



# The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

## Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

In 1922, Nick Carraway, a 29-year-old Midwesterner who moves east to New York after World War I to sell bonds for Probitry Trust, rents a run-down cottage on the shore of West Egg, Long Island. On East Egg, across the bay, his second cousin Daisy Fay Buchanan lives in a Georgian estate with her husband Tom. On a courtesy visit, Nick meets Daisy's childhood friend, Jordan Baker, a tournament golf pro, who confides to Nick that Tom keeps a woman in New York. Jordan shushes Nick so she can eavesdrop on a phone conversation between Tom and the mistress, who calls him at his home at mealtime.

### Chapter 2

Accompanying Nick on a commuter train to New York City, Tom suggests that they get off to meet his girl, Myrtle, wife of mechanic George Wilson, who owns the garage. She lies about visiting her sister so she can join the men on the train, but cautiously sits in a separate car. After purchasing a dog, they enter an apartment where Myrtle's urbane sister Catherine, photographer Tom and Lucille McKee, and other acquaintances engage in a drunken party which culminates with an argument between Tom and Myrtle. Before their guests, he breaks her nose.

### Chapter 3

Living next door to Nick is Jay Gatsby, a mysterious thirty-year-old tycoon whose parties are the talk of New York society. The source of his wealth is the subject of wild speculation, which links him with bootlegging, bond swindles, and murder. Nick receives an invitation to one of the parties, where he encounters Jordan.

### Chapter 4

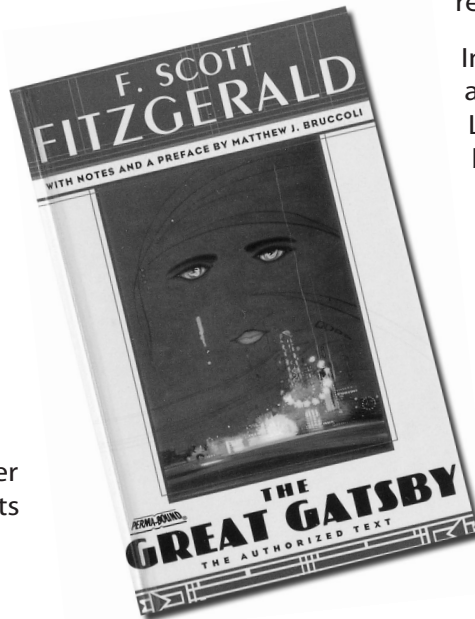
As Nick's friendship with Jay deepens, Nick is both attracted and repelled. On July 5, 1922, he begins a written schedule of celebrities attending Jay's parties. At 9:00 A. M. late in July, Jay invites Nick to lunch. Jay recites bits of his past. Inconsistencies cast doubt on his credibility. At lunch with Nick and Meyer Wolfshiem, a seedy racketeer, Jay informs Nick that Jordan will serve as his go-between. From her, Nick learns that Jay had been Daisy's girlhood lover and that he had reentered her life six weeks earlier.

In October 1917, when Gatsby was an army lieutenant at Camp Taylor near Louisville, he fell in love with Daisy, but her parents prevented their marriage. After he left for the front, she was engaged to Tom Buchanan in February 1918. She married him in June, despite a drunken soak in the tub where she clenched a sodden letter from Jay and wept. In August, when the Buchanans returned to Santa Barbara from a South Seas honeymoon, Daisy appeared to be in love. Jordan informs Nick that he must invite Daisy to tea.

### Chapter 5

That night, Jay gives a party that lights the sky at 2:00 A. M. He invites Nick to swim. Nick intends to call Daisy the next day to invite her to tea the following afternoon. Jay offers to include Nick in a business deal. Nick declines. At 11:00 A. M., a man cuts the grass; flowers arrive at 2:00 P. M. An hour later, Jay appears. At 3:58 P. M., he grows impatient. Daisy arrives and sends her driver away for an hour. The two reunite after five years apart. At 4:30 P. M., Nick leaves them alone.

Jay invites Daisy and Nick to his house. A house guest named Klipspringer plays "Ain't We Got Fun" on the piano. As Jay shows his guests through his mansion, he displays silk shirts, wealth and blind devotion impress Daisy. He displays newspaper clippings detailing social events she attends. Nick departs, leaving them together.



## Chapter 6

Nick learns that Jay is really James Gatz of North Dakota. After working along Lake Superior's south shore, Jay had attended St. Olaf College in Minnesota, but quit after two weeks because he hated having to work as a janitor. At Little Girl Bay, he had met Dan Cody, a speculator in metals, and traveled with him as his agent aboard the yacht *Tuolomee* to the West Indies. After Dan's death five years later, Jay inherited \$25,000, but the money passed to Ella Kaye.

For several weeks, Nick dates Jordan, but sees nothing of Jay. One Sunday in August, Nick goes to Jay's house and meets Tom Buchanan, who visits with the Sloanes. Mrs. Sloane invites Jay, but the couple leave before he can dress to go with them. The next Saturday night, the Buchanans come to Jay's party. Daisy is sparkling, but Tom, who suspects Daisy of adultery, is truculent. To Tom's question about Jay's wealth, Daisy contributes that he owns drug stores. Late that night, after the Buchanans depart, Jay confides his fears that Daisy didn't have a good time. He recalls kissing her five years before.

## Chapter 7

When Daisy begins visiting regularly, Jay fires his servants and hires a staff recommended by Wolfsheim. A week later, Jay stops hosting parties. Daisy invites Nick to lunch the next day. A phone call to Tom interrupts. Daisy introduces her daughter, Pammy. Tom becomes insanely jealous. Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, Nick, and Jordan depart from East Egg in two cars. At a stop at Wilson's garage, Tom, who drives Gatsby's yellow convertible, learns that the Wilsons plan to move west. George implies that he learned two days before that Myrtle is unfaithful. Tom fears that his wife and mistress are slipping away.

After engaging a suite at the Plaza Hotel shortly before 4:00 P.M., Tom challenges Jay about claiming to be an Oxford man. Jay explains that he attended Oxford in 1919 for five months. He informs Tom that he and Daisy have been in love for five years and insists that she never loved Tom. Daisy weakly confirms her love, but can't deny having loved Tom. Tom denigrates Jay's connections with Wolfsheim and claims they sell grain alcohol at drug stores.

At 7:00 P.M., Tom, Nick, and Jordan depart from the hotel in Tom's blue coupé; Daisy and Gatsby leave in Gatsby's yellow convertible. As the yellow car passes Wilson's garage, Myrtle, thinking that Tom has returned, flees her room and runs into the road. The car strikes her and rips her left breast, killing her instantly. The driver does not stop. Tom halts at the scene, where a police officer collects eyewitness testimony. George is hysterical with grief. On the drive to East Egg, Tom blames Jay for the hit and run. That night, Jay stands outside the Buchanan house. To Nick's questions, he indicates that Daisy was driving.

## Chapter 8

The next morning, Jay tells Nick that Daisy had come to her window at 4:00 A.M. Nick sits smoking with Jay, who tells about his youth with Cody and his love for Daisy the fall before he left Camp Taylor for the front. Jay rose to the rank of Captain while fighting in the Argonne Forest. Left alone, Daisy met Tom. Jay returned home while Daisy was still honeymooning.

Jay and Nick talk from dawn until 9:00 A.M., when Nick is to leave for the train. He remains to be with Jay, then goes to the office. Jay takes a swim in his pool before it is drained for winter. Jordan calls before noon to arrange a date with Nick, but he can't leave. At 3:50 P.M., Nick takes the train home. He learns that the crowd stayed at Wilson's garage until after midnight; at 3:00 A.M., Wilson quieted and told about his twelve-year marriage to Myrtle. His neighbor, Michaelis, examined a dog leash Myrtle kept in a drawer. Armed with a gun, Wilson searched the neighborhood for the driver of the car that killed Myrtle. He confronted Tom, who named Jay as Myrtle's lover and the driver of the yellow convertible. After 4:00 P.M., Nick and the staff find Jay on an air mattress at the pool, where Wilson shot him, then shot himself with the same gun.

## Chapter 9

The police deduce that Wilson was deranged with grief. Nick learns that the Buchanans left early that afternoon. Nick attempts to invite friends, relatives, and business acquaintances to Jay's funeral. He calls Wolfsheim's office after five. The next morning, Nick dispatches the butler with a letter and receives a hasty turndown. The third day, Henry C. Gatz arrives from Minnesota. That night, Klipspringer calls and promises to attend the

funeral the next day at 3:00 P.M. Nick goes to Wolfshiem's office, where the older man claims to have made Jay rich. Mr. Gatz shows Nick a cowboy book with a daily schedule dated September 12, 1906.

At 5:00 P.M., the cortege drives to the cemetery. Few people attend: Nick, the postman, servants, Owl-Eyes, who is a former guest at one of Gatsby's parties, and Jay's father. He tells Nick that Jay, originally named James "Jimmy" Gatz, decided at age seventeen to elude his real past and pursued an idealized self-image. He achieved his abandonment of the West by dropping out of St. Olaf College and following the mentorship of entrepreneur Dan Cody, a shifty copper tycoon and yachtsman.

Nick, saddened by Jay's death, rejects Jordan Baker, who claims to be engaged. In October, Nick encounters Tom in Manhattan and refuses to shake his hand. Nick learns that Tom directed George Wilson to Gatsby's house and realizes that Tom takes no blame for the murder-suicide. Disenchanted with the Buchanans, Nick moves back to the Midwest—away from the reckless, idle rich who have soiled the purity of the New World.

## Timeline

<b>1904</b>	The formation of an Anglo-French entente alarms Germany.
<b>1906</b>	France establishes a Moroccan protectorate.
<b>September 12</b>	<i>Jay Gatz composes a daily schedule in a Hopalong Cassidy book.</i>
<b>1907</b>	Britain allies with Russia and France in the Triple Entente.
<b>1909</b>	<i>Jay attends St. Olaf's College for two weeks, then becomes the protégé of Dan Cody.</i>
<b>1908</b>	Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Hercegovina.
<b>1910</b>	<i>George Wilson marries Myrtle.</i>
<b>October 1912</b>	Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro form the Balkan League.
<b>August 10, 1913</b>	England negotiates the Treaty of Bucharest.
<b>1914</b>	<i>Dan Cody dies, leaving Jay \$25,000, which he never collects.</i>
<b>June 24</b>	A Serb assassinates Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo.

<b>July 28</b>	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
<b>August 1</b>	Germany declares war on Russia.
<b>August 3</b>	Germany declares war on France.
<b>August 4</b>	Germany marches through Belgium. England declares war on Germany.
<b>May 7, 1915</b>	German torpedoes sink the <i>Lusitania</i> , unleashing anti-German sentiments in America.
<b>December 18, 1916</b>	War casualties reach a million.
<b>April 2, 1917</b>	President Woodrow Wilson calls for war.
<b>summer</b>	<i>Jay falls in love with Daisy.</i>
<b>fall</b>	<i>Jay leaves for the Argonne Forest.</i>
<b>November 7</b>	Lenin and Trotsky seize power in Russia.
<b>February 1918</b>	<i>Daisy is engaged to Tom Buchanan.</i>
<b>March</b>	General Pershing places American forces under Commander Foch.
<b>June</b>	<i>They are married and leave for a honeymoon in the South Seas.</i>
<b>August</b>	<i>The Buchanans return to Santa Barbara.</i>
<b>September 26- November 11</b>	The final major confrontations of World War I occur at the Argonne Forest.
<b>later</b>	<i>Jay is decorated by Montenegro.</i>
<b>January 18, 1919</b>	Peace talks, led by Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George, and Vittorio Orlando, open in Paris.
<b>January 25</b>	A League of Nations is established.
<b>later 1920</b>	<i>Jay attends Oxford University for five months. Pammy Buchanan is born.</i>
<b>January 16</b>	Prohibition ends the sale of liquor in the United States.
<b>1922</b>	<i>Nick Carroway moves east to New York after World War I to sell bonds for Probitry Trust.</i>
<b>late in May</b>	<i>Nick meets Jordan Baker at the home of his cousin, Daisy Buchanan.</i>
<b>later</b>	<i>Accompanying Nick on a commuter train to New York, Tom introduces him to Myrtle, wife of mechanic George Wilson, who owns the garage. At Tom's New York apartment, Nick meets Myrtle's sister Catherine. Tom breaks Myrtle's nose.</i>
<b>Saturday July 5, 1922</b>	<i>Nick receives an invitation to one of Jay's parties. Nick lists celebrities attending Jay's parties.</i>
<b>9:00 A. M.</b>	
<b>late in July</b>	<i>Jay invites Nick to lunch, where he meets Meyer Wolfshiem. Jay informs Nick that Jordan will serve as his go-between that night.</i>
<b>2:00 A. M.</b>	<i>Jay's party lights up the sky.</i>

<b>afterward</b>	<i>Jay invites Nick to swim.</i>
<b>11:00 A. M.</b>	<i>A man cuts the grass before tea that afternoon.</i>
<b>2:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Flowers arrive.</i>
<b>3:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Jay appears at Nick's house.</i>
<b>3:58 P. M.</b>	<i>He grows restless.</i>
<b>4:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Daisy arrives and reunites with Jay after five years apart.</i>
<b>4:30 P. M.</b>	<i>Nick leaves them alone.</i>
<b>5:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Jay invites them to his house.</i>
<b>for several weeks</b>	
<b>a Sunday in August</b>	<i>Nick dates Jordan and sees nothing of Jay.</i>
	<i>Nick goes to Jay's house and meets Tom Buchanan, who visits while horseback riding with the Sloanes.</i>
<b>next Saturday night</b>	<i>The Buchanans come to Jay's party, after which Daisy begins visiting regularly.</i>
<b>a week later</b>	<i>Jay stops hosting parties.</i>
<b>next day</b>	<i>Daisy invites Nick to lunch along with Jay and Jordan.</i>
<b>4:00 P. M.</b>	<i>The party takes a suite at the Plaza Hotel in New York City.</i>
<b>7:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Tom, Nick, and Jordan depart from the hotel in Tom's blue coupé; Daisy and Gatsby leave in Gatsby's yellow convertible.</i>
<b>that night</b>	<i>Gatsby stands outside the Buchanan house after Daisy kills Myrtle in a hit and run accident.</i>
<b>3:00 A. M.</b>	<i>Wilson tells Michaelis about his marriage to Myrtle.</i>
<b>4:00 A. M.</b>	<i>Jay keeps watch until Daisy comes to her window.</i>
<b>dawn until late morning</b>	<i>Jay and Nick talk until Nick leaves for the train.</i>
<b>noon</b>	<i>Jordan calls Nick to arrange a date</i>
<b>3:50 P. M.</b>	<i>Nick takes the train home.</i>
<b>4:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Nick and the staff find the bodies of Jay and Wilson.</i>
<b>after 5:00 P. M.</b>	<i>Nick tries to call Wolfshiem.</i>
<b>next morning</b>	<i>Nick dispatches the butler with a letter to Wolfshiem and receives a hasty reply.</i>
<b>third day</b>	<i>Henry C. Gatz arrives from Minnesota.</i>
<b>that night</b>	<i>Klipspringer calls and promises to attend the funeral.</i>
<b>next morning</b>	<i>Nick goes to Wolfshiem's office.</i>
<b>5:00 P.M.</b>	<i>The small cortege drives to the cemetery.</i>
<b>October</b>	<i>Nick learns that Tom directed George Wilson to Gatsby's house.</i>

## Author Sketch



Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald has come to symbolize the insouciant *joie de vivre* of the jazz age. Born into the upper middle class in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 24, 1896, he learned the lessons of shirt-sleeved gentility, which denied him the affluence he craved. Fitzgerald attended St. Paul Academy, Newman Academy in Hackensack, New Jersey, and Princeton University, which he entered in 1913. From writing for school literary journals, Fitzgerald, who dropped out of Princeton, advanced to fiction writing with *This Side of Paradise*, his first novel, and articles for the *Nassau Literary Magazine*, a journal edited by his college pal, critic Edmund Wilson.

After a brief departure from Princeton, Fitzgerald returned in 1916, then left permanently the next year to join the army. While stationed at Camp Sheridan, Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre, a self-absorbed flapper from a privileged Montgomery family. Her family insisted that he achieve financial stability before their marriage, which he accomplished by moving to New York to work in advertising by day and write in his spare time. In 1919, the success of the first novel and the sale of short fiction to *Saturday Evening Post* and other popular magazines assured Fitzgerald a comfortable living.

Fitzgerald and Zelda married in 1920, lived in New York City, then moved to Great Neck, Long Island, where he wrote a failed play, *The Vegetable*, and his most successful novel, *The Great Gatsby*. The couple migrated to Paris, produced a daughter, Scottie, and lived among hard-drinking, fast-living expatriates, including Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein. On his return to the States, Fitzgerald wrote Hollywood screenplays as his fiction career subsided. Zelda, whose tenuous mental state evolved into schizophrenia, entered Johns Hopkins hospital in Baltimore and later a sanitarium in Asheville, North Carolina. Weak with coronary disease and chronic alcoholism, Fitzgerald allied himself with Sheila Graham, his nurse/lover through his final years. He died of heart failure December 21, 1940.

## Critic's Corner

Fitzgerald holds an enviable place among American authors in that he lived the exotic fantasy of a flamboyant period by marrying a golden girl, earning extensive notoriety for his lyrical genius, and associating with a coterie of wealthy goodtimers who saw themselves as bohemian artists in exile. As a handbook to the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* captures both the height of escapism and the depths of despair, venality, and moral corruption. Perhaps from a front-row glimpse of what rich people do to entertain themselves, Fitzgerald created fictional landscapes populated with restless vapid social parasites whose sole purpose was the temporary satisfaction of exaggerated appetites.

Although Fitzgerald was disappointed in limited sales of *The Great Gatsby*, subsequent critical opinion ranks it as a classic American novel, one which remains on high school and college lists as a perceptive analysis of the self-indulgent, amoral *nouveau riche*. The depth of Fitzgerald's commentary suggests that his years among the wealthy were spent in serious analysis of ethical bankruptcy, the dry rot that depleted the Jazz Age. At his death, his alma mater refused to purchase his letters and papers; his daughter donated them to Princeton a decade later.

## Fitzgerald's Published Works

*This Side of Paradise*, 1920  
*Flappers and Philosophers*, 1922  
*Tales of the Jazz Age*, 1922  
*The Beautiful and Damned*, 1922  
*The Vegetable, or From President to Postman*, 1923  
*The Great Gatsby*, 1925  
*All the Sad Young Men*, 1926  
*Tender Is the Night*, 1934  
*Taps at Reveille*, 1935  
*The Last Tycoon*, 1941  
*The Crack-Up*, 1945  
*The Portable F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 1951  
*Afternoon of an Author: A Selection of Uncollected Stories and Essays*, 1958  
*Babylon Revisited and Other Stories*, 1960

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## Related Reading

Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy* and *Sister Carrie*  
 T. S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*  
 William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*  
 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz"  
 Lillian Hellman, *The Little Foxes*  
 Ernest Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and *The Sun Also Rises*  
 Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* and *Daisy Miller*

Nancy Milford, *Zelda*  
E. A. Robinson, "Richard Cory"  
John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*  
William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*  
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*

## General Objectives

1. To assess the destructiveness of idealism, fantasy, and covetousness
2. To note the relationship between setting and outcomes
3. To evaluate the significance of social class on behavior and expectation
4. To justify the role of the American dream in fiction
5. To delineate elements of the "Jazz Age"
6. To account for the author's nostalgia, compassion, and intensity
7. To comment on the themes of honesty, self-deception, and chicanery
8. To analyze the intermingling of despair, hope, love, yearning, and failure
9. To typify the carelessness and recklessness of the post-World War I generation
10. To discuss the use of inconsistency as an indication of character weakness

## Specific Objectives

1. To characterize the novel's mood before and after Myrtle's death
2. To assess Gatsby's ambitions
3. To discuss Nick's coming to knowledge and abandonment of New York
4. To order events in Daisy's life, particularly her affair with Jay, Pammy's birth, marriage to Tom, Myrtle's death, and the hasty departure from East Egg
5. To describe significant minor figures, notably Michaelis, Gatsby's servants, guests, musicians, Owl-Eyes, Catherine, McKee, Ewing Klipspringer, and business associates
6. To describe the use of summer and fall as controlling metaphors
7. To predict Nick's success in the midwest
8. To explain how and why Jay's fabricated past rings false
9. To evaluate the friendship between Nick and Jay Gatsby
10. To list details from Jay's New York home that suggest shallow opulence rather than gen-

uine contentment

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of the novel, present the following terms and applications to *The Great Gatsby*:

**Irony:** an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant, as in the implication that Jay killed Myrtle and the resulting violence that victimizes both Jay and George, the wronged husband. Significant to the irony is the role of Tom, who deliberately misleads George into blaming a man who had no part in the hit-and-run and who didn't know Myrtle. Likewise, it is ironic that Daisy kills Myrtle, even though she didn't suspect that Myrtle was Tom's lover.

**Motif:** a pattern or predictable arrangement of elements to express an abstract theme in a story, for instance, the use of water imagery to convey Jay's fragile hold on reality. While working the shore of Lake Superior, Jay had survived on jobs that kept him on boats. His fixation on Daisy's house centers on the winking green light at the end of her dock. At his death, Jay floats atop an air mattress, a thin device that prevents his contact with the water below.

**Symbol:** a concrete object that stands for a complex or abstract idea or relationship and implies more than the literal meaning of the word or words, as with the pink cloud that Daisy longs to steer as a conveyance for Jay. Like other aspects of her life, the cloud is a romantic notion that has little to do with her actual role as Tom's wife and Pammy's mother. When reality encroaches after Myrtle's death, the Buchanans quickly flee to a location where they can continue living where money wards off the intrusion of reality.

## The Importance of Setting

The action of the novel occurs on the Atlantic seaboard, far from the Midwestern environs in which Jay, Nick, and Daisy grew up. In flight from the humdrum of Middle America, they live in the territory once settled by the Dutch. The setting vibrates with the exuberance of the Jazz Age and defiance of Prohibition. Fitzgerald dots the text with numerous comments about the Park,

Greenwich, 158th Street, Pennsylvania Station, Madison Avenue, Coney Island, New Haven, Yale, East and West Egg, and the Long Island Sound. The specifics of a city wedding in the Plaza Hotel link the Buchanans' sham marriage with riotous celebration, which also accompanied their marriage five years earlier.

Surrounding the intense social whirl of New York City are inklings of harder lives growing up in North Dakota, attending class and working as a janitor for two weeks at St. Olaf's College in Minnesota, seeking ore in the Yukon and Nevada, earning a living on a boat in Little Girl Bay on Lake Superior, and fighting in the army in the Argonne Forest. The realities that penetrate Jay's fantasy wealth contrast the frills of his lifestyle. Countering

a pile of silk shirts bought by a purchasing agent are medals for World War I. Outside the fantasy of Daisy's love are the clippings of real social events that Jay keeps in his scrapbook. In Henry C. Gatz's wallet are the intentions of a teenage Minnesota native to better himself.

At the end of the story, Nick, the ingenuous narrator, is still in New York some months after the hit-and-run, murder, and suicide, when he encounters Tom. The revelation of Tom's manipulation that resulted in two deaths ends Nick's frail connection with the East Coast and its amoral value system. Certain that he wants no more to do with Jordan, the Buchanans, and selling bonds, he flees to the Midwest he knew in childhood.



## Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about Zelda and Scott Fitzgerald, the Roaring Twenties, Prohibition, and World War I, consult these sources:

*Eye-Deep in Hell—Trench Warfare in World War I*, John Ellis  
*The Timetables of American History*, Laurence Urdang, ed.  
*War in the Trenches*, Stewart Ross

Also, consult these websites:

F. Scott Fitzgerald Centenary Home Page  
<http://www.csd.scarolina.edu/fitzgerald/index.html>

Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum  
<http://www.olcq.com/al/atc/central/szfm.html>

Gas Warfare  
<http://mirrors.org.sq/ww1/arm006.htm>

World War I and World War II Posters  
<http://www.the-forum.com/posters/warpost1.htm>

World War II  
<http://odyssey.lib.duke.edu/mazzoni/ww1.html>

World War I: Trenches on the Web  
<http://www.worldwar1.com>

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- delusion
- dependence
- vulnerability
- ambition
- opulence
- materialism
- longing
- adultery
- violence
- regret

### Motifs

- relationships between people of different classes
- dreaming of an idyllic love
- living a lie
- separating rumor from fact
- valuing a friend
- assigning fault for multiple wrongs

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Reserving judgements is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth. (Chapter 1, p. 2)  
*(By way of framework to Nick Carraway's reflections on the summer of 1922 comes this rather convoluted explanation of point of view. Nick, who attempts to remain objective on the matter of Jay Gatsby, admits that it is difficult to evade prejudice against someone "who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn." In retrospect, Nick concludes, "No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.")*
2. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. (Chapter 1, p. 3)  
*(An essential of Nick's point of view, Easterners' frenzy, and Jay's tragedy is the upheaval brought on by World War I. Nick, who was in his mid-twenties by 1917, fought in France with the Ninth Machine-Gun Battalion, as he relates to a guest at Jay's lawn party. The brash post-war era, an energetic burst of self-indulgence, thrill-seeking, and consumption, preceded the stock crash of 1929 like a pendulum swiftly cutting through air from one extreme to another. For a handful of years, Americans gyrated to big bands, either live or on radio, dressed in garishly revolutionary styles, and tried to forget the misery of global war. The era boasted its corruption and amorality like little boys bragging about petty mischief. As a privileged leisure class benignly spent most of the nation's wealth, legends sprang up among the less fortunate about the type of women who danced the Charleston and Black Bottom and men who bootlegged gin and gambled on the outcome of the World Series.)*
3. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold



the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew. (Chapter 1, p. 4)  
*(Having secured a year's allowance from his father, Nick moves to New York, settles in an \$80-per-month "cardboard bungalow" on Long Island, and contemplates the bond business. Clearly undecided on the direction and values of his life, he appears to set up a home altar on which stand tomes containing the mysteries of endless wealth. His intentions carry the allure of the mythic moneybags, as epitomized by Midas, the Phrygian king cursed with the golden touch, J. P. Morgan, a turn-of-the-century financier who prospered in banking, railroads, and real estate ventures, and Maecenas, a Roman adviser to the Emperor Augustus and an art patron who bankrolled the best authors of the times—Propertius, Varius, Horace, and Virgil.)*

4. I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming. (Chapter 1, p. 9)

*(By evaluating the people whom he frequents, Nick gives away his own failings. He suspects that Daisy poses as a soft-voiced murmurer only to draw people toward her. This pretension helps establish her feigned, self-dramatizing character from the outset, although Nick negates the rumor as irrelevant and continues to think of his cousin as charming. The self-absorption of Daisy and her guest Jordan demonstrates their egotism and discourtesy to lessers. To Nick's explanation of his messages from mutual friends, Daisy immediately asks, "Do they miss me?" With spirit, Nick replies: "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore.")*

5. At the news-stand she bought a copy of *Town Tattle* and a moving picture magazine and, in the station drug-store, some cold cream and a small flask of perfume. (Chapter 2, p. 27)

*(No less perceptive of pretentious working class people, Fitzgerald pursues the character flaws in Myrtle Wilson, a vital, sensuous woman who submerges herself in creature comforts and shallow pleasures. So inane are her tastes that "she let four taxi cabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-colored with grey upholstery." At the apartment, she drops the gossip sheet beside a "copy of 'Simon Called Peter,'" a popular novel with a title alluding to Christ's favorite disciple, the big fisherman who receives the keys to the kingdom and who later denies Christ, even as Jay's friends shunned his funeral.)*

6. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove. (Chapter 3, p. 56)

*(Somewhat like Jay Gatsby, Nick has a failing for dream-world imaginings, partly because he is lonely in New York. In his fantasies, "Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness." The elusiveness of beautiful pedestrians parallels the phantom Daisy, who haunts Jay's mind for five years and permeates a collection of newspaper clippings he keeps of her goings and comings.)*

*Reflecting on the "poor young clerks" who "[waste] the moist poignant moments of night and life," Nick fails to castigate himself for squandering time. Perhaps it is this acceptance of his own foibles that leaves Nick open to the events of 1922, which wither his hopes and deplete his youthful optimism. Like the waning months of summer, Nick lives out the ebb of his youth and naivete, an easy prey to the horror of Jay's murder and Daisy and Tom's role in the cover-up of the hit-and-run that claims Myrtle's life and precipitates George Wilson's suicide.)*

7. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration—even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea! (Chapter 4, p. 66)

*(In his reminiscences of the war years, Jay takes pleasure in recalling Montenegro, a tiny Serbian republic north of Albania which was absorbed into Yugoslavia in 1918. The medal serves as prophecy. Like Jay himself, the pretensions of so small a nation symbolize his inflated autobiography and suggest that he will suffer the same erasure.)*

8. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish. (Chapter 6, p. 103)

*(Two weeks after meeting the Buchanans, Jay sees Tom and the Sloanes riding horseback, invites them to his house, and offers them refreshments. The threesome snub Jay, who aggressively mentions his connection with Daisy. While Jay is absent from the room, Tom displays his ominous possessiveness by grouching that Daisy should remain in check. The double standard that allows Tom to romance Myrtle demonstrates upper crust society's amorality. The conclusion of the scene—Jay's return just as the trio depart—suggests that he fails to gauge their viciousness and that his innocence leaves him vulnerable to their discourtesy.)*

9. "That drug store business was just small change," continued Tom slowly, "but you've got something on now that Walter's afraid to tell me about." (Chapter 7, p. 134)

*(Through a connection with Walter Chase, who is jailed for bond fraud, Tom learns about the shady dealings that enhance Jay's*

notoriety. The look on Jay's face proves that Tom's information is correct. Ironically, the "something" that Jay is hatching with Meyer Wolfshiem and his "gongnegtions" pales before the deaths that the Buchanans trigger in the novel's denouement. Tom's self-righteous palaver veneers his hidden agenda—a possessiveness toward his wife, a trophy whom he retains to shield his ego. Lacking the idealism that drives Jay's covetousness, Tom tightens his claim on her solely as a matter of self-esteem.)

10. 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.

(Chapter 9, p. 180)

(Part of Nick's despair at Jay's needless death reflects a desire for fulfillment of the American dream—the wonder that filled the eyes of Dutch sailors who viewed New York before white settlers had begun cutting trees and sullyng the newness of the land. Nick acknowledges that Jay was defeated from the beginning, "somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.")

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

### Questions 1 - 5 (Literal Level)

1. Who is Nick Carroway?

(Nick, the scion of three generations of prominent, well-to-do people, completes his education in New Haven in 1915, then serves in the Ninth Machine-Gun Battalion in France. After the war, he chooses the bond business and in summer 1922 receives a year's support while he journeys east to learn the trade in New York. He rents a cottage with a roommate, who leaves him alone on West Egg, across the Long Island Sound from Manhattan. A self-congratulatory man, as an observer, Nick considers himself honest and disdains the pretensions of shallow people like Myrtle Wilson, the Sloanes, and the parasites who ingratiate themselves with Jay Gatsby.)

As Nick becomes involved in his friendship with Jay, his next-door neighbor, he reveals more of his values and perceptions. Nick despises the snobbery of the East Egg elite and the recklessness with which wealthy people use Jay, undervalue his hospitality, assassinate his character, snub him, and abandon him after his murder. Nick's sensitivity, naivete, and vulnerability

preface the disillusion that ends his romance with New York City and sends him home to the Midwest. He concludes, "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.")

2. Describe Jay Gatsby's lawn parties.

(On summer evenings, servants and caterers prepare crates of fruit, arrange flowers, string lights, and roll out a canvas dance floor as early-afternoon revelers swim and dive, sun themselves, and enjoy boat rides on the sound. Jay's Rolls Royce and station wagon ferry more partygoers from the city and train station as the staff spiff up the expansive lawn and palatial house. With the bar and orchestra in place, celebration commences and extends to the wee hours. Many people arrive without invitations and segue into the mass already gathered.)

Jay, who takes a recessive role in the glitter, encourages his guests to ask for what they want. As guests converse, impress each other, dance, dine, and cavort, he observes them, says little, and withdraws for telephone calls. Meanwhile, the debauch reaches its early-morning height with a car losing a wheel and landing in the ditch. In the distant moonlight, the house is engulfed with emptiness as Jay waves, "his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.")

2. What fantasy possesses Jay?

(Since meeting Daisy in Louisville, Jay, along with a number of wooers, pursues her. Daisy's erratic romances end suddenly with a garish wedding to Tom Buchanan, a wealthy New Haven graduate and polo player who presents her an expensive pearl necklace and takes her on an extended honeymoon to the South Seas. Meanwhile, Jay nurtures hopes of rekindling his romance with Daisy and walks the streets where she used to live.)

For five years, while Jay fights in Europe and returns a decorated hero, he clings to the unlikely belief that he will one day marry Daisy. While establishing a tutorial alliance with entrepreneur Dan Cody, racketeer Meyer Wolfshiem, and others, Jay grows rich. He clips newspaper articles that mention Daisy and builds an opulent mansion opposite her home on East Egg so he can impress her.

Through Nick and Jordan, Jay arranges a meeting with Daisy after five years' separation. The situation embarrasses him, temporarily quelling his desire to continue, but with Nick's encouragement, he returns to Nick's living room and initiates an affair that changes his life. The parties at his home stop. He fires his staff and hires a few discreet servants who will maintain the secrecy of his afternoon trysts with Daisy. His confidence in the dream restored, he determines to face Tom with his liaison.)

3. Why do Gatsby's dreams fail to materialize? (In the late-August heat, the Buchanans, Nick, Jordan, and Jay drive to New York and take a suite in the Plaza Hotel. Tom, who has been investigating Jay, lashes out at the repetition of "old sport," a British phrase denoting familiarity and chummy respect. As the sounds of a wedding in a nearby suite invade the room, Tom needles Jay further with questions about Oxford. For the first time, Jay offers details: "I only stayed five months.")

As Daisy prepares mint juleps, Tom moves to a direct confrontation of Jay's interest in Daisy. Jay pours out his delusion: "She never loved you . . . She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved anyone except me!" Tom uses the overstatement as a tool to hack away Daisy's resolve as he alludes to intimate moments they shared.

Jay's hopes fail to materialize as Daisy admits, "I did love him once—but I loved you too." Jay refuses to yield and asserts, "Daisy's leaving you." At this point, Tom deflates Daisy's romantic notions by calling Jay a cheap con artist who "hangs around with Meyer Wolfsheimer." Daisy grows frightened and begs the group to leave. Tom demonstrates his mastery of the situation by sending Daisy with Jay in the yellow convertible. "Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over.")

4. Why does Myrtle fling herself into the path of the car?

(On the ride into New York, Tom, driving the yellow convertible, stops for \$1.20 worth of gas, and learns from George that he needs money to take Myrtle away. Tom agrees to sell George his blue coupé for potential resale. Upstairs, Myrtle, locked in her room, observes the group and glares at Jordan, whom she misidentifies as Tom's wife. On the return trip through the valley of ashes, Myrtle, fearful that she will not get another chance to escape George, breaks free of her husband's restraint and dashes at the yellow car.)

5. What are Tom's and Daisy's responses to the accident?

(Daisy, a spoiled, self-centered woman whose voice sounds like money, accepts no responsibility for the hit-and-run accident. She continues on the road to East Egg after colliding with Myrtle and returns to her bedroom. The implied response to the accident can be deduced only from surface details. At 9:30 P.M., Tom offers minimal hospitality to Nick, who declines food and exits the property, meeting Jay in the bushes. Jay explains that Daisy, who was driving the yellow convertible, was nervous and wavered between hitting Myrtle and an oncoming car. After the collision, Jay took control. Daisy fell into his lap.

From his vantage at the edge of the yard, Nick looks through a

rift at the pantry window and sees the Buchanans "sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table . . . He was talking intently across the table at her and in his earnestness his hand had fallen open and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement." Nick notes a natural intimacy in the couple, who seem to face the calamity in tense concord.

Whereas Jay declines the option of fleeing to Montreal or Atlantic City, Daisy does what she did in her youth—flees "into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing." After Jay's death, Nick telephones her house and discovers that "she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them." In October, when Tom greets Nick on a New York street, Nick concludes, "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.")

#### Questions 6 - 8 (Interpretive Level)

6. How does Fitzgerald utilize sumptuous detail in expressing the theme of materialism?

(To delineate the hollow, moneyed values of people like Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Fitzgerald dwells on small items, such as the spurned pearl necklace that Daisy casts off the day of her wedding and the water-soaked letter she clutches in the bath. In contrast to Daisy's regret, the author sketches a parallel view of Jay, who flaunts his wealth, which allows him to hire a buyer to supply him with fashionable silk shirts twice a year and who awards a nameless, faceless guest a replacement dress covered with bugle beads in place of the one that was ruined at his party. In both instances, Daisy and Jay enjoy so much affluence that they cease to value and recede into brooding discontent brought on by spiritual emptiness and fantasy.

Another approach to details is the heaping of images in a single motif of debauchery. At Jay's parties, lemons and oranges arrive in five crates and exit in rinds, their pulp squeezed out for the sake of a single party. In like manner, hordes of privileged guests attend Daisy's wedding, arriving in Louisville via two private train cars from Chicago. The lavish wedding rites honor a loveless wedding that quickly masks a dismal relationship between a vapid wife and a grasping, unfaithful husband. One detail in their home—their two-year-old daughter Pammy—recedes into the ostentation of draperies, furniture, riding stables, and cars. Like the rest of Tom's possessions, she bears little significance beyond a beauty that predicts the emergence of yet another social parasite to play the "little fool" and consume more than her share of worldly goods.)

7. What do Tom's liaisons suggest about his tastes?

(Tom is drawn to Daisy for her prominence and glitter and gives

little thought to marital fidelity. Among numerous liaisons is a hotel chambermaid, whom he carried in his car shortly after his marriage. The broken arm she is left with indicates his ability to smash whatever appeals to him and to walk away from temporary infatuation with no remorse.

Tom's affair with Myrtle, which forms a significant portion of the novel, depicts the soullessness of his amours. Drawn to the buxom vitality of Myrtle Wilson, he orders her to town as though she were an item on the menu. At their love nest in New York, he halts her intrusion on his marriage by breaking her nose. The impetus of their fight was the repetition of "Daisy, Daisy," a name ironically suggesting the innocent purity of a common flower.

Months after Myrtle's death, Tom claims to suffer severe grief. In October, he tells Nick that the sight of "that damn box of dog biscuits there on the sideboard" reduced him to tears. Yet, his actions denote little sentiment for Myrtle as he packs his bags and spirits Daisy out of town to avoid involvement in scandal.)

8. Why does the author withhold information about events and characters?

(By veiling characters and events in mystery, Fitzgerald increases the ironies that undergird his fiction. Because Jay may or may not have attended Oxford, killed a man, profited from the "pipeline to Canada," or been involved with the 1919 World Series scandal, the reader is left with the same innuendos and rumors that titillate guests and hangers-on. The drifting tidbits of information that Jay reveals and Jordan and other acquaintances perpetuate create a burden of evidence that he acquired his wealth by questionable methods and that he perpetuates rumor as a means of diverting intense scrutiny of his past and his motives.

Another important aspect of point of view is the fact that Nick, the central intelligence, has limited access to Jay's past. While developing a friendship for his neighbor, Nick learns half-truths, partial-truths, and lies, which begin to sort themselves out after he spends time alone with Jay. Perhaps the most significant clarifier of fact is Henry C. Gatz, the sad, proud old father who reveals Jay's rural past, his flight from the Midwest, and the ambitions that drove him. By contrasting Jimmy Gatz's list in the Hopyalong Cassidy book with Jay's flaunted Montenegrin medal, Oxford photo, and memories of Dan Cody, the reader is able to frame a fair estimate of a midwesterner who evades the social class that stifles his aims and who attains brief notoriety through questionable bond deals, bootleg liquor sales, flaunted parties, and the fleeting heroism that clings to a World War I veteran.)

Questions 9 and 10 - (Critical Level)

9. Why is *The Great Gatsby* sometimes labeled a dirge for the American dream?

(Fitzgerald's novel suggests a loss of humanity, a predatory materialism that usurps the idealism that people associate with the New World. On the verdant, unspoiled land first observed by Dutch sailors three centuries earlier, George Wilson—the lower end of the class scale—lives in the valley of ashes and tries to earn a living. Beset by fears for his marriage and disdain for his physical weakness, he attempts to buy and sell elegant cars fail to enrich himself after eleven years in business. Meanwhile, on the road that links East Egg and Manhattan, the elite parade back and forth, many participating in wild parties at Jay's estate. Gobbling the best of champagne, cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, hams, turkeys, and other buffet treats, the mindless rich spend idle hours impressing each other and frolicking with abandon.

The cataclysm of lower and upper classes, which occurs after Daisy swerves Jay's convertible into Myrtle Wilson's body, delineates a dream gone wrong. George, the cuckolded husband-turned-widower, realizes that his dream is not only unattainable, but that it died in ignominy after Myrtle's repeated infidelities. Tom, her lover, grieves briefly, but saves his intense energies and aggressions for the home scene, where he protects Daisy from involvement. The most sordid aspect of the debacle is Tom's implication of Jay into the hit-and-run and the resulting murder-suicide, which produces two additional victims.

As a result of the carnage, Nick, the innocent-eyed observer, acquiesces to realism by abandoning the dream. Like Jay, Nick looks back at Jay's lawn and locates "an obscene word, scrawled by some boy with a piece of brick." This final fillip further degrades Jay's optimism and leaves Nick pondering how Long Island Sound must have looked before it was besmirched by grasping settlers. Lyrically, he concludes, "... tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further... So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.")

10. How does Fitzgerald's classic novel compare with Hemingway's works?

(Ernest Hemingway, a contemporary and friend who challenged Fitzgerald to write quality fiction, produced his own views of the post-war malaise that gripped the generation who came to adulthood during the period between the two world wars. Like *The Great Gatsby*, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* scrutinizes a vapid, restless, materialistic generation who never settle into careers, but wander Europe in search of refreshment, entertainment, and temporary liaisons to absorb their energies and slake their physical appetites. Lady Brett Ashley, Hemingway's prototypical vamp, seeks the ultimate sexual conquest. Her frustration in failing to make the desexed Jake

*Barnes conform to her ideal parallels Jay's forcible creation of a dream Daisy, one who will drop husband and child and assume the role of fantasized golden girl.*

*In both novels, the characters, veterans or civilian survivors of World War I, attempt to bolster valueless, spiritless egos with physical stimuli. Just as Jay treats a flock of nameless partygoers to food, drink, and entertainment, the nomadic cast of The Sun Also Rises flits from bed to bar to cafe to bullfight arena with no sincere effort to confront the emptiness that defeats their efforts at fulfillment. As Gertrude Stein observed, the generation of the 1920s was a lost generation, out of touch with a changed world and incapable of knowing themselves. In payment for their failed affairs, violence, and self-indulgence, they rendered up their souls and became pathetic wanderers, Brett and Jake in Spain and Jay, Nick, and the Buchanans on the road joining East and West Egg with Manhattan, through the valley of ashes.)*

**Questions 11-13 - (Creative Level)**

11. Compose a conversation with a critic with whom you discuss your response to *The Great Gatsby*. Be specific about your likes and dislikes in classic American literature and your assessment of the novel's depiction of the American character. Discuss aspects of theme with which you disagree.
12. List and characterize Jay's relationship with neighbors, servants, business associates, his father, Daisy, Jordan, and guests. Explain why he is often surrounded by people, yet remains utterly alone and nearly friendless.
13. Compose an oral report on the causes and outcomes of World War I. Explain why people like Jay and Nick who survived combat are sometimes classed as a lost generation. How does the war dissociate them from roots and goals?

**Across the Curriculum**

**Math**

1. Make a timeline of major U.S. and world events that occur between Gatsby's infatuation with Daisy in 1917 and his death in 1922. Determine other events, such as Pammy's birth, the rigging of the 1919 World Series, Prohibition, Tom's marriage to Daisy, Jimmy Gatz's departure from St. Olaf college and

meeting with Dan Cody, Nick's visit to the Buchanans' East Egg mansion, ore strikes that enriched Cody, the death of Myrtle Wilson, and Nick's return to the midwest.

2. Explain how Meyer Wolfshiem profited by "fixing" the World Series.

**Economics and Social Studies**

1. List laws that apply to events in the novel, particularly those governing adultery, racketeering, phony bond deals, assault and battery, bootlegging, hit-and-run, unlawful flight, wrongful death, driving under the influence, failure to report an accident, carrying a concealed weapon, and murder.
2. Explain the connection between prohibition and drug stores. Why would Jay cultivate an interest in a string of pharmacies?

**Psychology**

1. Discuss the illusions that fuel Jay's dream of marrying Daisy. Explain why his persistent fantasizing robs him of pleasure in his wealth and independence and leads to multiple deaths, including his own.
2. Discuss the nature and purpose of manipulation. Why is Tom able to convince Daisy that she should not leave him for Jay? How does Tom's understanding of the trauma that unhinges George enable him to manipulate George into murdering Jay? How does Tom rationalize the act?
3. How does Tom translate possessiveness and jealousy of a trophy wife into love for Daisy? Why does Tom's aggression and brutality threaten both his wife and mistress?

**Cinema**

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel that would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts for a stage or movie version, particularly the parties, Myrtle's death, Nick's tea for Jay and Daisy, the collapsing air mattress, and the winking green light at the end of the dock.
2. Contrast the film version of *The Great Gatsby* with the novel. Explain why the movie emphasizes

color and texture, as in the flowing draperies, Daisy's delight in Jay's silk shirts, the air mattress, roses in Nick's house, Jay's signet ring and medals, Pammy's hair and dress, the yellow convertible driving through the valley of ashes, and dark wood paneling in Jay's office.

**Science**

1. Explain why Daisy's windows appear golden from a distance. How does the author use this phenomenon to further the connection between Daisy and Jay?

**History**

1. Discuss how World War I influences the novel. Why would Jay display a medal from Montenegro? Why would ex-soldiers be offered education at Oxford or other European colleges?
2. Account for immorality and blatant violation of law during Prohibition.

**Language**

1. Create a glossary of slang and period terms, for example kike, bucks, gat, "The Sheik of Araby," "Beale Street Blues," fox-trot, Barbary Coast, gin rickys, omnibus, "Follies," Ninth Machine-Gun Battalion, rot-gut, pipe-line to Canada, knickerbockers, highballs, Armistice, Hopalong Cassidy, and old sport. Define each term and explain its origin.
2. Using examples from the novel, compose an extended definition of classism. Place major and minor characters under class headings, i. e. working class, skilled laborer, unskilled laborer, servant class, rising middle class, professional, old money, aristocracy, and nouveau riche.
3. Make a list of sense images under the headings of sound, touch, sight, smell, and taste. For example, "Under the dripping bare lilac trees a large open car was coming up the drive," "The Sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty with a solid sticky bob of red hair and a complexion powdered milky white," and "I couldn't sleep all night; a fog-horn was groaning incessantly on the sound, and I tossed half sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams."

**Art and Music**

1. Use desktop publishing to create memorials to George, Myrtle, and Jay, a World War I enlistment poster, a 1919 World Series advertisement, a garage price list, a road or rail map of the area between East and West Egg and Manhattan, a commuter's rail schedule, an invitation to a party at Jay's mansion, brochures advertising bonds for Probity Trust, an advertisement for a used blue coupé, and a policeman's accident report.
2. Pantomime songs and dances popular during the 1920s, such as the Charleston, fox-trot, big apple, suzy-q, ragtime, and black bottom and "Ain't We Got Fun" and "The Shiek of Araby." Contrast the rhythms and focus of the lyrics with music characteristics of earlier times, such as ballads and waltzes. Suggest reasons for the pulsing energy of twenties era music.
3. Sketch fashions suited to particular characters and scenes, such as Jordan at a golf tournament, Daisy dancing at Jay's party or attending tea at Nick's house, Pammy greeting guests, Myrtle on the train to New York, Mrs. Sloane while riding with her husband and Tom, or Catherine for a visit to Myrtle and Tom's New York flat. Include accessories, such as shoes, hats, jewelry, gloves, shawls, and flowers.

**Student Involvement Activities**

1. Compose a theme describing the expectations and opportunities for midwestern boys like Jimmy Gatz. Suggest why such young men turned to the military, college, or crime as a means of escaping the tedium of agriculture.
2. Draw an extensive character web detailing various interpersonal relationships from the novel, for example, parents, friends, dance partners, lovers, spouses, relatives, clients, employees and servants, and hosts and guests.
3. Relate the following literary terms to *The Great Gatsby*: literary foils, denouement, dramatic irony, symbol, simile, lyrics, flat and round

characters, stereotyping, romantic conventions, narrator, controlling metaphor, scenario, epistle, journal, dialogue, caesura, dialect, symbol, motif, framework, and flashback.

4. Contrast the people who influence Jay, for example Dan Cody, Daisy, Henry Gatz, Meyer Wolfshiem, the Montenegrans, staff of St. Olaf College, George, Tom, and Nick. Why does Nick insist, "You're worth the whole damn bunch."
5. Write a minor character's diary entry on significant days, particularly Ewing Klipspringer and the owl-eyed man on the day of the funeral, Michaelis during Myrtle's trip to New York, Catherine on the day of Myrtle's death, Pammy after Nick's first visit to the Buchanan house, Edgar following Jay's death, and Mr. Sloane following Jay's last lawn party.
6. Rewrite Jimmy's list in the *Hopalong Cassidy* book so that the goals correspond with current values and needs. How would savings, studies, hobbies, and personal hygiene differ? What would a modern Jimmy Gatz do to improve himself?
7. Write a chapter describing the sale of Jay's possessions. Note the reaction of former guests as they examine priceless mirrors, wines, portraits, pianos, books, clothing, medals, photos, vehicles and boats, and other objects placed on the auction block.
8. Create a discussion among Jay's servants concerning his life. Note their reflection on lavish entertainments, their employer's underworld connections and reputation, and reaction to his murder and sparsely attended funeral.
9. Determine Henry Gatz's attitude toward Jimmy. Contrast his emotion with that of Nick, Meyer Wolfshiem, Daisy, Jordan, Tom, and Owl-Eyes.
10. Discuss the effects of rumor, threats, misrepresentation, innuendo, and direct questions on Jay. Cite lines that prove he had something to hide.

## Alternate Assessment

1. List chronologically significant events in Jay's life, such as his connection with Meyer Wolfshiem, Dan Cody's influence, the list in the *Hopalong Cassidy* book, promotion to major, the end of his lawn parties, tea at Nick's house, meeting Tom and Daisy at the Plaza Hotel, leaving St. Olaf's College, driving with Nick, having lunch with Meyer and Nick, receiving a medal from Montenegro, working in Little Girl Bay, and swimming alone in early September.
2. Make a list of scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward honesty, friendship, optimism, illusion, loss, responsibility, fidelity, wealth, prestige, dependence, and compromise. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
3. Compose a brief definition of success as it applies to Jay. Account for Fitzgerald's choice of title.
4. List examples of ostentation and discuss the effect of each on Jay, Nick, Jordan, Daisy, Tom, guests, and strangers at Jay's lawn parties.

## Vocabulary

Select synonyms from the list that follows to replace the underlined words below. Place your choices in the blanks. You will have answers left over when you finish.

aquaplanes, ascertained, cataracts, caterer, contemptuous, cordials, cynical, erroneous, flannels, fruiterer, gaudy, harlequin, hauteur, homogeneity, hors d'oeuvre, impersonally, impetuously, individualistically, innuendo, melancholy, notorious, omnibus, opal, permeate, piccolos, prodigality, profound, pulpless, sauntered, scampered, sea-change, shorn, significant, speculation, staid, testimony, traps, vacuous

1. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing pleasure craft \_\_\_\_\_ over cascades \_\_\_\_\_ of foam.
2. Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a supplier \_\_\_\_\_ in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of gutted \_\_\_\_\_ halves.
3. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening canapes \_\_\_\_\_, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of variegated \_\_\_\_\_ designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold.
4. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are rich \_\_\_\_\_ with primary colors and hair cut \_\_\_\_\_ in strange new ways and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile.
5. The bar is in full swing and floating rounds of cocktails fill \_\_\_\_\_ the garden outside until the air is alive with chatter and laughter and casual hints \_\_\_\_\_ and introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.
6. It was a witness \_\_\_\_\_ to the romantic guessing \_\_\_\_\_ he inspired that there whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.
7. Instead of rambling this party had preserved a dignified sameness \_\_\_\_\_, and assumed to itself the function of representing the conservative \_\_\_\_\_ nobility of the countryside—East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.
8. There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden, old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably and keeping in the corners—and a great number of single girls dancing characteristically \_\_\_\_\_ or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo or the cymbals \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian and a scandalous \_\_\_\_\_ contralto had sung in jazz and between the numbers of people were doing "stunts" all over the garden while happy inane \_\_\_\_\_ bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky.
10. I had taken two finger bowls of champagne and the scene had changed before my eyes into something meaningful \_\_\_\_\_, elemental and deep \_\_\_\_\_.



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## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Identify the characters described below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. lies about leaving a borrowed car in the rain with the top down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. is born the spring after her parents' June trip to the South Seas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. has a car accident that breaks a chambermaid's arm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. worked as a janitor while attending St. Olaf College.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. saw James rowing in Little Girl Bay.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. has flowers sent to Nick's cottage and servants to mow the grass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. wears molars as cuff links.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. rejects an expensive string of pearls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. repeats "Daisy, Daisy, Daisy."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. borrows a suit to be married in.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. resides in Jay's house as a boarder.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. tells George that Dr. Eckleburg is an advertisement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. serves as the messenger who carries a death notice to Wolfshiem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. reads about Jay's death in a Chicago newspaper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. claims to be "five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor."

### Part II: Quotation identification (20 points)

Beside each quotation place the name of the speaker and the person being addressed.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1a. He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn't told him who owned the car.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2a. In case there's a fire or a flood ... or any act of God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3a. He would never so much as look at a friend's wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4a. Bles-sed pre-cious ... You dream, you. You absolute little dream.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5a. Maybe I could call up the church and get a priest to come over and he could talk to you, see?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5b.

## Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Catherine believes that the braided leash proves Tom's love for Myrtle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Meyer Wolfshiem implicates Jay in the 1919 World Series scandal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Jay is relaxing on an air mattress in the pool when George pulls the trigger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. George tries to stop Myrtle's infidelities by locking her in her room over the garage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. One night, the parties cease without warning, although people keep coming to Jay's house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Because Jordan tore her dress at the banquet table, Jay sent her a new evening gown, which is too large in the bust.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jay flashes a card at the police officer and drives away without a ticket.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In October, Tom denies having anything to do with George on the day of the murder-suicide.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. In Louisville, Daisy dated only Jay before her unexplained decision to marry Tom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. After organizing the small funeral party, Nick is surprised to see the owl-eyed man come unannounced to the cemetery.

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Contrast the immorality of Jordan and Daisy.
- 2. Explain why Myrtle dashes into the yellow car.
- 3. Analyze Nick's desolation after Gatsby's death.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Underline an answer to complete each statement below.

1. **(Dan Cody, Mr. Sloane, Tom, Ewing Klipspringer)** clearly does not want Jay to come to lunch.
2. George Wilson is obsessed with finding out the name of the owner of the **(borrowed suit, yellow car, box of dog biscuits, green light at the end of the dock)**.
3. Meyer Wolfshiem is proud to know **(the wearer of the molar cuff links, a professional golfer, a boot-legger, an Oxford man)**.
4. In October, Nick refrains from **(shaking Tom's hand, calling Jordan, blaming Daisy for Myrtle's death, mourning Jay)**.
5. While Tom leaves the room, **(Jordan tells Daisy about his mistress, Nick asks Jordan to join him at Jay's party, Daisy kisses Jay, Lucille McKee holds a cloth to Myrtle's bleeding nose)**.
6. While Daisy sits in the bathtub, **(the letter disintegrates, Jordan drinks sauterne, her parents demand that she marry Tom, an officer pleads for one hour with her)**.
7. Nick acknowledges that he **(did a favor for the commissioner, visited Daisy's parents in Chicago, doubts that Probity Trust will prosper, fought in France)**.
8. Gatsby fails to convince Daisy to leave Tom because **(she fears for Pammy, Jordan forces her to stay, Tom reveals Jay's bad reputation, Jay realizes the immorality of adultery)**.
9. Around four in the morning, **(Jay leaves his vigil, Myrtle dies of injuries from the accident, George rings the Buchanans' doorbell, Jay asks Nick to invite Daisy to tea)**.
10. Henry Gatz is proud that Jimmy **(ran away from St. Olaf, bought him a house, sailed on the Tuolomee, gave parties for famous New Yorker swindlers)**.

### Part II: Identification (20 points)

Place an X by any statement that is true of Nick.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. moves to the East coast to learn the securities trade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. receives silk shirts from an English buyer each spring and fall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. tries to ingratiate himself with Jordan's elderly aunt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. believes himself and the Buchanans to be Westerners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. dances a fair fox-trot with Daisy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. tells Jay that Daisy is embarrassed to see him at the tea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. admires Mr. McKee's study of Montauk Point.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. believes that Jay is the cousin or nephew of Kaiser Wilhelm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. disappears when Tom comes to his table to meet Meyer Wolfshiem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. does not recognize Jay at the party.

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: Fill-in-the-Blank (30 points)

Fill in a name or term which completes each of these statements.

1. People from \_\_\_\_\_ look down on the residents of West Egg.
2. Both Tom and Nick attended college in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Late in the summer, the Buchanans accompany Nick and Jay to the \_\_\_\_\_ Hotel.
4. Jay takes pride in his medal from "little \_\_\_\_\_."
5. Daisy and Jordan were friends back in \_\_\_\_\_, where officers swarmed around Daisy's house.
6. For eleven years, Myrtle has lived in quarters above the family \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Dr. Eckleburg's eyes seem to preside over the "valley of \_\_\_\_\_."
8. Nick is overawed by the Buchanans' Georgian palace on \_\_\_\_\_ Sound.
9. Following the \_\_\_\_\_ battles, Jay was advanced to the rank of major.
10. A long distance call from \_\_\_\_\_ indicates that Parke was arrested for a bond swindle.

### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain what Henry Gatz's visit adds to Nick's knowledge of Jay.
2. Discuss water images in the book, particularly the final sentence.
3. Analyze the importance of Nick as an observer and friend to Jay.

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. aquaplanes, cataracts    | 6. testimony, speculation     |
| 2. fruiterer, pulpless      | 7. homogeneity, staid         |
| 3. hors d'oeuvre, harlequin | 8. individualistically, traps |
| 4. gaudy, shorn             | 9. notorious, vacuous         |
| 5. permeate, innuendo       | 10. significant, profound     |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |             |                      |                  |
|-------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Jordan   | 6. Gatsby            | 11. Klipspringer |
| 2. Pammy    | 7. Meyer Wolfsheimer | 12. Michaelis    |
| 3. Tom      | 8. Daisy             | 13. Edgar        |
| 4. Gatsby   | 9. Myrtle            | 14. Henry Gatz   |
| 5. Dan Cody | 10. George           | 15. Nick         |

#### Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1a. Tom   | 4a. Daisy     |
| 1b. Nick  | 4b. Pammy     |
| 2a. Daisy | 5a. Michaelis |
| 2b. Nick  | 5b. George    |
| 3a. Meyer |               |
| 3b. Nick  |               |

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. F  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Mr. Sloane         | 6. the letter disintegrates            |
| 2. yellow car         | 7. fought in France                    |
| 3. an Oxford man      | 8. Tom reveals Gatsby's bad reputation |
| 4. shaking Tom's hand | 9. Jay leaves his vigil                |
| 5. Daisy kisses Jay   | 10. bought him a house                 |

#### Part II: Identification (20 points)

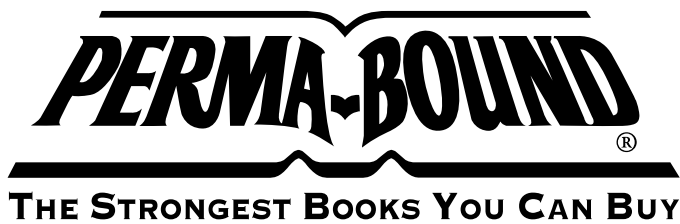
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. X | 6. X  |
| 2.   | 7.    |
| 3. X | 8.    |
| 4. X | 9.    |
| 5.   | 10. X |

#### Part III: Fill-in-the-Blank (30 points)

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. East Egg   | 6. garage      |
| 2. West Haven | 7. ashes       |
| 3. Plaza      | 8. Long Island |
| 4. Montenegro | 9. Argonne     |
| 5. Louisville | 10. Chicago    |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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