

AQA English Literature A-level

The Great Gatsby Overview of Text and Key Scenes

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Overview

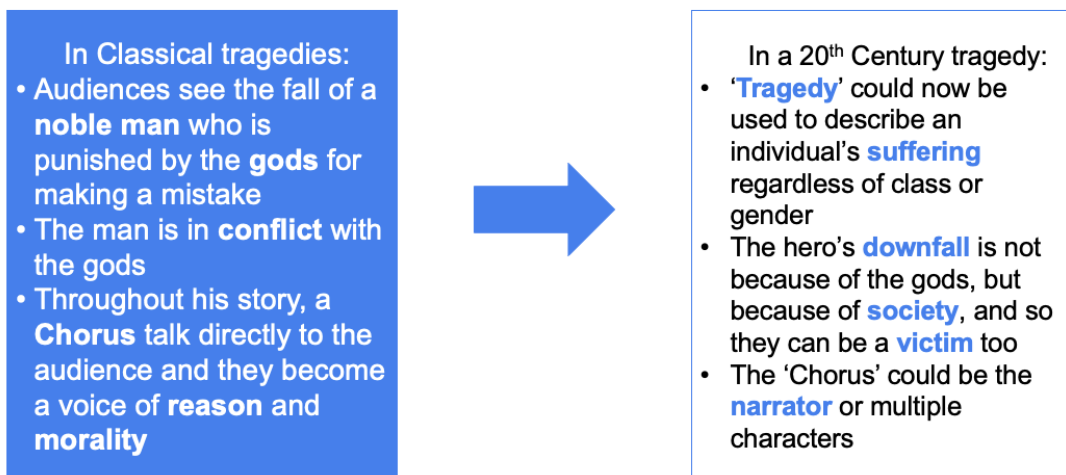
Written by the American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald in **1925**, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the greatest American novels of the **twentieth century** and arguably Fitzgerald's seminal text. It is set in the summer of 1922 in New York. It has **9** chapters and is framed by Nick Carraway, an **unreliable narrator**. The story follows Nick's **memories** of Jay Gatsby, a man who still loves Daisy Buchanan, now a **married** woman. Gatsby tries to **impress** Daisy, who lives across the bay from him, with his **extravagant** and lavish parties. But Gatsby's **hopes and dreams** of winning Daisy are crumbled when he faces her husband, the **cruel** Tom Buchanan. *The Great Gatsby* explores the **Roaring Twenties**, **The American Dream**, **class** and grapples with the **past and future**. In doing so, it captures the spirit, excitement, and violence of the era Fitzgerald named '**The Jazz Age**'. Indeed, through the symbols of the **green light**, the **eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg**, **the valley of ashes**, the friction between the **east and west** and **Gatsby's mansion**, *The Great Gatsby* is a classic story of **hope** and **disillusion**.

Genre and Structure

Fitzgerald was writing in the **Modernist** period where **technological** change was rapid and this meant society was moving towards **modernity**. But throughout, Fitzgerald's poetic language suggests his **inspiration** from the **Romantic** age.

Some critics argue that Fitzgerald was influenced by the English Romantic poet, **John Keats**. In his 'Ode to a **Nightingale**', Keats's speaker is torn between the **enchancing** nature of death and the **uncertainty** of life. Perhaps Fitzgerald alludes to this through **Daisy**. When Daisy sees a nightingale in *The Great Gatsby*, she says "**It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?**". Perhaps Daisy is enchanted by its **poetic symbol**. This moment ends with the "**shrill**" of the telephone. This shows how modernity **kills** the beauty of nature, it cuts it off and thus, the conflict between **science** and **nature** arises. Fitzgerald was also **influenced** by the great Modernist poet, **T. S. Eliot** (he called himself a "**worshipper**" of Eliot's poetry. We see the influence of Eliot's seminal poem '**The Waste Land**' in the novel. The **Valley of Ashes** alludes to this wasteland and both writers **criticise** modernity and its **ruin** of nature.

The Great Gatsby is a novel about **America** in the 1920s. Many readers consider *The Great Gatsby* as a 20th-century **tragedy**. If we can understand what a **classical** tragedy entails, then we can extrapolate this into its modern equivalent.



The Great Gatsby is sometimes considered a **Realist** novel, in its realistic depiction of the world a banknotes Fitzgerald sets his novel in a **New York** that readers recognise: **landmarks** such as the **Plaza Hotel** and **Central Park** are familiar to readers. However, Fitzgerald alters Great Neck and Manhasset Neck to **East** and **West Eggs**. The large landfill site at Flushing is renamed “the **valley of ashes**”. Nonetheless, Fitzgerald’s use of **factual figures** and **historical dates**, like the 1919 World Series, places the novel under the genre of **realism**. The exploration of the themes of **sex** and **adultery** also emphasise the novel’s realism. The novel is also considered a **social satire**. Fitzgerald’s use of **irony**, **exaggeration** and **ridicule** mocks and exposes the **hedonism** of 1920s America. Think about Nick’s long list of Gatsby’s guests: none of them knew who Gatsby really was and the readers didn’t know who they were. Even though most social satire is superficial, Fitzgerald exposes the **tragic** human tendency to be **fallible**. The readers see this through Myrtle Wilson’s attempt to transcend the **status quo** but fate decrees she must die. With her death, Gatsby and George Wilson die too. Only those of the **lower class** die in this novel. Fitzgerald demonstrates how the lower classes are the **victims** of 1920s American society. Beneath all the **extravagance** is a **deep callousness** and **shallowness**.

The readers understand the **greatness** of Gatsby through the **unreliable** voice of Nick Carraway. Nick’s voice is not the same as Fitzgerald’s but sometimes Nick assumes the role of Fitzgerald’s **mouthpiece**. Interestingly, Fitzgerald doesn’t use an **omniscient** narrator, especially since Nick doesn’t know all the facts. And yet, the reader is expected to believe Nick. Nick’s **subjective** point of view places Gatsby on a **pedestal** and the real **victim** of the novel. Nick is **dishonest** about his own shortcomings: he dismisses his **affairs** with other women and his **alcohol** use. He doesn’t tell the reader the truth about Gatsby’s **past** until chapter six. Thus, in many ways, Nick **outlines** Gatsby through his **retrospective** viewpoint and leaves the reader to colour him in. Gatsby’s backstory and tragedy are mainly told by Nick but it is also narrated by the gossiping party guests, Jordan Baker and Meyer Wolfsheim. This means that the novel is not in the **chronological order** of Gatsby’s life but the chronological order of Nick’s **memories**.

Here is a **diagram** of the novel’s structure.

Freytag’s Plot Structure Pyramid on *The Great Gatsby*

Rising Action:

Event 1: Nick meets Myrtle Wilson, Tom Buchanan’s mistress, and starts dating Jordan Baker.

Event 2: Nick is invited to Gatsby’s party and meets him.

Event 3: Gatsby tells Nick about his past life but it is full of lies.

Event 4: Jordan tells Nick about Gatsby’s past love with Daisy and Nick agrees to help reunite the two lovers.

Event 5: Daisy and Gatsby reunite in Nick’s house.

Event 6: Gatsby and Tom swap cars when they go to the Plaza Hotel and Myrtle thinks Gatsby’s car is actually Tom’s car.

Exposition:

Setting: Long Island and New York City in 1920s America

Characters introduced at the first party Nick Carraway goes to: Tom Buchanan, Daisy Buchanan and Jordan Baker

Situation: Nick, a young bond salesman goes to his cousin Daisy’s party at her home and learns of his mysterious neighbor Gatsby.

Turning Point/ Climax:

Tom and Gatsby fight over Daisy at the Plaza Hotel. Tom calls Gatsby ‘Mr. Nobody from Nowhere’. Daisy admits she loves both of them. When they go back to Long Island, Daisy is driving Gatsby’s car and she runs over Myrtle, killing her.

Falling Action:

Gatsby waits outside Daisy’s house to make sure Tom doesn’t hurt her. Nick finds both Tom and Daisy reconciled but Gatsby is still unsure.

Resolution:

Gatsby tells Nick about his first ever kiss with Daisy. He still believes he can win Daisy back.

Tom tells George Wilson that it was Gatsby that killed Myrtle. Gatsby takes a swim in his swimming pool and George shoots him before killing himself.

Denouement:

Gatsby is dead and Nick finds himself trying to find people who would attend Gatsby’s funeral.

Nick bumps into Tom who tries to make himself the victim. Tom doesn’t know that Daisy was the one behind the wheel and Nick doesn’t tell him.



Context

- **Jazz Age:** The **inter-war** period was known as **The Roaring Twenties**, the **Golden Years**, and Fitzgerald's term '**the Jazz Age**'. The war put pressure on the American industries. This meant that more jobs were created and more **employment** resulted in **economic booms**.
- **1920s America:** The decade of **consumption**. With all the money that the economic booms, **consumption** and **consumerism** were born. Brands and companies started to **advertise** more and people were influenced by advertisements. High consumption meant that whilst the American economy was **healthy**, it trapped individuals in **debt**.
- **Illegal activities:** Because of the **1919 Prohibition Act**, many people acquired their wealth through **bootlegging** (gangsters sold alcohol in secret bars called '**speakeasies**' for a great profit). People also **gambled** and there was a lot of **violence** and **mafia** involvement.
- **Immigration:** In **1924**, the **Immigration Act** was passed. This restricted the number of **southern** and **eastern Europeans** moving to the USA. It also prohibited any **Asian** to come to the US. There was a lot of prejudice against **ethnic minorities**: think about **Wolfsheim** and the treatment of **African Americans** in the novel.
- **Economic booms:** America's West coast was known for **hard, physical** work and the East coast was reputed for its **fast** living, **financial gain** and **corrupt** businessmen. During the American '**Gold Rush**' of the 19th century, Americans moved West in search of **fortune**. But after WW1 people moved east to profit from the **post-war banking boom**.

Key Themes

- **The Roaring Twenties:** After the First World War, America and the West, in general, found an **economic boom**. With all this excess money, the Roaring Twenties were born: lavish **parties**, glamorous **fashion**, and loads of **liquor** (even with the Prohibition Act of 1919). Whilst this decade was known for its **optimism** and extravagance, Fitzgerald highlights the **shallowness** that dictated this **hedonism**.
- **The American Dream:** Since the time of the first settlers, America has always been the 'land of **opportunity**'. This Dream paints the **sentiment** that through **hard work**, one can climb the social ladder and be respected and **successful**. Fitzgerald shows us that it's not that simple. Whilst the money aspect of the American Dream was achievable by Gatsby, his American Dream of winning back Daisy costs him his life. Gatsby represents the **corrupted** Dream (in its **callous** attitude towards the lower classes) and the **uncorrupted** Dream of **pure** love and **earnest** hope.
- **Money and Class:** Money dictates class. In Fitzgerald's novel, there are three real classes but the third one is **subtle** and is largely **ignored**. We have the '**Old Money**': those like Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker and Nick Carraway. The 'Old Money' largely live in the **East Egg**. We also have the '**New Money**': Gatsby. Whilst Nick is 'Old Money', he lives in the **West Egg** with Gatsby. The **third** class is arguably the '**No Money**': George and Myrtle Wilson can be considered of this class. Myrtle tries to escape this class through her **affair** with Tom Buchanan, but this only gets her killed. George hopes to **move West** to escape this class but his dream dies with Myrtle.
- **Past, Present and Future:** **Time** is a big theme in this novel. Gatsby tries to "**repeat the past**" by winning Daisy back but he shatters against Tom's "**cruel body**". Gatsby's dream



is **every man's dream**. His “**romantic readiness**” is admirable as he seeks the pure Dream of love. In doing so, he dismisses the present and **obliterates** the future. Nick recognises that Gatsby is **stuck** in the past. See below for the symbol of the clock.

- **Religion and Morality:** All the characters search for new **values** and beliefs. Nick compares Gatsby to the “**son of God**” but Gatsby’s world **revolves** around Daisy. She becomes his religion as he **worships** her. The readers can also see how George Wilson mistakes the billboard of the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg (see below for its symbol), as God. Religion has been replaced by **consumerism** and the pursuit of **pleasure**. In this way, morality is secondary and is corrupted. We see the **seven deadly sins** throughout the novel and **infidelity** is never condemned correctly.
- **Gender and Sexuality:** The 1920s saw the redefinition of stereotypical **gender** roles. The Jazz Age gave birth to the **flappers** and this meant women were no longer confined to the **private** sphere. Whilst this is great, Tom proves that **misogyny** is still present in 1920s America and readers recognise that the novel is set in a **patriarchal** society. Some critics have argued that Jordan Baker is **lesbian** because of her **subversive** role as a woman. This contrasts greatly with Myrtle who conforms to ideas of femininity and **female sexuality** to climb the social ladder. Myrtle proves that sexuality is connected to **autonomy** and **agency** to change one’s, social class. But Tom also highlights that sexuality is connected with **power** and **control**. He uses his sexuality to get whatever he wants. There are also many hints throughout the novel that Nick may be **gay**.
- **Love and Relationships:** There is only one **true** love in the novel, and it is Gatsby’s love for Daisy. But it is an **idealised, unconditional** love that is shattered by the **material** love that the other characters possess. Every relationship ends in **conflict** and the end, Nick leaves unscathed as he never really cared for Jordan. Fitzgerald paints relationships and friendships as inherently **shallow**. Interestingly, the traditional **nuclear family** dynamic is non-existent in the novel. Instead, readers are presented with **hedonistic** pursuits of **pleasure** that **corrupt** love and relationships.
- **Appearances and Reality:** Not all is what it seems. Gatsby’s rise to fame is because of the **myth** that he created of himself. This myth is kept alive by the **rumours** that surround him. Gatsby is an **illusion**, and even readers are **enchanted** by him because of this. Perhaps the biggest critique of appearances comes with the idea of “advertisements”. Daisy says that Gatsby reminds her of an **advertisement** and George **worships** the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg. Even the books in Gatsby’s library show the **conflict** between appearances and reality.

Key Symbols

- **The Green Light:** This is the greatest symbol of **hope**. Gatsby’s dreams are **concentrated** in this light and the general colour of **green**. Green becomes a symbol for **money** and it colours the way Gatsby sees the world around him. Perhaps Gatsby’s love for Daisy isn’t pure because he likens her to the **American Dream**. Nonetheless, Gatsby’s idea of Daisy is **romanticised**.
- **East and West:** Nick describes the novel as a “**story of the West**”. The **conflict** between the East and the West kills Gatsby. It is the “**foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his**



dreams". *The Great Gatsby* is a love story that is coloured by class; the East and the West Eggs symbolise this **class struggle**.

- **Valley of Ashes:** It is an area in between New York City and the West Egg. It symbolises the **corruption** of the Jazz Age. It houses the 'no money' class that the Wilsons belong to.
- **Eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg:** For Nick and George, the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg watches over the **corruption** of the Roaring Twenties. But George also imposes the **idea of God** to the eyes. He believes that the advertisement must be God as it sees the **corruption** and the **hedonism** of society.
- **Clocks:** The "defunct mantelpiece clock" symbolises **time**. When Gatsby leans too hard on the clock, it almost drops before he catches it. Gatsby sees the clock as a **crutch**. He relies on time to "**repeat the past**". It also symbolises the **destruction** of time. Everyone in the novel and the readers believe that Gatsby's time is **up**. He cannot win back Daisy because she changed too much. But Gatsby is the only one who holds on to his **dream**.
- **Cars:** They symbolise **modernity**, **status** and **destruction**. Without cars, it would be very difficult to imagine the story in the 20th century. The cars show **progression** in **civilisation** and they highlight modernity. But only Gatsby, Tom and Jordan own a car. This suggests that cars are synonymous with status. For Gatsby, his car completes his image of the **self-made man**. Tom uses his car to assert his **social superiority** over everyone else. But Jordan uses her car to highlight the **subversion of femininity**. However, cars also symbolise **destruction**. It is the car that kills Myrtle and in turn, everyone else's dreams die.

Characters

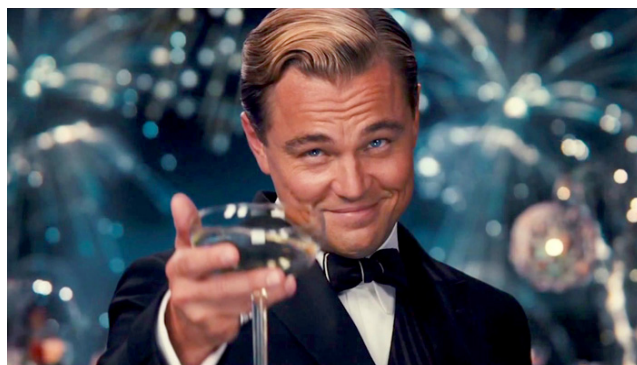
- **Jay Gatsby:** Nick Carraway's rich neighbour and Daisy Buchanan's former **love interest**. He is known for his lavish lifestyle in a mansion on Long Island's **West Egg**. He is a self-made '**new money**' man (his birth name was James Gatz) through **boot-legging** at the time of the **Prohibition Act of 1919**. He represents the **tragic hero/ lover** of the Jazz Age.
- **Nick Carraway:** the **unreliable narrator** that retells the story of Jay Gatsby even though he describes himself as "**one of the few honest people that [he has] ever known.**" He is Daisy Buchanan's cousin but criticises her lifestyle and her husband's lifestyle by exposing their **callousness**. He represents **the romantic critic** of 1920s America.
- **Daisy Buchanan:** the love of Jay Gatsby's life, Nick Carraway's cousin and Tom Buchanan's wife. She is an **ephemeral** woman who values **material and superficial objects** and lets down Jay Gatsby by staying **loyal** to her disloyal husband. She hopes her daughter grows up to be a "**beautiful little fool**". She isn't so horrible - it's just that the **greed of society** has corrupted her and made her callous. She exposes the **lust for money** in 1920s America.
- **Jordan Baker:** the love interest of Nick Carraway. But he **misjudges** her and calls her "**incurably dishonest**" for cheating in golf.

EXAM TIP

Although your exam question may be related to love, you are expected to write about the relationships between the characters and the ways in which Fitzgerald portrays and comments on different kinds love through these characters.



- **Tom Buchanan:** the husband of Daisy Buchanan and the **antagonist** of the story as he opposes Jay Gatsby. His '**old money**' status barely veils that he is a misogynistic, racist, self-serving and violent monster of a man.
- **Myrtle Wilson:** the wife of George Wilson and Tom Buchanan's **mistress**. She desperately tries to seek **a better life** and in doing so she faces the **brutal violence** of her husband, the indifference of Tom Buchanan and the cold metal of **Jay Gatsby's car**. She represents the **lower class** that fails to climb the **social ladder** and are **exploited** without compensation.
- **George Wilson:** the husband of Myrtle Wilson. He owns a garage in the **Valley of Ashes**. He loves his wife but turns violent towards her after learning of her affair. This drives him on edge and he becomes mentally unstable after her death.
- **Meyer Wolfsheim:** the friend and business partner of Jay Gatsby. He is a gambler that makes his name in **organised crime** by fixing the 1919 World Series.
- **Owl Eyes:** a drunken man that Nick encounters in Gatsby's library that is filled with real books rather than cardboard in the shape of books like he thought it would be.
- **Ewing Klipspringer:** a man who visits the Gasby mansion very frequently but he leeches off Gatsby's money and generosity. After Gatsby dies, he only cares about the pair of sneakers he left behind. He doesn't attend Gatsby's funeral.
- **Dan Cody:** the mentor and best friend of Jay Gatsby. Cody left Gatsby twenty-five thousand dollars after he died but Gatsby couldn't receive it because of a legal complication.
- **Henry Gatz:** the father of Jay Gatsby. He believes his son was destined for great things.
- **Pammy Buchanan:** the young daughter of Tom and Daisy Buchanan.
- **Michaelis:** a Greek man who owns a coffee shop near George Wilson's garage.
- **Catherine:** Myrtle's sister who knows about Myrtle's affair with Tom Buchanan.



A shot from Baz Luhrmann's 2013 *The Great Gatsby* starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Gatsby

Image source:

<https://www.dailyadvent.com/news/18e16dbeff0d2e9e987bcf9fd2a25637-New-Years-Resolutions-of-Fictional-Characters>

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1

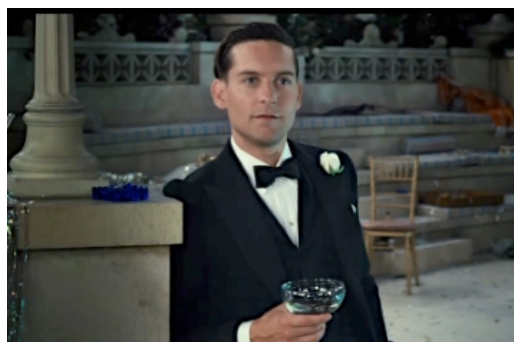
1. Nick Carraway is the novel's narrator and the supposed '**author**' who retells the course of events that had taken place more than a year ago. This means that Nick is relying on his **memory of the events** when relaying the story.
2. He believes that Gatsby had a "**gorgeous**" **personality** and an "**extraordinary gift for hope**" Gatsby, Nick tells the reader, is a victim of the "**foul dust**" that "**preyed on**" him and corrupted his dreams.
3. The story starts when in the **summer of 1922**, Nick, a recent Yale graduate that has just finished his military service, moves to New York in hopes to find **a taste of excitement** and becoming a bond salesman.



4. Nick rents a small house in **West Egg**, a Long Island suburb across a bay from **East Egg**. He tells the narrator that despite identical shapes and sizes, both West and East Egg communities differ greatly in every way. The East Egg is where people lived if they had the **social connections** and **cultural refinement** that generational 'old money' wealth offers. The West Egg is where the 'new money' families reside and they possess "**garish displays of wealth**" that 'old money' families find distasteful.
5. Nick's home is right next door to Gatsby's mansion which is covered in ivy to give the aesthetic of 'old money' homes. It is surrounded by forty acres of lawns and gardens. This makes Nick's home look like an "**eye-sore**" compared to it.
6. Nick visits his cousin Daisy Buchanan and her family for dinner in East Egg. There he meets Tom Buchanan who greets him with **brutish force**, wearing his riding clothes, and talks condescendingly at him. He also meets Jordan Baker, a young professional golfer who is both beautiful but seems constantly bored with her surroundings.
7. Tom attempts to interest his guests in a book called *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by a man named Goddard. The book is deeply racist and embraces white-supremacist attitudes that Tom seems to adhere to.
8. Shortly after, Tom gets a phone call and leaves the room and Daisy follows him. Jordan tells Nick that the call is from **Tom's mistress**. They continue to have dinner, albeit awkwardly. When he leaves, Daisy and Tom suggest he should **pursue a romance** with Jordan since the rumours of his supposed engagement were false.
9. When he arrives home, Nick finds Gatsby alone on his lawn staring at the Long Island Sound. He thinks of calling out to him but stops himself as Gatsby extends his arms out towards the far side of the water. When Nick follows Gatsby's gaze he only finds a tiny **green light** blinking at the end of the dock.

Chapter 2

1. Nick describes the "**wasteland**" called the **Valley of Ashes** between West Egg and New York City where the **ashes** of the city are dumped. He tells the reader that ashes cover everything, even the men who live there.
2. Above the Valley of Ashes, stare out **two huge spectacled eyes** from a billboard for an eye doctor's defunct practice. They are the all-seeing, unblinking **eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg** that watch over everything in the Valley of Ashes.
3. One day, Tom and Nick ride a train from Long Island into the city but Tom gets off at a stop in the Valley of Ashes and tells Nick to come along. Tom takes Nick to George Wilson's auto garage. Nick soon learns that **Tom's mistress is Wilson's wife**, Myrtle.
4. Whilst George is handsome, he appears **beaten down and lifeless**. However, Myrtle strikes Nick as vibrant and oddly **sensuous** despite her stocky figure.
5. Tom talks with Wilson about selling a car. But when Wilson goes to get some chairs, Tom whispers to Myrtle to meet them shortly at the train station. Tom, Nick and Myrtle go to the



Nick Carraway, played by Tobey Maguire in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

Image source:

<https://fashionintofilm.wordpress.com/2013/05/27/fleurs-du-mal-daisy-rosebud-and-the-language-of-flowers-in-luhrmann-and-martins-the-great-gatsby/>



Morningside Heights apartment Tom keeps in New York City to conduct his **affair**. Catherine shows up and so does another couple.

6. The topic of conversation eventually turns to Gatsby. Catherine says Gatsby is a relative of the German emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm. Everyone agrees that Gatsby has an **enigmatic background**.
7. The more Myrtle drinks, the more talkative she gets. She starts talking about her life, her **marriage** and her first meeting with Tom. Soon she talks about Tom's marriage. Tom warns her about mentioning Daisy's name. She repeats Daisy's name as a way to tease Tom and he **punches her nose**, breaking it.
8. The party ends and Nick takes the train home alone.

Chapter 3

1. Every Saturday night, Gatsby throws **parties** at his **mansion**. Nick is finally invited one day and joins the festivities. But he feels out of place as the party is filled with people who haven't been invited.
2. The main topic of conversation at the party is **rumours** about Gatsby. Some say he's a German spy, **an Oxford graduate** and someone claims that Gatsby once killed a man.
3. Nick runs into Jordan Baker at the party. Suddenly, he sees all the amazing luxuries of the party. Gatsby's party is beautiful. The guests gape at his Rolls-Royce, his swimming pool, his beach, crates of imported fresh fruit, the cornucopia of food and the live orchestra playing under the stars. The **liquor flows freely** and appears endless.
4. Nick and Jordan decide to find their mysterious host but no one seems to know where he is. This suggests that they don't even know who Gatsby is. Nick and Jordan end up wandering into Gatsby's library in search of him. They meet a short, drunken man who Nick refers to as Owl Eyes because of his glasses. Owl Eyes is intrigued by the vastness and **"realism"** of Gatsby's unread book collection.
5. Later, Nick and Jordan sit outside watching the party. Nick strikes up a conversation with the man sitting beside him. Turns out the man thinks Nick looks familiar and they might have crossed paths during **World War I**. The man introduces himself - it's Jay Gatsby.
6. Nick finds Gatsby's speech elaborate and formal. Gatsby has a habit of calling everyone **"old sport"** Nick tells the reader that Gatsby has **a dazzling smile "with a quality of eternal reassurance"**. Nick finds Gatsby interesting as he remains apart from the party, deriving pleasure from watching others have fun.
7. It's almost two in the morning and the butler tells Jordan that Gatsby wants to meet her. She returns a while later telling Nick that she just heard the **"the most amazing" story**.
8. After saying goodbye to Gatsby, Nick leaves the party. As he walks home, he sees a crowd around a car accident. Drunken Owl Eyes drove his car into a ditch. With no luck getting it out, Owl Eyes gives up and walks away, leaving the car behind.
9. Nick tries to prove to the reader that he does more than just attend parties. He goes to work every day in the city and **casually dates women**. He has had a brief relationship with a woman from New Jersey and now he is dating Jordan Baker.
10. Although he's attracted to her, Nick dislikes Jordan. He finds her **dishonest** and she even cheats at golf. Nick then goes on to say that he is one of the only honest people he's ever known.



Chapter 4

1. Nick observes some drunken women on Gatsby's lawn gossiping about Gatsby's mysterious identity. He then starts to list out everyone who went to the party that summer, none of whom knew anything about their host.
2. Nick narrates to the reader about the time he accompanied Gatsby on a trip into the city for lunch. They ride to the city in Gatsby's monstrous cream-coloured car. While he drives, Gatsby tells Nick about his past. He tells him that he was the son of wealthy parents from the "Midwest" town of San Francisco. Apparently, Gatsby graduated from Oxford, "a family tradition", was a noted jewel collector in many European cities and a decorated hero in the war. Noticing Nick's doubtful glances, he shows Nick a war medal and a photo of him playing cricket in Oxford. Gatsby then tells Nick to expect to hear a very sad story about him later in the afternoon. When Gatsby exceeds the speed limit, the policeman apologises and lets him go because Gatsby shows him a white card.
3. For lunch, they meet Meyer Wolfsheim, Gatsby's business partner. He tells Nick that Gatsby is a man of "fine breeding" who would "never so much look at a friend's wife". Nick gets the impression that Wolfsheim is a shady character with underground business connections. Gatsby tells Nick that Wolfsheim is the man behind fixing the 1919 World Series. This makes Nick think that Gatsby might be involved in organised crime.
4. On the way out of the restaurant, Nick sees Tom and introduces him to Gatsby. Gatsby appears embarrassed and leaves the scene without saying goodbye.
5. After lunch, Nick meets Jordan at the Plaza Hotel. She tells him Gatsby's story. As a young man, Gatsby had a passionate romance with Daisy Fay, now Daisy Buchanan. During the war, when Daisy was not yet twenty, Gatsby met her while he was stationed in Louisville as a Lieutenant and the two of them fell in love.
6. Her family prevented Daisy from leaving and marrying Gatsby, and one year later she married Tom Buchanan, a wealthy man from Chicago who gave her a string of pearls worth \$350,000 and a three-month honeymoon to the South Seas. Daisy drank herself into numbness the night before her wedding after she received a letter from Gatsby. Daisy has apparently remained faithful to her husband throughout their marriage, but Tom did not. He was quick to cheat on Daisy early in their marriage.
7. Jordan finishes the story later in Central Park. She says Gatsby never fell out of love with Daisy and bought his great mansion in West Egg to be across the bay from her. He had hoped that the magnificent house would impress her and win back her love. Nick realizes that the green light he saw Gatsby gazing at sits at the end of Daisy's dock.
8. Finally, Jordan adds that Gatsby has requested that Nick invite Daisy over to his house for tea. Then Gatsby will show up so that Daisy will have to see him, even if, as Gatsby fears, she doesn't want to.



Jay Gatsby from Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

Image source:
<https://www.desktopbackground.org/wallpaper/jay-gatsby-wallpaper-jay-gatsby-hd-wallpaper-backgrounds-desktop-1044037>



Chapter 5

1. That night, Nick comes from the city after a date with Jordan. He finds Gatsby nervous on his front lawn as he asks if Nick would like to take a swim in his front pool. Nick reassures Gatsby that he would help set up the meeting between Daisy and Gatsby.
2. On the day of the meeting, Gatsby is even more **nervous**. Gatsby sends a man to cut Nick's grass, even though it's raining and sends another man with flowers to Nick's home. But when Daisy arrives, Gatsby disappears. Soon, there's a knock at the door and Gatsby appears wet and deathlike. He **knocks over Nick's mantelpiece clock** by accident and is a nervous wreck.
3. Nick leaves them alone for half an hour and when he returns they are very happy. Gatsby offers to take them on a tour of his mansion and Nick third-wheels. In Gatsby's bedroom, Daisy starts **crying** as she looks through Gatsby's shirts and hearing about how Gatsby would stare at the green light on her dock.
4. Nick voices to the reader his doubts about how Daisy could fulfil **Gatsby's idealised vision of her**. Nick notes that whilst Gatsby stayed loyal to their love, Daisy married another man she didn't love, **all for money**. They then go visit Gatsby's grounds and he even gets Ewing Klipspringer to play the piano for them. Gatsby holds Daisy's hand and she whispers something that makes him emotional. Nick, realising his third-wheel status, leaves them and walks alone into the rain.

Chapter 6

1. A reporter comes to Gatsby's home attempting to interview him. The **myth of Gatsby** has become so great and this makes Gatsby happy.
2. But Nick tells the reader the truth about Gatsby. He was born James Gatz on a farm in North Dakota around 1900. He changed his name to Jay Gatsby at the age of 17. He attended college at St Olaf in southern Minnesota but left after 2 weeks because he couldn't stand the janitorial work he had to do to pay for the tuition fees.
3. He spent more than a year on the south shore of Lake Superior clamming and fishing and met Dan Cody, 50-year-old multimillionaire expert in the mining of precious metals. Dan Cody takes Jay Gatsby under his wing and makes him his assistant for 5 years aboard his yacht. Cody dies and **leaves Gatsby \$25,000**. But Gatsby doesn't receive this money because Cody's **mistress** legally prevents him from claiming his inheritance. Gatsby dedicates himself to becoming **rich and successful**.
4. For a few weeks, Nick doesn't see Gatsby. Then, one Sunday afternoon, Nick visits Gatsby's home and is startled to find Tom Buchanan and a couple stopping for a drink. Gatsby awkwardly tells Tom that he knows his wife, and invites Tom and his friends to stay for dinner. They apologise but invite Gatsby to dinner. Gatsby accepts, not realizing that their invite was purely rhetorical to be polite. This makes Tom contemptuous of Gatsby's **lack of social grace**.
5. The next Saturday night, Tom and Daisy come to a party at Gatsby's. Nick doesn't find the party that great and Tom is disdainful. **Gatsby**



Gatsby dances with Daisy in Baz Luhrmann's
The Great Gatsby (2013)

Image source:

https://www.cinemagazine.gr/nea/arthro/neo_treiler_tou_gkatsmpi_certainly_glad_to_see_you_again-129247038/



and Daisy dance which marks the only time Gatsby really gets involved with one of his own parties.

6. When dinner arrives, Tom remarks he wishes to eat with another group. Daisy, always aware of what Tom is really up to, remarks the girl is "**common but pretty**" and offers her gold pencil in case he wants to take down an address.
7. As the Buchanan couple are leaving, Tom vices his suspicions that Gatsby culminated his wealth through **bootlegging**. Nick denies this and Daisy angrily retorts that Gatsby made his money from drugstores he owns.
8. After the party, Gatsby is sad because Daisy didn't enjoy herself. Nick reminds him that **he can't "repeat the past"** to which Gatsby idealistically answers "**why of course you can!**". This "**appalling sentimentality**" both disgusts and delights Nick.
9. Nick remembers when Gatsby shared the story of when **he kissed Daisy for the first time**. Nick believes that in that kiss Gatsby's dreams of success focussed solely on Daisy. She became **an idealised dream** and the **centre of his life**. Now that he has Daisy, Nick reflects, Gatsby's dream is effectively over.

Chapter 7

1. Gatsby's house becomes much quieter because he stopped all his parties now that he no longer needs them to attract Daisy. He also fired all his servants and replaced them with **Wolfsheim's men** so no one can gossip about his and Daisy's relationship.
2. On the **hottest** day of the summer, Daisy invites Nick and Gatsby to lunch with her, her husband and Jordan. When Tom leaves the room, **Daisy kisses Gatsby on the lips** and tells him **she loves him**. But then the nurse brings in Pammy. Gatsby suddenly keeps glancing at the little girl **in surprise**. Gatsby then tells Tom that his house is only across the Sound.
3. Lunch is awkward because of the heat and the tension between the men. Daisy starts talking philosophically and then has the idea of going to the city for the day. Daisy and Gatsby lock eyes and she comments aloud that Gatsby always looks like an **advertisement**. Tom senses that Daisy and Gatsby are in love and he suddenly agrees to go to the city. Before going to the city, Nick and Gatsby agree, in private, that Daisy is quite loud. But Gatsby also comments that her voice is "**full of money**".
4. Tom insists on driving Gatsby's big yellow car. Gatsby and Daisy travel alone in Tom's coupe and Tom drives Nick and Jordan. The readers are aware that Tom knows about the affair between Daisy and Gatsby. Because Gatsby's car is low on gas, Tom pulls into Wilson's garage in the Valley of Ashes. Wilson asks Tom about buying his other car to resell it. He wants to raise money so that he and his wife could move **west**. Tom is startled at the **impending loss of his mistress**. He is doubly enraged at the possibility of **losing both wife and mistress**.
5. Wilson tells Tom that he had become physically ill after learning that his wife had been living a double life. Nick notes that Wilson doesn't know that Tom is the other man. Nick also thinks that **Wilson and Tom are identical**, except that Tom is healthy and Wilson is sick.



Daisy, played by Carey Mulligan in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)



Nick notices the haunting eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg and then spots Myrtle staring down from the windows above the garage at Jordan Baker. She seems to have mistaken Jordan for Daisy.

6. The group takes a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom is quick to challenge Gatsby's "**Oxford man**" history. When Gatsby answers confidently, Tom confronts him about the "**row**" he's trying to cause between the Buchanans. Daisy tries to quieten Tom but fails. Gatsby says that **Daisy never loved Tom** and has only ever loved him. Tom protests, but Daisy says it's true. But then Tom asks her to think about their marital history and Daisy admits she did love Tom before. But **she loved Gatsby "too"**. This breaks Gatsby's heart.
7. Tom reveals that Gatsby is involved in organised crime like bootlegging. This scares Daisy and she wants to go home. Tom tells her to go back with Gatsby and not to worry because **he won't "annoy" her** anymore. Gatsby takes Daisy in his car. Nick suddenly remembers that the day is his thirtieth birthday. In Tom's car, Nick described the car journey as **driving towards death**.
8. The reader is given the point of view of Michaelis. He saw Wilson sick in his office and heard Myrtle screaming upstairs. Wilson told him that he had locked her up until they moved west the next day. That evening, Michaelis saw Myrtle shout at Wilson and run into the street. She was **killed by a passing car** that may have been light **green**.
9. The point of view returns to Nick. Tom, Nick and Jordan arrive at the scene in their car. Both Tom and Wilson are **overcome by grief** for Myrtle. Tom suspects that Gatsby ran over Myrtle. Tom, Nick and Jordan drive to the Buchanan's house. Tom calls a taxi for Nick who waits for it outside. There, he finds Gatsby **hiding** in the bushes. Gatsby tells Nick that it was Daisy who was driving the car and he tried to stop the accident but was too late. He says that he'll take the **responsibility** but he seems to care very little about what happened to Myrtle. He fears that Tom will hurt Daisy.
10. Nick goes and checks on Daisy through the window. He finds her and Tom eating **cold fried chicken and drinking ale**. Nick tells Gatsby everything is quiet, but Gatsby still refuses to leave. Nick leaves him "**watching over nothing**" under the moonlight.



Robert Redford as Jay Gatsby in Jack Clayton's *The Great Gatsby* (1974)

Chapter 8

1. Nick goes to see Gatsby for breakfast the next morning and Gatsby tells him that Daisy **never came** outside that night. He rejects Nick's advice to forget Daisy and leave Long Island because the police would start questioning him.
2. Gatsby tells Nick about the love between him and Daisy five years ago. He remembers how impressed he was by her **wealth**, her enormous house, and even by the fact that other men had loved her. To be with her he tricked her into believing he was of the same class as her. One night **they slept together**, and he felt **he had married her**. Then he left for World War I. Daisy waited for a while and then married Tom.
3. After they finish breakfast, they go for a walk outside. Gatsby's gardener tells him that he's going to drain the pool but Gatsby tells him to wait. He hasn't used the **swimming pool** that summer yet. Before leaving, Nick tells Gatsby that he's worth more than all of the "**rotten crowd... put together**". Gatsby smiles in reply.



4. That day at work, Nick falls asleep but is woken by a phone call from Jordan. They start arguing and hang up on each other. Nick tells the reader that he doesn't care for her anymore.
5. Nick tells the reader what happened at Wilson's garage after Myrtle's death. Wilson spoke all night to Michaelis about how she had a **lover**. He tells Michaelis that he suspects the lover to be the man driving the car because Myrtle ran towards it. Wilson told Michaelis how he had confronted her that she was **sinning** in the eyes of God whilst staring into the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg. Wilson tells Michaelis that he has a way of finding out who was driving the car. In the morning, he leaves his garage.
6. At two in the afternoon, Gatsby goes for a swim and tells his servants to inform him if there was a phone call for him. No phone call came for him. But later in the afternoon, Nick and some of the servants discover Gatsby, shot dead in his pool, **shouldering his mattress**. Apparently, Wilson, sure that Gatsby is responsible for his wife's death, shoots and kills Gatsby. The gardener finds **Wilson's dead body** close by lying on the grass.

Chapter 9

1. It's now two years later and Nick is recounting his memories of the days shortly after

Gatsby's death. **Wild rumours** about Gatsby's relationship with Myrtle start circulating which make reporters and gossips prowl around the mansion looking for stories. Nick becomes the main contact for all matters relating to Gatsby because nobody else wanted to be. Daisy and Tom disappear with no forwarding address, and Meyer Wolfsheim says he has pressing business and can't help at present.



Gatsby with Daisy in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

2. Three days after Gatsby's death, a telegram arrives from **Henry C. Gatz**. Mr Gatz arrives in person at Gatsby's mansion for the funeral. He's an old man wearing **cheap clothes** and is devastated by his son's death. He truly believed Gatsby was **destined for a great future**. Nick tells Mr Gatz that they were close friends.
3. That night, Klipspringer calls. When Nick tells him about the funeral, Klipspringer says he can't attend. But he asks Nick to send him the **pair of tennis shoes** he left at Gatsby's mansion.
4. Gatsby's funeral takes place the next day. Nick goes to New York to get Wolfsheim to attend the service so more people are present. At his office, Wolfsheim talks of his early memories with Gatsby, whom he claimed to have raised "**out of nothing**". Nick tries to convince him to attend the funeral but he refuses because he does not get mixed up with murdered men.
5. Only, Nick, Henry Gatz and, to Nick's surprise, Owl Eyes show up for Gatsby's funeral. Owl Eyes pities Gatsby as a "**poor son-of-a-bitch**".
6. Nick describes the story as a whole as that of the West since many of the key characters (Daisy, Tom, Nick, Jordan, Gatsby) involved are not from the East. After the death of Gatsby, the East has become **haunted** for Nick.



- Nick goes to Jordan Baker's house to end things properly but she tells him she is **engaged** to another man. Nick doesn't really believe her. She even accuses Nick of being dishonest.
- Later that October, Nick runs into Tom Buchanan in New York. He refuses to shake Tom's hand. He learns that Tom was the one who told Wilson that Gatsby ran over Myrtle. Tom tells Nick that he cried when he gave up the Morningside Heights apartment. Nick doesn't tell Tom that it was Daisy driving. He describes the Buchanans as living in "**vast carelessness**" and then **retreating to their money**.
- On his last night in West Egg, he walks down Gatsby's beach and looks over Long Island Sound. He wonders how the first settlers in America felt staring out at the "**green breast**" of **the new continent**. He imagines Gatsby's similar wonder when he realised that the green light belonged to Daisy.
- Nick describes Gatsby as a believer in the future, **a man of promise and faith**. He compares everyone to Gatsby - everyone moves forward with their arms outstretched, looking to the future but **searching for a lost past**.

Analysis - Chapter 1

- Nick's so-called "**advantages**" come from his '**old money**' status. Whilst he doesn't judge based on class, the Buchanans do. Even Gatsby to some extent, judges based on class. By the end of the novel, the East is **haunted** for Nick which creates the impression that he has succumbed to judging based on class. This highlights the judgemental culture and the grappling of **class dynamics** that was quintessential of the **Roaring Twenties**. When Nick introduces Gatsby, he connects him to both '**new money**' and the **American Dream**. Gatsby became undone by the "**foul dust**" of the Roaring Twenties.
- The 1920s boom inverts the American Dream. People no longer go west to build a fortune and a life. Instead, people abandoned their roots to come east for the chance at fortune. '**Old money**' East Egg is opposite '**new money**' West Egg which symbolically highlights the **class rivalry** of the Roaring Twenties. This pinpoints the central theme of the novel. Whilst the 'new money' families in the West Egg overcompensate on their lack of **generational wealth** through "**garish**" displays of luxury, the 'old money' community find this **distasteful** and **lacking in grace**.
- Tom's riding clothes highlight his 'old money' status. His **brute-like** monstrous body suggests the **hyper-masculinity** that Tom underpins. This makes him scary and positions him as the **antagonist** of the novel. Indeed, Tom's brute body **challenges** Gatsby, **undermines** Nick, **hurts** Daisy and **ruins** Myrtle. It is also a **symbol** of his underlying **monstrous behaviour** that his social grace and etiquette **scarcely veils**.
- Jordan's constant **boredom** with her surroundings highlights the **superficial** and **shallow** nature of the '**old money**'. This further emphasises the **futility** of the American Dream. Even after working so hard to achieve great wealth, one's surroundings would make them bored.

EXAM TIP

Try to think about how a character changes their views or behaviours towards LOVE. Does a particular event change them? Why? This counts as structural analysis and should help you get a deeper understanding of the theme.



- Tom's **racist** opinions and reading highlights the **white-supremacist**, **colonial** ideologies still rife in the 'old money' of the 1920s. Furthermore, his **misogynist**, **libertine** tendencies paint him in a **negative** light as Daisy and Myrtle become his **victims**.
- The first time, Nick describes an **encounter** with Gatsby is at the end of the chapter. This is interesting as the reader sees Gatsby's "**extraordinary gift for hope**" in his outstretched arms towards the **green light**. Here, his outstretched arms highlight his **yearning** for the light and thus, by association, **Daisy**. Her marriage to Tom Buchanan is only a minor **obstacle** for Gatsby as his love **transcends marital sanctities** and earthly **boundaries**.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- **"There was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life"**
 - Here, the adjective 'gorgeous' highlights a sense of **homoeroticism** that certainly creeps up elsewhere in the text. Nick admires Gatsby a lot, his **love** for him drives him to narrate this tale to **immortalise** Gatsby and his ability to love. Fitzgerald introduces a topic that is slowly garnering tolerance in American society. Fitzgerald's use of 'heightened sensitivity' further emphasises the **homoerotic** undertones of the text as Tom, later in the chapter (see below), embodies ideas of **hyper-masculinity**. Gatsby believes he is **destined** to marry Daisy. She represents to him the 'promises of life'.
- **"Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body - he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage - a cruel body"**
 - Here, Tom's **muscular** and **masculine** build is emphasised. It is interesting that Nick notices and comments on his muscles. It supports the idea that Nick is **attracted** to men. But this fascination with Tom is unlike his love for Gatsby. Tom appears **dangerous** and is positioned as the **antagonist** from the onset. Tom is **not emasculated** by the effeminate luxury of his clothes. If anything, it makes him all the **more masculine**. This is all epitomised through the use of the adjective 'cruel'. It is this body that **rivals** Gatsby, **undermines** Nick, **cheats on** Daisy and **exploits** Myrtle.
- **"I hope she'll be a fool - that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool"**
 - Here, Daisy's **anti-woman** rhetoric is concerning. Indeed, being married to a misogynist brute has turned her into a **self-loathing soul**. But perhaps Daisy has a point. Even by the 1920s, women were largely considered **useless** and **inferior sex**. If Pammy Buchanan grows up to be a 'beautiful little fool', she'd be just like her mother, which isn't too bad. Daisy is married to an 'old money' wealthy man and has a secure future. But, this is partly why she doesn't leave Tom even after he cheats on her continuously. This, of course, makes her a **fool** and a **coward**. She prefers the **stability of superficial bank notes** rather than her own **happiness** and **fulfilment**. To be a fool is to be too simple or **ignorant** to correctly perceive what is happening around you. Perhaps Daisy wishes she herself was a fool. This would

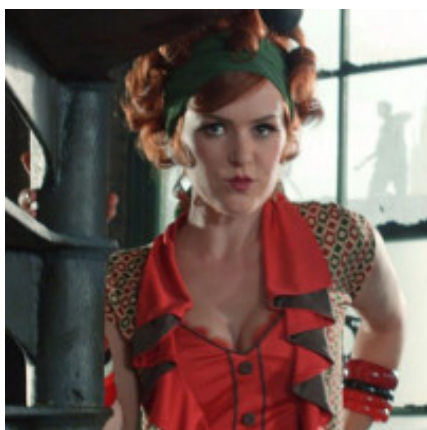


allow her to enjoy the **luxuries** of being Tom's wife without being aware of his **disloyalty** towards her. Most interestingly, however, Fitzgerald depicts how **gender roles** functioned in the **Roaring Twenties**.

- “He stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was **trembling**. Involuntarily, I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single **green light**, minute and far away, that might have been the **end of the dock**”
 - Here, Gatsby's outstretched arms highlight his **yearning** for Daisy that causes him to **tremble**. His love for her is so great and powerful. Indeed, the colour “green” is synonymous with **hope** and has connotations of **fertility** and **wealth**. The “green light” is without a doubt the **most iconic symbol** from Fitzgerald's novel for his love for Daisy and the **American Dream**. Perhaps Gatsby hopes that his love would give birth to a **proper relationship** with Daisy. His love for Daisy is most **symbolised** through her **wealth**. She represents **the American dream** for him and money. His initial attraction towards her was because of her **house** and her **wealth**. He refers to her voice as “**full of money**” in chapter seven. Thus, Gatsby's **attraction** towards green **epitomises** his **desire** to be **rich** and **successful**.

Analysis - Chapter 2

- The description of the “**valley of ashes**” recalls the **bleak spiritual landscape** of T.S. Eliot's **The Waste Land**, a poem published in 1922, the year in which *The Great Gatsby* is set. The poem exposes the **materialistic** and **consumerist values** in modern society. This mirrors Fitzgerald's aims in his novel. The Valley of Ashes represents the people that are excluded from the **Roaring Twenties**. The ashes and dust remind the reader of the “**foul dust**” that preyed on Gatsby. Indeed, the **unblinking eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg** watch everything in the Valley of Ashes. This calls to mind **Nietzsche's theory of 'the death of God'** in the late 1800s. It also highlights the **rise of the media** and the **power of advertisements**. This is later reflected when Daisy calls Gatsby “**an advertisement**” in chapter seven.



Myrtle Wilson, played by Isla Fisher in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

Image source:

https://historica.fandom.com/wiki/Myrtle_Wilson

- The Wilson couple is **exploited** by Tom's indifferent and **callous** attitudes towards them. Whilst George is a “**spiritless man, anaemic**”, Myrtle carries her “**flesh sensuously**”. This highlights Myrtle's **desperation to escape her life** and enter the world of **desire, money and luxury**. She **cuckolds** her husband and changes her “**costume**” often to fit the money status she desires but can't touch. Myrtle, to a certain extent, is bought by Tom. He buys her gifts like dogs as pets and in turn, gets to have sex. He views his relationship with Myrtle in **material terms** or a **physical affair** rather than an **emotional commitment**. In contrast, Gatsby's love and **idealistic** devotion to Daisy is entirely emotional.



- The apartment represents the place of **immorality** as the group engage in **gluttony** and **lust**. They drink themselves senseless and fulfil their sexual desires. There is even a moment when Nick puts to bed Mr McKee which suggests a **homoerotic** episode. When Tom punches Myrtle for being **envious** (a deadly sin) of Daisy, he performs an act of **wrath** which further emphasises another deadly sin. They lay around doing nothing (**sloth**) and bask in **the promise of money** of the Roaring Twenties that Tom embodies (**greed** and **pride**). Thus, the apartment becomes a **fertile ground for sin and evil**.
- It is worth noting that this **lewd depiction of intoxication** is set against the backdrop of the **Prohibition Act of 1919**. It remained in force until **1933**. This created severe limitations on producing and consuming alcoholic drinks. Fitzgerald hints that part of Gatsby's immense wealth is his involvement (whether explicit or implicit, readers do not know) with **bootlegging**.
- The fascination of Gatsby highlights the **hollow nature of both Gatsby and those gossiping about him**. Gatsby represents the **corruption** of the American Dream. Whilst Gatsby achieves the American Dream of **transcending social barriers** by climbing the social ladder and obtaining great wealth and success, he had to make sacrifices. First of which was his need to reinvent himself. In an **anti-semitic age** of America, James Gatz (Gatz is a Jewish German name) would not have gone far in trying to obtain wealth. He had to reinvent himself as Jay Gatsby to **escape his past**. In this way, Gatsby can obtain wealth and rub shoulders with the upper-class and be one of them. Gatsby, however, fails in his American Dream of winning Daisy back. Her **rejection of Gatsby corrupts him** and thus she is rendered as the **embodiment** of the American Dream. Gatsby's **idealised** version of Daisy crumbles the moment he dares to touch it. She is not what he expects and life cannot go back to Louisville five years ago. Instead, it must plough on and Gatsby must pursue another dream or else perish at the merciless hands of George Wilson.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- “This is a **valley of ashes**—a fantastic farm where **ashes grow like wheat** into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where **ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke** and, finally, with a **transcendent effort**, of men who move dimly and **already crumbling** through the powdery air.”
 - Here, “wheat” and “gardens” are **associated** with life and nature whilst “ashes” belong to the realm of **death**. Fitzgerald combines these images, in contrast, to highlight that **beauty is destroyed**. If “ashes grow like wheat”, then death rules and spreads. This simile reveals the spread of **immorality** in **1920s America**. Fitzgerald uses long lists of the objects made from ash to emphasise the scale of **decay**. The repetition of “and”, and thus the polysyndeton, slows the pace of reading, emphasising the **trudging drudgery of life** in the valley. Furthermore, the image of “transcendent effort” shows how all the men’s energy is taken up in just **existing**. But despite their struggle to survive, they’re “already crumbling”.
- “I **want** you to meet my **girl**”
 - Tom is very **bold** for wanting to introduce his mistress to his wife’s cousin. He clearly doesn’t think Nick would tell Daisy about what he knows or rather, Tom just doesn’t care whether Daisy knows or not. The verb “want” highlights Tom’s **desire**



for Nick to perhaps approve of his choice of mistress. This also portrays the **double standards of 1920s America** for men and women. When men have mistresses, they are perceived as doubly masculine and very attractive. But when women take up lovers, they are **abused** and driven to their death (Myrtle) or they retreat back into their lives and selves in **solitude**, **silence** and **selfishness** (Daisy).

- **“She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her flesh sensuously as some women can [...] looking at him flush in the eye. Then she wet her lips..”**
 - Myrtle is very **seductively** described. She is the **microcosmic representation** of the desperate lower-class woman who tries to **transcend the status quo** by climbing the social ladder through sex. In doing so, she destroys herself and ruins her marriage. She subjects herself to the **brutal masculine force** of Tom’s hand when he breaks her nose (see below) and the **violent jealousy of her husband** when he locks her up and beats her upon finding out she took up a lover. Fitzgerald highlights the **quintessential** gender roles and expectations. He exposes **the Madonna-Whore Complex** existing in the Flapper Age.
- **““You see,’ cried Catherine triumphantly. She lowered her voice again. ‘It’s really his wife that’s keeping them apart. She’s a Catholic and they don’t believe in divorce.’ Daisy was not a Catholic, and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie.”**
 - The “elaborateness of the lie” highlights Tom’s **deception** to **exert power** and have fun. This paints him in a negative light as he **exploits** the women in his life. It also portrays Myrtle as a **pathetic** woman who doesn’t see her exploitation. This makes the reader feel sympathy for Myrtle. Tom’s money and “vast carelessness” (chapter 9) allows him to get away with hurting others all in the name of **self-satisfaction**.
- **“I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life”**
 - Nick’s **critical** outlook on the life of the East Egg is interesting here. Fitzgerald uses Nick’s observation of the vice to show the next step in his journey of discovery about whether the American dream and social status holds value as he believed at the start of the story. The use of the verb “enchanted” highlights Nick’s **fascination** with the upper classes of society and how they operate. Nick **sympathises** with Gatsby and loves him because Gatsby represents the **tragic hero**. He is a self-made man but also a **man who is made and undone by society**. The judgemental and **callous** upper class make Gatsby suffer to get wealth and love. He is constantly faced with obstacles - whether meaningless rumours, unrequited love or the “cruel body” of Tom (chapter one).
- **“Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand”**
 - Here, the reported style of the **narrative** highlights Tom’s **arrogance** and **violence**. This only adds to his **unlikeability** as he resorts to exerting his power violently when he doesn’t get what he wants. The use of Tom’s full name epitomises his callous violence as it puts the blame **singularly** on him. This foreshadows Tom’s power to falsely inform George Wilson that it was Gatsby who killed Myrtle. This, in



turn, get Gatsby killed and George kills himself in the **perfect and tragic murder-suicide** of the book. Tom finds it very easy to hurt those that stand in his way. His **guiltless carelessness** marks him plainly as the **antagonist** and he **juxtaposes** Gatsby who loves too much.

Analysis - Chapter 3

- Fitzgerald uses **poetic language** to create a **magical atmosphere** for Gatsby's parties. His "**blue gardens**" are alive with the "**whisperings and the champagne and the stars**". Throughout his description, Fitzgerald appeals to the reader's five senses as though they were there as one of the guests. The party soon increases **in pace and tempo** with each incident ending on the **climax** of the crash and the **denouement** of Nick's pseudo-humble words.
- Fitzgerald exposes the **depravity** and **hedonism** of the wealthy in 1920s America through Gatsby's party. There's an **unsettling** contrast between the guest's **reckless** behaviour and the **enchanted** surroundings that luxury has to offer. This highlights both Nick and Fitzgerald's simultaneous **attraction** and **repulsion** for the era. In fact, the **emptiness** of this era is symbolised by the "**oranges and lemons**" that are reduced to "**pulpless halves**" by Monday.
- Gatsby's 'new money' guests **exploit** his parties for a **taste of luxury** even when they don't know him. He is just a means for a good party and exists only in the form of rumours about him. Nick's feeling of discomfort suggests that **he senses the emptiness of the party**. The party's emptiness reflects the **shallowness** of the American Dream.
- This shallowness is also reflected in the "**realism**" of the books Owl Eyes admires in Gatsby's library. Despite their "realism", the people of the Jazz Age look for **enchantment** and **fantasy** through the **superficial luxuries** that life affords them. Owl Eyes' comment highlights the **tension** between **reality** and the **myth** of Gatsby.
- This enchantment is also embodied in Gatsby's **smile**. Its **hopeful disillusion** mimics the **façade** of the Roaring Twenties. But it is this same smile that holds an element of **distance** because he aspires to **rekindle** his love for Daisy. Nick learns that Gatsby is more than a smile and rumours when Jordan tells him the "**amazing**" story of Gatsby.
- Owl Eyes' car accident symbolises two things. Most importantly, the **recklessness** of the Roaring Twenties and its indifference towards the **pain** and **suffering** it imposes on others. It is a **shallow** recklessness, one that disregards humans and treats them as **disposable**, especially the lower working class or 'no money'. But this scene also **foreshadows** Myrtle's death when Daisy runs over Myrtle. In his car crash, Owl Eyes was not the one driving: in the same way, Gatsby is **mistaken** to be the driver in Myrtle's death.
- When Owl Eyes was in the library, he muttered to himself "**if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse**". This reveals the **futile** and **weak illusion** of Gatsby. Should one aspect of his **outward** image crumble, the entire **illusion** would shatter. This **foreshadows** the moment in chapter 8 when "**Jay Gatsby**' had broken up like glass

EXAM TIP

Don't forget to also write about structural techniques like dialogue, sentence types and punctuation. They can help you explore and track Fitzgerald's depiction of LOVE.



against Tom's hard malice". Here, Gatsby's **fragile** world is **shattered** by the **brutally** physical **reality** of Tom Buchanan.

- Nick's **discomfort** with the **careless** Roaring Twenties mirrors the reader's discomfort with the **easy money and hypocritical loose morals**. He claims very boldly that he is the most honest person he's ever met. This makes the reader question Nick's **reliability** as he views Gatsby through **a rose-tinted lens** and continues to date Jordan despite thinking her as "incurably dishonest".

Key Quotes & Analysis

- **"In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars"**
 - The contrast between the colour 'blue' and the colour green of normal 'gardens' highlights a **fantasy-like atmosphere** to Gatsby's party. He appears as an **illusionist** in his methods of enchanting his guests. The simile of 'moths' reveals the attraction the guests have to his parties, even when they know so little about their host. Fitzgerald's use of the polysyndeton and triadic structure (rule of three) further emphasises the **fairy-tale elements** Gatsby can weave into his parties. The whispering and the champagne are also constants in every party as his guests try to decipher Gatsby with their wild theories even when he offers them copious alcohol. Perhaps this quote also highlights the inherent **emptiness** of 1920s America with their appreciation for the shallow and superficial.
- **"It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life."**
 - Nick is fascinated by Gatsby's smile as he observes the **psychological** power of it. Nick starts with a cliché. But he soon corrects himself to highlight Gatsby's **magnetic** effect. Gatsby's smile offers "eternal reassurance" because it attempts to convey to Nick desperation and the need for support. But readers later understand that Gatsby is a **façade**, a **performance** that has been mastered over the years. Despite his heartbreaking story, his admirable affection towards Daisy and his earnest intentions, 'Gatsby' is only **skin-deep**. Fitzgerald indicates that Gatsby had perfected a way to respond to others that makes them feel entirely known and meaningful. Thus both Gatsby and those he smiles at become fundamentally **empty**: Gatsby for performing, but others for so desperately wanting to be understood, believed in and assured.
- **"She was incurably dishonest. [...] Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply"**
 - By today's feminist and pro-woman standards, this quote is shocking. Not only does Nick expose the underlying **misogyny** that was rife in 1920s America, but he also proves to be just like Tom in his view of the women all around him. Suddenly, readers are forced to face their dismissive reaction when Nick doesn't defend his cousin. This paints Jordan's character with a new layer. Her name links her to two makes of cars: Jordan and Baker. This emphasises her **materialistic** and modern character. Some critics argue that Jordan is **gay** because of Fitzgerald's masculine description of her "**erect carriage**" and "**hard jaunty body**". Jordan appears to



reject the **stereotypical** role of a submissive and meek woman. She paves her own way towards success. Perhaps one can read Fitzgerald's text through a progressive feminist lens. Perhaps Fitzgerald's depiction of Jordan highlights the **subversive** woman - a mild femme fatale in her aura of mystery and lack of care when driving. In this same sense, Daisy is a sort of **femme fatale** in her carelessness.

Analysis - Chapter 4

- This chapter opens with another **damning portrayal** of the 1920s. Nick expects the reader to recognise these people and their **immoral** ways. This further emphasises the darkness beneath the **lavish** and carefree lifestyle.
- Gatsby's story doesn't add up. It seems that in typical 'new money' fashion, Gatsby entirely **reinvents his identity** after coming to New York and getting rich. Whilst he achieves the American Dream of incredible wealth, he **sacrifices his real identity**. When Gatsby speeds in his car it paints him as careless in his driving, his lifestyle (with all the liquor) and his blindness and "**extraordinary gift for hope**" even when the odds and Tom are against him.
- Wolfsheim's connection to Gatsby is a sign of the **corruption** of the American Dream. He is bad news from the beginning but Nick and the reader can't do much about it, other than witness the corruption of the Jazz Age consume Gatsby.
- When Tom and Gatsby meet each other, it **foreshadows** the conflict between them in chapter seven and the **symbolic conflict** between 'old money' and 'new money'.
- Jordan's story highlights the real Gatsby's purpose in life. He has achieved the Roaring Twenties version of the American Dream by becoming very rich. To achieve that wealth he reinvented himself, possibly became involved in **criminal** activities, and sacrificed his past. But he did it all in service of a purer, more traditional American Dream: real and true love.
- Daisy chose the **security of money** over love when she chose Tom over Gatsby. So Gatsby made himself rich: he thinks that money will win her back. The **green light** represents both Gatsby's dream of recreating his past with Daisy and the corrupt American Dream of extreme wealth.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- "I didn't want you to think that I was just some **nobody**"
 - Gatsby's **self-conscious** words highlight his resentment towards his past and the 'no money'. Tom later calls Gatsby "**Mr Nobody from Nowhere**" in chapter seven. This highlights the disregard Tom has for Gatsby because of his 'new money' status. Gatsby creates his **image and myth** to be someone worthy of attention and worthy of Daisy's love. This quote suggests irony since, people throughout New York, in all walks of life seem to know who Gatsby is. Although he is well known there is **no historical weight** or family meaning attached to the name Gatsby, he is aware of the fact that no one knows definitively where his money comes from and presents himself in a way to contrast this. Gatsby's efforts are all in an attempt to encourage his wish to be 'old money' since he is aware of the positive connotations attached to this, within his society.



- **“Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder”**
 - Nick shows the **myth of Gatsby** is plausible because of his limitless ability to dream. Whilst Nick has a hard time believing the mostly false story of Gatsby’s life as the son of a wealthy family, he doesn’t challenge Gatsby’s outrageous lies. For Nick, anything is possible when it comes to Gatsby, especially in the large and **liberated** city of New York. Gatsby’s success is only made possible because of America. Nick suggests that being successful without a generational **reputation** is only possible in the United States.

- **“He’s an Oggsford man”**

- The character of Meyer Wolfsheim represents the **criminal** underworld of the 1920s. Wolfsheim is introduced just after Gatsby describes his past life as a **“young rajah”**. The juxtaposition of Gatsby’s elaborate lie and the introduction of Wolfsheim hints that there’s more to Gatsby than what meets the eye. Wolfsheim’s character is based on the real **Arnold Rothstein** - a notorious Jewish gangster who lived in New York and was involved in bootlegging. Fitzgerald’s portrayal of Wolfsheim is heavily **anti-Semitic**. Nick draws attention to his **“tragic”** nose and mocks his speech: **“gonnegtion”** and “Oggsford”. That Wolfsheim mispronounces Oxford and feels the need to explain its significance is indicative of his position, like Gatsby, as an **outsider** to the East Egg, old wealth society. This makes Wolfsheim a **comic** character which is at odds with his ruthless behaviour and character. Wolfsheim has “human molars” cuff buttons. This highlights a **cannibalistic** effect as well as other nasty **anti-semitic** ideas. Even his name, “Wolfsheim” suggests a **primitive** and predatory element to him. This adds to the anti-semitism that is seeped in the portrayal of Wolfsheim.



Meyer Wolfsheim, played by Amitabh Bachchan in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

- **“The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at some time”**
 - Readers finally discover more about why Gatsby has taken such an interest in Jordan and Nick out of all people; they have a **connection** to his former lover Daisy. This **establishes** the relationship between Daisy and Gatsby as they have a past and his love for Daisy was not always unrequited as it first appears. Despite his **accomplishment** in achieving the American Dream wealth-wise, he doesn’t feel accomplished because he has everything except the thing he really wants: Daisy’s love. This quote highlights that Daisy was just like any other American girl - she just wanted to be loved.



- “‘But it wasn’t a **coincidence** at all’ [...] ‘Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay’”
 - Gatsby’s entire life is built around his **obsession** with Daisy. Everything he has built is merely a way to get closer to her. Gatsby is really stuck in the **illusion** he has of the **past** and trying to recreate it. In this way, Gatsby can’t move on with his life because he is adamant to win Daisy back. And yet, Daisy is only a **distant** and **idealised** love that is unreachable.

Analysis - Chapter 5

- When Gatsby gives Nick money for setting up the meeting, he reveals how he has been **corrupted** by his pursuit of the money. He feels that money was crucial to making his love with Daisy a reality. Gatsby sees everything through the **green lens of money**.
- Fitzgerald uses pathetic fallacy to suggest that their **reunion** is tragic. It is “**pouring rain**” and there is a “**damp mist**” that blocks the two lovers, recalling tears. The only other time it rains is on Gatsby’s funeral in chapter nine which highlights the **unreachable** and corrupted American Dream.
- The most symbolic moment of this chapter is when Gatsby accidentally knocks over the “**defunct mantelpiece clock**”. Here, the **obsolete** clock suggests the ship has already sailed for Daisy and Gatsby.
- One can read Daisy’s breakdown in front of the “**beautiful shirts**” in two ways. Perhaps she realizes that Gatsby could have given her the life she chose by marrying Tom or perhaps she realizes that she’s most in love with **money**. Indeed this highlights the ideals of 1920s America where **appearances** were everything. Either way, she misses Gatsby describing his love for her.
- The green light is reduced to little or **no significance** now that Gatsby has Daisy. Gatsby is so caught up in his dream for Daisy that he doesn’t notice that she changed. In fact, once Gatsby has Daisy, he forgets about Nick. This could be read as a **critique** of ‘new money’ values.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- “The **exhilarating ripple** of her voice was a **wild tonic** in the rain.”
 - Throughout the text, Daisy’s voice is an extended metaphor. It is a ‘**wild tonic in the rain**’ or “**full of money**”. Daisy’s voice becomes significant in its **siren-like quality**. It draws Gatsby in from across the bay (perhaps this can be substituted for a sea in the sea-quest allegory). Her voice has life; it is enchanting and **alluring** for Gatsby and anyone else who listens. The sound of her voice is a cure for Gatsby’s longing. She represents the **American Dream** that Gatsby must chase and attain at any cost.
- “His head leaned back so far that it rested against the face of a **defunct mantelpiece clock** [...] Luckily the clock took this moment to **tilt dangerously** at the pressure of his head, whereupon he turned and caught it with **trembling fingers**, and set it back in place”



- In this heart-wrenching moment, time and love are **interconnected**. It is too late for Gatsby, Daisy is even more unreachable now. Perhaps the mantelpiece clock symbolises a **crutch**. The act of leaning against a clock can symbolise that Gatsby is using time as a crutch to support his hopes of winning Daisy after having lost her. Perhaps knocking the clock over highlights that **'time is money'**. Fitzgerald shows throughout the novel that time and money are connected. The fact that the clock is broken may symbolise that "time is up". Nonetheless, this scene demonstrated Gatsby's **determination** to win back Daisy, even when the world is set against him.
- **"He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes."**
 - Gatsby's love for Daisy is pure. He made so much money, just to please her. When he 'revalued everything', the reader sees the lengths to which Gatsby would go, all in the hopes of winning Daisy back. This chapter specifically shows Fitzgerald's use of **eyes and voices** to move feelings. Daisy, whose voice is "was a wild tonic", also had "well-loved eyes". This **romanticised** description of her places her on a pedestal. She is **idealised** and **worshipped** by Gatsby. Perhaps if Wilson views the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg as God, Gatsby could be said to view Daisy as God and heaven combined.
- **"It makes me sad because I've never seen such — such beautiful shirts before."**
 - Daisy's **inherent materialistic nature** is exposed here. She cries over English shirts. The absurdity of this may leave the reader very shocked. But perhaps, the reader shouldn't be shocked. After all, Daisy never understood **sentimentality** in the way Gatsby ever did. She only sees the world through the **green-tinted lens of money**. She chooses Tom over Gatsby because of money. It is her base desire, in the same way, that Gatsby's **base** desire is to win Daisy (perhaps she substituted for the American Dream in his eyes).
- **"There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. [...] No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart."**
 - Nick expresses his doubts over the couple's love and he has every right to. The reader sees Nick's point - Daisy and Gatsby are no longer compatible. She changed too much and Gatsby is still stuck in second gear. Fitzgerald's poetic language, once again, amplifies the gut-wrenching heartbreak of Gatsby and Daisy. The reader knows that they would face a **tragedy**. Daisy "tumbled short of his dreams": this crude and inelegant phrase reduces Daisy's position on her **pedestal**. She could no longer be seen under the **golden spotlight** of Gatsby's dreams. His **"extraordinary gift for hope"** is presented through the "colossal vitality of his illusion". There is a lot at stake for Gatsby - Daisy was his sole dream. And yet, his dreams were "beyond" reality and now his heart will be left empty and "ghostly" as Daisy lets him down.



Analysis - Chapter 6

- Gatsby is a **self-made man** who ends up achieving the American Dream, even if it's a little **corrupted**. He literally created himself, from changing his name to creating his own **myth**. Gatsby was created in the **pursuit of the American Dream**. His story is more common than the rumours allow to suggest - he is the American dreamer. He represents a quintessential member of the **rags-to-riches** class. But at the heart of this quest to success is Daisy. She represents the class and wealth that he aspires to.
- The **conflict** between Gatsby and Tom, new money and old money, continues to build. Here, Gatsby fails to understand the 'old money' manner of insincere politeness; he mistakes it for actual politeness. This shows the difference between the earnest 'new money' and the corrupted 'old money'. Regardless, they both share a shallowness.
- Nick feels sorry for Gatsby and sides with him against Tom. Whilst Tom's hatred for the party is to be expected, the fact that Daisy is not enjoying herself suggests that Gatsby might not so easily be able to **rekindle** their love. There may be too many obstacles. Daisy's presence also exposes Nick's growing comfort around the West Egg hedonistic lifestyle.
- Gatsby believes in the future and the American Dream and believes that money can buy both. Nick comments on Gatsby's "**appalling sentimentality**" because it has made Daisy into a symbol of **perfection**, an idealized vision to which Gatsby has sacrificed his identity. Gatsby is adamant that one can "**repeat the past**" and is desperate to regain what he once lost.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- **"He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about His Father's business, the servant of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty"**
 - Fitzgerald's comparison of Gatsby and **Jesus** showcases Gatsby's inherent **earnest** feelings. His purpose revolves around Daisy in the same way Jesus's mission revolved around saving those around him. Gatsby is the servant of a big, crude and empty **shell** of a life. Perhaps Fitzgerald suggests that Jesus was similar in his purpose. The world is too cruel for those with pure and earnest hearts. It chews you up before proving that evil lives under every rock of this world.
- **"He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you'. After she had obliterated four years"**
 - Gatsby reduces his mission to two simple steps: He impresses Daisy and then she dismisses her married life to go back to Gatsby. Of course, it is not as easy as that. Gatsby is asking for too much: he wants Daisy to go three steps back instead of forwards. The verb "obliterated" is telling and ominous. The **consequences** of leaving Tom would be catastrophic for her.
- **"'You can't repeat the past' [...] 'Why of course you can!'"**
 - This quote can summarise the whole novel. Whilst Gatsby has achieved his American Dream of wealth, he loves a girl he cannot call his own. He yearns for



Daisy and she is **unreachable**, buried in her careless 'old money' life. This also shows the **class divides** of the Roaring Twenties. Indeed, Gatsby knows he cannot really repeat the past but he holds on to the idea with his "extraordinary gift for hope". It is this same hope that gave Gatsby the confidence to be rich and successful. But it is **foolish** to think he can turn back time when Daisy is married with a child. Gatsby's dreams begin to shatter under the **realistic** light of Nick's comments and observations. Gatsby seems to want to "recover something, some idea of himself perhaps" when he talks of the past. Perhaps he wants to **preserve** his lifestyle through Daisy, she would validate and **consummate** his lifestyle and dream.

- **"He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable vision to her perishable breath [...] At his lips' touch she blossomed for him, like a flower and the incarnation was complete"**
 - The poetic imagery here makes Gatsby's love very **romantic** and **tragic**. He is the tragic lover that bears the brunt of the American Dream's **corruption**. The flower simile and metaphor elude to **femininity** and female sexuality. It is a euphemism for their sexual intercourse. She "blossomed for him" and this makes Gatsby feel **"married to her, that was all"**. Gatsby's eagerness to love Daisy places a heavy **expectation** that she meets his "unutterable vision". However, they share an **"uncommunicable forever"**. They are **not meant** for each other.

Analysis - Chapter 7

- This is the **climax** of the novel. After getting Daisy, Gatsby quits the parties. This shows how **turbulent** and ever-changing the 'new money' was.
- When Daisy kisses Gatsby, the readers and Gatsby feel that he's won. But Gatsby is left **shocked** when he sees Daisy's daughter. She **symbolizes** a shared past between Daisy and Tom that Gatsby can't alter.
- Tom senses and discovers Gatsby and his wife's affair. Daisy's **comparison** of Gatsby to a man in an advertisement shows her corruption by the **media** and **consumer culture**. Beneath her skin, she is empty and only cares for the **material**.
- Gatsby and Tom's car swap is important to the plot. Myrtle seeing Tom in Gatsby's car drives her to her death. Even Wilson has his own American Dream of **moving west**. Tom's world seems to fall apart when he realises that Daisy is slipping away from him and into Gatsby's ready hands and Myrtle would move away and out of reach. This pushes Tom over the brink.
- Nick notices the **fundamental similarity** between Tom and Wilson. Both are only separated by money, otherwise, they are pretty much identical in their behaviour and brute force.
- Tom confronts Gatsby which draws attention to their different class. Interestingly, Daisy likes things the way they are and she didn't want any confrontation. In a way, she is similar to Tom: she finds it acceptable to lead a double **betraying** life. She feels no remorse for betraying either Tom or Gatsby.



- Tom's hostility is probably best demonstrated when he taunts Gatsby by calling him "**Mr Nobody from Nowhere**". This is only insulting to Gatsby because he had fought a long battle to prove to everyone he wasn't just some "**nobody**".
- When Gatsby has Daisy confesses that she never loved Tom, for a brief moment it appears as though his sacrifice had been worthwhile. But this soon shatters as does the **myth** and **illusion** of Gatsby. Gatsby sees Daisy's past as just that one month they spent together. He places all his hopes and dreams in recreating that month they spent together five years ago, and in doing so, he forgets to live in the present. Gatsby **corrupted** himself and his dream to win Daisy's heart. Now that corruption scares her away. Tom sends Daisy off with Gatsby as a final insult.
- Nick's wariness about the future and his comment about the car headed toward death foreshadows a death in the novel and the end of the **Roaring Twenties**.
- Wilson tries to make his dream of a new life with Myrtle a **reality**. But almost every character's dreams **die** with Myrtle's death. She proves that the 'no money' could never transcend **societal barriers and boundaries**. The gates of the **status quo** are rigid and fixed in place.
- Daisy is the one behind the wheel, but just as 'old money' hides its corruption behind a **disguise** of good manners, Daisy hides behind Gatsby. Gatsby dedicated his life to winning Daisy's heart. Now he only cares about her and ignores Myrtle's death. Daisy chooses the security of Tom over Gatsby's love, for the second time. And still, Gatsby does not betray their love, even when it's technically **dead**.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- **"As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth"**
 - Here, Daisy is surprisingly **active** in her display of love towards Gatsby. For the first time, Gatsby is not the one who continually courts her. She does not fear her husband walking back into the room. She turns into Tom in her **easy betrayal** and faithlessness. Her bold displays of affection place Gatsby as the object of her love and this makes it seem like he's one. However, this all comes shattering down when she chooses Tom over Gatsby. Gatsby is only ever a **sideshow** for Daisy and she leads him on to then abandon him.
- **"You resemble the advertisement of the man"**
 - This paints Daisy as inherently **materialistic**. All she cares about is the material world. Perhaps too, she views love as a material object. One can give a **Marxist** reading of the novel which highlights the class divide between Daisy and Gatsby. He is the object of her **consumption** and her **fleeting lust**. This also shows the rise of the **media and consumer culture** which only feeds the **Capitalist** factory of society. Perhaps we are Gatsbys. Just like advertisements, Gatsby sells himself through his **myth**. He fails to dispel the rumours surrounding his identity. The readers could relate to this with the rise of **social media** and the inherent vanity of all humans. This brings to mind the story of the greek **Narcissus** who fell in love with his own appearance. The **motif** of advertisements creeps up again when George tells Michaelis that he confronted Myrtle about sinning in front of the eyes of



God (T. J. Eckleburg). The **eyes of T. J. Eckleburg** are synonymous with God and the effects of consumer culture are highlighted.

- **“Oh, you want too much!” [...] ‘I did love him once - but I loved you too’”**
 - Daisy breaks Gatsby’s heart. She places Gatsby as **secondary** and this shatters Gatsby as he always put Daisy at the forefront of his hopes and dreams. Daisy views her love for both Gatsby and Tom as **equal**. She cannot choose between the two loves, but she can choose Tom’s money over Gatsby’s earnestness. She doesn’t place Gatsby on the pedestal the way he does for her. This breaks the reader’s heart as well as Gatsby’s. Sadly, Gatsby does not give up on Daisy even after this happens. He continues to be **faithful** to their love even as he shoulders his mattress. Daisy can easily eat cold fried chicken and drink ale; she can easily retreat to her **carelessness**. But Gatsby cannot fathom another love.
- **“They saw her left breast was swinging loose like a flap, and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath”**
 - The description of Myrtle’s death is **sexually charged**. Her “left breast” swings “loose like a flap”. She is stripped from her **dignity** and she is **sexualised** even in death. Here, readers see how she is doubly discriminated against in the novel: both as a woman and as the lower class. Myrtle’s death signifies the death of every other relationship and everyone else’s dreams. Her death means that her marriage fails and her affair is broken. Daisy and Gatsby can’t happen because Tom has no one else and Nick resolves to honestly break things with Jordan. Gatsby’s dream of Daisy is shattered and George’s dream of moving west dies with Myrtle. In essence, her whole life is reduced to the **sexualisation** of her “left breast”. It mirrors the **“fresh, green breast”** of **America** that appealed to the first Dutch settlers.

Analysis - Chapter 8

- This chapter marks that Gatsby’s dream is **dead**. Gatsby’s story explains his actions. He was in love with the **idea** of Daisy: Daisy’s love gave Gatsby an **identity** - a purpose as a young man and made his made-up ‘new money’ identity legitimate. It seems that Gatsby believes he can only preserve that feeling of purpose through Daisy.
- Myrtle’s death destroys Wilson’s dream, leaving him nothing. The Roaring Twenties **conflict** between old and new money has destroyed him: he can’t even distinguish an advertisement from God. Fitzgerald builds tension through incomplete accounts to build up tension and suspense that ends with the crescendo of Gatsby’s death. Gatsby dies shouldering his mattress. This is poignant as it amplifies the image of Gatsby as Jesus. Nick calls him **“a son of God”** in chapter six to highlight Gatsby’s earnest intentions. Gatsby’s death is almost a crucifixion and this further emphasises Gatsby’s innocence and his earnestness.
- The hedonistic **recklessness** of the **Jazz Age** destroys every relationship: Myrtle and Wilson, Myrtle and Tom, Daisy and Gatsby, Jordan and Nick. Only ‘old money’ prevails: Daisy returns to Tom, though she **sacrifices** her real happiness for that.



Key Quotes & Analysis

- “He was **clutching at some last hope** and I couldn’t bear to shake him free”
 - Nick can see that Gatsby is clinging onto every last strand of hope. His “**romantic readiness**” is admirable. Nick tries to ‘save’ Gatsby but cannot. Gatsby is too invested in Daisy and this is perhaps his **fatal flaw**. His tragic death is driven by Daisy. She was the one behind the wheel but she let Gatsby take the blame for it. This, in turn, makes George Wilson kill Gatsby in hopes of avenging his wife. Nick’s attempts are done in vain because Gatsby is blinded by his love for Daisy.
- “He was **liable at the whim of an impersonal government** to be blown anywhere about the world”
 - Gatsby attempts to break class divides through love. But these class divides are the “impersonal government” that blows Gatsby whichever way it pleases. Gatsby surrenders himself to fate with “**romantic readiness**” and “**an extraordinary gift for hope**” but Gatsby never reaps the fruits of this labour. Instead, he is murdered in cold blood by a “**deranged**” George. This highlights the **injustices** of the corrupt American Dream.
- “The **holocaust** was complete”
 - Gatsby’s birth name is James Gatz, a Jewish name. Throughout the novel, there are references to Germany and Gatsby’s supposed connections with Kaiser Wilhelm. He is also friends with the **stereotypically described** Jewish man Meyer Wolfsheim. These connections with **Germany**, especially during the inter-war years make this comment luminous. Perhaps Nick is suggesting that Gatsby could finally rest in peace now that he isn’t **suffering** on Earth. Perhaps Nick draws parallels between the Nazi prosecution and extermination of Jews with the world’s treatment of Gatsby. Nonetheless, this comment is **ambiguous** in its meaning.

Analysis - Chapter 9

- In death, Gatsby is still a **myth**. The abandonment of Gatsby at his funeral reveals the **emptiness** of the age and the American Dream. Wolfsheim and the Buchanans are all corrupt at heart. This brings to mind Nick’s last words to Gatsby where he reminds him that he’s “**worth the whole damn bunch put together**”.
- Gatsby’s ‘new money’ friends are shallow leeches who care only about Gatsby’s money. Wolfsheim exhibits the worst qualities of the ‘new money’ class: he is corrupt, selfish, and callous. Wolfsheim believes that money is **everything**.
- Perhaps the most chilling part of the whole ordeal is that Tom doesn’t even know that Daisy was really driving the car. He is completely blind to the emptiness of his old money circus. He sees himself as a victim for losing Myrtle, his mistress and thus, his **corruption** is complete.
- Nick connects Gatsby’s American Dream of winning Daisy’s love to the American Dream of the first settlers coming to America. Both dreams were noble, and ultimately much more complicated and dangerous than anyone could have predicted. Nick sees Gatsby as



symbolic of everyone in America, each with his or her own great dream. And each dream is an effort to regain a past already lost.

Key Quotes & Analysis

- “They were **careless people**, Tom and Daisy - they smashed up things and creatures and then **retreated back to their money or their vast carelessness**, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let **other people clean up the mess they had made...**”
 - Tom and Daisy are **corrupted** by their money. They have their American Dream, even if it is garnered through **generational wealth**. Daisy abandons Gatsby at his funeral and this shows her great lack of care. If she did think that both her love for Gatsby and Tom were **equal**, she doesn't show it. She continues with her life and this makes her just as corrupt as Tom. She is deeply **selfish** and sees the world through its material value rather than sentimental value. Daisy and Tom rely on “other people” like Nick to clean up their wreckage. Daisy doesn't own up to killing Myrtle and Tom is unaware. It is the crude **wife-kills-mistress trope**. Nonetheless, Nick doesn't tell Tom who really killed Myrtle. Perhaps nothing would change for his **marriage**, but one could wonder whether he would actually care if he knew that his wife killed his mistress.
- “Gatsby believed in the **green light**, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter - tomorrow we will run faster, **stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning ----**”
 - Gatsby's “**romantic readiness**” for the future is admirable. Nick compares Gatsby to the everyman: we all have hopes and dreams but our futures are vastly coloured by our pasts. Just like Gatsby, we also “stretch out our arms farther”. The **uncompleted sentence** could suggest that we would die in our pursuit of this dream, much like Gatsby. Or perhaps it suggests that we do indeed achieve our dreams and heart's desires. Nonetheless, it is vastly **ambiguous**.
- “So we beat on, **boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past**”
 - The plosives in this quote emphasise the drudgery of life and the continued **conflict** between past, present and future. This also recalls the **image of the Dutch sailor-settlers**. Gatsby's struggle with his past is a lesson for everyone but most of all, it is indicative of **American society in the roaring 1920s**.

Key Critics

Critics on the novel

- William Rose Bennet (1925): ‘The **queer charm**, colour, wonder and drama of a young and **reckless** world’
- Edwin Clark (1925): ‘A curious book, a mystical, **glamorous** story of today’.
- Edwin Clark (1925): ‘...Fitzgerald discloses in these people a means of spirit, carelessness and absence of loyalties. He **cannot hate** them, for they are dumb in their **insensate** selfishness...’.



- H. L. Mencken (1925): 'What engrossed Fitzgerald were those who have too much **money** and too much **time** for the spending of it.'
- Jonathan Yardley (2007): 'Fitzgerald gives us a meditation on some of this country's most central ideas... the **quest** for a new life, the **preoccupation** with class, the **hunger** for riches'.
- Harold Bloom (2010): 'So much of the meaning in *Gatsby* comes out of imagery, its texture and the **complexity** of its motives'.
- Joshua Rothman (2013): 'The **flatness** of the characters in *Gatsby* is, I think, part of what makes it so insightful. In *Gatsby*, everyone wants to be **simpler** than they really are.'
- Joshua Rothman (2013): 'Everyone is a **fantasist**, and, therefore, an actor, a "beautiful little fool."'

Critics on Gatsby

- H. L. Mencken (1925): 'Only Gatsby himself **genuinely lives and breathes**. The rest are **mere marionettes**'.
- A. E. Dyson (1925): 'In one sense Gatsby is the **apotheosis** of his rootless society... He really **believes** in himself and his illusions'.
- R. W. Stallman (1955): Gatsby is a 'modern **Icarus**'.
- Marius Bewley (1965): 'Gatsby's guilt was his failure to understand that Daisy was immersed in the **destructive** American world as was Tom'.
- Judith Fetterley (1977): Gatsby's **romanticisation** of Daisy is 'heroic though misguided'.
- Judith Fetterley (1977): 'The story of Gatsby was about the **struggle of power** and the girl was the **prize** - Daisy is **blamed** for everything in the end.
- Thomas Flanagan (2000): 'Gatsby lives in the world of **romantic** energies and colours'
- Thomas Flanagan (2000): 'Gatsby is somewhat **vague**. The reader's eyes can never quite focus upon him, his **outlines are dim**'.
- Jacqueline Lance (2000): '**Becoming Tom** was Gatsby's dream'.
- Jacqueline Lance (2000): 'It is Gatsby's dream of winning Daisy's love and respect that is **corrupted** by his obsession with wealth'.
- Jacqueline Lance (2000): 'Gatsby's status as the **nouveau riche**'
- A License (2008): 'Gatsby is a **martyr** of a **materialistic** society
- Lev Grossman (2010): 'Gatsby lays bare the **empty, tragic heart** of the **self-made man**'.
- Paul Staveley (2014): 'Gatsby, **like America** itself... strives to reach a place he has created in his own mind, an **impossible** perfect'

Critics on Nick

- William Troy (1945): 'Nick Carraway is an admirable character who had grown in **moral perception** by the end of the novel'
- David O'Rourke (1982): 'Nick is considered to be quite **reliable**, basically **honest** and ultimately changed by his contact with Gatsby'.
- Bryant Mangum (1998): 'Nick is the **everyman**: he has enough **objectivity** to comprehend the awful irony that Gatsby's dream has been **futile** from the beginning'.
- Claire Stocks (2007): 'Nick wants to portray Gatsby as **great** and undermines anything that might undermine that **image**'.



- Monty J Heying (2018): 'Nick's **infatuation** [with Gatsby] colours his judgement, making him more vulnerable to the **inherent distortions in the American Dream** that Fitzgerald satirises'.

Critics on Daisy

- Alfred Kazin (1946): Daisy is '**vulgar and inhuman**'.
- Kenneth Eble (1964): 'Daisy moves **away from actuality** into an **idea** existing in Gatsby's mind'.
- Marius Bewley (1965): 'Daisy has **monstrous moral indifference** and **vicious emptiness**'.
- Keath Fraser (1979): 'Daisy is torn between a **desire for personal freedom** and the **need for stability**'.
- Kathleen Parkinson (1987): Daisy exists 'only in the **images men create of her**'.
- Sarah Beede Fryer (1989): Daisy's 'desire for her daughter to be a fool is actually a desire to **shelter her** from experiencing the pain that she herself has experienced'

Critics on Tom

- A.E. Dyson (1925): 'Tom's restlessness is an **arrogant assertiveness** seeking to evade in bluster the deep uneasiness of self-knowledge'
- Christine Ramos (2013): 'By attempting to maintain his way of life, Tom has reduced whole people to **ashes** without any thought of **consequences**'.

Critics on Myrtle

- Kathleen Parkinson (1987): Myrtle expresses an 'urgency of **desire**'
- Kathleen Parkinson (1987): Myrtle is a '**victim** of Tom's aggression'
- Harold Bloom (2010): 'Myrtle's vitality bursts forth in **violence**, destroying the body that stored it'
- Harold Bloom (2010): Myrtle 'embodies the **physical, sexual passion** that Nick appears to evade'

Think also about how readers in **different decades** thought of the text.

- **Early critical reviews:** Many critics thought Fitzgerald was attacking them by exposing them as **hedonistic** and **shallow**. Think about whether this novel is a **realist** text or a **satire**.
- **1940s:** When Fitzgerald died in 1940, his death brought about a **revival** of his texts. Many critics saw the novel as a **self-portrait** of Fitzgerald
- **1950s:** Literary criticism was influenced by '**New Criticism**' which looked at texts closely and largely ignored the **context** that the author wrote in. This was later marked by Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' in 1967. These critics read the novel looking for **symbolism** and **meanings**.
- **1960s:** These critics looked at the ways Fitzgerald represented **ethnic minorities**. They were appalled by the **anti-semitic representations** of the Jewish character Meyer Wolfsheim. Tom's comment about **race**, when he talks of **Goddard's** 'The Rise of the Colored Empires', highlights the **poor** treatment of African Americans. Tom says "it's up to us, who are the **dominant** race, to watch out or these **other races** will have **control** of



things” (chapter one). Interestingly, Fitzgerald ignores any **Native Americans**. He begins the story of America with the first settlers.

- **1970s:** **Feminist** critics looked at the roles of the **women** in the novel. They were appalled by the **male-centred narratives** of American literature. They saw Daisy as the true **victim** of the novel. She is somewhat **blamed** for not being able to choose between Gatsby and Tom; she gets **cheated** on by her husband countless times and her dreams and desires are constantly **ignored** by Nick, Tom and even Gatsby.
- **1980s:** **Marxist** readings of the novel saw the book as a **social commentary**. Some critics thought that everything in the novel, including people, were seen as **objects** and **material**. Think about the **class divide** and **struggle** as well as the **Valley of Ashes**. A Marxist reading of the Valley of Ashes would suggest that the valley represents the **ruin** of **civilisation** and this is emphasised by the advertisement of the doctor. The doctor’s eyes are only present in the Valley of Ashes. This links **consumer culture** with the ruin of civilisation.
- **1990s:** **Postmodernist** critics were interested in the **consumer culture** of the novel. The novel dismantles the notion of **high culture** (the characters don’t go to the opera nor read high brow literature). However, we see the **rise of low culture** (advertisements). Think about the theme of **appearance** and **reality** as they are connected with the **commercial space** that Fitzgerald creates in the novel.
- **21st Century:** The novel still appeals to a contemporary audience. If you can, watch the **2013 Baz Luhrmann** version of *The Great Gatsby*. There is a reason that Luhrmann thought it necessary to create a **remake** of this novel. Luhrmann’s **energetic** and **artistically** captured film captures the **extravagance** that **enchanted** readers across the ages. Its **magical mise-en-scene** and **bright** colours capture Gatsby’s **unreachable** dream. His film’s success shows that Fitzgerald’s novel reveals something about our society today. Perhaps the novel represents our **aspirations**. Perhaps it represents our **desire** to live a **carefree** life. Either way, the novel is still **relevant** today.

Sources

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