

The Great Gatsby

Chapter I

1. What purpose do the first four paragraphs serve?

2. What advice does Nick’s father give him? Why does Fitzgerald have Nick share his father’s advice with the reader?

3. What other method does Fitzgerald use to persuade the reader that Nick is credible?

4. What does the statement “When I came back from the East last autumn...” tell you about the story to follow?

5. What importance is there in Nick’s statement that “My family have been prominent, well-to-do people...for three generations”?

6. What is the setting of the story?

7. Interpret the meaning of the simile: “They [books on investments and securities] stood like new money from the mint.”

8. How is West Egg different from East Egg?

9. What is the relationship between Nick and Daisy and Tom Buchanan?

10. Interpret the oxymoron: “two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all.”

11. Cite the device and the imagery that Fitzgerald uses to make the Buchanan palace seem alive.

12. Describe Tom Buchanan. What tone does the author use in his description?

13. Analyze Fitzgerald's method of creating mood inside the Buchanans' palace.

14. Who is the other person in the Buchanan home?

15. Cite the anaphoras and explain their use.

16. What is the author's purpose in the use of hyperbole?

17. What annoys Nick about Tom's response to Nick's employment?

18. What social issue does the allusion to Goddard’s book highlight?

19. Why does Miss Baker refer to California after the discussion of white supremacy?

20. What unflattering feature of Jordan Baker’s personality is revealed?

21. During the dinner conversation, Nick wanted to “look squarely at every one, and yet to avoid all eyes.” This statement is an example of what type of rhetorical device? What does this convey to the reader?

22. When the telephone rings, why does Nick say that no one “was able utterly to put this fifth guest’s shrill metallic urgency out of mind”?

23. Why is Nick’s instinct “to telephone immediately for the police”?

24. What is the reader left to think about Daisy's emotional state and her relationship with Tom?

25. What did Daisy mean when she said of Pammy, "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."

26. When Nick starts the engine of his car, Daisy stops him by making the statement, "We heard you were engaged to a girl out West." What does Nick's answer reveal about his character?

27. As Nick drives away from their house, he experiences a number of conflicting emotions. Why does he feel touched? Why does he feel confused and disgusted?

28. How does Fitzgerald change the mood of the story?

29. The green light that Gatsby is staring at is mentioned several more times and assumes symbolic significance. Where do you think the green light might be? What can it mean?

Chapter II

1. In the first paragraph of Chapter II, what device does Fitzgerald use to create a musical effect? Cite some examples.

2. On a literal level, what is the valley of ashes? What might it represent on a symbolic level?

3. What overlooks the valley of ashes? What might they symbolize?

4. Contrast Daisy with Myrtle, Tom's mistress.

5. Analyze Nick's statement "I think he'd tanked up a good deal at luncheon, and his determination to have my company bordered on violence."

6. What method of character development does Fitzgerald employ to develop the character of Myrtle?

7. What is the significance of the name George Wilson?

8. How has Fitzgerald used colors to support the developing theme of the American dream?

9. Myrtle says of her sister, “She’s said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know.” What does this statement say about society?

10. How does Fitzgerald emphasize the smallness of the apartment?

11. In what way is the party in the apartment different from the dinner at the Buchanans’ in Chapter I? In what way is it similar?

12. The McKees appear only in Chapter II. Why does Fitzgerald bring them into the story?

13. What does Fitzgerald convey through the use of an asyndeton?

14. What rumor does Nick hear about Gatsby?

15. Although Catherine comments that Tom and Myrtle cannot stand one another, how does the reader know that that isn't true?

16. What seems to be the feeling towards divorce in the 1920s?

Chapter III

1. What is the setting for Chapter III?

2. In what ways is Chapter II like Chapter III?

3. Why is it that Fitzgerald waits until Chapter III to introduce Gatsby?

4. There are at least two examples of a polysyndeton in Chapter III. Identify one of them, and explain what it contributes to the impact of the chapter.

5. What does Nick's twice insisting that he had "actually been invited" suggest?

6. Nick comments that the people at the party conduct "themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park." Analyze what is being conveyed by the comparison.

7. What metaphor does Fitzgerald use to convey the theme of the upper class's lack of integrity?

8. Explain the meaning of the statement "...the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound."

9. What do Gatsby and Nick have in common?

10. What does Fitzgerald subtly wish to convey about Gatsby when he has Nick say, "...I was looking at an elegant young roughneck, ...whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care"?

11. Although there are many rumors regarding Gatsby, there is a clue given to the reader about what the nature of Gatsby's work may be. What is the clue? What might it indicate is his work?

12. In what way is Gatsby's behavior at his party quite unlike the behavior of most of his guests?

13. Explain the symbolism of the simile, "...at intervals she appeared suddenly at his side like an angry diamond, and hissed: 'You promised!' into his ear."

14. What is the significance of the phone calls that Gatsby receives? How does it add to the development of his character? What does the lack of calls to Buchanan demonstrate?

15. What does the author do to convey the idea that the gentleman driving the car is drunk?

16. The first three chapters span what time period?

17. How does the viewpoint change during this chapter? How is this accomplished? What is the purpose?

18. What purpose does the character of Jordan Baker fulfill?

19. What is the second ugly character flaw revealed about Jordan? How does this affect the reader?

20. What do you think Fitzgerald wishes to convey about Gatsby's parties through the incident with the drunks and the car, and the husbands and wives arguing?

21. What is revealed about Nick's character?

22. How does the motif of geography in the novel help shape its themes and characters?

Chapter IV

1. What is the significance of the date on the timetable?

2. How does Fitzgerald's use of names further the motif of geography?

3. What symbol does Fitzgerald use as the outward manifestation of Gatsby's wealth? What theme does this reinforce?

4. Describe Gatsby's car.

5. What causes Nick to think that Gatsby cannot be telling the truth? What changes his mind?

6. Gatsby fills Nick in on the details of his life for what reason?

7. How does Fitzgerald emphasize the mood and reinforce the theme of the Roaring Twenties?

8. Where do Gatsby and Nick go for lunch? Whom do they meet?

9. Analyze the techniques used to develop the character of Wolfsheim.

10. What do the characters of Buchanan and Wolfsheim represent?

11. What government act extended the activities of the underworld?

12. Explain Gatsby's statement: "Miss Baker's a great sportswoman, you know, and she'd never do anything that wasn't all right."

13. What matter does Jordan speak to Nick about? How does she know this information?

14. Jordan informs the reader that Daisy was 18 when she and Gatsby consummated their love. What significance does her age have?

15. Why is Daisy so upset on her wedding day?

16. Interpret the metaphor “He [Gatsby] came alive to me [Nick], delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.”

17. Why is it important to Gatsby that Daisy see his house?

18. What symbolism is there in the name Daisy Fay?

19. What overall purpose do the three events in Chapter IV accomplish?

20. Where on Freytag’s pyramid would the description of the parties fall?

Chapter V

1. When Nick comes home to West Egg that night, what does he find unusual? How does this description contribute to the mood?

2. Why does Gatsby suggest that he and Nick “go to Coney Island,” or “take a plunge in the swimming-pool”?

3. How does Gatsby show that he is grateful to Nick for his agreeing to call Daisy?

4. Throughout Chapter V, how does Fitzgerald use weather to reinforce the mood?

5. What effect is created by the greenhouse hyperbole?

6. How does Daisy's agreeing to come to Nick's house without Tom contribute to the theme of changing moral values?

7. Explain how the ambiguous metaphor about Daisy's voice is appropriate.

8. How does Fitzgerald show the changes in Gatsby?

9. What literary purpose does the broken clock serve?

10. What makes Gatsby sound like Tom?

11. What arouses Nick's suspicions about Gatsby's past? What suspicion does this apparent lie reinforce?

12. What changes take place in Gatsby during Daisy's visit?

13. Analyze the passage “He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock.”

14. Why does Daisy cry about the shirts?

15. As the three of them look across the bay toward Daisy’s house, the narrator states, “Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy, it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.”

What does Fitzgerald mean by:

- A. “Compared to the great distance” between Gatsby and Daisy?

- B. “Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.”

16. Explain the statement, "Daisy tumbled short of his dreams."

17. Explain the significance of the metaphor, "...that voice was a deathless song."

18. Who is the protagonist: Gatsby or Nick?

Chapter VI

1. What is the narrative and structural purpose of Chapter VI?

2. In what sense does this chapter epitomize the American dream?

3. What purpose does the biblical allusion: “He was a son of God...and he must be about His Father’s business” serve?

4. Who is Jay Gatsby?

5. What is the meaning of the statement "...they [reveries] were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing"?

6. Analyze the meaning of the name Dan Cody.

7. How long was Gatsby employed by Cody?

8. Why does Gatsby not drink?

9. Describe Tom's first visit to Gatsby's home.

10. Knowing Tom, how can one account for his comment about being “old-fashioned” and “women run[ning] around too much these days to suit [him]”?

11. What does the word choice “menagerie” help Fitzgerald convey?

12. Explain Gatsby’s expectations of Daisy. Are they realistic?

13. In this chapter, Nick narrates the event of Daisy’s and Gatsby’s first kiss. He says that Gatsby knows that, after kissing Daisy, “...his mind would never romp again like the mind of God.” What does this mean?

Chapter VII

1. What allusion does Trimalchio represent?

2. Identify and explain the personification.

“Automobiles...turned expectantly into his drive...and then drove sulkily away.”

3. What foreshadows trouble at the Gatsby mansion?

4. Why did Gatsby replace his servants?

5. What is the meaning of Gatsby’s statement to Tom, “I’m right across from you”?

6. What does Daisy mean when she says “...everything’s so confused”?

7. What alerts Tom that his wife has other interests? What is Tom’s response?

8. Interpret the metaphor “Her voice is full of money.”

9. Identify the oxymorons that describe the expressions that pass by Gatsby’s face. Explain their importance.

10. How does Daisy respond to Tom’s insisting to drive Gatsby’s car? Why? How does Gatsby respond? Why?

11. Does Tom like Gatsby’s car?

12. What causes Mr. Wilson’s sickness?

13. Why do you suppose that Tom decides to let Wilson finally have the car he has been promising him?

14. How does the news about the Wilsons leaving affect Tom?

15. Who sees Tom driving the yellow car besides Mr. Wilson? What is their response?

16. What do Tom and Wilson have in common? How does each respond?

17. What is Gatsby's explanation of his being at Oxford? Why is it important to Tom to expose the Oxford-man lie?

18. What theme is supported by Tom's side in his argument with Gatsby?

19. When Gatsby confronts Tom with the comments "Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me." What is Gatsby's meaning?

20. What is Tom's response to his wife's infidelity?

21. Describe the emotions that Daisy goes through as Tom and Gatsby argue.

22. How has Gatsby gotten some of his money? What does Tom say that startles Gatsby?

23. What is the outcome of the argument in the hotel room?

24. Analyze the significance of Nick's statement "... 'I just remembered that today's my birthday.' I was thirty."

25. How does Fitzgerald foreshadow what is about to happen?

26. Analyze the statement "So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight."

27. How does Myrtle die?

28. Why is Myrtle running out of the garage towards the car?

29. How do Tom, Jordan, and Nick find out about the accident?

30. What is Wilson's response to Myrtle's death? Tom's response? Gatsby's response?

31. What does Fitzgerald convey to the reader by choosing the word "conspiring" in the description of Tom and Daisy in their kitchen?

32. Why does Gatsby loiter outside of the Buchanans' house? How does Fitzgerald let the reader know there is nothing for Gatsby to wait for?

Chapter VIII

1. How is the tone set for Chapter 8?

2. Interpret the simile “Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice...”

3. How does Fitzgerald capture the ambience of the 1920s?

4. Summarize the beginning of Daisy and Gatsby’s relationship, five years ago.

5. Why does Daisy give up on Gatsby? How does Gatsby learn of the relationship between Daisy and Tom?

6. In what ways can the letter from Daisy be considered Gatsby's salvation?

7. After all that has taken place, how does Nick say he feels about Gatsby? What does he mean? Is he sincere?

8. What does Jordan do the morning following the accident?

9. What clues give Wilson the idea there is another man?

10. What conclusion does Wilson come to regarding his wife's death?

11. Whom does Wilson associate with the yellow car?

12. What motif reappears in Chapter 8? What meaning is attributed to it?

13. Where does Wilson spend the day following Myrtle's death?

14. Where do you think Wilson gets the information to track the car to Gatsby? Use evidence from the text.

15. Analyze the techniques that Fitzgerald uses to indicate that Gatsby is no longer living in a dream and to foreshadow who his killer may be.

16. How is Gatsby's body discovered?

17. Why does no one find Gatsby earlier?

18. What do you suspect happened to Wilson?

19. Cite examples of the motif that nature reflects life.

Chapter IX

1. How does Catherine respond during the trial?

2. Why is it important to Catherine that her story seem true?

3. When it is time for the funeral, what becomes of Gatsby's friends?

4. Describe Gatsby's father.

5. Mr. Gatz compares his son, Jay Gatsby, to James J. Hill. Explain the significance of this allusion.

6. What is ironic about the Swastika Holding Company?

7. Where is Gatsby buried?

8. What is Nick's fantastic dream? How does Nick view the East?

9. What becomes of Jordan and Nick's relationship?

10. Explain the analogy comparing drivers with relationships.

11. When does Nick head west?

12. Describe Nick and Tom's final meeting.

13. Summarize the final message of the epilogue.
