

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD THE GREAT GATSBY

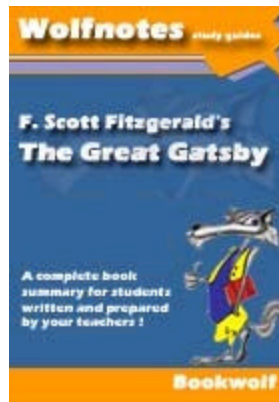


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CONTEXT

Nick Carraway having graduated from Yale and fought in World War I, has returned home to begin a career. He is restless and has decided to move to New York to learn the bond business. The novel opens early in the summer of 1922 in West Egg, Long Island, where Nick has rented a house. Next to his place is the Gatsby's mansion.

Tom and Daisy Buchanan live in East Egg. Daisy is Nick's cousin and Tom had been in the same senior society at Yale. They invite Nick to dinner at their mansion, and he meets a young woman golfer named Jordan Baker, whom Daisy wants Nick to be interested in. During dinner the phone rings, and when Tom and Daisy leave the room, Jordan informs Nick that the caller is Tom's woman from New York.

Myrtle Wilson, Tom's woman, lives in a section of Long Island known as the Valley of Ashes. In the Valley of Ashes is George Wilson's garage. Painted on a large billboard nearby is a fading advertisement for an optician with the eyes of a Doctor looking over them with a pair of glasses.

One day Tom takes Nick to meet the Wilsons. The party breaks up when Myrtle starts using Daisy's name, and Tom breaks her nose with a blow of his open hand. Several weeks later Nick is invited to one of Gatsby's elaborate parties. Nick watches Gatsby and notices that he does not drink or join in the revelry of the party.

At a luncheon with Nick in New York, Gatsby tells Nick that he graduated from Oxford. During lunch Gatsby introduces Nick to his business associate, Meyer Wolfsheim, who fixed the World Series in 1919.

At tea that afternoon Nick finds out the Gatsby wants Nick to arrange a date between him and Daisy. Gatsby had loved Daisy five years ago, but he had been sent overseas by the army. Daisy had given up waiting for him and had married Tom. Gatsby decides to win Daisy back and his first step is to buy a house in West Egg. His house is across the bay from Daisy's house, and he can see a green light at the end of Daisy's dock. It represents his hope.

Gatsby and Daisy meet for the first time in five years, and he tries to impress her with his mansion and his wealth. Tom, Daisy, Gatsby, Nick and Jordan go into the city where the truth is revealed about Gatsby and Daisy. Daisy will not go away with Gatsby and the five-year dream is over. Gatsby and Daisy go home together in a yellow Rolls Royce. On the way home they get into a car accident

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in which Myrtle was killed. Gatsby will take the blame for Daisy who was driving. George Wilson shoots Gatsby and then kills himself.

Not many people came to Gatsby's funeral except Nick, Mr. Gatz, and a few servants. Nick returns to his hometown.

The Author

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 24, 1896. He was named after the author of the National Anthem who was a distant cousin. His father, Edward Fitzgerald was a manufacturer of wicker furniture in St. Paul and his mother, Mary Mc Quille was the daughter of a wealthy wholesale grocer. When Edward Fitzgerald business failed, he became a salesman for Procter & Gamble in upstate New York.

When his father lost his job, the family returned to St. Paul and Fitzgerald attended the St. Paul Academy and the Newman, a Catholic prep school. From there he went to Princeton where he distinguished himself as a writer. He wrote the scripts and lyrics for the Princeton Triangle Club musicals and was a contributor to the *Princeton Tiger* humor magazine and the *Nassau Literary Magazine*. His college friends included Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop.

His literary interests took precedent and he neglected his studies to the point of being placed on probation. This prevented him from graduating with his class and he joined the army in 1917.

He was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry and was assigned to Camp Sheridan near Montgomery, Alabama. There he fell in love with a celebrated belle, eighteen-year-old Zelda Sayre, the youngest daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. The war ended just before he was to be sent overseas. After his discharge in 1919, he went to New York City to seek his fortune in order to marry. Unwilling to live on his small salary, Zelda broke their engagement.

This incident spurred Fitzgerald into writing his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. The book was published in 1920 and brought him fame. His success made Zelda reconsider and they were married shortly thereafter.

The couple lived an extravagant life, traveling, and buying expensive homes in Westport, Connecticut as well as in Great Neck, Long Island. This type of life distracted Fitzgerald and marred his image as a serious writer. He began to drink heavily and even though he wrote only when he was sober, he lost the respect of literary critics.

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Fitzgerald's marriage also started to disintegrate and Zelda began having emotional problems. As her condition worsened, Fitzgerald was forced to give up more and more of his time. He learned that each breakdown made her final recovery less likely and his dependence on alcohol increased.

He went to Hollywood in 1937, where he met Sheilah Graham, a gossip columnist, with whom he lived for the rest of his life. Fitzgerald worked on various screenplays, but completed only one, *THREE COMRADES* (1938), before he was fired because of his drinking.

Fitzgerald died of a fatal heart attack in 1940 at the age of 44.

The chief theme of Fitzgerald's work is aspiration--the idealism he regarded as defining American character.

Another major theme was mutability or loss. As a social historian Fitzgerald became identified with "The Jazz Age": "It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire."

Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* in France, where he and his wife and daughter spent most of the last half of the 1920s. The novel bears almost no resemblance in form to those that had come before. In *Jay Gatsby*, Fitzgerald created far more than just another Amory Blaine seeking his fortune in the world.

In his misguided romantic way, *Gatsby* stands for a deeper malaise in the culture. It typifies a sickness that drives young men to think that riches can obliterate the past and capture the hearts of the girls of their dreams.

The reviews for *The Great Gatsby* were the most favorable so far. Most notably Gilbert Seldes proclaimed that Fitzgerald has mastered his talents and gone soaring in a beautiful flight, leaving behind him everything dubious and tricky in his earlier work, and leaving even further behind all the men of his own generation and most of his elders. He praises Fitzgerald's ability to report on a tiny section of life ... with irony and pity and a consuming passion, calling the novel passionate.

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

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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:

The novel begins with Nick Carraway, a young man from the Midwest, introducing himself as a graduate of Yale and a veteran of World War I. He recalls the events of the summer of 1922 when he moved to New York to learn the bond business. He tells us that he's tolerant, inclined to reserve judgment about people, and a good listener. People tell him their secrets because they trust him; he knows the Story of Gatsby. If you read closely, you'll see that Nick has ambivalent feelings toward Gatsby. He both loves Gatsby and is critical of him. Nick is tolerant, but that toleration has limits. He hates Gatsby's crass and vulgar materialism, but he also admires the man for his dream, his "romantic readiness," his "extraordinary gift for hope."

Nick makes the distinction between Gatsby, whom he loves because of his dream, and the other characters, who constitute the "foul dust" that "floated in the wake of his dreams." Nick has such scorn for these "Eastern" types that he has left the East, returned to the Midwest, and, for the time being at least, withdraws from his involvement with other people.

Having told us about his relationships, Nick now introduces us to the world in which he lived during the summer of 1922: the world of East Egg and West Egg, Long Island.

The story opens in East Egg on the night Nick drives over to have dinner with Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Daisy is Nick's cousin and Tom had been in the same senior society at Yale. Their house is "a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial Mansion" overlooking the bay. And the owner is obviously proud of his possessions.

Our first view of Tom Buchanan reveals a very powerful man standing in riding clothes with his legs apart on his front porch. He likes his power, and like the potentates of Eastern kingdoms, he expects the obedience of his subjects.

We are ushered into the living room with its "frosted wedding cake" ceiling, its wine-colored rug, and its enormous couch on which are seated two princesses in white: Jordan Baker and Tom's wife, Daisy Buchanan. Fitzgerald controls the whole scene through his use of colors--white and gold mainly--that suggest a combination of beauty and wealth.

Yet underneath this magical surface there is something wrong. Jordan Baker is bored and discontented. She yawns more than once in this very first scene. There is something cool and slightly unpleasant about the atmosphere--

something basically disturbing. Tom talks about a book he has read, *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by Goddard. It is a piece of pure Social Darwinism, advocating that the white race preserve its own purity and beat down the colored races before they rise up and overcome the whites. Daisy, who seems not to understand what Tom is talking about, teases him about his size and about the big words in the book. The telephone rings, and Tom is called from the room to answer it. When Daisy follows him out, Jordan Baker confides to Nick that the call is from Tom's woman in New York.

The rest of the evening is awkward and painful as Tom and Daisy try unsuccessfully to forget the intrusion. Daisy's cynicism about life becomes painfully clear when she says about her daughter's birth: "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."

When Nick returns home, he sees his neighbor standing alone and staring across the water at a "single green light, minute and far away." He was tempted to speak to him but then changed his mind.

Interpretation:

The first chapter introduces the main characters of the novel and identifies Nick as not only being the narrator of the story but also being deeply involved in the action. He starts the novel by relaying his father's advice, "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." This thought causes him to hold back in formulating opinions about people that he meets.

It is interesting to note the sharp contrast between Tom Buchanan and the women, Daisy and Jordan. Tom is described as a "big, hulking physical specimen" who likes to domineer others. Daisy and Jordan are presented as being demure and dressed in white, a sign of purity. This is in complete contrast of their character as the story later reveals.

Fitzgerald designed *The Great Gatsby* very carefully, establishing each of the locations in the novel as a symbol for a particular style of life. West Egg, where Nick and Gatsby live, is essentially a place for the nouveau riche. There are two types of people living here: those on the way up the social ladder who have not the family background or the money to live in fashionable East Egg; and those like Gatsby, whose vulgar display of wealth and connections with Broadway or the New York underworld make them unwelcome in the more dignified world of East Egg. Nick describes his own house as an eyesore, but it is a smaller eyesore than Gatsby's mansion, which has a tower on one side, "spanking new under a

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thin beard of raw ivy." Words like new, thin, and raw describe some of the reasons Gatsby's house is a monstrosity.

By contrast, East Egg is like a fairyland. Its primary color is white, and Nick calls its houses "white palaces" that glitter in the sunlight.

Chapter 2

Summary:

Tom takes Nick to meet Myrtle Wilson, Tom's woman, who lives in a section of Long Island known as the Valley of Ashes. Her husband, George, has a gas station and an auto repair shop there and the couple lives directly above it. It is located in a desolate section on a road that runs between West Egg and New York. Nearby is a large billboard upon which is painted a fading advertisement for an optician with the eyes of a Doctor looking over the area with a pair of glasses.

Tom has Myrtle meet them in the city, where Tom buys her a dog. They go to visit Myrtle's sister and also visit her neighbors, Catherine McKee and her husband, who is an artist. They gossip about Gatsby, and Myrtle discusses her husband, claiming that she was crazy to marry him, and how she met Tom. The party breaks up when Myrtle starts using Daisy's name and Tom breaks her nose with a blow of his open hand.

Interpretation:

This chapter brings into focus the other two settings of the novel, the Valley of Ashes and New York City. The Valley is described as being gray, bleak, and poverty ridden. The most dominant feature of the area are two huge eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, a billboard advertisement of an optometrist. They first take on meaning in subsequent chapters.

New York City is presented as being vibrant and glitzy. In this setting, Myrtle can give her fantasy full reign and she becomes lively and boisterous. Tom can indulge in his vulgarity and carry on his love affair with Myrtle without any concerns.

Chapter 3

Summary:

Nick Carraway describes the customs of Gatsby's weekly parties: the arrival of crates of oranges and lemons, a corps of caterers and a large orchestra. On the first night that Carraway visits Gatsby's house, he was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. When he arrives, he is delighted to see Jordan Baker, a familiar face. He had not seen her since meeting her at his cousin's house. They strike up a conversation and she tells him that she has recently lost a golf tournament. They then start to talk about Gatsby and the ridiculous gossip that surrounds him - he supposedly killed a man, or was a German spy.

Nick expresses a desire to meet his host so that he can thank him for the invitation. They start to look for him and walk into the mansion. They reach Gatsby's library and find another guest there, a man wearing very large eyeglasses. At first Jordan thinks that the books are not real and is surprised to find that they are. After looking into a few other rooms, they return to the garden.

Later that evening, a man who recognizes Nick from the war talks to him - Nick does not know that it is Gatsby. Suddenly, after he identifies himself, Gatsby gets a phone call from Chicago. Afterwards, Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan Baker alone. When she finishes talking to Gatsby, she tells Nick that she heard the most amazing thing and will tell him about it at some later time.

Guests begin to leave the party. Some are too drunk to drive and a group has a car wreck in Gatsby's driveway. One of the involved people happens to be the man whom Nick saw in the library earlier that evening.

This was merely one event in a crowded summer. Carraway, who spent most of his time working, began to like New York. For a while he lost sight of Jordan Baker. He was not in love with her, but had some interest in her.

Interpretation:

Even upon his introduction, Jay Gatsby remains a mystery. At his parties few of the guests know the host or are even invited at all. This chapter builds on the idea that there is something not only mysterious, but also sinister about Gatsby. All of the gossip that relates to Gatsby is borderline monstrous; whether committing murder or spying for the Germans during the war. When Nick finally meets Gatsby, the man is unassuming and ordinary, easily mistaken for another guest. Among the others he is isolated. He alone does not dance.

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The sense of mystery that surrounds Gatsby is compounded by the long discussion that he has with Jordan Baker. There is some amazing news about Gatsby that Jordan will soon reveal to Nick.

Another contemporary touch that Fitzgerald adds to this chapter is the use of cars. At the time of this book's publication, they were still novelty items, and Fitzgerald presents them with a sense of luxurious danger. A car accident disturbs the end of the party, when one of the guests drives drunk, and Carraway realizes that Jordan is a terribly unsafe driver. Her near car accident serves as a metaphor for the behavior of her contemporaries: Jordan is a careless driver because she expects others to be careful and stay out of her way in the event of an accident.

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 Wolfsheim, 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. Cody showed his appreciation by giving Gatz a job. He became Cody's personal servant and this opened a new life for Gatz. He was able to travel to exotic locations such as the West Indies and the Barbary Coast. Gatsby fell in love with the opulent lifestyle and he was determined to become wealthy himself.

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 that they did not expect that he would accept.

The following Saturday night Tom and Daisy go to the Gatsby party. Tom wants to see for himself what Daisy sees in Gatsby. 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.

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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.

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:

It was the following Saturday when Nick noticed that the usual party preparations were not occurring. Nick goes to see if Gatsby is sick, and learns that Gatsby has dismissed every servant in his house and replaced them with a half dozen others who would not gossip, for Daisy has been visiting in the afternoons.

Daisy invites Gatsby, Nick and Jordan to lunch. It is an extremely hot day and when they arrive, Tom is supposedly on the telephone with Myrtle Wilson. Daisy shows off her daughter, who is dressed in white, to her guests. Shortly thereafter, Tom joins his guests and comments about the heat that he read that the sun is getting hotter and soon the earth will fall into it - or rather that the sun is getting colder. Daisy makes an offhand remark that she loves Gatsby, which Tom overhears.

When Tom goes inside to get a drink, Nick remarks that Daisy has an indiscreet voice. Gatsby says that her voice is "full of money." After some additional tension-filled conversation between Tom and Gatsby, they all decide to drive to New York for diversion. Tom insists on trading cars with Gatsby for the drive into the city, so Gatsby and Daisy take Tom's car while Tom drives with Nick and Jordan in Gatsby's new yellow roadster.

As Tom speeds towards New York, he decides to spin by Wilson's gas station to torment Mr. Wilson for a few minutes. At the station, Nick notices Myrtle peering out her second-story window:

Meanwhile, Wilson was relating to Tom how he suspects that his wife was involved with another man, and how the two of them would soon be moving west. Feeling slandered and confused, Tom punches the gas pedal and races off toward the city.

Arriving in New York, Tom's group meets up with Gatsby and Daisy, and everyone decides to go to the Plaza Hotel to last out the heat sipping mint juleps. But soon Tom and Gatsby become embroiled in a heated argument. In anger, Gatsby roars that Daisy was in love with him now. What's more, he alleges that Daisy never did love Tom.

Tom shouts that it was a lie, then turns to Daisy for acquittal. Although she wants to side with Gatsby, she can not. "I can't say I never loved Tom.... It wouldn't be true," she stuttered. Tom confronts Gatsby with the information that he has found out and calls him a "common swindler and bootlegger."

Daisy is shocked by all of what she hears and not wanting to be associated with a criminal, she begins to side with Tom. It is at this point that Tom realizes that he has won her back and that Gatsby has lost Daisy forever.

Gatsby heads for home in his roadster with Daisy at his side; Tom, Nick and Jordan drive a few miles behind. Suddenly, Tom's group comes upon the scene of an accident in front of Wilson's gas station. A woman, Myrtle Wilson, has been run over and killed; the "yellow car" that had hit her hadn't even stopped. Tom, convinced that Gatsby had struck Myrtle, drove hurriedly on home. Tears streamed down his face. "The God damned coward!" he whimpered, "He didn't even stop his car."

Interpretation:

A number of changes accompany the new romance between Gatsby and Daisy. Gatsby has reunited with Daisy; he no longer needs to throw his lavish parties simply to find some connection to her. For the first time, Gatsby shows some awareness of public perceptions of him. Previously, Gatsby has shown no interest in the numerous rumors concerning his reputation; however, with Daisy's frequent visits he must now exercise some discretion.

Tom's awareness of Daisy's affair is mirrored in Wilson's realization that Myrtle and Tom's affair. A major development in this chapter is that Fitzgerald reveals how each of the characters knows or at least suspects what is going on with the others. This is not a society in which moral codes are strictly enforced or infidelities are shocking news. Although angry at his wife, Tom is certainly not shocked by Daisy's behavior. Quite tellingly, Tom seems less opposed to the fact that his wife is having an affair than that she is having an affair with a man he considers to be low class.

The introduction of Daisy's daughter is an abrupt and jarring development in the novel. It is an additional reminder to Gatsby that he cannot turn back the five years that have passed, and makes it quite clear that Daisy is a mother. Yet the presence of her daughter makes Daisy seem all the more immature. Fitzgerald describes the child as nearly identical to her mother, even dressed in white as Daisy traditionally is, and Daisy's manner seems even more insubstantial than usual around the young girl.

The chapter also elucidates the particular qualities in Daisy that Gatsby admires. His remark "Her voice is full of money" is particularly significant. For Gatsby, Daisy represents the money (and, more importantly, the status it entails) for which he has yearned. The distinction between 'old' and 'new' money is crucial;

while Gatsby had to strive to earn his fortune, Daisy's inherited wealth has formed her sense of ease and leisure.

The description of Myrtle at the window foreshadows dire events relating to the character. While the others remain calm despite the more shocking revelations, Myrtle verges on hysterics. Tom responds to events with bitter disgust, and Wilson descends into glum resignation. Myrtle, however, is seized with "jealous terror."

The confrontation between Gatsby and Tom depends upon the major motivations for each character. For Tom, the affair between Gatsby and Daisy is further proof of the decline of society and, more importantly, of social stratification. Tom's attacks on Gatsby are meant to expose Gatsby as a lower class fraud. He opposes his wife's affair because it sneers at family life and institutions - the very institutions that place Tom at the apex of society. He even claims that the affair is a step toward the eventual collapse of society and "intermarriage between white and black." This is a remarkable shift for Tom, who moves "from libertine to prig" when it suits his needs. Tom obviously does not predict similar dire consequences stemming from his affair with Myrtle.

Gatsby, however, desires no less than for Daisy to entirely renounce Tom and to claim her unwavering devotion to Gatsby. When she refuses to concede that she never loved Tom, it is a defeat for Gatsby, who can accept nothing less. It is this fact that gives Tom the victory. Daisy may not love Tom, but she doesn't love Gatsby enough to satisfy him. His expectations are far too high to ever allow complete satisfaction.

Daisy remains a pawn throughout the entire chapter, caught between the arguments of the two men. Her fragility is particularly important in this chapter. Tom and Gatsby fight over who can possess Daisy and provide for her. Gatsby does not tell Tom that Daisy is leaving him, but that "You're not going to take care of her anymore." Neither of the men conceives of Daisy having the ability for independent action. Yet the careless Daisy does not challenge their possessiveness. Gatsby lets her drive to calm her down after the argument, but she is not up to the task. Afterwards, Gatsby must leave the scene of the accident and hide the car to protect her delicate nerves. Her weakness is such that for Gatsby, Daisy's emotions are all that matter, despite the fact that she killed another woman through her careless driving.

Throughout the chapter, Nick serves as simply a passive observer. He is caught up in the events surrounding him, even forgetting important details of his own life. He goes without noticing that the day was his thirtieth birthday. When he does realize this, it reflects a turning point for Nick. He has witnessed the bitter

confrontation between Tom and Gatsby, which matures him, and this newfound maturity is reflected in a literal aging of the character.

Chapter 8

Summary:

Nick cannot sleep that night. Toward dawn he hears a taxi go up Gatsby's drive, and he immediately feels that he has something to warn Gatsby about. Gatsby is still there, watching Daisy's mansion across the bay.

Nick warns him to get away for a week, since his car will inevitably be traced, but he refuses to consider it. He cannot leave Daisy until he knows what she will do. It was then that Gatsby told his entire history to Nick.

Gatsby still refuses to believe that Daisy ever loved Tom. After the war Gatsby searched for Daisy, only to find that she had married Tom. Nick leaves reluctantly, having to go to work that morning. Before he leaves, Nick tells Gatsby that he's "worth the whole damn bunch put together." At work, Nick gets a call from Jordan, and they have a tense conversation.

That day Michaelis goes to comfort Wilson, who is convinced that his wife was murdered. He had found the dog collar that Tom had bought Myrtle hidden the day before, which prompted their sudden decision to move west. Wilson looks out at the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg and tells Michaelis that "God sees everything." Wilson left, "acting crazy" (according to witnesses), and found his way to Gatsby's house. Gatsby had gone out to the pool for one last swim before draining it for the fall. Wilson shot him, and then shot himself.

Interpretation:

Nick's concern for Gatsby demonstrates the loyalty that he still has toward the man. Despite all of the careless behavior that Gatsby has been involved in, he still remains absolved of a great deal of the blame. Nick gives the final appraisal of Gatsby when he tells him that he's "worth the whole damn bunch of them."

Although Nick disapproves of some things that Gatsby does, he admires him for being the hopeless and hopeful "great romantic who represents the worldly ambitions in all of us. He believes in seizing the 'green light' and the dreams of youth, no matter what the cost.

The exchange between Michaelis and Wilson before he seeks out Gatsby is significant. He looks out at the eyes advertisement and claims that "God sees everything," an important injection of morality into the novel. The only previous statements of moral belief have come from Tom, who uses them as weapons to maintain his societal status. For Wilson the statement is of religious terror: whatever sins these people commit, they cannot hide them from god. Yet this

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jarring introduction of moral instruction is based on delusion. Wilson confuses the eyes of an advertisement for the eyes of god.

Fitzgerald imbues the description of Gatsby's death with images of transition. Even before the murder occurs there seems to be an understanding that a change will soon occur. When Nick leaves Gatsby they say good-bye to each other, implying that it is a final departure. Before Gatsby is murdered he is taking one last swim before draining the pool for the fall.

Gatsby's unshakable faith in his 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:

Fitzgerald closes *The Great Gatsby* by tying up several loose ends. During the day after Gatsby's death, Nick feels that he alone is on his neighbor's side, as Gatsby's house floods with police, photographers, and newspapermen. Discovering that Tom and Daisy Buchanan have left town, leaving no address, Nick sends a letter to Meyer Wolfsheim informing him of Gatsby's death. Wolfsheim responds by saying although it is one of the most difficult shocks of his life, he is simply too busy to be involved with funeral preparations or visit Gatsby's house.

As Nick stays with the dead body at Gatsby's house the phone rings, and a man begins talking -- believing Gatsby answered the phone -- with news that "Young Parke's in trouble....They picked him up when he handed the bonds over the counter" (174). This seems to indicate, finally, that Gatsby was involved with illegally handling stolen bond funds.

Gatsby's father arrives for the funeral, and Nick attempts to find others to attend; everyone he speaks with, however, has an excuse. None of the guests who abused Gatsby's hospitality at his parties all summer show up to his funeral, until Owl Eyes -- a character from Nick's first visit to Gatsby's -- arrives. Taken aback that no one else came, Owl Eyes remembers, "Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds....The poor son-of-a-bitch" (183).

After Gatsby's death, Nick determines to move back to the Midwest, but first goes to visit Jordan Baker one last time. To Nick's surprise, Jordan informs him that she is already engaged to somebody else, prompting him to leave angrily, still "half in love with her, and tremendously sorry" (186). Later that fall Nick runs into Tom Buchanan, who Nick remains angry at. Having figured out that George Wilson had gone to see Tom before killing Gatsby, Nick asks Tom what he told Wilson that afternoon. Tom replies, "I told him the truth," (187) elaborating that Wilson was crazy enough to kill him if he didn't reveal who owned the car.

Finally, on his last night in West Egg, Nick goes over to Gatsby's house -- that "huge incoherent failure of a house" (188) -- where he finds some boy has scrawled an obscene word with a piece of brick on the front steps. After erasing it, Nick walks to the beach, reflecting on how Gatsby's green light -- one man's hope for the future -- was actually just part of an unattainable past.

Interpretation:

The reports of Gatsby's death are consistent with the rumors that circulated when he was alive: they assume a number of lurid details, when in fact the circumstances of the murder are actually somewhat mundane. The general opinion of Gatsby after the death demonstrates clearly how he was such an outsider in society. Only Nick remains devoted to Gatsby after the murder, while the rest of Gatsby's acquaintances have no interest in him. The many guests at his parties are now absent; his murder confirms the ill suspicions and rumors that had circulated concerning Gatsby.

After the murder, Tom and Daisy quickly flee New York, an action typical of their careless behavior. They do not take responsibility for any of the events surrounding Gatsby's murder, leaving Nick to handle everything alone. Even Meyer Wolfsheim behaves responsibly in comparison to the Buchanans. Although he refuses to be mixed up in the situation, he still shows concern and compassion. Wolfsheim even gives a sane appraisal of the situation, telling Nick that one should show friendship for a man when he is alive.

Wolfsheim's reluctance to be involved seems honorable, and Fitzgerald makes it clear that Wolfsheim had genuine affection for Gatsby. The Buchanans behave entirely selfishly.

Henry Gatz serves to place Gatsby's life in proper perspective. From him Nick learns how much Gatsby achieved and how dedicated he was to self-improvement. Even when he was an adolescent he had grand plans for becoming respectable. Contrary to his reputation as a man interested only in pleasure, Gatsby took good care of his father, buying him a house and providing him with a modestly comfortable life.

The funeral provides further evidence that few had any concern for Gatsby. Other than his servants, Henry Gatz and Nick, only the Owl-Eyed man from the first party attend the funeral. Where hundreds attended his parties, only a small number attend his funeral.

A common trait among the principle characters of the novel - Gatsby, Daisy, Nick, and the Buchanans - is that each came east for its excitement, compared to the bored Midwest. Yet for Nick the excitement of the east is a grotesque distortion. The excitement of the east sustains wild parties at the Gatsby mansion, but also provides an atmosphere in which people as careless as the Buchanans can wreak incredible havoc upon others.

Jordan's 'bad driver' metaphor places Nick into a different light. Since he serves primarily as an objective narrator, there is little critique of his actions. Only

Jordan points out that Nick is as false and careless as the others. He pursued a halfhearted romance with Jordan with little consideration for her feelings, showing interest for her only casually. Significantly, she does not find the solution to their faults to be self-improvement and correction, but rather avoidance. According to Jordan, irresponsible people are only harmful when they find each other (as Nick had found her and the Buchanans).

The meeting between Tom and Nick is disturbing because Tom sincerely believes that he deserves some degree of sympathy. It was Tom who was responsible for Gatsby's murder, but he believed that the outcome was justice. It is here that Nick fully realizes the Buchanans' depravity, giving the most accurate appraisal of them: he calls them "careless people" who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness."

Fitzgerald concludes the novel with a final note on Gatsby's beliefs. It is this particular aspect of his character - his optimistic belief in achievement and the ability to attain one's dreams - that defines Gatsby, in contrast to the compromising cynicism of his peers. Yet the final symbol contradicts and deflates the grand optimism that Gatsby held. Fitzgerald ends the book with the sentence "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly into the past," which contradicts Gatsby's fervent belief that one can escape his origins and rewrite his past.

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.

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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 Wolfsheim'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 selfdestructive purposes