohol readily available to the masses. The 20's were a period where the young generations were trying to forget the hardship and shock of the war years, and they indulged in high living, putting aside the established morals.

Fitzgerald found this new lifestyle too tempting to resist as he had always worshipped the very rich and now found himself in a decade of unrestrained materialism. Like Nick, Fitzgerald recognized the hypocrisy and emptiness of this lifestyle and *The Great Gatsby* is his attempt to confront the conflicting feelings he had about the Jazz Age.

Fitzgerald's love for Zelda parallels Gatsby's love for Daisy in that in order to win her love, he had to go down a path which led him to a lifestyle he despised.

## Characters

### Nick Carraway

The novel is seen through Nick's eyes - the young man from Minnesota, education at Yale and who fought in World War 1. He arrives in New York and is regarded as honest, tolerant, but indecisive. Throughout the novel, Nick is one with whom the characters can confide, sharing their troubled secrets. In moving to West Egg area of Long Island, Nick lives beside the class of wealthy people who have gained their fortunes recently 'new money' whose recent good fortune does not enable them to enter into fashionable society. Nick quickly befriends his neighbor, the mysterious Jay Gatsby. The story is told as Nick sees it and his thoughts and intuition shape and fashion the tale.

### Jay Gatsby

The title character, an extremely wealthy young man living in a Gothic mansion in West Egg is renowned for his lavish Saturday night parties, but those who attend these functions do not know Gatsby's history or how he acquired his fortune. Slowly Nick learns about Gatsby's rise to fame and how from a lowly beginning he obtains his fortune. Gatsby's first break comes when he obtains work for a millionaire and this makes him decide to achieve his own fortune. This is driven on by his love for Daisy who he meets whilst training to be an officer in Louisville. As the story develops, Nick learns that Gatsby acquired his fortune through criminal activities, bootlegging etc. and that he is willing to do anything in order to gain Daisy's love. Nick sees Gatsby as an imperfect man, dishonest and crude, but his greatness is derived from his extraordinary optimism and his efforts to transform his dreams into reality.

### Daisy Buchanan

Nick's cousin, the woman with whom Gatsby is in love, met Gatsby in Louisville just before the war in 1917. Daisy was seeing a number of officers at that time, but she fell in love with Gatsby and had promised to wait for him. However, she needs attention and loves wealth and power, so when Tom Buchanan proposes to her, she decides not to wait for Gatsby, but to marry Tom. She relishes in the role of a beautiful socialite and enjoys the life Tom provides for her. She has a baby daughter by him. When Gatsby returns from the war and starts to make his fortune he moves to West Egg to be as near as possible to his love, Daisy. From the start of her marriage, Tom is unfaithful, but Daisy turns a blind eye to his infidelity.

### Tom Buchanan

Physically very strong and powerful, Tom is an arrogant and hypocritical bully. It is clear that he is a racist, and male chauvinist, and he never tries to live up to the moral standards he demands from those around him. He feels no guilt about his affair with Myrtle, but when he suspects Daisy of infidelity he becomes morally outraged and races towards a confrontation. Tom was a member of Nick's circle of friends at Yale.

### **Jordan Baker**

One of Daisy's friends, this is a woman with whom Nick becomes romantically involved during the novel. She is regarded as one of the new women of the 1920's, a tomboy, confident, engaged in her hobby as a golfer. She is dishonest and admits to cheating in order to win her first golf tournament and throughout the book, she is economical with the truth, a cold and unfeeling person.

### **Myrtle Wilson**

Compared to the other characters, Myrtle leads a lowly life and sees the only way to escape her lot is through her affair with Tom. Her husband, George, owns a dilapidated garage and lacks any ambition to improve their social position.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Summary**

Nick Carraway, a young man from Minnesota rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island. It is the summer of 1922 and he has come to New York to learn about the bond business. West Egg is the unfashionable area of Long Island where the 'new money' live, those who have made their fortune quickly. Typically they indulge in lavish displays of wealth showing poor taste. Nick lives next to Gatsby's mansion, a Gothic structure. Nick is unlike his neighbors in that he does have social connections in East Egg, and one night he drives out to have dinner with his cousin Daisy and husband Tom Buchanan, who incidentally was a former member of Nick's social circle at Yale. Tom is a striking figure, dressed in his riding attire and welcomes Nick to his home where he finds Daisy and her friend Jordan Baker, a competitive golfer.

Tom tries to entertain the others by quoting from a book called 'The Rise of the Colored Empires', by Goddard, but this only encourages Daisy to tease Tom about the book. This is the first indication of Tom's racist attitudes. Whilst Tom leaves the room to take a 'phone call followed by Daisy, Jordan takes the opportunity to tell Nick that the call is from Tom's lover in New York. The dinner party soon breaks up. Jordan has to prepare for a golf tournament, but before Nick leaves, Tom and Daisy hint that they would like to encourage Nick to take a romantic interest in Jordan.

This chapter ends with Nick arriving home and seeing Gatsby for the first time, standing on his lawn with his arms reaching out towards the dark water and a distant green light, which marks the end of Daisy's dock.

### **Interpretation**

In the first chapter, the novel introduces the story's main characters and settings. It is clear that Nick will be the narrator of the tale and he seems honest and thoughtful, if somewhat indecisive. He fails to form definite conclusions about the other characters. Nick's East Egg connections, Tom and Daisy Buchanan, have almost an arranged relationship in that Daisy ignores Tom's indiscretions, happy to lead the good life. Tom is in stark contrast to Nick, being arrogant, dishonest and a clear racist, and seems happy to continue his infidelities in public. Daisy, on the other hand, tries hard to be shallow, even saying that she hopes her baby daughter will grow up to be foolish, but beautiful, because these women lead the best lives.

Jordan Baker is clearly dishonest in that she cheats in order to do well in her golfing activities and is also very cynical and clearly bored by her shallow existence. All these characters share an inner emptiness and really have very few redeeming virtues. In contrast to these characters, Gatsby is only glimpsed briefly in this chapter, but he is already surrounded by an air of mystery, highlighted by the image of him stretching his arms out to the distant green light. At this stage Nick does not know his aims, the source of his fortune, or his background, but all becomes plain during the telling of this story.

Fitzgerald uses a clever relationship between the characters of the book and where they live. We have already been introduced to the two areas West and East Egg, each home to fabulous wealth i.e. the new money in West Egg and the aristocrats in East Egg. East Egg is linked with the Buchanans and the inherited social position they enjoy, whilst West Egg is linked with Gatsby's monstrous house. He is a driven man, obsessed with obtaining wealth and Daisy. Nick becomes the bridge between Gatsby's love and Daisy's position in East Egg. The two other areas, which are covered later on in the book, are the Valley of Ashes where Myrtle lives, and New York City.

## **Chapter 2**

### Summary

Between West Egg and New York City lies the Valley of Ashes, or gray valley where New York's ashes are dumped, and the men who live and work there, shovel these ashes up. Over the valley is an enormous sign containing an advertisement on which is shown the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. This is one of the striking images described in the book. This advertising hoarding shows the unblinking eyes, which stare, over the Valley of Ashes.

Nick goes with Tom to George Wilson's garage, which sits on the outskirts of the Valley of Ashes. Myrtle is Wilson's wife and lives there with him. He has no ambition in contrast to Myrtle's vitality and desire to improve her position. Tom takes Nick and Myrtle to New York to the apartment he keeps for her in Morningside Heights, and where he conducts his affair. Tom and Myrtle have a party involving Myrtle's sister Catherine and a couple called McKee. Catherine has a gaudy appearance wearing a great deal of make-up and she tells Nick that Gatsby is a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm, the ruler of Germany during the war. The McKee's are an obnoxious couple who live downstairs. Mr. McKee is effeminate and Mrs. McKee is loud. The party soon degenerates into a drunken binge and Nick becomes repulsed by the behavior of the others. Although he wishes to leave, he finds himself strangely attracted by the lurid spectacle of the gathering. The more Myrtle drinks, the more offensive she becomes, and then she starts to talk about Daisy. Tom reacts violently by striking Myrtle and breaking her nose. This brings the party to an abrupt end. Nick decides to leave with Mr. McKee and eventually takes the train back to West Egg.

### Interpretation

Here the final two settings are dealt with, the Valley of Ashes, and New York City. In the Valley of Ashes, the characters are gray and desolate, being brought down by the poverty, which surrounds them. There is no glamour here, unlike Long Island, or New York, and this area represents the moral decay, which has so far been hidden from us in Chapter 1. The whole area is dominated by the billboard showing the massive eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, this being one of the most important images in the novel. The eyes uncertain meaning makes them so unsettling in this chapter and they appear to have no symbolic value at this stage. They merely 'brood over the solemn dumping ground'. You will find that *The Great Gatsby* is full of images of sight and blindness i.e. in Chapter 3.

New York is in stark contrast to the gray Valley of Ashes, being vibrant, sparkly, and loud. To Nick, New York is a contrast being both thrilling, but without any moral base. In the Valley of Ashes, Tom is obliged to keep his affair with Myrtle secret, but in New York he appears in public with her without causing any scandal. Surprisingly even Nick, Daisy's cousin seems to tolerate Tom's behavior and goes with the flow, treating life as a game.

Nick's tolerance and indecisiveness are highlighted at the party where he feels repelled by the sordid behavior of the company, but is too fascinated to leave. This is repeated later on with his feelings towards Gatsby. Tom's hypocrisy is also highlighted at this party where he feels no guilt at betraying Daisy with Myrtle, but reacts violently when Myrtle mentions Daisy's name, breaking her nose.

Even at this party, there is still no escape from the mysterious Gatsby, where he becomes the subject of gossip with a ridiculous rumor being spread by Catherine about his German connections, but he still remains an enigma at this stage of the book.

## Chapter 3

### Summary

It is not long before Nick receives an invitation to one of Gatsby's famous Saturday night parties. Here the guests engage in rumors concerning their host, but nobody really knows Gatsby's real history or where his wealth came from. At the party, Nick meets Jordan, whose friend Lucille suggests that Gatsby was a German spy during the war.

Nick soon appreciates the deserved reputation that these parties have gained and marvels over Gatsby's Rolls Royce, swimming pool and beach area. Gatsby provides crates of fresh oranges and lemons, marquees containing extravagant foods and the partygoers revel in the opulence accompanied by an orchestra playing under the stars. Gatsby keeps himself aloof from the proceedings not drinking, but merely standing alone watching his guests indulge themselves. Nick and Jordan come across a middle-aged man in Gatsby's library who is called Owl Eyes, as he sports a huge pair of spectacles, again this recurring image of eyes. Eventually they find Gatsby who looks like a roughneck, but his speech is refined and formal and he has an annoying habit of calling everyone 'old sport'. Nick soon becomes increasingly fascinated with Gatsby and is curious as to why he does not join in with the

partying. As the early hours approach, the partygoers start to leave, and Nick starts to walk home when he notices Owl Eyes again struggling to get his car out of a ditch.

The remainder of the chapter deals with a description of Nick's everyday life and his work in New York City. He does briefly meet with a Jersey City girl with whom he has a brief relationship, but then he starts to see Jordan Baker and despite her dishonesty, becomes romantically involved with her.

### **Interpretation**

Nick's description of his life in New York highlights its glittering attraction, but also its lack of stability. He thinks that Jordan Baker is very similar to New York in that she is glitzy, however, she is dishonest, selfish and cynical, but despite these flaws, he is still attracted to her. It is clear that Nick is becoming acclimatized to life in the East and is leaving behind his mid-western values; he is tempted with the excitement of this new environment. Returning to Gatsby's party, the main point here is the opulence and high living enjoyed by the party revelers. It is clear that both the aristocrats from East Egg and the new money from West Egg can equally indulge themselves without restraint. The Englishmen at the party are set off dramatically from the Americans where there is a hope of making connections, which will make them rich. Fitzgerald makes a point of separating Gatsby from the party where he is content to observe his guests at a distance. In this chapter there is the first direct contact between Gatsby and Nick where Gatsby's smile is described as 'one of those rare smiles with a quality of external reassurance in it'.

Nick sees Gatsby as the eternal optimist and believes that he does have the power to make his dream come true, but is not sure what future Gatsby has in mind.

Nick describes himself as one of the few honest people that he has ever known (which is an important quality in a narrator), and he stays with Jordan, despite her easy ability to bend the truth. There is a strange blend of honesty and dishonesty evident in the characters and the reference to Owl Eyes continues this observation of the characters by the reader.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Summary**

This Chapter at last gives some insight into the complexities of Gatsby's character. The reader up until now has only obtained third hand gossip from the minor characters in the book, but first there appears one of the most entertaining passages of the whole novel – Nick's view of the guests who attend Gatsby's parties for which he has kept a roll call.

The Stonewall Jackson Abrams of Georgia

The Cheadles

S. W. Belcher

Miss Haag

James B. Rotgut Ferret

The Smirks

The Schraders

Each has a brief note of their activities, thus an impression of the Jazz Age society is obtained.

Nick obtains further details about Gatsby while they are driving to New York in Gatsby's yellow Rolls Royce. This is, of course, Gatsby's number one status symbol. In America, perhaps more than anywhere else, the car has significant symbolism. Fitzgerald uses this to great effect. The car is Gatsby's pride and joy, but through a complex chain of events, the car brings about his destruction, a dream based purely on possessions alone will fade away and evaporate.

Passing through the gray landscape of the Valley of Ashes, Gatsby gives some details to Nick regarding his past life. Nick obtains a mixture of truth and lies from Gatsby about his past and the tale seems improbable, but Gatsby produces the odd photograph and war medal to support his words. A traffic policeman quickly halts their fast trip, but Gatsby flashes a white card at the officer who apologizes and allows them to proceed. At lunch in New York they meet Meyer Wolfshein, a business associate, who seems a dubious character with underground business connections. Nick now suspects that Gatsby's wealth stems from ill gathered gains derived from the sleazy world of crime, drugs and alcohol. Wolfsheim claims to be responsible for the fixing of the 1919 World Series, which in actual fact was rigged. Wolfsheim is in awe of Gatsby's standing and refinement, but he himself is almost a ridiculous figure with his cufflinks made out of human teeth, and a comical nostalgia giving another insight into the fragile base on which Gatsby's dream stands.

After lunch Nick meets Jordan who gives an account of Gatsby and Daisy's early relationship. Fitzgerald uses another flashback to provide a few more pieces of the enigma that is Gatsby. According to Jordan, during the war Daisy was the center of attraction for the Military Officers in the town of Louisville, but Daisy fell in love with Lt. J. Gatsby though she chooses to marry Tom once Gatsby leaves for the war. Just prior to the wedding she received a letter from Gatsby, so she drank herself into a stupor the night before. Although Tom was unfaithful throughout their marriage, Daisy apparently remained faithful.

### **Interpretation**

It is clear that Gatsby has cut himself off from his real past and has created his own personal background which he has now revealed to Nick as he feels he can trust him with the story. Nick sees through the façade and deduces that this personal history is at least partly invented. However, Nick remains impressed by Gatsby's boundless hope for the future which lies with Daisy, his only love. Nick cannot decide whether Gatsby is the lovesick war veteran, which is clearly an attractive figure, or a crooked businessman with no morals and single-mindedly set on making his fortune.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary**

Later that evening Nick meets Gatsby on the lawn. Gatsby now sees a way to realize his dream, and Nick may be the instrument to bring about the realization of all his hopes. Gatsby bends over backwards to please Nick and get on his good side, and eventually Nick agrees to invite Daisy to his home. On the day of the meeting, it is raining heavily and Gatsby is extremely nervous and when Daisy arrives he disappears and walks outside in the downpour. When he returns, he meets Daisy and initially there is awkwardness about their meeting. Nick decides to leave them alone and when he returns, they are blissfully happy. The three then go to Gatsby's mansion and Gatsby in awe of its grandeur and the luxurious lifestyle enjoys Daisy. Gatsby feels confident to reveal his passion for Daisy and tells her of his infatuation and how he has gazed at the green light shining at the end of Daisy's Dock. Nick cannot see how his cousin Daisy can live up to the expectation that Gatsby has, however, he leaves the two together while the resident pianist Klipspringer plays a popular tune 'Ain't we got fun'.

### **Interpretation**

The main two players of the plot are together. From now on the story moves inevitably to its climax in Chapters 7 and 8. After Gatsby's history with Daisy is revealed, it was bound to happen that these two characters should move towards a meeting. Daisy's guided tour of Gatsby's home is one of the main sections of the novel. His possessions are the culmination of years of work and dreaming to amass this splendor to impress Daisy, and now that they have met, his goal is attained. When Daisy enters the mansion, everything in it must be re-evaluated and mere material objects lose their reality in her presence because she is representative of a higher reality towards which all of Gatsby's possessions are dedicated. One of the main symbols is Gatsby's collection of shirts, which are not mere garments to be worn, but enchanted objects created by money, significant only in as much as they contribute to winning the ideal vision. Everything, which Gatsby owns, exists for the attainment of his dream and this is different from the materialistic Buchanan's, Jordan or Myrtle, who use objects for their own enjoyment. What Gatsby does not realize is that when he attains his dream, there will be nothing left to conquer or achieve.

Nick leaves the house almost totally ignored, having fulfilled his part in bringing these two characters together.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Summary**

This chapter provides the final pieces of Gatsby's makeup, and this is done by further flashbacks into critical periods of his past. The real history narrated by Nick is, of course, in contrast to the information Gatsby has himself provided. Gatsby was born James Gatz on a North Dakota farm and he briefly attended College in Minnesota, but dropped out after a few weeks. He then worked on Lake Superior, fishing for salmon and clams, and this is where he came across the wealthy businessman Dan Cody. Gatsby had rowed out to warn Cody that there was a storm coming and he should take his yacht to

safety. The grateful Cody took the young Gatz on board his yacht as a personal servant. This opened a new life for Gatz where he traveled to exotic locations such as the West Indies and the Barbary Coast. Gatsby fell in love with the opulent lifestyle and, in fact, inherited \$25,000 when Cody died, but Cody's mistress prevented Gatsby from claiming the money. Gatsby was determined to become wealthy himself and was driven to obtain a personal fortune.

Several weeks have now passed since Gatsby and Daisy were reunited and Nick has seen little of them since that fateful day. It is not surprising that Tom has become suspicious and takes the opportunity to go to Gatsby's house while out riding with the Sloane's. Gatsby invites them to stay for dinner, but they refuse. Etiquette required them to invite Gatsby to dine with them and to Tom's dismay, he accepts. Gatsby clearly does not realize the insincerity of the invitation. Tom looks down on Gatsby because of his lack of sophistication and is highly critical of Daisy's habit of visiting Gatsby on her own. Although suspicious, Tom has not yet discovered the secret love between the two. The following Saturday night Tom and Daisy go to the Gatsby party and Tom is merely there to see if there is any infidelity between Gatsby and Daisy. Nick is also there, but is far less impressed by the party this time round. Daisy also becomes upset when she learns from Tom that Gatsby's fortune comes from criminal activities. When Tom and Daisy leave the party Gatsby looks for Nick to find out why Daisy is unhappy. Gatsby wants things to return to what they were in Louisville when they first met, but Nick reminds him that he cannot recreate the past, and here the first cracks in Gatsby's dream appear.

### **Interpretation**

The first part of the chapter tells us about the early life of Gatsby, and how Dan Cody was the source of Gatsby's early education into the high life and the ultimate American dream. However, unlike Gatsby, Cody has no driving purpose for obtaining wealth. His life is almost aimless, drifting about in his yacht in exotic locations. Here again is the theme that wealth without a worthy purpose is ultimately self-destructive. The events of the party show that Gatsby's dream is disintegrating and unlike his previous parties, this one has a different feel to it because it is being evaluated according to Daisy's morals and standards, and not those generally accepted in West Egg. Daisy is a stranger in this glitzy environment and is unhappy with every aspect of the party except when she is drawn to the scene between the movie director and his star. These two figures form a kind a theatrical set-piece amidst a sea of emotion.

There is a rising tension now surrounding Gatsby's relationship with Daisy, and Gatsby encounters Tom's increasing suspicion, which will soon flare up into a confrontation. It should be noted that Fitzgerald never gives us a single scene from Gatsby's affair with Daisy. This is Nick's story and he never witnessed their intimate relationship. Fitzgerald leaves this part of the affair to our imaginations. Instead, he is concerned with the menacing suspicion and mistrust, which will ultimately lead to their ruin.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Summary**

Now that he thinks he has won Daisy, his dream fulfilled, Gatsby no longer needs to impress her so the Saturday Parties cease. He fires his servants to avoid any gossip and replaces them with Meyer Wolfsheim's people. It is the hottest day of the summer and Nick drives to the Buchanan's home for lunch. Here he finds Gatsby and Jordan occupying the couch, a repetition of the Chapter 1 scene with Jordan and Daisy on the couch. Tom is again called to answer the 'phone from Myrtle and while he is momentarily out of the room, Daisy starts kissing Gatsby, an illustration of her carelessness. It indicates that Daisy views her affair with Gatsby as just a game and she does not share the commitment, which Gatsby has to the relationship. Although Gatsby is now part of Daisy's life there is no real change in the Buchanan household. Gatsby's dream takes a jolt when Daisy's baby daughter is produced and shown off like a prize horse. Gatsby wants to live in the past when he first met Daisy, but the child Pammy Buchanan makes this impossible.

During the course of the lunch, it is impossible to hide the love between Gatsby and Daisy, and Tom finally realizes the true situation. Itching for a showdown, Tom agrees with Daisy's proposal for them all to go to New York. They decide to take a suite at the Plaza Hotel and Nick rides with Jordan and Tom in Gatsby's Rolls. Gatsby and Daisy ride together in Tom's car, stopping for gas at Wilson's garage. Here, Nick, Tom and Jordan discover that Wilson is aware of his wife's unfaithfulness, although he does not know the identity of her lover. Nick sees that Tom and Wilson are in the same position and again another descriptive passage brings in the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, which stare down on the scene. The party arrives at the Plaza Hotel and Tom begins his confrontation with Gatsby by mocking him in his peculiar habits, in particular calling people 'old sport'.

In this neutral venue, Tom's overpowering personality is the controlling factor and he engineers a confrontation with Gatsby and systematically destroys the man, advising Daisy that his wealth has come from illegal activities such as bootlegging. Clearly, Daisy has to make a choice, but she would prefer the status quo, enjoying the best of both worlds, and both relationships, with Tom and Gatsby, but Tom will have none of this and pursues the destruction of the affair. This is the moment of Daisy's betrayal of Gatsby's dream, and she chooses to enjoy the security of being Mrs. Buchanan and mother to Pammy. What Gatsby requires as part of his dream is for Daisy to say that she has always loved him and has never loved Tom. Only in this way can the last 4 years be wiped out. Daisy cannot do this. She will return to her husband and Gatsby's dream is gone forever. So confident is Tom in his victory that he allows Daisy and Gatsby to return to West Egg on their own. When Nick, Tom and Jordan drive back to Long Island, they come across a frightening scene just close to Wilson's garage where Myrtle has been run over and killed by a car coming from New York. The car had struck her, paused and then drove away at speed. Slowly Nick comes to the realization that Gatsby and Daisy in the yellow Rolls Royce must have hit Myrtle. Tom thinks that Wilson will remember the yellow car from that afternoon and suspects that Gatsby must have been the driver.

Back at Tom's house, Nick finds Gatsby hiding in the bushes waiting to make sure that Daisy is safe and not harmed by Tom. He tells Nick that Daisy was driving the car when it struck Myrtle, but Gatsby will take the blame, willing to make this sacrifice for her because of his love for the dream. Nick goes in to see how Tom and Daisy are, and they are eating cold fried chicken and talking as if nothing had happened. They are reconciling their differences. Nick leaves Gatsby standing alone in the moonlight.

### **Interpretation**

Chapter 7 brings the story to its climax with the final confrontation between Gatsby and Tom. Daisy's loyalty to Tom is established and her fate sealed. Throughout the previous chapters, there has been the rumor concerning Gatsby's criminal activities. Tom finally uses this to undermine Daisy's feelings for Gatsby. Gatsby realized his dream of becoming rich, but he had to cheat in order to make it happen. Tom's brute strength and social standing overcome Gatsby's hope and fortune. For Gatsby's vision of the future to come true he must be able to control the past, but this could not happen because Daisy would not admit that she did not love Tom, and also she has a child by him. Daisy is Tom's again, so much so, that Tom feels safe sending her back with Gatsby. The surprising death of Myrtle almost seems like an anti-climax, but it is this, which will finally seal Gatsby's fate. His decision to take the blame for her, shows how deeply in love he still is with Daisy, who by the time she has returned home to Tom, has almost forgotten about the incident.

Nick's New York adventure has gone sour. Myrtle's death, the shallow self-centered Buchanan's and the cold Jordan will all drive him away. The chapter ends much as Chapter 1 did, with Gatsby on his own, pining for Daisy and the green light no longer symbolizes a dream – it is just a light like any other.



## Chapter 8

### Summary

Later that night, Nick goes to visit Gatsby who is desperately trying to hang on to his dream. He is reduced to reminiscing about their courtship in Louisville in 1917. He says how he loved her for her youth and vitality and idolized her social position, wealth and popularity.

In 1917, Daisy appears a more sympathetic character at this point in her life, appearing as a weak and vulnerable person, rather than a vicious one. Gatsby still believes that Daisy only said what she did due to pressure from Tom and will not come to terms with the fact that she feels little for Gatsby.

Early that morning, Gatsby's gardener plans to drain the pool, as he thinks that the falling leaves of autumn will clog the drains. Gatsby wishes to have one more swim and tells the gardener to wait another day before draining the pool. Nick says his farewells to Gatsby, telling him that he thinks he is worth more than the Buchanans and all their friends. Nick is due to meet Jordan for a date, but decides not to fulfill this engagement. He also feels too distracted to work. While riding back to West Egg on the train, he looks down at the gray Valley of Ashes where the plot advances in that George Wilson finds out that the owner of the car which killed his wife is Gatsby. He has suspected that whoever killed his wife, was also her lover. He is blinded by hate and mistakes the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg for those of God. Encouraged by Tom, he goes to Gatsby's mansion, finds him in the pool, shoots him and then shoots himself.

### Interpretation

Nick finally discovers the nature of Gatsby's feelings for Daisy as he gives details of their relationship in Louisville in 1917. For Gatsby to lose Daisy would be like losing his entire world and he is desperate to try and keep his dream alive. Nick imagines that Gatsby's final thoughts are of their time together in 1917. We have already seen how Gatsby idolizes wealth and Daisy. Now we see that the two are very much the same thing in Gatsby's mind. Daisy is the symbol of everything he wants from life. Gatsby's unshakeable faith in this dream has been an affirmation of the richer, more essential part of life, and he emerges as the only admirable character in the book apart from the narrator. Gatsby dies with his dream still alive, awaiting an improbably 'phone call from Daisy.

## Chapter 9

### Summary

Nick tries to hold a large funeral for Gatsby, but all of Gatsby's so-called friends and associates have disappeared. The Buchanans have moved away with no forwarding address, and Wolfsheimer and Klipspringer refuse to come. The only mourners to attend the funeral are Owl Eyes, some long-standing servants and Gatsby's father who came all the way from Minnesota. Nick is sick of his life in New York and the people he has met, and he decides to move back to the mid-west. He finds out that Jordan has suddenly become engaged to another man, although he had decided to break off with her in any case. On his last night in West Egg, Nick walks over to the empty mansion and finds that there is some graffiti written on the side of the house, which he removes. As the moon rises, Nick imagines the island with no buildings and wonders what it must have looked like to the explorers who discovered these new world centuries before. He imagines that America was once a goal for dreamers, just as Daisy was for Gatsby.

### Interpretation

In the final paragraphs of the book, a comparison is made between Gatsby's green light and the 'green breast of the New World'. The word breast suggests that for the early explorers, the American dream was like that of a woman, just as Gatsby's vision was of a perfect woman who in fact did not exist. Gatsby was a dreamer, divorced from the real world and in order for his vision to be fulfilled; he had to win the love of a perfect woman, which turned out to be pure fantasy.

Fitzgerald draws an analogy between Gatsby and the early American explorers, and like Gatsby, they had lost track of their dreams because America lost its way, and the age of dreams is gone. Much of the 'green breast of America' has turned into the gray Valley of Ashes.

## Questions for study with ideas for answers

Question: What are the good and bad aspects of Nick Carraway's narration of the book?

Ideas: His attributes are honesty and tolerance, which soon result in him gaining the confidence and trust of those around him who feel they can confide in him. His indecisiveness is evident as he is able to perceive faults in the other characters, but is reluctant to act accordingly, e.g. it is clear early on that Jordan Baker is a habitual liar, and dishonest, but Nick turns a blind eye to her flaws.

Question: What are the differences between the residents of East and West Egg districts of Long Island? Detail anything they have in common and indicate what sets them apart from each other.

Ideas: The East Egg residents are those who have inherited wealth, the aristocrats. The Buchanan's are the main characters of the book living here, and they form the establishment.

In West Egg are the 'newly rich' e.g. Gatsby who lives in a huge mock palace projecting an image of grossness. Nick, as a middle class conservative, resides in a bungalow befitting his station in life. Apart from their wealth, the aristocrats and 'newly rich' have little in common.

Question: In what way does Fitzgerald's life parallel the life of Gatsby?

Ideas: Under achievement at school; enlisted for the Army at the end of World War 1; in love with women full of vitality and going to great lengths to impress them; indulging in excessive and reckless living; acquiring great wealth at a young age. To win the love of the one he idolised Fitzgerald, like Gatsby, had to go down a road that led to a lifestyle he hated.

Question: The Great Gatsby is rich in symbolism. Give examples of this.

Ideas:

The green light – Daisy's home, Gatsby's dream

Wolfshiem's cufflinks (human teeth) – sleazy character with a criminal background

Yellow Rolls Royce – Gatsby's status symbol and the means of Myrtle's death

Dr. T. J. Eckleburg advertising hoarding – eyes of God for Wilson later on in the plot who's on light blue eyes suggest a spiritless resident of the Valley of Ashes

Dan Cody – instrumental in Gatsby's early education, he symbolises the archetypal American – a man who acquired great wealth, but was incapable of using it for good, only for self-destructive purposes