The Great Gatsby

by

F. Scott Fitzgerald

1925

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LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING
The novel is set in New York in the 1920's, at Nick Carraway's bungalow and Gatsby's mansion on West Egg, at the Buchanan's mansion on East Egg, in various places in New York City, including Myrtle's apartment, the Plaza Hotel, and a restaurant across from The Metropole, and in the Valley of Ashes.

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Nick Carraway
The narrator of the novel and the protagonist of the frame narrative. He is a conservative young man from the Midwest, who comes to New York to seek freedom and escape his small-town background. During the course of the novel, he turns thirty and decides to leave the East, juding it to be shallow and meaningless. At the end of the book, he has decided to return home to the Midwest and marry the girl who has been waiting for him.

Jay Gatsby
The protagonist of the main plot of the novel and the character who is referenced in the book's title. A poor young man in the army, he falls in love with Daisy Fay, a wealthy and shallow "golden girl." He spends the rest of his short life trying to win Daisy’s love. In order attract her attention, he amasses a fortune, earned from bootlegging and other illegal means, and builds a huge, gaudy mansion across the bay from the home of Daisy and her husband. He convinces Nick, Daisy’s distant cousin, to bring the two of them together, and for awhile Gatsby and Daisy have an affair. She, however, only uses Gatsby for entertainment, to break the boredom of her life. In the end, he is shot by Wilson, who believes that Gatsby was having an affair with his wife and was responsible for her accidental death.

Daisy Fay Buchanan
Daisy is an attractive, wealthy, and shallow young lady. She had a fling with Gatsby when he was stationed in the army in Louisville, her hometown, and fancied that she loved him. When Gatsby was sent to Europe to fight in the war, she waited for him to return for a short while. Soon bored and impatient, she began to date other men of her same social class. She met and fell in love with the wealthy Tom Buchanan, whom she married. The young couple moved to East Egg, where they led a shallow and shallow existence. When Daisy meets Gatsby again at Nick’s house, she has an affair with him, but she will never leave Tom for Gatsby. Throughout the novel, Daisy is the object of Gatsby’s dream; even in the end, he does not realize that she is not worthy of his adoration.

Tom Buchanan
Daisy’s wealthy husband. He is a symbol of the shallowness and carelessness of the very rich. He plays with cars and race horses, has sordid affairs, and treats Daisy shabbily. She, however, will always remain with Tom, for he offers her security and the life style to which she is accustomed.

Myrtle Wilson
The gaudy mistress of Tom Buchanan and the wife of George Wilson. Tom keeps an apartment for her in the city, which is the scene of a rather wild party during the book. When George realizes she is having an affair, he locks her in her room and plans to move her out West. She, however, is killed in a car accident by a hit-and-run driver, who is Daisy Buchanan.

Minor Characters

Jordan Baker
Daisy’s good friend. She is an attractive and wealthy young golfer whom Nick dates while he is in New York. A compulsive liar and a cheat, she is almost as shallow and careless as Daisy.

George Wilson
Myrtle’s husband and the owner of a garage in the Valley of Ashes. He idolizes his wife and goes crazy when she is killed. Thinking that Gatsby is responsible for her death, he shoots him and then kills himself.

Catherine
The sister of Myrtle who is as tacky and ostentatious as Myrtle.

Mr. and Mrs. McKee
The couple who lives in the apartment below the one that Tom keeps for Myrtle in the city. They come to the party at Myrtle’s apartment.

Meyer Wolfsheim
The shady Jewish business associate of Gatsby. He wears human molars as cufflinks, fixed the world series, and makes his money through gambling and racketeering.

Michaelis
One of the few friends of George Wilson. He is a young Greek man who owns a coffee shop in the Valley of Ashes, located next to Wilson’s garage. He is the only eye witness to Myrtle’s accidental death and tries to comfort Wilson over the loss.

Owl-Eyes
A middle-aged man who frequents Gatsby’s parties. He is one of the few people who show up at Gatsby’s funeral.

Klipspringer
A frequent guest at Gatsby’s parties, who is called “the boarader” and often plays the piano.

Dan Cody
The wealthy man who employed Gatsby as a youth and taught him about business. Although he is never actually seen in the novel, Gatsby explains all about him to Nick, and he is instrumental in shaping Gatsby’s life.

Henry C. Gatt
Gatsby’s father. He is seen for the first time when he comes to his son’s funeral. He is an old, nervous man who is proud of Gatsby’s wealth.

Pammy Buchanan
The daughter of Tom and Daisy. She appears only for a moment in the book to show that Daisy is incapable of any depth of maternal love; for her, Pammy is a toy or plaything.

CONFLICT
The novel is really a combination of two plot lines developing simultaneously, creating two sets of protagonists, antagonists, climaxes, and outcomes. Both are given below.

Nick Carraway’s plot:

**Protagonist**
Nick Carraway, the proper young man with roots in the Midwest, is the narrator of the story and the protagonist of his own plot, which forms the frame narrative of the novel. He tries to escape his limited, small town experience in the Midwest and to find himself in New York.

**Antagonist**
Nick’s antagonist is his past and his own limited view of things. Although he tries to run away from his Midwestern heritage, he cannot escape it. His values and beliefs are too entrenched in his whole being. At the end of the book, after becoming totally disillusioned with the world of Daisy and Tom, Nick accepts who he is and returns to live an orderly life in the Midwestern town from which he came.

**Climax**
The climax for Nick comes in the eighth chapter, after the blow-up between Tom and Gatsby. The next morning Nick goes over to Gatsby’s house. Although he has been critical of his neighbor all through the novel, he now realizes that Gatsby is worth more than all of “them” put together. He finally sees that Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and the entire monied class of society is purposeless and devoid of moral value. He then realizes that his place is not in New York.

**Outcome**
Nick’s story ends in comedy, for he reckons with and accepts his past and who he is and returns home to the Midwest to the orderly life of his youth and upbringing. He is really the only truly moral character in the novel.

Jay Gatsby’s plot:

**Protagonist**
Jay Gatsby, the symbol of new money, is the protagonist of a second plot that is totally interwoven into Nick’s plot. His gauche behavior and extravagant display of wealth is somewhat purified by his dream of being able to have Daisy Buchanan. Since he met her when he was stationed in Louisville in the army, he has devoted his whole life to obtaining his dream—to winning Daisy for himself.

**Antagonist**
Gatsby’s protagonist is reaching his goal, his dream of being meritorious of Daisy. The irony is that Daisy is not worthy of Gatsby, for she is a selfish, thoughtless young woman who is restless and devoid of value. Gatsby, however, never realizes this fact, for he has put her on a pedestal and spent his adult life idolizing and trying to win her. Until the very end, he sadly believes his dream is obtainable.

**Climax**
The climax for Gatsby occurs in the seventh chapter when he and Tom fight about Daisy. Hoping to make his dream come true, he tries to make Daisy say that she loves him and has never loved Tom. Although she utters the words, they are not said with any sincerity, for what Daisy wants is to have both Gatsby and Tom. When forced to choose, she will not desert the comfortable life of the wealthy, established society in which she has always lived; thus, Gatsby’s dream is destroyed, Daisy has chosen Tom over him.

**Outcome**
The plot ends in tragedy for Gatsby. He is tragically shot by George Wilson, who believes that Gatsby is his wife’s lover and her murderer. In fact, had he not been killed, Gatsby’s life would have been miserable, for he would have realized that Daisy would never again be part of his existence; his holy grail, the dream of possessing Daisy, is obliterated forever when Daisy chooses Tom over Gatsby.

**SHORT SUMMARY**
In the spring, Nick Carraway, a young, moral, and conservative young man from the Midwest, has come to New York to learn the bond business and to escape the confusing small town environment of his youth. He rents a small bungalow on West Egg, next door to his neighbor and cousin, Daisy Buchanan. As he arrives at his new home, he meets his cousin, Jordan Baker, who asks him to come for dinner with her, her husband, Tom, and her friend, Jordan Baker. When he arrives at their home, Nick is amazed at the lavishness of the house and the size of it. He is also amazed at the purposelessness of their lives. Daisy, always dressed in white, seems to float about without a serious thought or any ability to plan anything meaningful. Jordan is no better. Tom seems to care only about his polo ponies and his mistress. Nick interrupts the normal narrative of the story to give some background information on Gatsby. He was born as James Gatz to poor parents. When all the guests, including Daisy, have gone home, Gatsby asks Nick to stay for awhile and invites him to rejudge the value of everything in his house according to Daisy's reaction to it. He simply cannot believe that after all these years, he cannot believe that after all these years, the purity of his dream and his devotion to it, is better than the "whole damn lot" of the Buchanans and their likes from East Egg.

Later in July, Jordan sends his chauffeur over to Nick's house with an invitation for him to attend a party the next Saturday night. Nick accepts and arrives at the party with great curiosity. He is amazed at the lavishness he sees. A full bar, with a brass rail, is set up on the back porch. The first few minutes are very awkward, but the two of them manage to strike up a conversation and Discover that they have a common interest in literature. Nick is pleased to meet the young man whom he calls "Owl Eyes." Not finding his host, however, he is relieved to see Jordan Baker. They spend most of the evening together. At one point, as they are seated at a table, they are joined by a young man in his thirties. He seems to recognize him, and the two of them have a conversation about Gatsby. Nick had imagined him to be much older. The new man introduces himself as Jay Gatsby. He tells Nick that he is a wealthy young man from a socially prominent family in Chicago. Before long, he accepts his proposal of marriage and wrote Gatsby a letter to end their relationship. In reality, the dream is beginning to break up for Gatsby even though he is not aware of it. When Tom brings Daisy to Gatsby's next party, it is clear to Nick that something is going on. Sometime later, Tom and Nick are sitting outside on a lawn when Daisy asks him if he can drive his car in order to calm her nerves. When the car approaches the Valley of Ashes, Myrtle asks Gatsby to stop. In the end, he pulls the emergency brake to halt the car and takes the driver's seat. He has already decided that he will not take the blame for the accident. Daisy does not even call to express her sorrow or offer to help with the funeral. When Wilson moves her away. When Daisy sees the woman, it is too late. She hits Myrtle, but keeps on driving, even though she is needlessly shot by Wilson, who thinks Gatsby is his wife's lover and murderer. Daisy does not even call to express her sorrow or offer to help with the funeral. In fact, no one other than the hired help comes to Gatsby's funeral except for Nick, Gatsby's father (Mr. Gatsby), and the hired help. Tom walks out of the room. Before long, Tom realizes that there is something going on between Gatsby and his wife and is totally outraged. As a result, he agrees to go into the city, as Daisy has suggested, he is ready for a confrontation with Gatsby.

On the way into town, Tom insists upon driving Daisy's yellow car, which he calls a circus wagon. When the car is low on fuel, he stops at Wilson's garage and learns that Wilson has found out that Myrtle is having an affair and is planning to move his wife and him out of town. When she looks out and sees Tom, she thinks he may be for the last time. When she spots Jordan Baker, who is riding with Tom, she is afraid of him. She quickly explains to Nick that she has a special arrangement with Wilson to provide her with flowers every day. When Nick interrupts the normal narrative of the story to give some background information on Gatsby. He was born as James Gatz to poor parents. When all the guests, including Daisy, have gone home, Gatsby asks Nick to stay for awhile and invites him to rejudge the value of everything in his house according to Daisy's reaction to it. He simply cannot believe that after all these years, he cannot believe that after all these years, the purity of his dream and his devotion to it, is better than the "whole damn lot" of the Buchanans and their likes from East Egg.
The East

The East is a symbol of shallowness, carelessness, and corruption, as evidenced by characters such as the Buchanans, Jordan Baker, Meyer Wolfsheim, and Dan Cody. In contrast, the Midwest is a symbol of morality, conventionalism, and practicality, as evidenced by the narrator, Nick Carraway. He tries to flee from his Midwest roots by heading to New York, but when he sees and judges the East as corrupt, as a result, he chooses to move back home to the stability of the Midwest.

MOOD

The mood is largely dark, pessimistic, and vapid as set by the purposelessness and carelessness of the wealthy, the ongoing string of meaningless parties, the ugliness of the Valley of Ashes, and the tragic deaths of Gatsby and Myrtle. Only Nick Carraway's honest and moral view of life breaks the sense of tragedy.

THEME

THEMES

The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby is F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece and remains one of the most popular American novels. It is set in the 1920's, a period known in America as the Roaring Twenties. After the end of World War I and before the stock market crash of 1929, there was a spirit of rebellion in the United States. The mood is largely dark, pessimistic, and vapid as set by the purposelessness and carelessness of the wealthy, the ongoing string of meaningless parties, the ugliness of the Valley of Ashes, and the tragic deaths of Gatsby and Myrtle. Only Nick Carraway’s honest and moral view of life breaks the sense of tragedy.

CHAPTER 1

Summary

In 1920, Fitzgerald married the eighteen year-old Zelda, and they moved to New York City. Soon afterwards, they had a daughter, “Scottie.” In spite of their parenthood, Fitzgerald and Zelda played hard and drank excessively, living beyond their means and becoming famous for their partying and outrageous scenes. They also traveled extensively and knew all the expatriate American writers in England and France. Despite their glamorous marriage, it was very tumultuous.

In 1934, Zelda was hospitalized in the United States for treatment and never came out of an institution again. In 1939, she was hospitalized in Europe. Fitzgerald had the success and acclaim he had sought. His last novel, The Last Tycoon, was published in 1940 and made into a film.

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Nick Carraway, the narrator of the entire story, is clearly depicted. He is a young man in his late twenties who grew up in the Midwest in a prominent, respected middle class family with Scottish ancestry. He says he is a decent human being who was taught at an early age to reserve judgment, a trait which has made him a confidante to many people in his life. He graduated from New Haven (Yale) in 1915, and then served in the military in World War I. When he returned to the Midwest after the war, he quickly grew restless and found his small hometown to be too confining. As a result, he has come to New York City to learn the bond business, like many of his friends.

The main purpose of this first chapter is to introduce the characters and setting of the book. Nick Carraway, the narrator of the entire story, is clearly depicted. He is a young man in his late twenties who grew up in the Midwest in a prominent, respected middle class family with Scottish ancestry. He says he is a decent human being who was taught at an early age to reserve judgment, a trait which has made him a confidante to many people in his life. He graduated from New Haven (Yale) in 1915, and then served in the military in World War I. When he returned to the Midwest after the war, he quickly grew restless and found his small hometown to be too confining. As a result, he has come to New York City to learn the bond business, like many of his friends.

Tom Buchanan, his family in an elaborate Georgian Colonial mansion on East Egg, of which he is very proud. It is on East Egg that Nick Carraway’s distant cousin Daisy lives with her husband Tom Buchanan. Tom Buchanan, his thirty year old host, is standing on the wide front porch, dressed in his riding clothes. Nick immediately notices that Tom has changed since his college days. Although still blond, handsome, and muscular, he appears more sturdy and arrogant; in fact, Nick comments that Tom has a “cruel body, capable of enormous leverage,” an analysis which foreshadows Tom’s future actions.

East Egg is located across a small bay from West Egg, but they are separated by more than a body of water. West Egg is the less fashionable island, peopled with flashy mansions built by new money, in contrast, East Egg is filled with the fashionable, substantial, and sturdy palaces representing the old guard and inherited wealth. It is on East Egg that Nick Carraway’s distant cousin Daisy lives with her husband Tom Buchanan. Tom, who was at Yale with Nick, was a football hero in college and comes from an enormously wealthy Chicago family. After marrying Daisy, the two of them “drifted” for several years from place to place, including a year’s stay in France. Now Tom has brought his polo ponies east and established himself and his family in an elaborate Georgian Colonial mansion on East Egg, of which he is very proud.

Nick has been invited to dinner at the Buchanans. When he arrives at their home, he is amazed at its size and the expansive grounds that run from the house for a quarter of a mile down to the beach. Tom Buchanan, his thirty year old host, is standing on the wide front porch, dressed in his riding clothes. Nick immediately notices that Tom has changed since his college days. Although still blond, handsome, and muscular, he appears more sturdy and arrogant; in fact, Nick comments that Tom has a “cruel body, capable of enormous leverage,” an analysis which foreshadows Tom’s future actions.

In total contrast to Tom’s appearance, Daisy, Tom’s wife and Nick’s cousin, appears to be light as a feather. It is an appropriate image, for there is not much depth to her. She sits inside the living room on a sofa and is dressed in a lightweight, white garment that is rippling in the breeze, giving the young woman the image of floating. Her voice, light and thrilling to Nick, intensifies the cool, airy picture of her appearance, but as she speaks, Daisy reveals that her purpose in life, in fact, is also “flying.” She tells Nick that they will all “escape” to the East coast. As a result, he has come to New York City to learn the bond business, like many of his friends.

Nick has learned that a Mr. Jay Gatsby owns and inhabits the mansion.

During the course of the dinner, part of the reason for Daisy’s unhappiness is revealed. When Tom receives a phone call and leaves the table, followed by his wife, a second guest, Jordan Baker, tells Nick that Tom has a mistress in the city. In a conversation after dinner, Daisy also reveals other “turbulent emotions” to Nick. She tells him that when she had her daughter two years ago, Tom was nowhere around. She is glad that the child is a daughter, for she feels she can raise her to be “a fool—that’s the best thing a girl can be in the world, a beautiful little fool.” She then admits her misery to Nick and says, “I’ve had a very bad time, and I’m pretty cynical about everything.” The noble Nick, hesitant to make judgements, feels very uneasy about Daisy’s confessions and the smirk that spoils her lovely face. He also feels like an outsider, excluded from the distinguished secret society to which the Buchanan’s belong.

After their private conversation on the porch, Nick and Daisy go inside to join Tom and Jordan. Tom warns Nick about Daisy’s complaints and says, “Don’t believe everything you hear.” Nick then learns that Jordan is a well-known golf star, and Daisy teases them both about arranging their marriage. They then quiz Nick about his being “engaged to a girl out West,” but he explains that she is only a friend and part of the reason he has escaped to the East coast. Since Jordan must depart to rest before her morning golf tournament, Nick also takes his leave. As he drives away, he has feelings of confusion and disgust about the Buchanan’s. He really feels that Daisy and her daughter should rush out of Tom’s house forever, but he also knows that will never happen.

When Nick arrives home, he stands outside to take in the view of the bay. He notices that his neighbor is also outside, staring at the stars with hands in his pocket. Just as Nick prepares to greet him, the neighbor stretches out his arms to the dark water and appears to tremble. Nick looks out to the bay to see what attracts the neighbor’s attention, but he sees only a single green light, probably at the end of a dock in East Egg. When Nick looks back toward his neighbor, the man has vanished. What an appropriate first glimpse of the mysterious Gatsby!
CHAPTER I

Notes

Nick Carraway, the narrator of the book, tells the story from his memory in the first person point of view, participates in the action of the plot from time to time, and evaluates the events occurring in the story. He also tells his own story, which serves as the frame narrative to Gatsby’s own plot. It is significant to note that Nick, after he has returned to the Midwest, opens the first chapter with a reflection about Gatsby, before the main character is ever seen or even introduced:

When I came back from the East last autumn, I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction -- Gatsby who represented everything for which I have unaffected scorn.....There was something gorgeous about him...it was an extraordinary gift for hope; 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.

This early foreshadowing (about the outcome of the plot that is soon to unravel) serves several purposes. It builds dramatic effect and emphasizes that Nick’s experience in New York has profoundly changed him, that he is capable of making a moral judgement, and that Gatsby is judged to be a romantic who is better than all of the others in the East who suffer from foulness and meaninglessness.

After these opening comments, Nick explains his Midwestern background and ethics in some detail. The action of the entire novel, set mainly on the flashy islands of East and West Egg, New York, is in total contrast to Nick’s stable background; and yet Fitzgerald makes Nick’s participation in the story plausible by creating him as a well-to-do young man with social graces. He happens to be the cousin of Daisy Buchanan and the neighbor of Jay Gatsby. He also prides himself in not judging people, therefore, often serving as a confidante.

The contrast between Nick’s background and the East is the first of many in this chapter. West Egg, peopled by the “nouveaux riches” is contrasted to East Egg, home of the old money. Gatsby’s gaudy mansion, full of flash, imitation, and newness, is contrasted to the stately Georgian mansion belonging to Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Tom’s dark, sturdy, powerful image is in stark contrast to the airy, floating, white image of his wife Daisy. Nick’s purpose and planning in life (he is all business between soldiering and learning bonds) is in contrast to the aimlessness and drifting of Tom and Daisy.

Not surprisingly, Nick is uncomfortable with the contrast to the Buchanans that he feels. His decent Midwestern upbringing is shaken by Daisy’s wanting to bring her daughter up to be a fool, by Tom’s having a mistress who is bold enough to call his home, by Tom’s open hostility to his wife in conversation, and by their drifting nature and inability to plan. It is no wonder that when he leaves the Buchanans after dinner, he feels unsettled -- “confused” and “disgusted.” Fitzgerald is already developing the theme that “money corrupts.” Daisy and Tom have unlimited wealth, but limited inner strength or purpose.

Ironically, when Nick returns home from East Egg, he receives his first glimpse of his neighbor, Jay Gatsby, and it is a symbolic image. Gatsby, already defined as a romantic, is outside in the dark, staring at the stars, almost in the appearance of worship. He then stretches out his hands toward a green light on the shore of East Egg. The green light, which is at the end of the Buchanans’ dock, is the visible representation of Gatsby’s unattainable vision -- to be something he can never be, to have something he can never have. The light, significantly, is green -- the color for “go,” the color of new life, and the color of hope. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the identical Egg Islands, the color of green is also money, a corrupting influence in life.
CHAPTER II

Summary

This chapter opens with a description of the Valley of Ashes, a desolate area of land between West Egg and New York City. In this industrial wasteland, through which the commuter train must pass, everything is covered with dust, smoke, and ashes. But above this gray, ashen land, there is a sign of hope - a huge advertisement painted on the side of a building. The ad shows the large, blue eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckelberg, oculist, looking out from an enormous pair of yellow glasses. The eyes, which are just beginning to fade in color, appear to be brooding over the gray wasteland below them.

This bleak setting is the appropriate home of Tom Buchanan’s mistress, Myrtle Wilson. One Sunday afternoon in July, when Nick and Tom are riding into the city, the train stops at a drawbridge in the Valley of Ashes. While the train is at a standstill, Tom grabs Nick’s elbow, forces him from the car, and says, “I want you to meet my girl.” They walk through several blocks of nothingness until they enter Wilson’s Garage and Repair Shop. George Wilson, like the building and its surroundings, is covered in ash and spiritless in nature. In contrast to him, his wife Myrtle, in her mid thirties, is very sensuous, with an air of vitality about her even though she is faintly stout and unattractive. Tom taunts George with a promise to sell him his automobile and tells Myrtle to get on the next train. She is always ready to escape from the Valley of Ashes, and gladly obliges Tom. She discreetly sits in the next car, away from her lover. In New York, however, the three of them get in a cab together and head towards the apartment that Tom rents for her.

On the way to the apartment, Myrtle, possessed with purchasing things, insists upon stopping to buy a puppy being offered by a gray old man on the street corner. Tom pays the man for the dog and comments that “it’s a bitch,” words that Myrtle ironically could not say even though she is a mistress herself. Nick tries to leave the cab to take a pastoral stroll through the park in the soft warmth of the bright afternoon, but Tom insists that Nick come up to the bleak apartment, which is a small, crowded one bedroom flat on the top floor. (Symbolically, Nick is torn between the order of his pastoral Midwest and the chaos and flash of New York.)

The crowded apartment is soon packed with additional guests – Myrtle’s sister Catherine (described in ashen terms) and the McKees, who are neighbors from downstairs. A party of sorts ensues with much drinking and inane conversation. Myrtle, who has changed her clothes for the third time in a matter of hours, also changes her personality from the earlier vitality found in the garage to one of false pretension, with exaggerated laughter and phony gestures. She loudly complains to everyone present about her husband George and says, “I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...I thought he knew something about breeding.” She next goes on to tell how she was horrified to discover that he had borrowed the suit he had worn to their wedding. She then tells Nick about meeting Tom on the train for the first time, being attracted by his clothing, and convincing herself to go off with him since “you can’t live forever.”

By nine o’clock, Mr. McKee has fallen asleep, and Nick quickly goes over and wipes from his face a spot of dried lather that has bothered him all afternoon. Myrtle, by this time, is orally making a list of all the things she has planned to buy: a massage, a permanent wave, a collar for the puppy, a special kind of ash tray, and a wreath with a black silk bow that will last all summer for her mother’s grave. She then states, “I got to write down a list so I won’t forget all the things I got to do.” In the midst of it all, people seem to disappear and reappear, to make plans to go somewhere and then lose each other. Nick admits that he has had too much to drink and that everything appears vague and shadowy, as if Myrtle has brought the Valley of Ashes with her.

Nick describes himself at the party as being “within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.” The spell of the party, however, is broken around midnight when Tom and Myrtle argue loudly over her talking about Daisy. Tom insists that she not even mention his wife’s name. When Myrtle taunts him by shouting, “Daisy! Daisy!...I’ll say it whenever I want to,” Tom answers by striking her face and breaking her nose. Nick’s sense of moral order is repulsed by the violence, and he leaves in an alcoholic stupor, finally catching the 4:00 a.m. train back to West Egg.

CHAPTER ANALYSIS / NOTES

CHAPTER II

Notes
It is intentional that Chapter I ends with Gatsby reaching out to his dream, a hope for something concrete, as symbolized by the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. By contrast, Chapter II opens with a description of the Valley of Ashes, a symbol of the hopelessness produced by modern, industrialized society in its thoughtless search for money. The ashes are the by-product of the wealthy, the foul dust that destroys dreams and the symbol of the spiritual decay of the times.

The contrasts and symbolism continue throughout the chapter. The eyes of Dr. Eckelberg, painted on a building overlooking the wasteland known as the Valley of Ashes, symbolize the all knowing eyes of God, as if the owner is losing hope, as if he can do nothing to control the ashes that mankind continues to create in abundance. Dr. Eckelberg’s large blue eyes are then contrasted to the eyes of George Wilson, a pathetic and spiritless product of the wasteland who is blinded and obliterated by the ashes. In contrast to her husband, Myrtle Wilson at first seems to have some vitality left in her despite her life in the Valley of Ashes. When she goes to the apartment in New York, however, she seems to bring the ashen life with her, creating a smoky air and disguising her vitality, which is replaced with false pretension to be something she is not and can never be. Throughout the chapter, Myrtle is developed in total contrast to the light and airy Daisy, who has no purpose or plan. Myrtle, a heavyset, plain woman, is preoccupied with appearances (she constantly worries about clothing) and petty planning (to buy a dog collar, an ash tray, a massage, and a wreath for her mother’s grave - all of seeming equal importance to her). Myrtle wants more than anything to permanently leave the Valley of Ashes, to rise above her low class, and pretends that dresses and purchases elevate her lifestyle. Her pathetic existence, while more active and organized than Daisy’s, is equally meaningless.

A sharp contrast is also developed between Nick and Tom. Nick, who longs several times in the chapter to take a pastoral walk through the park (subconsciously reflecting his desire to return home to the pastoral Midwest), is still a product of his orderly upbringing. He is horrified by Tom’s behavior and driven to distraction by a bit of dried shaving cream on Mr. McKee’s face. As soon as McKee falls asleep, Nick wipes the spot away, trying to put everything back in order. Tom, on the other hand, is violent and compulsive. He spiritually strikes out at Daisy by having this petty affair and displaying his common mistress for the world to see (much like he parades his horses) and he physically strikes out at Myrtle, breaking her nose in total brutality. In perfect contrast to the orderly Nick, Tom is a symbol of disorder and destruction -- the product of his extreme wealth.

Tom is also contrasted to George Wilson, Myrtle’s husband. She claims that she married him because she felt he had “good breeding” but betrays him when she thinks that he does not act or dress like a gentleman. Ironically, she is attracted to Tom because he wears nice clothing and appears to be well bred. But George Wilson, covered in ashes and destined to poverty, really has better breeding than Tom. Incapable of violent action, George can only stand by and long for the woman he truly loves. The violent Tom, on the other hand, was born to wealth and class, but has no capacity to truly love.

It is significant to note that Gatsby is not seen and only mentioned in passing in this chapter. When Myrtle’s sister Catherine learns that Nick lives on West Egg, she inquires if he knows Jay Gatsby. She explains that she recently went to a party at his mansion. She also tells Nick that rumor says Gatsby’s money comes from being a relative of Kaiser Wilhelm. She ends her conversation about him by adding that “I’m scared of him. I’d hate to have him get anything on me.” Such brief and mysterious comments about the main character serve to heighten his intrigue and the reader’s interest in him.

It is also significant to note that Nick describes himself as both within and without the action in this chapter, just as he, as the narrator, within and without the plot of the story. Nick also shows he is within and without when trying to deal with his moral, orderly past. He does not want to meet Tom’s mistress, does not want to go to her apartment, wants to leave the party and take a peaceful walk, wipes the spot from McKee’s face (his moral order at work) and yet, because of Tom and Myrtle (symbols of depravity) and his fascination with them, he is caught up within the party, drinking himself into a stupor (for only the second time in his life). As his inebriation progresses throughout the chapter, the details of the evening and the conversations begin to blur, just like Nick’s moral stance is blurred at the party, but the bizarre gathering, that ends in ugly violence, clearly reflects the moral decay of the age. The chapter ends, as it begins, in a symbolic valley of ashes.
hours of the morning. Gatsby’s Rolls-Royce becomes a shuttle bus for the party-goers, and cars were still parked five deep in the drive. A “corps of caterers” arrives once a week to set up buffet tables filled with gourmet treats, and the main hall is transformed into a bar complete with brass rail and every type of liquor. Nick then describes more specifically the first party that he attends at his neighbor’s house. Gatsby has sent his chauffeur next door with a formal invitation to Nick to attend “a little party” on Saturday night. Nick accepts the offer, dresses in white flannels, arrives at Gatsby’s around 7:00, and wanders, rather ill at ease, among the swells of unknown dressers. He is delighted to find Jordan Baker among the guests, greets her warmly, and remains by her side for much of the evening.

During the course of the party, Nick looks several times unsuccessfully for Gatsby in order to formally introduce himself; he overhears much talk about the host, including rumors that he is an Oxford graduate, that he has killed a man, and that he served as a German spy during the war; he also learns that Gatsby has sent an expensive dress to a young lady as a replacement for one torn at a previous Gatsby gathering. He visits the library and meets a middle-age man, who has been drinking for a week and who wears “enormous owl-eyed spectacles” (recalling the image of T.J. Eckelberg). The man is absolutely amazed that the titles in Gatsby’s library are actually real books with real pages. He then exclaims, “It’s a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism!—didn’t cut the pages.” It is as if this drunken gentleman knew the real Gatsby and believes he is hiding behind a facade that includes his mansion, his parties, and his library.

As Nick turns towards his home next door, he finds an accident has just occurred outside. A car has left Gatsby’s drive, run into a wall, and lost its wheel. The first person to emerge from the wreck is Owl-Eyes, the drunken man with the spectacles found earlier in the library. When questioned about the accident, he “washes his hands of the whole matter,” just as he washes his hands of his careless, drunken behavior and lack of moral responsibility. He is followed out of the car by the driver, “a pale, dangling individual,” an apparition of a man hiding behind a facade that includes his mansion, his parties, and his library.

At midnight, the party is still going strong with dancing, music, and “stunts” in the garden. Nick notes that “the hilarity had increased...while happy vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky.” Nick is sitting at a table with Jordan and an unknown man of his approximate age. The man tells Nick that his face looks familiar, and the two of them discover that they had both been in the Third Division during the war. The gentleman then warms towards Nick, calls him “old sport” repeatedly, and asks him to take a ride in his newly purchased hydroplane on the next morning. After accepting the invitation, Nick is surprised to learn that this gentleman is Jay Gatsby himself. Nick then notes the warmth and reassurance of his neighbor’s smile that seems to be an appearance that vanishes too quickly. When Gatsby leaves to take a phone call, Nick admits to Jordan, “I had expected that Mr. Gatsby would be a florid and corpulent person in his middle years.” He then asks Jordan to tell him more about this mysterious man. Jordan simply replies, “He’s just a man named Gatsby,” a classical example of understatement.

Notes
This chapter presents the third meaningless party in a row for Nick Carraway, and this one, held at Gatsby’s mansion, has similarities to and differences from the small, classy dinner party at the Buchanan’s and the raucous, drunken gathering at Myrtle’s apartment. Like the party at the Buchanan’s, Gatsby’s party is held in a mansion, is attended by denizens of the fashionable Egg Islands (including Jordan and Nick), is well prepared, and features excessive drinking and behavior.

CHAPTER III

As Nick makes these observations, he and Jordan are interrupted by a butler sent by the host. Mr. Gatsby has requested to see Jordan, so she takes her leave. Alone again, Nick surveys the degenerating party scene. The orchestra has left, but the room is still crowded. A drunken red-headed woman is singing loudly and weeping at the same time. Most of the women are fighting with their husbands or dates about leaving the party, and two women are physically carried out. As Nick prepares to leave the party himself, Jordan emerges from the library with her host and tells Nick, “I’ve just heard the most amazing thing,” building even more suspense about the mysterious Gatsby. Nick promises to call Jordan and then bids Gatsby goodnight with new apologies for not having known him earlier in the garden. Gatsby says, “Don’t mention it,” and reminds Nick of their morning hydroplane plans.

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Nick closes the chapter with explanations about himself, to fill in his life between the parties. Most of his time is spent working at Proctor Trust and studying about investments. He says he is learning to like the “tacky face” of New York, but dreams of finding a romantic attachment. He also admits that he sometimes, in the hustle and bustle, feels a “haunting loneliness” in himself and others, and personally longs for “gayety and...intimate excitement.” He also reveals that he has seen Jordan Baker in the library with the butler of the mansion and developed a tenderness for her. He was shocked, however, to learn that she “incurred dishonest” and terribly careless. At least Jordan admits that she “hates careless people. That’s why I like you.” Despite their mutual interest in one another, the noble Nick puts the brakes on their relationship because he has still not settled his responsibility. He is followed out of the car by the driver, “a pale, dangling individual,” an apparition of a man (with flashback to the valley of ashes). He is also quite drunk and cannot quite understand that the wheel is gone from the car, rendering it undrivable. Nick, disgusted with this drunken scene of destruction and the attendant cacophony of impatient horns, goes home. As he glances back to Gatsby’s mansion, he is struck by the sudden emptiness he sees and by the isolated figure of the host waving upon the porch.

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Nick notes that he is the only honest person he knows.
Gatsby’s party is described in greater detail than the other two parties in order to introduce the character of the host and to emphasize the purposelessness nature of his gatherings. Most of his guests have not been invited to the party but have been brought by others or just drop in. With no moral consciousness, they drink Gatsby’s liquor and eat his food without even attempting to meet him or express appreciation (in contrast to Nick who is obsessed with finding Gatsby and introducing himself). The women, purposefully dressed in silvers and golds (symbolic of money), only pretend to have fun. (They even weep as they sing.) There are no real relationships here, only inane chatter, wild speculation, and drunken antics; it is a false appearance of happiness that covers up the lack of moral responsibility and misery of the soul.

The whole swelling party scene is orchestrated by Jay Gatsby, who like his party, appears to be a splendid illusion. He has borrowed the design for his mansion from France; he has created an impressive library filled with real books that are never opened; he gives wild parties in which he never really participates; he speaks with elaborate formality saying words of little meaning; and he flashes a vibrant, understanding smile that quickly vanishes to reveal the true Gatsby. Just as the party lies to cover up the misery beneath, underneath Gatsby’s smooth appearance, Nick recognizes “a young rough-neck.” But Gatsby is not a party-goer by nature. He stands alone, distant from the action. The first image of him in the book was at the end of Chapter 1, standing in isolation in the darkness with hand outstretched to the green light. In a similar manner, at the end of this chapter, he stands alone on his porch, waving from a distance to his last departing guests. Gatsby does not join in with the drinking and merriment, but orchestrates it all for a purpose, for he is an incurable romantic, a man with a dream.
Nick turns from the long list to tell about the first time Gatsby comes to his home. He has arrived in his elegant automobile to take Nick into the city for lunch. During the drive, Gatsby asks Nick, "What’s your opinion of me anyway?" and then launches into an explanation of his background. He first says he is the son of a wealthy family from the "middle-west". He then adds he was educated at Oxford, inherited a great deal of money, and attended Gatsby's gatherings. Most of the names, such as Leech, Blackbuck, Dancies, Whitebait, Hammerhead, and Claudia Hip, are to poke fun at the society of the roaring 20's. But Nick's description of some of their activities is not funny. Mr. Civet drowned in Maine, the Blackbucks flipped up their noses at the world like goats, Snell Bull, Smirkes, Belcher, and Hip, are to poke fun at the society of the roaring 20's. Appropriately, Nick has observed the passing surroundings. He spies Mrs. Wilson at her husband's gas pump in the Valley of Ashes. He sees a dead man in a hearse, followed by two carriages filled with mourners that have "tragic eyes". He notices a limousine driven by a white chauffeur and carrying "three modish Negroes." He stares at the city skyline rising ahead "in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-oilactory money." Then Nick reflects that anything can happen in New York, a city filled with mystery and beauty.

As Jordan and Nick leave the Plaza Hotel, they hear children in the park singing "The Sheik of Araby," an appropriate song that seems to foreshadow Gatsby's sneaking into Daisy's life, just as the Sheik of Araby was sneaking into a tent. With this song in the background, Jordan tells Nick the most astonishing news of all.
that Nick is attracted to Jordan for all the wrong reasons. He knows that she is incurably dishonest, limited, and skeptical.

supports Jordan's idea that "Daisy ought to have something in her life," even if it is totally immoral. It is also obvious plans to arrange a meeting of his neighbor and Daisy, without any knowledge on Daisy's part. It is almost as if he purposeless, drifting Daisy, is not worthy of such devotion.

mansion, driven his car, in order to catch Daisy's attention, the man was "delivered suddenly from the womb of his proper Midwesterner is appalled. But when Nick realizes that Gatsby has done everything, obtained his riches, bought his Gatsby's "faux pas," Nick calls Daisy the next day, invites her to tea, and tells her not to bring Tom.

Gatsby's"huge"favor is for Nick to invite Daisy over one afternoon and let him drop manufacture it and pretend to be something he can never be.

Then Jordan explains that Gatsby's "huge" favor is for Nick to invite Daisy over one afternoon and let him drop names and just like the vehicles they drive and wreck.

4th, after the great American Declaration, after the holiday, but they are nothing to celebrate; they are a sad and corrupt written the names and events on a fading train schedule dated July 5, 1922. This "roaring" generation comes after July written about as the infancy of a generation. The world Institute for War and Peace is the backwater of literature. It is the backwater of truth (symbolized by the Rolls-Royce) and the backwater of beauty (symbolized by Death) with the rising reality of the Valley of Ashes, which is in contrast to the white sugar lumps of New York.

Gatsby has a "big" favor to ask of Nick, so he feels he should tell his neighbor something about himself, and the story is as extravagant as Gatsby's car. He says he is from the Midwest (like Nick himself) and then adds specifically from San Francisco (far from Nick's middle west both geographically and spiritually). He says he is the son of a wealthy family that has passed away, leaving him a large inheritance. He also claims he was educated at Oxford, for "it is a family tradition." After college, he chooses to live the life of luxury in Europe, collecting rubies and hunting big game, with no real purpose. Then he enlists in World War I, where Gatsby hopes to be killed, but instead becomes a decorated war hero. Since the war, he has drifted here and there, trying to forget a very sad thing that has happened to him. To Nick, this story is so obviously exaggerated and told in such poor taste that it is comical.

Even though Nick finds Gatsby's manufactured history to be a fascinating and incredible story, Gatsby himself is a fascinating and incredible character. He has been in love with Daisy Fay (her maiden name appropriately means fairy) since 1917, when he was a young lieutenant stationed near Louisville. Daisy, the most wealthy and popular girl in town with her fancy white roadster, was very attracted to this handsome, young man and she wrote to nick to meet him. After college, she ignored him. She wanted a man with a fortune, which is located across the street from where they are having lunch. Nick then learns that this astonishing man is also fixed the 1919 World Series, an action which staggered Nick's moral Midwestern mind, and he says, "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people--with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing up a safe." Appropriately Wolfsheim proudly wears cuff links made from human molars, symbolizing the corrupt nature of the wealthy who will do anything to obtain and maintain their materialistic goals. Gatsby's association with this incredible man sheds light on how he has likely amassed his fortune.

Nick leaves this luncheon with the West Eggers (the new money) to have tea with an East Egger (the old money), but the only differences between them are in appearance and background. Both East Egg and West Egg are characterized by materialism and purposelessness, as revealed in Jordan's upcoming story. Over tea she talks about her wedding to Tom and the MANY abortions she has had. Nick has been in love with Daisy Fay (her maiden name appropriately means fairy) since 1917, when he was a young lieutenant stationed near Louisville. Daisy, the most wealthy and popular girl in town with her fancy white roadster, was very attracted to this handsome, young man and she wrote to nick to meet him. After college, she ignored him. She wanted a man with a fortune, which is located across the street from where they are having lunch. Nick then learns that this astonishing man is also fixed the 1919 World Series, an action which staggered Nick's moral Midwestern mind, and he says, "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people--with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing up a safe." Appropriately Wolfsheim proudly wears cuff links made from human molars, symbolizing the corrupt nature of the wealthy who will do anything to obtain and maintain their materialistic goals. Gatsby's association with this incredible man sheds light on how he has likely amassed his fortune.

With Jordan's revelation about Gatsby totally changes Nick's opinion of him. At the beginning of this chapter, Nick's sense of reality has returned home from his date in the city with Jordan Baker, Gatsby's house is ablaze with lights from the handsome green leather interior. On the way into New York, Nick describes two other vehicles. The first is a "rich cream color bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its most wealthy and popular girl in town with her fancy white roadster, was very attracted to this handsome, young man and she wrote to nick to meet him. After college, she ignored him. She wanted a man with a fortune, which is located across the street from where they are having lunch. Nick then learns that this astonishing man is also fixed the 1919 World Series, an action which staggered Nick's moral Midwestern mind, and he says, "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people--with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing up a safe." Appropriately Wolfsheim proudly wears cuff links made from human molars, symbolizing the corrupt nature of the wealthy who will do anything to obtain and maintain their materialistic goals. Gatsby's association with this incredible man sheds light on how he has likely amassed his fortune.

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On the morning of Daisy’s visit, scheduled for 4:00 p.m., it is pouring rain, but a gardener, sent by Gatsby, still comes and cuts Nick’s grass. At 2:00 p.m., a virtual greenhouse of flowers, complete with containers, arrives from Gatsby. At 3:00 p.m., Gatsby, looking nervous and tired, arrives, dressed in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold tie. He tries unsuccessfully to calm his nerves by reading. Finally, at a little before four o’clock, he announces that obviously no one is coming to tea, and he is going home. Before he can depart, Daisy’s open car comes up the drive, and Nick goes out to greet her with her “bright ecstatic smile.” She asks Nick in her rippling voice, “to this abode where you live, my dear, come in!” She is obviously excited at the size and appearance of the small bungalow. When Daisy and Nick enter the house, Gatsby has disappeared. He soon, however, knocks at the front door, and Nick finds him outside “pale as death with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets and a stalking in a pudding of war,” staring frantically into the rain. Daisy comes inside to the living room, and Daisy, in a clear, artificial voice, tells him how glad she is to see him again. Nick can barely hear her voice above the pounding of his own heart. He wants this meeting at his house to be a success, so he leaves the two of them alone for awhile.

When Nick re-enters the living room, Daisy is reclining against the mantel in a “strained countenance of perfect ease or boredom...and his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy, who was sitting frightened but gracefully on the edge of a stiff chair.” Daisy explains to Nick that she has not seen Gatsby for many years, and Gatsby immediately adds that if his been five years and nine months. He describes to Daisy his love for her. Fortune-telling. Nick tries to comfort his neighbor by telling him that Daisy is as embedded as he is. Nick then scolds Gatsby, saying he is acting like a little boy and being rude by leaving Daisy all alone. When Gatsby returns to the living room, Nick goes outside to the back yard, observes his neighbor’s house for thirty minutes, and gives the history of the mansion.

When Nick rejoins the pair in the living room, Daisy is wiping her eyes, which are filled with tears. Gatsby, on the other hand, is glowing with a new well-being. He insists that both Nick and Daisy come over to his house. While the men wait for Daisy to freshen up, Gatsby admires his house and tells Nick that it took him three years to earn the money to buy it. When Nick questions his neighbor about having inherited money to purchase the house, Gatsby covers up once again and says that he lost his inheritance in the big panic of the war. When Nick questions him further about what kind of business he is in, Gatsby, without thinking, says, “That’s my affair,” and then, realizing his rudeness, adds he has dabbled in the oil business and the drug business.

Daisy emerges from Nick’s house to join them on the lawn and explains that she loves Gatsby’s huge house, but does not see how he could possibly live there all alone. He responds by telling her that he kept it filled with interesting and celebrated people both night and day. The three of them then enter the mansion through the front door with the gold kiss-me-nots at the gate. Inside, the trio wanders through the music rooms, the salons, and the library (where Nick recalls the owl-eyed visitor). Upstairs they visit the bedrooms, apartments, and dressing rooms, finding Mr. Klipspringer, the “boarder,” in one of them. Finally they come to Gatsby’s room, the library, and the secretary. He explains that the elderly gentleman is Mr. Dan Cody, who, before his death, used to be Gatsby’s best friend. Daisy proclaims that she adores the picture of an eighteen-year-old Gatsby in a yachting outfit. He then shows her newspaper clippings that he has cut out about William She, an artist, and then turns to the photographs in Gatsby’s room. He explains that the elderly gentleman is Mr. Dan Cody, who, before his death, used to be Gatsby’s best friend. Daisy proclaims that she adores the picture of an eighteen-year-old Gatsby in a yachting outfit. He then shows her newspaper clippings that he has cut out about William She, an artist.

At dusk, Nick takes his leave from Daisy and Gatsby. Gatsby’s performance is over, and it is “the hour of profound human change,” when the world rushes home from work. As he bides farewell, Nick notices that Gatsby is still suggesting that he has dabbled in the oil business and the drug business.

Notes

In this chapter, Gatsby repeatedly reveals his ignorance of proper social or ethical behavior, betraying his total lack of understanding of how Daisy’s aristocratic society and Nick’s moral society actually act. Although he has amassed plenty of wealth, Gatsby has been unable to purchase an ounce of class. This is first revealed in Chapter 4, when Nick questions his neighbor about having inherited money to purchase the house. In Chapter 5, he asserts that to earn the money to buy it. When Nick questions his neighbor about inheriting money to purchase the house, Gatsby covers up once again and says that he lost his inheritance in the big panic of the war. When Nick questions him further about what kind of business he is in, Gatsby, without thinking, says, “That’s my affair,” and then, realizing his rudeness, adds he has dabbled in the oil business and the drug business.

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and his car. Daisy may admire Gatsby's material extravagance, but the admiration will be short-lived and at a distance, for Daisy's world is surrounded with tradition and family inheritance.

During the tea with Daisy, Gatsby's behavior borders on the absurd. He stalks about the room, feigns boredom, knocks a clock off the mantel, dashes after Nick into the kitchen while leaving his dream by herself, and moans to Nick about it all being a terrible, terrible mistake. Nick tells him he is acting like a little boy, and, in fact, that is what Gatsby really is. He is a romantic youth who has no idea of the reality behind his dream. With youthful passion, he has idolized Daisy from afar and not realized that she is unworthy of his vision. He also is too immature to realize that money alone cannot "buy" Daisy, and he lacks the tradition or family background to win her permanently. Like the man who originally built Gatsby's mansion, Gatsby puts all his energy into an impossible dream that must eventually be destroyed by reality. Daisy could never live with the vulgar Gatsby as he believes, just as Tom could never live with the vulgar Myrtle. The Buchanans just want diversions and excitement.

The tour through Gatsby's mansion is extremely important to the story. Gatsby has purchased the house in order to be close to Daisy and has dreamed of the day she will enter it. But in the act of possession, Gatsby has become proud of his house, his car, and his parties, not for his own enjoyment, but in anticipation of Daisy's reaction to them. He says to Nick, as they wait for Daisy to freshen up, that his house truly is grand, just as he had earlier praised his Rolls-Royce. When Daisy tours the mansion, however, Gatsby and his belongings are forced to undergo change. He must revalue everything based on Daisy's reaction. His belongings are no longer mere material possessions or symbols of his wealth, purchased to attract Daisy; instead, they are now a part of his dream. His clothing takes on particular importance in the chapter. He shows her his rows of suits and piles of shirts, not mere garments to wear, but part of that pure dream, like the green light. But Gatsby gets carried away and begins tossing the shirts one by one into a heap. Daisy, understanding the motivation behind the action, puts her head in the shirts and weeps, while assuring Gatsby they are the most beautiful clothes she has ever seen.

Gatsby's attitude changes dramatically and rapidly in the chapter. Initially, he is embarrassed by the meeting with Daisy, feeling that to have planned it was a terrible mistake. After Daisy relaxes and seems to enjoy Gatsby, he is filled with pure joy. After five years, his dream is actually sitting next to him in person and talking to him in that histrionic voice. His attitude then turns to a sense of wonder, that Daisy is actually touring his house, responding to his possessions. But Gatsby's attitude ends in bewilderment. He has mixed emotions about having achieved his goal, having visited with Daisy. His life has been dedicated to the quest, and now the dream is flesh and blood. He has nothing left to seek, no illusion to pursue. He is now like the other wealthy people in America who find that amassing the fortune is the excitement. When the wealth has been acquired, there is nothing left to do but drift from place to place, like Jordan, Daisy, and Tom.

At the end of the chapter, it is clear that Gatsby does not want to give up the dream, does not want to pull Daisy from the pedestal that he has created for her. Fortunately for him at this point, her voice allows Gatsby to still live in an illusion, for Daisy's voice is thrilling and enchanting, promising much more than the person behind it can offer. Gatsby wants desperately to cling to that illusion. The rest of the book promises to be his efforts towards preserving the dream that has sustained him for so long.

**CHAPTER VI**

**Summary**

The wild rumors about Gatsby still abound, and because of them a young reporter from New York shows up at Gatsby's door to interview him. After reporting this incident at the beginning of the chapter, Nick begins to set the record straight about his neighbor. He again interrupts the real chronology of the story to explain Gatsby's past. He was born as James Gatz, and his parents were "shiftless and unsuccessful" North Dakota farmers. The son never accepted them as his parents, but dreamed, even as a boy, of a better life for himself. At age sixteen, he set off to make his own way as a clam digger and salmon fisherman on the shore of Lake Superior. He knew women early and quickly grew contemptuous of them for their ignorant and hysterical behaviors. He went to St. Olaf Lutheran College, hoping to pay for an education by being a janitor, but he scorned the manual work and left after two weeks. Still dreaming of material greatness for himself, he drifted back to Lake Superior, searching for something to do with his life. One day as he loaded on the beach, he spied a large yacht drop anchor nearby. James Gatz rowed a borrowed boat out to the "Tuslocome," which represented all of the beauty.
Tom that she never loved him and to free herself to marry Gatsby. He wants to erase the last five years and close to her when she was still only a dream represented by the green light.) What he wants is for Daisy to tell enjoy the party, that she does not understand him, and that he feels far away from her. (Ironically, he felt very look tired and that his face is drawn tighten. He is the picture of misery. Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy did not Gatsby asks Nick to stay after the other guests have left. Nick immediately notices that his neighbor's eyes Gatsby's heart and blot out five years of unwavering devotion to her. Tom, who is perturbed over Daisy knowing Gatsby and running around alone too often, brings his wife to Daisy's next Saturday night gathering. It is the same kind of party with the same kind of people as always, but Nick notices that there is a "peculiar quality of oppressiveness" about his one. He tries to blame the air of unpleasantness on the repetitive nature of the parties, but he instinctively knows that is Daisy's presence that is really causing the change. She tries to be excited about the party-goers and involved in the festivities, but everything about the party offends her. The women are inebriated and acting poorly, and Tom is chasing a girl uninvited and openly scoffs at the "menagerie" of people at the party. Gatsby becomes the picture of misery over that knowledge, he paces up and down "a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers." Nick tries to warn his neighbor that it is difficult to repeat the past, but Gatsby fools himself into believing that through his wealth he can make everything right with Daisy. Notes

CHAPTER VI

In this very important chapter, Nick once again interrupts the chronology of the story to give flashbacks about Gatsby's past. It is a very effective means of narration, for the reader can compare the present day Gatsby to a younger version and understand how the past and present fit together. The illusion surrounding Gatsby in the present is a direct result of the harsh reality of his past. His real history is very different that the made-up story Gatsby tells in Chapter 4. Gatsby's negation of the illusion surrounding his past foreshadows the negation of Gatsby's entire dream and, thus, the end of the man himself, who cannot exist in the real world without the dream.
Summary
One sunny night Nick notices that the lights do not go on at Gatsby's. Worried about his neighbor, he goes over to check on his mansion. Gatsby, although nervous around Tom, is polite and hospitable and tries to make the guests and behavior at Gatsby's party, neither of which is as bizarre as the guests and behavior at the previous party at Myrtle's apartment. Daisy, who seems no longer concerned about Tom's infidelity and who offers him a pencil to write down the addresses of the women that he meets at the party, is worried about Gatsby finding an "authentically radiant young girl," as Daisy recognizes that she herself is not authentic.

The next morning Nick is greeted by a rude servant he does not know. Nick inquires if Gatsby is sick; the servant says no and slams the door in his face. Later Nick learns that Gatsby has dismissed his whole staff and replaced them with some of Meyer Wolsheim's people.

Daisy's daughter, Pammy, is then brought into the room by her nurse. Her mother calls her "blessed precious" and "absolute little girl," as she loves him. She also orders Jordan to kiss Nick.

Tom is on the phone arguing with Wilson about selling him an automobile. Daisy gets up, gives Gatsby a kiss on the mouth, and tells him she loves him. She also orders Jordan to kiss Nick. He believes this West Egg type to be of a lower class, dismisses his presence as unimportant, and ignores his conversation. Tom is horrified that Gatsby plans to join them for dinner and perturbed that his wife seems to know this character.

Gatsby is also contrasted to Tom Buchanan in this chapter. Tom stops with his riding party at Gatsby's mansion to have a drink. Gatsby, although nervous around Tom, is polite and hospitable and tries to make the intruders feel comfortable. Tom, although ignorant of Daisy's affair with Gatsby at this point, is still extremely rude to his host. He believes this West Egger to be of a lower class, dismisses his presence as unimportant, and ignores his conversation. Tom is horrified that Gatsby plans to join them for dinner and perturbed that his wife seems to know this character.

The chapter is also filled with ironies. Tom chases another woman at the party, and yet is upset that Daisy runs away around by herself too much and has become acquainted with Gatsby in the process. He also harshly criticizes the guests and behavior at Gatsby's party, neither of which is as bizarre as the guests and behavior at the previous party at Myrtle's apartment. Daisy, who seems no longer concerned about Tom's infidelity and who offers him a pencil to write down the addresses of the women that he meets at the party, is worried about Gatsby finding an "authentically radiant young girl," as Daisy recognizes that she herself is not authentic.

The chapter ends with Nick noticing that the lights do not go on at Gatsby's. Worried about his neighbor, he goes over to check on his mansion. Gatsby, although nervous around Tom, is polite and hospitable and tries to make the guests and behavior at Gatsby's party, neither of which is as bizarre as the guests and behavior at the previous party at Myrtle's apartment. Daisy, who seems no longer concerned about Tom's infidelity and who offers him a pencil to write down the addresses of the women that he meets at the party, is worried about Gatsby finding an "authentically radiant young girl," as Daisy recognizes that she herself is not authentic.

THE GREAT GATSBY STUDY NOTES
CHAPTER VII
The group has lunch in the dining room, darkened against the heat. Daisy makes a reference to and is astounded to realize that something is obviously going on between Daisy and Gatsby. Upset by his realization, Tom tries to organize everyone for the trip into town. Daisy and Jordan go upstairs to get ready. When Daisy calls down to tell Tom to bring Gatsby in the same place, tells him that all is quiet at the house, and suggests that he goes home. Gatsby insists upon keeping his vigil has to give his extravagant parties to attract Daisy's attention, for she is now part of his life.

This longest chapter of the novel provides the climax of the plot. It opens in the Buchanans' house and serves as a transition. The group has lunch in the dining room, darkened against the heat. Daisy moans about her boredom and asks, "What'll we do with this crowd of people?" Nick suddenly remembers it is his thirtieth birthday. A new decade stretches before him; he feels it will be one filled with loneliness.

When Tom, Nick, and Jordan grow irritable in the heat of the car. As they pass the faded eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, the cautious Nick node. He is already thinking of thinning hair and a thinning list of single men to know. He notices that it is seven o'clock when he and Jordan get into the car with Tom. Nick says that Tom talks incessantly, as "we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight.

Wilson that he has to pull himself together. He then explains that the yellow car he was driving earlier in the day does not belong to Gatsby. When he arrives at the Buchanans', Tom is relieved to see that Daisy is home. He tells Nick and Jordan to come inside and have the help prepare them some dinner. Nick, feeling a little sick about the events of the day, refuses to go inside, saying to himself, "I'd had enough of all them for one day."

When Tom, Nick, and Daisy approach the Valley of Ashes, a crowd has already gathered around the site of the accident. Tom decides to stop and see what has happened. When he emerges from the car, he hears a constant wailing sound coming from the garage. When Tom asks a policeman what has happened, the officer replies, "Auto hit her. Ins'antly killed. She ran out ina road. Son-of-a-bitch didn't even stop car." Michaelis, the young Greek who runs the coffee shop near the garage, is shocked at the news. Gatsby is already there and he is shocked at Wilson's words, for he is normally a mild, colorless man.

Daisy, standing between the two men, looking terrified. Gatsby's expression looks like he had just "killed a man." Gatsby tries to defend himself to Daisy, but she merely draws further and further into herself. Gatsby knows he is losing her - - that his dream is vanishing. Wilson is in his office staring down at the lifeless form and moans, "O my Gao-od!" over and over. Tom, with a dazed look and glazed eyes, is bending over Myrtle's body.

When Tom asks a policeman what has happened, the officer replies, "Auto hit her. Ins'antly killed. She ran out in a road. Son-of-a- bitch didn't even stop car." Michaelis adds there were only two cars, one coming in each direction. The one coming from New York is the one he first saw. A Negro man steps forward and says that it was a big, new yellow car. He did not see the accident, but remembered saying to T.J. Eckelberg, "Why, that's Daisy's car." He then tells Nick and Jordan it is time for them to leave. As Tom drives away from the death scene and the Valley of Ashes, he passes the yellow car speeding away. From above, Wilson yells, "I know what kind of car it was!" Tom walks over to him and tells Wilson that he has to say that the yellow car was Daisy's. Wilson insists that the yellow car was Gatsby and Daisy, and adds, "But of course I'll say I was driving."
away, knowing she may never see him again. This man, who always wants to be in control, realizes he is losing both his wife and his mistress. It is almost more than Tom can bear. In his own way, he is as panicked as Wilson; it is also ironic that these two men, at opposite ends of the social scale, find themselves in the same situation - betrayed by their wives and fearful of losing them forever.

Lockwood awakes upstairs, Myrtle looks down and sees the yellow automobile. She then spies Tom, the man she loves. When she sees Jordan, she wrongly assumes she is Tom’s wife; her jealousy is almost unbearable. She watches as her lover pulls away, knowing she may never see him again.

Tom steps on the gas to catch up with Daisy and Gatsby. They agree to meet in front of the Plaza Hotel, where they will drive to New York. They are in a hurry to get away from the dreary afternoons. This man, who always wants to be in control, realizes he is losing both his wife and his mistress. It is almost more than Tom can bear. In his own way, he is as panicked as Wilson; it is also ironic that these two men, at opposite ends of the social scale, find themselves in the same situation - betrayed by their wives and fearful of losing them forever.

Daisy cannot stand quietly by and let his dream slip away. She tells Tom that Daisy has always loved him and never loved Tom. She claims Daisy only married Tom because as a soldier, he was too poor to support her in the style to which she was accustomed. Gatsby then turns to Daisy and insists that she tell her husband that she loves only him; he also agrees to her suggestion after he has realized that there is something going on between Daisy and Gatsby. It is obvious to him that there is something going on between Daisy and Gatsby.

Gatsby then tells Nick about his past, probably because “Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice.” Gatsby begins with an explanation of Daisy. He explains that she was the first girl he had ever loved and that he fell in love with her when she was just a child. Gatsby then tells Nick about his wealth and his connections. He becomes more and more emotional as he talks about his past.

When he goes back to Gatsby to tell him that everything is calm inside, Nick asks him to come home with him. Gatsby agrees to come home with him.

Summary
Nick cannot sleep. He “half-sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams.” At dawn he immediately knows that he will take the blame for Daisy, claiming to be driving the car himself.

When Tom arrives at the accident scene, he stops his car to see what is going on. When he realizes that Myrtle has been killed, he is in a state of shock. When he learns that it is a new yellow car that has killed her, he is beside himself with rage, thinking that Gatsby is the murderer of his mistress and the lover of his wife. He openly states that he cannot believe that Gatsby is the murderer of Myrtle Wilson.

When Tom arrives at the Buchanan’s, he is a changed man; he wants nothing more to do with these frivolous people. He decides; the Buchanan’s and their world are simply too shallow, selfish, and careless for him. As if to prove his point, he goes up on the porch to see what is going on inside the house and then leaves.

The falling action begins with the trip home to the Eggs. Daisy, in order to calm herself down, requests to drive Gatsby’s car. When Myrtle spies the yellow automobile, she assumes that Tom is inside. She bolts out of the garage, waving her arms to stop her lover. Daisy does not see the woman until it is too late. She tries to reverse, but there is an oncoming car. rhe yellow car cuts the three off. It is obvious that Gatsby is the murderer of Myrtle.

Nick never makes it clear to what extent Daisy and Gatsby are involved, but it really does not matter; Gatsby feels that he has found his dream. He does say that Daisy often visits his house in the afternoon, and it is obvious that she is familiar with him, for she gives him a kiss on the mouth as soon as Tom leaves the room to take the phone call. She also says that he is not a very good soldier, but she is not sure whether he has killed her, if he is beside himself with rage.

The day does not belong to him. As always, both Tom and Daisy think only of themselves. In spite of her wealth, she has no personal depth and no way of entertaining herself. Her life is so empty that she wonders out loud what she will do for the next thirty years. Tom is no better. Like his wife, he plays games with his life. He is always trying to win, and this afternoon he wants to drive Gatsby’s car. When Gatsby’s hesitates, Tom insists; he has something up his sleeve.

On this day, Daisy is bored. In spite of her wealth, she has no personal depth and no way of entertaining herself. Her life is so empty that she wonders out loud what she will do for the next thirty years. Tom is no better. Like his wife, he plays games with his life. He is always trying to win, and this afternoon he wants to drive Gatsby’s car.

When he goes back to Gatsby to tell him that everything is calm inside, Nick asks him to come home with him. Gatsby refuses; he will keep his vgl until he is certain that Daisy is safely in bed. When Nick leaves, Gatsby is standing alone “watching over nothing.” He has lost Daisy and his dream.

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Chapter VII

Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.”

When Nick arrives at the Buchanan’s, he is a changed man; he wants nothing more to do with these frivolous people. He even says that he is in a state of shock. When he learns that Myrtle has been killed, he is in a state of shock. When he learns that it is a new yellow car that has killed her, he is beside himself with rage, thinking that Gatsby is the murderer of his mistress and the lover of his wife. He openly states that he cannot believe that Gatsby is the murderer of Myrtle Wilson.

When Tom arrives at the accident scene, he stops his car to see what is going on. When he realizes that Myrtle has been killed, he is in a state of shock. When he learns that it is a new yellow car that has killed her, he is beside himself with rage, thinking that Gatsby is the murderer of his mistress and the lover of his wife. When he says this, he is so filled with anger that he is unable to understand his own reaction to the news. This news only confirms what Nick has already decided; the Buchanan’s and their world are simply too shallow, selfish, and careless for him. As if to prove his point, he goes up on the porch to see what is going on inside the house and then leaves.

As a penniless young man, he knew that he did not belong there. “So he made the most of his time. He recognized that it was better to be a pitcher than to play with the carefree days of youth are behind forever. Appropriately, from this day forward Nick will negotiate the Buchanan’s and Jordan as unworthy and vulgar, in spite of their wealth; subconsciously, he has already made the decision to leave the only life he has ever known at his tea-time. For once, he is no longer simply a man who spots an automobile speeding down the driveway to wait for his taxi, he encounters Gatsby, who emerges from the bushes. When Nick questions him about the carefree days of youth are behind forever. Appropriately, from this day forward Nick will negotiate the Buchanan’s and Jordan as unworthy and vulgar, in spite of their wealth; subconsciously, he has already made the decision to leave the only life he has ever known at his tea-time. For once, he is no longer simply a man who spots an automobile speeding down the driveway to wait for his taxi, he encounters Gatsby, who emerges from the bushes. When Nick questions him about the
Gatsby knows he misled Daisy, for he had made her think that he came from a similar background to hers, that he could take care of her. As a result, he committed himself to someday being able to support her, to be worthy of her. She became his holy grail, his mission in life, his golden dream. In fact, “he felt married her.” Daisy seemed to care for him as well; but he was a soldier destined to be sent away. On his last afternoon with Daisy, Gatsby held her silently in his arms for a long time. Although Nick needs to go to work in the city, he wants to stay with Gatsby. He misses several trains and finally makes himself get up around ten o’clock. He promises to call Gatsby from the city, around noon. Gatsby lies to himself and says that Daisy will probably phone too. As Nick walks away, he calls back to his friend, “They’re a rotten crowd. You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.” On hearing these words, Gatsby breaks into a radiant and understanding smile, “as if we’d been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time.”

This chapter gives details on the beginning and final ending of Gatsby’s dream. It opens with foreshadowing of the later tragedy of the chapter. Nick hears a mournful foghorn and has terrible nightmares. No longer able to sleep, he goes to check on Gatsby and to advise him to leave town. Gatsby will not think of leaving West Egg, for he still refuses to admit that his dream is past. He excuses Daisy’s behavior, blaming it on Tom, and still hopes she may telephone. When he goes to the pool later in the day, he leaves specific instructions that he will take a phone call, still believing it might just be Daisy.

As if to hold on to his dream, Gatsby feels compelled to tell Nick more about his early relationship with Daisy, when he first met her as a soldier in Louisville. Although much of this information has been told to Nick by others, it is the first time that Nick has heard Gatsby’s side of the story. In the flashback, Gatsby admits that he misled the young Daisy, making her believe that he came from a similar background and could support her. He is still convinced that she has always loved him more.

As he left Louisville on the train, “He stretched out his hand desperately, as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him... he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.”

The butler waited until four o’clock to see if Gatsby received a phone call; it was “long after there was anyone to check on Wilson, but his friend was gone. Michaelis went home after dawn and slept for four hours. When he awoke, he went to check on Wilson, but his friend was gone. Wilson had gone out on foot to search for the owner of the yellow car. At noon, he had bought a sandwich and coffee in Gàd’s Hill. By half past two he was in West Egg, where he asked someone for directions to Gatsby’s house. At two o’clock Gatsby had put on his bathing suit. Before going to the pool, he blew up an air mattress, asked the servants to bring the phone out to him if there were calls, and told the chauffeur that the yellow car was not to be taken out of the garage for any reason, even though the right front fender needed repair.

The chauffeur waited until four o’clock to see if Gatsby received a phone call; it was “long after there was anyone to give it to if it came.” Gatsby must have known the call from Daisy would never come; he must have felt “that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is.” The chauffeur heard the shots, but had not thought anything about them. Then Nick arrived at Gatsby’s house, the pool was empty, the chauffeur was “looking at them as well. Michaelis seemed to care for him as well; but he was a soldier destined to be sent away. On his last afternoon with Daisy, Gatsby held her silently in his arms for a long time. As if to hold on to his dream, Gatsby feels compelled to tell Nick more about his early relationship with Daisy, when he first met her as a soldier in Louisville. Although much of this information has been told to Nick by others, it is the first time that Nick has heard Gatsby’s side of the story. In the flashback, Gatsby admits that he misled the young Daisy, making her believe that he came from a similar background and could support her. He did not feel he had the right to touch her, and yet he made love to her. From that point forward, Gatsby felt married to Daisy. He decided he would spend the rest of his life proving that he was worthy of what he had
Gatsby is pleased with the assessment, as seen by the smile that he gives Nick. It is also important that these loved him. He still clings to the dream.

The events at the Plaza Hotel, still naively holds to his claim that Daisy never really loved Tom, but has always loved him. He still clings to the dream.

It is very significant that Nick tells Gatsby that "you are worth more than the whole bunch put together." It is probably amongst the last words that Gatsby will ever hear spoken, and definitely the last he will hear from Nick. Ironically, Nick remembers that it is the first compliment he has ever paid Gatsby. Most importantly, however, it is the first time in the novel that Nick takes a firm stand and makes a clear judgement. One of his faults has been to reserve judgement, holding back and not taking a stand. Now he realizes that in spite of Gatsby’s vulgar, naïve ways, he must be respected for his tenacity in holding on to his dream. His words of judgement, clearly spoken to Gatsby, indicate that Nick has truly matured.

Nick proves his maturity several times in the chapter. He crosses to the other side of the train when it passes through the Valley of Ashes, for he does not want to be sickened by the sight of the curious onlookers gathered around the site of Myrtle’s accident. When he arrives at work, he cannot concentrate, for he is worried about his friend Gatsby and tries to call him several times. He refuses to see Jordan Baker, even though she telephones and wants to meet him; he instinctively knows she no longer holds any appeal to him. Such realizations are part of his maturing process.

Nick’s flashback about Wilson and the details of the previous night are filled with significant images. It must be remembered that Myrtle lived and was killed in a wasteland, the Valley of Ashes, underneath the watchful eyes of T.J. Eckelberg. Wilson has become so much a part of the wasteland that his eyes are even described as ashheaps. It is not surprising that he has no friends, no family, and no religion. Without Myrtle, he literally has nothing (even though the reader realizes he has had nothing for a long time.) It is intentional and significant that Wilson, like Gatsby, has held on to an empty dream.

There are many ironies in the fact that it is Wilson who kills Gatsby in the swimming pool. It is one disillusioned dreamer killing another disillusioned dreamer. Both of them are betrayed by the women they love, and both of those women (Daisy and Myrtle) love Tom Buchanan, a cruel man who is totally unworthy of being loved. By killing Gatsby and then turning the gun on himself, Wilson is destroying a lifetime of dreams; but neither man has anything left to dream about. By killing Gatsby, he is also totally clearing the way for Tom, the man that Wilson should really hate; now the careless Tom and Daisy can, without threat, continue their immoral and purposeless lifestyle. It is also significant that Gatsby is shot in the water, typically a symbol of baptism and rebirth. Ironically, Gatsby’s death begins a new life for Nick. He is finally able to see the shallowness of his life on the East Coast and make the decision to start a new life for himself in the Midwest. The end of Gatsby’s dream is also the end of Nick’s delusion about New York.

It is important to reflect on the time frame of the novel. Nick comes to the East in the springtime, the season of new life and new beginnings. He becomes acquainted with Gatsby, Jordan, and the lifestyle of the Buchanan’s during the hot, torrid months of summer. Now it is autumn, and the dead leaves are falling and Gatsby has been killed, his life snuffed out foolishly and prematurely. During the winter that is to come, Nick will prepare to return to the Midwest.

Summary

Nick writes this chapter two years after Gatsby’s death. He still clearly remembers the string of policemen and newsmen that invaded Gatsby’s home after his murder. The news stories that followed were “grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue.” Fortunately, Catherine, Myrtle’s sister, spoke out, saying that Myrtle did not know Gatsby and was perfectly happy with her husband George. As a result, Wilson was simply called a man that Wilson should really hate; now the careless Tom and Daisy can, without threat, continue their immoral and purposeless lifestyle. It is wasted on an object as unworthy as Daisy Buchanan. His spiritual quest degenerates into a financial quest so shallow.

Almost immediately after Gatsby’s death, Nick realizes he is the only person who seemed to really care about the man and one of the few who was on his side. Nick calls Daisy to give her the news within the hour, but the servants tell him that she and Tom have gone out of town without leaving an address or a date of return. He then tries to call Meyer Wolfsheim at his office, but it is after five o’clock, and no one answers. When Nick is in the room with Gatsby’s body, he imagines him saying, “Look here, old sport, you’ve got to get somebody for me...I can’t go through this alone.” The next day neither Wolfsheim nor Daisy telephone, even though he is certain that they would have read about Gatsby’s murder in the newspaper. In fact, no one calls or comes to Gatsby’s house. Nick feels very alone.
On the third day after Gatsby's death, a telegram arrives from Gatsby's father, Henry C. Gatz. It requests that the man to attend his funeral. Wolfsheim claims to have made Gatsby, to have pulled him out of the gutters, he does not care enough about hiding behind the door of the "Swastika Holding Company," but Nick finally gets him to emerge. Although Nick tries to concentrate on the minister's words and remember something about Gatsby, all he can think of is the last day at Gatsby's, and everything else is blurred out. Nick's memories of his West are images of the holidays with sleigh bells in the frosty dark, trains bringing people home, and holly wreaths thrusting from the front doors and white Christmas snow. In comparison to these images, the East seems fantastic and distorted to Nick, especially after Gatsby's death. Nick even compared the village of West Egg to a forlorn and grotesque painting by El Greco.

It is not surprising that the moral and conservative Nick decides to return home to the Midwest. Before he can do so, he must pay the bill for the funeral. He realizes that he had, in essence, assured Gatsby's murder by explaining to the gun-toting Wilson that Gatsby was the owner of the yellow car. The callous and selfish Tom does not care that an innocent man was killed, for the sale of his yellow car brought him some money. He tells Nick that "he had a big future...If he'd of lived he'd of been a great man...helped build up the country." The postman delivers the bill to Nick, and he must pay it. He is so horrified at the man's callousness that he hangs up the telephone before the boarder can give his address.

On the evening of Gatsby's arrival, Klipsringer, "the boarder," also telephones. Nick tells him about the funeral arrangements and that the first car to the cemetery is his. Tom spies Nick and reaches out his hand. When Nick hesitates, Tom asks if he minds shaking his hand. Tom what he had told Wilson after Myrtle's death. Tom admits he told him that Gatsby owned the yellow car. Tom then tells Nick he has suffered greatly, saying he cried like a baby when he gave up Myrtle's rented flat. Tom is, however, very worried about a pair of shoes that he has left at Gatsby's house. The callous and selfish Tom does not care about a pair of shoes that he has left at Gatsby's house. The coldness and selfishness of Tom is very noticeable as he once again seeks to benefit from Gatsby's death. Tom also reveals that he has no intention of attending the funeral of the man who died to benefit him. Tom is completely indifferent to the death of Gatsby and only seeks to benefit from his death.

Nick is so horrified at the man's callousness that he hangs up the telephone before the boarder can give his address. Nick's memories of his West are images of the holidays with sleigh bells in the frosty dark, trains bringing people home, and holly wreaths thrusting from the front doors and white Christmas snow. In comparison to these images, the East seems fantastic and distorted to Nick, especially after Gatsby's death. Nick even compared the village of West Egg to a forlorn and grotesque painting by El Greco.

In an attempt to befriend the dead Gatsby, Nick tries to find people to come to his funeral. He is horrified that Tom and Daisy are the only people who come, and he is even more horrified to see that they are the only ones to come. Nick is so horrified at the man's callousness that he hangs up the telephone before the boarder can give his address. Nick's memories of his West are images of the holidays with sleigh bells in the frosty dark, trains bringing people home, and holly wreaths thrusting from the front doors and white Christmas snow. In comparison to these images, the East seems fantastic and distorted to Nick, especially after Gatsby's death. Nick even compared the village of West Egg to a forlorn and grotesque painting by El Greco.

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Finally, Mr. Gatz, Gatsby’s nervous father arrives, adding several more interesting details about his son’s life. He says that it is the first time he has been to West Egg and seen Gatsby’s mansion; it is obvious that he is very impressed. He also reveals that his son came to see him in Minnesota about two years ago, during the visit, he bought his father a house, proving Gatsby basic goodness and kindness. Gatz then claims that Gatsby was always bright, hard-working, and driven. To prove his point, he shows Nick a copy of a book. On the inside back cover, “Jimmy” had written his daily schedule and included all of his resolutions. Mr. Gatz, like his son, is also a dreamer. He truly believes that Gatsby was destined for greatness, that he would do something significant to improve the country. Ironically, he has no idea that his son was a hopeless dreamer whose holy grail was nothing more than an unworthy, flighty, and selfish female.

Gatsby’s funeral is a pathetic affair, an appropriate end to a wasted life and tragic existence. The weather is appropriately gloomy and drizzling rain. The Lutheran minister who is to perform the funeral knows nothing about Gatsby. No one comes to the house for the service, even though they postpone its beginning by thirty minutes to allow for any late-comers. Only Owl-Eyes joins them at the cemetery. This man succinctly summarizes Gatsby’s life and existence by saying “the poor son-of-a-bitch.”

Nick again shows his maturity when he has a desire to leave things in order before he departs from New York. When he earlier left the Midwest, he did leave some things out of order, not dealing with the issue of his old girlfriend; that oversight has haunts his stay on the East Coast. Now he is determined to make things right. He arranges to see Jordan and tell her the truth about his feelings for her. Like Daisy, she is unworthy of such consideration. When Nick finishes his explanation, she casually says it does not matter, for she is engaged to another man to be married. Since she is an inveterate liar, Nick does not believe her story, even though he acknowledges she could probably choose a husband from several suitors. At the end of the meeting with Jordan, Nick acknowledges that he is thirty, too old to lie to himself anymore.

Nick shows his maturity again when he evaluates Tom and Daisy. He finally judges them to be careless people who smashed up things and left their mess for others to clean up. It is a clear reflection of an earlier description of one of Gatsby’s parties, where the hired help was left to clean up the remains of the festivities. It is also a reflection of the ashheaps in the Valley of Ashes. In essence, then, the dream of wealth, which is the American Dream, is really a meaningless dream that will end in a wasteland. In a like manner, Gatsby’s dream, a symbol of the American Dream, ends in the Valley of Ashes, from where Wilson emerges to kill both the Great Gatsby and the dream. Nick Carraway is the narrator of the entire novel, the protagonist of his own plot, and the moral judge of the events that surround him. He is a practical and conservative young man who turns thirty during the course of the story. Raised in a small town in the Midwest, he believes his hometown to be stifling and decides to move to the East Coast to learn the bond business. He hopes to find a sense of identity and freedom in New York. He runs a small bungalow out from the city on a fashionable island known as West Egg. His next door neighbor is Jay Gatsby, and his distant cousin, Daisy Buchanan, lives across the bay with her husband, Tom, on the more fashionable and wealthy island of East Egg. Nick plays an important role in the main plot of the novel, for he is responsible for reuniting Gatsby and Daisy.

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During the course of the novel, the naive and innocent Nick becomes totally disillusioned with the lifestyle of the wealthy on the East Coast. For most of the book, he is dragooned by Gatsby, with his wild parties, sentimental dress and manners, and his shady business dealings. He is horrified when he meets Meyer Wolfsheim, a racketeer and business associates of Gatsby, who wears human molars as cuff links and who fixed the World Series. He feels shame for Jordan Baker for her incurable lying and cheating, both on and off the golf course. He is shocked that Tom has a mistress to whom he wants to introduce Nick and horrified that he hits her in the face, breaking her nose. His greatest disillusionment, however, comes with Daisy. He sees her shallowness and carelessness and knows that she is trifling with Gatsby. More shocking is the fact that she hits and kills Myrtle while driving Gatsby’s car and does not even bother to stop; she then willingly lets Gatsby take the blame for the accident. When Gatsby is killed, he is appalled that Daisy does not even bother to telephone or send flowers to the funeral. It is not surprising that in the end he judges Gatsby to be worth more than the whole bunch of the Buchanans and their wealthy friends.

Nick Carroway does indeed find his identity on the East Coast. At first he is hesitant to take a stand or to judge those with whom he comes into contact; however, as the novel progresses, he begins to find everything about New York disgusting. He realizes that he has no desire to marry the likes of Jordan Baker, or live the careless, purposeless lifestyle of the Buchanans, or be associated with immoral characters like Meyer Wolfsheim. As a result, on his thirtieth birthday, Nick realizes that his place in the world is in the Midwest, a symbol of morality and conservatism. In an orderly fashion, he fulfills his personal responsibilities in the East, including an explanation to Jordan of his feelings for her. He then returns to live in his small hometown and marry his old girlfriend, who has faithfully waited for him. As a result, Nick’s plot ends as a comedy, for he has found himself and his place in life; he has also matured enough to make wise, moral judgements.
Jay Gatsby (born as James Gatz) - Jay Gatsby is one of the most interesting and memorable males in fictional literature, even though he is not a dynamic and changing character during the novel. In fact, Jay Gatsby has changed little since he was a teenager. Born as James Gatz to poor farmers in North Dakota, he decided at an early age that he wanted more out of life than North Dakota could offer. He leaves home to find excitement and wealth. While lounging on the beach one day, he sees a yacht docked off the coast. He borrows a boat and rows out to introduce himself to the owner of the yacht. Dan Cody is an extremely wealthy and wildly extravagant man. He takes a liking to young Gatsby and offers him a job. When Nick sees Jay, Gatsby has changed little since he was a teenager.

After Cody dies, Gatsby joins the army and is stationed in Louisville, Kentucky, where he meets and falls in love with Daisy Fay, the most popular and wealthy young lady in town. She is also attracted to him and even thinks about marrying him and running away, but he is not rich enough. She tells him that she will never remain with him, for he offers her security and the lifestyle to which she is accustomed. Although his story is a tragedy, for both he and his dream are of no light. Gatsby always remains one of the most memorable and complex characters in American literature.

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of Nick’s plot, for he realizes that the lifestyle in the East is too shallow and careless for him. He does not want to be associated with people as uncaring and immoral as the Buchanan’s; it is on this climactic day that Daisy kills Myrtle in a hit-and-run accident and acts like nothing has happened. Nick makes the decision, uncomromisingly at first, to return to the Midwest and marry his hometown sweetheart. When Gatsby is needlessly shot by Wilson and no one shows up at his funeral, Nick knows he has made the correct decision. His story ends in comedy, for he has found his true self, which definitely belongs to the moral Midwest.

Gatsby’s plot is much more complex, for it unfolds through a series of flashbacks and really begins long before the chronology of the actual story told in the novel. As a poor, young soldier stationed in Louisville, he meets and marries his childhood sweetheart, Daisy, and they have a daughter, Pammy. He later leaves her and she marries a man called Jack, who is naïve about his wife’s affair through most of the book, believes that Tom comes into his garage only to make sure she is safe. Daisy is truly unworthy of such devotion, but Gatsby never realizes that. His dream, his love, is lost forever. There is also a repetition of party scenes, both large and small. Several of Gatsby’s parties are involved with Gatsby, he confronts her lover. Gatsby naively tells Tom that Daisy does not love him and has never loved him. Tom forces Daisy into a decision, and she cannot say that she has never loved Tom. As a result, Tom is the victor, for he has a wife and Gatsby has a shattered dream, meaning a shattered self. Even though the scene in the room at the Plaza Hotel is the moment of climax for Gatsby, he refuses to give up. Even after Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle and refuses to stop at the scene of the accident, Gatsby stands by her, wanting to take the blame in her place. He goes to the Buchanan house and keeps a vigil outside her window, to make sure she is safe. Daisy is truly unworthy of such devotion, but Gatsby never realizes that. His dream, his love, is lost forever. There is also a repetition of party scenes, both large and small. Several of Gatsby’s parties are involved with Gatsby, he confronts her lover. Gatsby naively tells Tom that Daisy does not love him and has never loved him. Tom forces Daisy into a decision, and she cannot say that she has never loved Tom. As a result, Tom is the victor, for he has a wife and Gatsby has a shattered dream, meaning a shattered self. 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Several of the minor characters are also corrupted in their chase of the almighty dollar. Dan Cody makes a fortune in his copper mining business, but his life is a mess; he drinks and parties excessively, has one mistress after another, and is often involved in violence. Jordan Baker, Daisy’s wealthy friend, is a champion golfer; still, she has no morals or values. She is an invertebrate liar and cheat, even moving the golf ball during her matches. Like Daisy, she seems to drift from one place to another with no roots; in fact, she does not even have a home to call her own. Meyer Wolfsheim, a shady racketeer associated with Gatsby and the underworld, is a bootlegger and a gambler; in order to make a buck, he ever toyed with the faith of the entire American populace, fixing the World Series in 1919.

It is only Gatsby who is not corrupted by his money. Although he has a large, ostentatious mansion, drives flashy cars, gives extravagant parties filled with excess and waste, and has far too many gaudy clothes, he has not amassed his wealth or its accoutrements for himself. Everything he has done in life has been done to fulfill his dream—to prove to Daisy that he is worthy of her. He believes that his possessions will convince his golden girl to forget the past five years of her life and marry him. When he takes Daisy into his house and shows her her belongings, he values each item according to the worth that she places on it. When she shatters his dream by accepting Tom over him, Gatsby has no need for any of his possessions. No longer searching for his holy grail, the house, the clothes, and the cars mean nothing. Nick, who has thought Gatsby to be vulgar throughout the novel, finally realizes that his neighbor has more worth than all of the East Egggers put together.

All of the wealthy characters, including Gatsby, use people and things and then discard them as trash, destined for the Valley of Ashes. Tom uses Myrtle, and she dies amongst the ashheap chasing after him. He also uses George Wilson, and he is so much a part of the wasteland that his eyes have become ashen. Gatsby uses the butlers and the cooks to provide for his parties. They are left to clean up the ravages of Saturday night on Sunday morning. Fitzgerald is clearly saying that the American Dream has gone awry. People are so into chasing the almighty dollar that they have forgotten real human values. Like Tom and Daisy, their lives wind up in the Valley of Ashes, devoid of meaning or purpose. The all-knowing eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, a symbol of God, looks sadly down on the wasteland that has been created by the extravagant and careless lifestyles of the wealthy.

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE NOVEL

Fitzgerald clearly intends for Gatsby’s dream to be symbolic of the American Dream for wealth and youth. Gatsby genuinely believes that if a person makes enough money and amasses a great enough fortune, he can buy happiness. He thinks his wealth will grant him the love of his life—Daisy—after the last five years of his and Daisy’s life and reunite them at the point at which he left her before he went away to the war. In a similar fashion, all Americans have a tendency to believe that if they have enough money, they can manipulate time, stay perpetually young, and buy their happiness through materialistic spending. Throughout the novel, there are many parties, a hallmark of the rich. But each festivity ends in waste (the trash left behind by the guests) or violence (Myrtle’s broken nose and subsequent accidental death). Between the wealth of New York City and the fashionable Egg Islands lies the Valley of Ashes, the symbol of the waste and corruption that characterizes the wealthy.

When Gatsby’s dream is crushed by Daisy’s refusal to forget the past or deny that she has ever loved Tom, Fitzgerald is stating that the American Dream of wealth and beauty is just as fragile. History has proven that view correct. The sense of wonder of the first settlers in America quickly turned into an excessive greed for more wealth. The ostentatious, wild lifestyle of the wealthy during the 1920s was followed by the reality of the stock market crash and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Where there is great wealth, sadness and waste always seem to follow. The end product is always a valley of ashes.

Watching over the Valley of Ashes, that lies between the wealthy of the Egg Islands and the wealthy of New York City, are the all-knowing eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, a symbol of the omniscience of God; but his image is fading, as if he is totally tired of sadly looking down at the wasteland below. He seems ashamed of mankind’s extravagance that cause the ashheaps. His is a powerful image that is repeatedly referenced to hold the novel together and to emphasize Fitzgerald’s key theme: wealth corrupts.

THE GREAT GATSBY STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain Nick Carraway’s conflict and how it is resolved.
2. Give examples of Nick’s morality and conservatism in the book.
3. Describe Daisy Faye Buchanan. How did Gatsby meet her and why is he so attracted to her?
4. When, how, and why does Jimmy Gatz get the name of Jay Gatsby?
5. Explain Jay Gatsby’s conflict and how it is resolved.
6. Compare and contrast East Egg and West Egg.
7. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim?
8. There are many parties in the book. Describe each of them and explain how each of them ends.
9. What is the Valley of Ashes and how is symbolic? Contrast the description of it to the description of New York City.
10. What is the T.J. Eckelberg? What is his significance to the novel?
11. Describe Myrtle Wilson and what happens to her.
12. What is the significance of automobiles to the story?
14. Why is Gatsby never really corrupted by his money?
15. How does Nick judge Gatsby at the end of the book and why is it significant?
16. Describe Jordan Baker. How does Nick set things right with her before he leaves New York. Why is this important to him?
17. What is ironic about the fact that it is Wilson that murders Gatsby?
18. Describe Gatsby’s funeral. Why does it help to convince Nick he has made the correct decision about returning to the Midwest?
19. What does Fitzgerald say about the American Dream in the novel?
20. Are there any parallels in the book between any of the characters and Fitzgerald and/or Zelda?
21. What things are learned through flashback in the novel?
MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1. Nick Carraway was born -
   A. in the Northeast
   B. in the Midwest
   C. in the South

2. The character who first appears "in riding clothes... standing with his legs apart on the front porch" is -
   A. Gatsby
   B. Tom Buchanan
   C. Gatsby's piano player

3. The pretentious expression, "I'm paralyzed with happiness," is spoken by -
   A. Jordan Baker
   B. Daisy Buchanan
   C. Gatsby

4. James Gatz is -
   A. Daisy's cousin
   B. Gatsby's piano player
   C. Gatsby's real name

5. Nick Carraway recalls a story which implied that Jordan Baker once -
   A. betrayed a close friend
   B. stole some money
   C. cheated at golf
   D. charmed at golf

6. Gatsby shows a police officer -
   A. a fifty dollar bill
   B. a Christmas card from the police commissioner
   C. the damage done to the front fender of his car

7. The character who hangs up the phone in Nick's ear "with a sharp click" is -
   A. Gatsby
   B. Tom Buchanan
   C. Jordan Baker

8. When Nick tells Gatsby, "You can't repeat the past," Gatsby replies -
   A. "Of course you can."
   B. "After all I've done? That's nonsense."
   C. "I've never thought of that before, Old Sport."

9. Doctor T. J. Eckleburg becomes a symbol of -
   A. Gatsby's "romantic readiness"
   B. Nick's friendship for Gatsby
   C. the lack of morals prevalent in the East

10. Myrtle Wilson's nose is broken by -
    A. Gatsby
    B. Tom Buchanan
    C. Jordan Baker

11. The expression "and the holocaust was complete" refers to -
    A. Myrtle's death
    B. George Wilson's death
    C. Gatsby's death

12. Nick left his home to come to New York in an effort to -
    A. make money
    B. meet new people
    C. locate Gatsby

13. The character who has "one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across... four times in life" is -
    A. Daisy Buchanan
    B. Gatsby
    C. Jordan Baker

14. The character who, according to Gatsby, "fixed the world series" is -
    A. Wolfsheim
    B. Klipspringer
    C. Owl Eyes

15. Apparently, most of Gatsby's money, has come from -
    A. drug sales
    B. bootlegging
    C. bond investments

16. When Myrtle Wilson is killed, the car that hit her was driven by -
    A. Gatsby
    B. Daisy
    C. Tom

17. "The promise of a decade of loneliness" is sensed by -
    A. Nick
    B. Gatsby
    C. Dan Cody

18. The most significant change in Daisy's life since before the war is that she now -
    A. has a child
    B. loves Gatsby
    C. likes having money

19. "That ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees" is -
    A. George Wilson
    B. Gatsby
    C. Tom Buchanan

20. A symbol of the human capacity for hope is -
    A. Gatsby's immense mansion
    B. the green light at the end of Daisy's dock
    C. Owl Eyes

ANSWER KEY

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. C
5. B
6. A
7. B
8. A
9. C
10. B
11. B
12. A
13. B
14. A
15. B
16. B
17. A
18. A
19. A
20. B