

# AQA English Literature A-level

## The Great Gatsby: Character Profiles Tom Buchanan

This work by [PMT Education](https://www.pmt.education) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)



## TOM BUCHANAN - THE ANTAGONIST

### INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Tom, like Daisy, is **born** into money. Individually and as a couple they represent the 'old money' class. He attended Yale University which is where he met Nick. Tom has a history of **infidelity** - he constantly cheats on Daisy, initially with a maid at Santa Barbara Hotel during their trip to the South Seas and during the novel's events, with Myrtle. He is also a bad father, having been absent at Pammy's birth. Tom's character is the **embodiment of masculinity**. He defines himself through his **physical strength**, and prides himself on his **superior position** in society as a wealthy man of old money. He subscribes to **traditional patriarchal gender norms**. This is particularly apparent in his relationship with his wife, Daisy. Though Tom demonstrates a **break from tradition** in his affair with Myrtle, it is less to give her liberty and more to assert his **control** over her as well as over Daisy, who despite her vague knowledge of the affair, does not offer much **resistance**.

Tom is **nostalgic** for his youth in which he was an **accomplished** athlete. He is **underwhelmed** by his role in high society. He is the **embodiment of old money** that maps out clearly its members' life roles and uses marriage as a means to **secure wealth and social standing**. The paramount importance Tom places on **protecting** his **status** is evident after Tom and Daisy both find out that they have **cheated** on each other. Tom asserts that they have loved each other and always will and that **nothing** can change that; nevertheless, despite his assertion, their marriage seems to be a **social contract** rather than a romantic one. Tom's insistence that nothing can change the fact that they have loved each other is reflective of his **stubbornness**, a stubbornness that manifests in various displays of his **mental inflexibility**. Instead of reason he uses **intimidation**, threats and violence to get his message across. Tom is frightened of his **wealth and privilege** being taken from him by the increasingly mobile non-white or working class Americans. He airs multiple **racist comments** and these, together with his **domineering** nature, make him one of the novel's most dislikable characters.

### CONTEXT

#### The Lost Generation:

The term, "The Lost Generation" was coined by Gertrude Stein. It was also used in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* as an epigraph: "You are all a lost generation". Aside from Hemingway, it was used to refer to expat writers in Paris in the 1920s such as Fitzgerald and T.S. Eliot.

This term describes the generation of people who came of age during the First World War who felt **restless** and **disoriented**. After witnessing enormous **death tolls**, many in this generation were **distressed** and sought **comfort** in material wealth. This was often **reckless** and



**purposeless**. Tom and Daisy's life lacks any kind of purpose, as revealed in Nick's sketch of their post-marriage years: "They had spent a year in France, for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there **unrestfully** wherever people played polo and were rich together" His affair with Myrtle, whom he treats coldly, is also evidence of this. Restlessness also **permeates** his gestures; in Chapter 1, we see how his eyes "**flas[h] about restlessly**" and how he "**hover[s] restless**". When Nick meets him in New York at the end of the novel, he notes his "**restless eyes**" (Chapter 9). Restlessness seems to be one of his **defining characteristics**.

His **indifference** and **aimlessness** are characteristic of many others within his generation. This was in **contrast** to his **past**; at the peak of his youth when he was a football star. Thereafter, everything in his life feels like an "**anticlimax**" (Chapter 1). This loss of Tom's **thriving youth** is not unlike the loss of youth of the generation who lived through the war. **Decadence** and a tendency to **idealised the past** were common features of those suffering within this generation, both of which are exhibited by Tom. Though these characteristics are also represented by Gatsby, it is Gatsby's **optimism** and sustained belief in his **dreams** that sets him apart from Tom.

#### Immigration Act of 1924:

The Immigration act of 1924 prevented immigration from Asia. This supplanted previous laws that were similar and was used to "to **preserve** the ideal of U.S. homogeneity". National quotas were established for immigrants from certain countries and funding aided the **deportation** of people who exceeded these quotas. In the context of the post-War recession, **xenophobia** escalated as immigrants could be **blamed** for the worsening unemployment rate. Ultimately, it **isolated** ethnic minorities, made them **targets** of violence and exploitation and compromised ethnic and racial **diversity**. Tom's racist and xenophobic remarks are a representation of the **repercussions** of this law and others that preceded it. His fears reveal his anxiety to preserve the white-dominant **status quo**.

In the first chapter, when Nick meets the Buchanans, Tom's **xenophobic** and **nationaistic** beliefs are introduced. He speaks about 'Goddard's' *The Rise of the Colored Empire* and tells Nick: "If we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly **submerged**" (Chapter 1). These **hyperbolic claims** reveal Tom's **fear of extended rights** given to incoming migrants and non-Whites (Afro-Americans) which may **jeopardise** his **superior** position in society. He enlists '**science**' to back up his white supremacist views, stating: "Well these books are all scientific...This fellow has worked out **the whole thing**. It's up to us who are the **dominant** race to watch out or these other races will have **control of things**" (Chapter 1). He continues making this case by telling Nick of the **superiority** of the Nordic race, though he is **ambiguous** about who this includes. Nick recollects this by saying:

"This idea is that we're Nordics. I am and you are and you are and—" Here, Tom stops before adding Daisy to the list. After an **infinitesimal hesitation** he included Daisy with a slight nod and she **winked** at me again." (Chapter 1).



These claims of Tom's not only reveal his **superiority complex** but also his **lack of intelligence**, which Nick is frank about from the beginning, suggesting earlier in the chapter that he is **“one of those men who reach [...] an acute limited excellence”**. Contemporary readers would have immediately understood this through his misrendering and conflation of the names of two real-life thinkers: Lothrop Stoddard, author of *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920), and the eugenicist Madison Grant, inventor of “Nordic theory” and *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), the latter whom he misnames Goddard. Tom claims that Caucasians have **“produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art and all that”** yet his clear lack of intelligence and articulacy make this episode **ironic**. Tom's stupidity makes him a **comic figure** and this **undermines his beliefs**. Nevertheless, we **cannot assume** that this means Fitzgerald is **free from bias** - later in the novel he reproduces **antisemitic prejudice** through the caricatured character of Wolfsheim.

Tom's hatred of - and fears about - people of colour are **“representative”**, [Sarah Tripp argues](#), **“of a larger cultural fear present in the 1920s”**: the loss, not just of white civilization, but of patriarchal civilization. We can also link his snobbery about Gatsby and the *nouveau riche* to his underlying **fear of loss of class privilege**.

### Automated Telephone Exchanges:

The telephone was an important **symbol** of the 1920s. It saw the beginning of automated telephone exchanges. Instead of contacting an operator who would then connect the call, people could use personalized numbers and contact people **directly**. We first become aware of Tom's affair when he receives a phone call from Myrtle. Jordan tells Nick: **“Why--- Tom's got some woman in New York”** (Chapter 1). By first learning about Tom's **unfaithfulness** through a phone call, the device suggests a **loss of intimacy and desire** with its potential for connection. Improved **communication** is merely an illusion as it allows Tom to plan his affair with Myrtle more effectively while **simultaneously** breaking down communication with Daisy. Note that the use of **“some woman”** points to Myrtle's **low social status** as a **“nobody”** (the same way Tom refers to Gatsby), which alludes to the **bridge** built between the **classes** enabling people like Myrtle to stay **connected** with their upper-class lovers. The telephone represents a **destruction** of social relationships and **trickery**. Moreover, the **depersonalization** of communication introduced by technology also symbolizes the **empty** and **fickle** relationships of the wealthy class; not unlike their **material aspirations**. Though Tom's communication with Myrtle via telephone represents a **bridge** between social classes it is not a solid one; the basis of a phone call is **distance** like the **inevitable schism** between the upper and lower classes.



## KEY CHARACTERISTICS

### Hyper and toxic masculinity:

Tom Buchanan is **arrogant** in every way, and acknowledges his **social superiority** through acting **intellectually superior** than everyone he speaks to. Tom appears to be dictated by his **physical strength**; he has a muscle-bound frame that Nick describes as a “**cruel body**” with “**enormous power**” (Chapter 1). His muscular strength complements his **cruel** and **violent nature**, which comes to the fore in Chapter 2, when he breaks Myrtle’s nose with a “**short deft movement [of] his open hand**”. He progressively becomes more and more **aggressive** and **belligerent** during the course of the novel. He is definitely a man of **action**, instead of an **emotional dreamer** like Gatsby, and this is reflected by his impulsive movements and his “**violent**”, “**impatient**” and “**decisive**” way of speaking (Chapter 1).

Tom’s strength and bulk give him an air of **danger** and **aggression**, as when he hurts Daisy’s finger and she calls him a “**brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen...**” (Chapter 1). The use of “**specimen**” here is interesting - while Daisy jokingly - and perhaps even fondly - chooses the word, it conveys his lack of humanity - his **brute, savage nature** - which further undermines his white supremacist beliefs - it is Tom who appears to be the **primitive savage**. Tom represents the **status quo** and resists the **democratic promises** of the American Dream. When he breaks Myrtle’s nose in Chapter 2, we see his lack of conflict about using his **strength** against the women he is involved with. Even the women who are **peripherally** involved with Tom are injured by their contact with him: the chambermaid from the Santa Barbara Hotel, for example, has her car broken following a car accident with Tom.

Tom is aware that Myrtle will stay with him despite the **domestic violence** - and so will Daisy. Women in the 1920s had limited choice but to stay with someone like Tom who socially and financially is at the top of the **hierarchy**.

““Did you give Nick a little heart-to-heart talk on the veranda?” **demanded** Tom suddenly. “Did I?” She looked at me. “I can’t seem to remember”...“Don’t believe **everything** you hear, Nick,” he advised me.” (Chapter 1)

This quote demonstrates Tom’s need for control: he wants to be in control of their marriage as well as **commit adultery** without any **consequences**. He also wants to **control the narrative**; by advising Nick not to believe what is told, he tries to uphold his **reputation**, maintain himself in a good light and silence his wife. Tom repeatedly reasserts his **dominance** to **mask** the problems of his marriage, and to keep Daisy on a **leash**.

“The fact that he had one [a mistress] was **insisted** upon wherever he was known. His acquaintances **resented** the fact that he turned up in **popular** restaurants with her and, leaving her at a table, **sauntered** about, chatting with whomever he knew.” (Chapter 2)



Tom's **dominance** and **arrogance** extends to the point that he holds no **respect** for his wife, as he **unashamedly** parades his mistress around New York. He wants the **freedom** to keep a mistress openly, **violating** the Wilsons' marriage, but is **offended** when Gatsby does the **same**. This highlights his **hypocrisy**.

### The Social Context: A 'Crisis of Masculinity'

[Sarah Tripp](#) argues that Tom's hypermasculinity is formed in response to a crisis of masculinity between 1890 and 1920. In this period, a **"vigorous and industrial capitalist marketplace"** was forming, making men **"dependents of a larger bureaucratic institution rather than the captains of their own ship"**. This dependency was associated with femininity and therefore with emasculation. In response to this threat to manhood, masculinity had to evolve. It **"came to be defined more and more in opposition to femininity"**, thereby **"divorc[ing] itself from the softer virtues of compassion and emotional sensitivity that were previously a component of the male identity"**. Instead, it became associated exclusively with aggression and physical strength.

*The Great Gatsby* is set in 1922, after this period had ended. Nevertheless, Tom will have been socialised during those years. We can also conjecture that Tom feels threatened in the present by women's increasing legal, sexual and social freedoms (in 1920, [some women](#) were guaranteed the right to vote) as crystallised by the figure of the 'flapper' and his hypermasculinity may be partially a response to this, too.

### Classist:

Tom is perhaps the most **outwardly classist** character in the novel. Tom is part of a traditional upper class who survive on their inherited wealth, enabling them to lead lives of leisure. His **class status** is through his identification with sports like football, polo, and horse racing as well as through his house, a **Georgian Colonial** mansion on East Egg which contains European characteristics such as **"French windows"** (Chapter 1) - a house that highlights both his connection to slavery and his **European lineage**.

Tom's class (as well as his racial) privilege is threatened by the **ideology of the American Dream**, which encouraged Americans of all backgrounds to pursue prosperity and success. This threat, together with a **deep-seated sense of class superiority**, fuels his contemptuous treatment of the *nouveau riche* and the lower classes.

Tom **disparages** Gatsby on the basis of his lower-class roots and 'New Money' tastes: **"An Oxford man! He was incredulous. 'Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit'"** (Chapter 7). He similarly seems concerned about Gatsby's affair with Daisy, primarily on a class basis: **"I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife"** (Chapter 7). Here he references ideas about class equality. Although he dismisses





them (“**You can count me out**”) it is clear that Gatsby’s relationship with Daisy offends his pride; Gatsby is his **social inferior** and therefore should not be able to access his wife. Although he immediately pegs Gatsby for a bootlegger rather than someone who **inherited** his money, Tom still makes a point of doing an investigation to figure out exactly where the money came from, revealing the threat he feels. Tom’s resistance to the idea that “**Mr Nobody from Nowhere**” could be a potential rival reveals the clear **schism** between Old and New Money, which plays a key role in distinguishing between the different characters throughout the novel and their inter-relationships.

Tom does not only demonstrate his classism in relation to Gatsby. He also demonstrates it in New York, when he corrects a puppy seller about a puppy’s gender:

**“Is it a boy or a girl?” she asked delicately. ‘That dog? That dog’s a boy.’ ‘It’s a bitch,’ said Tom decisively. ‘Here’s your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it.’”**

Clearly, Tom finds it impossible to tolerate someone of a lower social standing **challenging** him or offering an opinion in place of his.

Tom’s **class anxieties** are in part **allayed** with his relationship with Myrtle. In Myrtle he finds an opportunity to **assert his dominance**, be that physically or verbally. His financial status further allows him to control her; he chooses her apartment, gives her a stipend, and essentially buys her as she buys her “**bitch**” of a dog.

### **Nostalgic/ Melancholic:**

Tom is established early on as **restless** and **bored**, with the threat of **physical aggression** lurking behind that **restlessness**. With his glory days on the Yale football team well behind him, he seems to constantly be **searching** for - and failing to find - something which represents the **excitement** and **challenge** of a college football game, which puts him in the spotlight. Tom, like Gatsby, is also trying, and failing, to repeat the past.

**“[Tom], among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven—a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anti-climax.”** (Chapter 1)

Here Nick is able to introduce Tom to the reader as a ‘**has-been**’, someone who can never live up to the **glory of his youth**. His life only had a **purpose** when he was **starring** in one of the world’s most famous football teams. In the novel’s present he drifts without a clear sense of direction, and this unites him with the rest of the Lost Generation. Tom is destined to “**drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game**” (Chapter 1). The **unspecific**, even **dismissive** use of the determiner “**some**” to describe his football successes shows how **vague** and **insignificance** it is. Through his introduction to Tom, Nick reveals early on how **unproductive** and **toxic** living in the past can be.



By chasing something **irrecoverable**, like Gatsby running after his five-year-old fling with Daisy, Tom becomes **dissatisfied** with his present. This makes him not only **uncomfortable**, but also **trapped** in this **cycle of obsession** with an old idea of himself, one he cannot move past unless he **lets go** of. Because he achieved his **accomplishments** so early on in his life, the rest of his **anti-climactic** life appears not only **wasteful** but also **depressing**, which perhaps explains his propensity for aggression.

### **Anxious, insecure and victimised:**

“...as we drove away Tom was feeling the **hot whips of panic**. His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago **secure** and **inviolate**, were slipping precipitately from his **control**.”  
(Chapter 7)

This quote reveals Tom's **fears** and **conservatism** as well as his **recklessness**. He is happy to keep a mistress, provided she is from a **lower class** so he can **exploit** her or keep her on a leash. He also **neglects** his wife consistently, yet is surprised she nearly slips out of his control by engaging in an affair with Gatsby. His relationship with Myrtle allows him to **fasten his grip** on society, and maintain the status quo by emasculating George Wilson.

Tom's **xenophobia**, **classism** and **racism** reveal his fear of change, particularly because it would give others the **right** to what he feels is only for people of his particular demographic. Tom's insecurity translates into even more **overt shows of his power—flaunting** his relationship with Myrtle, **revealing** the **social climber** Gatsby as a bootlegger, and **manipulating** George into killing Gatsby.

Tom also has a **victim complex** as a result of his **insecurities**. In Chapter 1, Nick posits that Tom has always sought to **recapture** the thrill of his youth, and his failure to do so **infuses** his life with a sense of **melancholy**. It is perhaps this sense of melancholy that contributes to Tom's evident victim complex. A rich man, Tom has no reason to feel victimised by social change, nor does he have reasonable cause to feel **victimised** when he learns about Daisy's history with Gatsby, since he himself has engaged in a far worse **extramarital** affair. Tom therefore represents the patriarchy's inability to watch women or other marginalised individuals break through the **glass ceiling**, and fight for **equality**.

### **TOM'S AFFAIR WITH MYRTLE**

- George and Myrtle's marriage serves as a **foil** to Tom and Daisy's.
- Tom and Myrtle's affair is a **foil** for Daisy and Gatsby's.

Though the affair is a ticket out of **poverty** for Myrtle, for Tom, Myrtle is a **fun pastime**. They have strong **physical chemistry** but are **disconnected** by their two vastly different social worlds. In Chapter 2, Nick tags along with Tom as he meets Myrtle. This is after she is mentioned by Jordan in Chapter 1. On the way to Tom's New York apartment, Myrtle spots a





dog. She remarks: **"I want to get one for the apartment. They're nice to have—a dog"** (Chapter 2). Tom agrees to buy her the dog. While she sees it as a **display of affection**, he indifferently commands: **"Here's your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it"** (Chapter 2). This is not a display of his **generosity** but of his wealth and an **opportunity** to order someone around.

Myrtle tells Nick how she and Tom met. They met on the subway and she was **captivated** by his **physical offering**. She says: **"He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes and I couldn't keep my eyes off him"** (Chapter 2). Her fixation on the way he was dressed is representative of the **continued material value** their affairs holds, particularly because suits and patent leather shows are **indicative** of upper-class **status** in 1920s America. Myrtle goes on: **"When we came into the station he was next to me and his white shirt-front pressed against my arm—and so I told him I'd have to call a policeman, but he knew I lied"** (Chapter 2). Tom's physical forwardness is evident of his **toxic masculinity** and of his **awareness** of his social **superiority**, which allows him to take **advantage** of women. Myrtle in particular is easy prey for Tom. For Myrtle this is a **romantic escape** from her unhappy marriage of 12 years as well as a chance to fulfil her **consumer desires**. For Tom, this is an **assertion** of both his physical and financial **dominance** and a means for him to **sustain his superiority** over someone from an inferior class. Tom's dominance over Myrtle escalates when they have an argument about whether she can say Daisy's name. When she repeats calls, **"Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!"**, Tom breaks her nose with his open hand" (Chapter 2). This scene establishes Tom and Myrtle's relationship as one of **violence** and **control**. Tom's brutality is made very clear and very early on the **stability** of their relationship is thrown into question.

Tom values his control over Myrtle and panics when George finds out of his affair; this diminishes his **control**. As both mistress and wife **slip** out of his fingers, his **emotions** surface. When Myrtle is killed, Tom displays some **emotional attachment** to her. By the end of the novel he tells Nick: **"When I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard I sat down and cried like a baby"** (Chapter 9). However, when he sides with Daisy who was responsible for Myrtle's death, his feelings seem **less genuine**.

The idea that class boundaries are **impermeable** is revealed by this relationship. Myrtle attempts to gain **class mobility** and ends up dead, while Tom's union with Daisy is **renewed**. When Tom he sides with Daisy, he cries over **losing** another **object** of his control and tries to **hold on** to the last person he has **authority** over.

### **TOM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH DAISY [see Character Profile: Daisy Buchanan]**

Tom and Daisy are both physically and emotionally reckless.

They are protected from the consequences of their **physical recklessness** because of their financial and social **status**. Daisy is **absolved** of her **responsibility** for running over Myrtle



with the car and killing her. Tom is able to continue his affair with Myrtle after **violently** breaking her nose, and they both let Gatsby take the **fall** as her lover and killer.

Their **emotional recklessness** is displayed in their **blasé interactions** with each other. It is also evident in their response to each other's affairs. Daisy offers **little resistance** to Tom's first affair as well as the one with Myrtle and chooses to stay with him. Tom is also relatively **unbothered** by Daisy's affair with Gatsby as he is certain Daisy is unable to be with him.

Tom and Daisy's recklessness is secured by their **class superiority** and those who are of a **lower social status** than they are, like Gatsby and George Wilson, feel the trickle of the **consequences** of their bad **behaviour**.

## TOM AND OTHER MALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

### GATSBY

Tom's affair is more recent than Gatsby's. Gatsby and Tom are both holding on to their **pasts**, hoping to **relive** or **preserve** a part of them. This of course **entrap**s them in an **unmoving** and **unproductive cycle**. The fact that Tom **romanticises** about his youth **nostalgically**, whilst Gatsby hopes to **relive** his summer fling with Daisy is evidence that they are part of the 'Lost Generation', who cannot find a clear sense of **direction** and hope for the **future**. Tom is **unfeeling** towards the lower classes and his desire to maintain the **status quo** is what makes him the **antithesis** of Gatsby, the **ambitious vessel** of the American Dream. But however different new and old money is, both like to **flaunt** their **wealth** and make known their **successes** to those around them.

### NICK

Both Nick and Gatsby went to university at Yale together, both being from similar **Old Money** backgrounds. However, Nick does not share the **arrogant attitude** of Tom; he seems to be an altogether **milder** character. Both have the same **disapproving** attitude to Gatsby's **social climbing** yet Nick grows to understand and admire Gatsby and overcomes his prejudice, whilst Tom seeks to **prevent** his rise and meets his **ambition** with "**hard malice**" (Chapter 8). By the end of the novel Nick concludes that he cannot stand Tom and people like him, and proves **critical** not only of the **rash promises** of the American Dream, but also 1920s American society as a whole - one driven by **empty consumerism** and **selfish corruption**. Whilst Nick is **sympathetic** and **approachable**, Tom is **domineering**, **controlling** and **hateful**.

### WILSON

Description-wise, Wilson is the **foil character** to Tom in the novel. They share virtually no similarities, as Tom is a **hulking, strong, rich** man whilst Wilson is **pale-faced, weak** and **anaemic**. Wilson also seems **defeated by life** and resigned to his fate in the limbo-like Valley of



Ashes. The direct **contrast** between the two characters marks a **schism** between the lower **labouring** class and the **elite**. Wilson's lifelong **passivity** ends when he tries to lock up Myrtle - which fails, resulting in her death - and later kills Gatsby. Note that Tom is literally **responsible** for both acts as he conducts an affair with Myrtle, making her commit **adultery**, and convinces George that Gatsby drives the yellow car and is therefore Myrtle's lover and killer. Tom **exploits** both Myrtle and George, and **wrecks** their marriage, only to save his own. One similarity to be drawn between both characters is their use of **domestic violence** when they deem it necessary to keep Myrtle **in check**.

## KEY QUOTES

1	<p>“...sturdy, straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two <b>shining arrogant</b> eyes had established <b>dominance</b> over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning <b>aggressively</b> forward. Not even the <b>effeminate swank</b> of his riding clothes could hide the <b>enormous power of that body</b>—he seemed to <b>fill</b> those glistening boots until he <b>strained</b> the top lacing, and you could see a <b>great pack of muscle</b> shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body <b>capable of enormous leverage</b>—a <b>cruel</b> body.” (Chapter 1)</p> <p>Tom's physical appearance <b>predicts</b> his personality. The fact that even his eyes have established dominance over his face reveals to what degree he is domineering. He <b>emits danger</b> and <b>destruction</b> wherever his <b>cruel</b> presence takes him. His physical <b>dominance</b> rarely <b>falters</b>, except when he feels the “<b>hot whips of panic</b>” in Chapter 7.</p>
7	<p>““Self-control!” repeated Tom <b>incredulously</b>. “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let <b>Mr. Nobody from Nowhere</b> make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out [...] Nowadays people begin by <b>sneering</b> at family life and family <b>institutions</b>, and next they'll throw everything <b>overboard</b> and have <b>intermarriage between black and white</b>.” Flushed with his <b>impassioned gibberish</b>, he saw himself standing <b>alone</b> on the <b>last barrier of civilization</b>.” (Chapter 7)</p>



	<p>Tom displays his true feelings here: he clearly <b>despises</b> the American Dream which promises the “nobodies” of society the ability to climb the <b>social ladder</b> and obtain wealth and social status. This emerging New Money class poses a <b>threat</b> to Tom and his <b>possessions</b>, Daisy being one of them. He sounds like a <b>eugenicist</b> here, promoting <b>white supremacy</b> and raging against <b>inter-racial or inter-class marriage</b>. Tom appears to suggest that interclass and interracial marriage would be <b>poor breeding</b> - an <b>undesirable</b> and <b>dangerous change</b> to society.</p> <p>President Coolidge backed this Old white view, when <b>curbing the influx of immigrants</b> (in the period of anti-Asian immigration and <b>Yellow Peril</b>), that <b>“Americans should be kept American ... biological laws show that Nordics deteriorate when mixed with the other races”</b> - a clear Eugenicist view. This should be contrasted with the concept of <b>Behaviorism</b> - a movement which gained currency around the same time as Eugenics. Behaviorist scientists sought to prove that <b>human behaviour</b> is taught rather than inherited. This of course brought the <b>promise of change and improvement</b>, promising <b>egalitarian</b> opportunities if one worked hard - fitting perfectly with the promises of the American Dream. Here Tom <b>dismisses</b> the American Dream, which promised people like Gatsby the ability to rise above their humble beginnings.</p>
7	<p><b>“And what's more, I love Daisy too. Once in a while I go off on a <b>spree</b> and make a <b>fool</b> of myself, but I always come back, and in my heart I love her all the <b>time...</b>”</b> <b>“Why - There are things between Daisy and me that you'll never <b>know</b>, things that neither of us can ever <b>forget.</b>”</b> (Chapter 7)</p> <p>Tom’s use of the <b>euphemistic</b> word <b>“spree”</b> <b>downplays</b> the <b>damage</b> he causes. He treats everyone around him as <b>collateral damage</b>, particularly if they are from a lower class which he perceives as <b>exploitable</b>. He wrecks homes and marriages and partakes in affairs whenever he wishes, leaving others <b>broken</b> or deflecting blame onto other characters. His actions literally seem to bear no <b>consequences</b> as he comes out of each affair <b>untouched</b>.</p> <p>Tom <b>underreports</b> his actions, as if <b>infidelity</b> is just a <b>casual</b> thing - which points to the <b>immoral</b> nature of the American Twenties which was characterised by such <b>corruption</b>. The fact Daisy is <b>passive</b> in the face of his <b>infidelity</b>, and they remain together after they are both <b>unfaithful</b> shows how they are connected more by the money and status than by the love. The fact that he claims this is love is an attempt to <b>manipulate</b> and <b>control</b> Daisy into</p>



	<p>staying alongside him. Tom uses the present tense “I go off”, which is in line with the fact that at the time of speaking he is still seeing Myrtle and does not <b>regret</b> his actions.</p> <p>There is certainly a <b>sexual double standard</b> here as he expects Daisy to stay continually faithful to him when he is able to go on a “<b>spree</b>” whenever he feels <b>restless</b> and <b>bored</b>. During that time, women (particularly from upper class marriages) were <b>expected</b> to abide by their husbands and remain passive whilst their husbands took on mistresses and enjoyed themselves <b>sexually</b>. The <b>exclusivity</b> of Tom’s social class is indicative of the <b>corruption</b> and <b>immorality</b> of the social context which <b>entitles</b> certain people to <b>bad behaviour</b> and <b>infidelity</b>, but people like Gatsby and Myrtle <b>suffer</b> the consequences of such <b>liberties</b> taken by upper-class characters.</p>
7	<p><b>"You two start on home, Daisy," said Tom. "In Mr. Gatsby's car." She looked at Tom, alarmed now, but he insisted with magnanimous scorn. "Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over."</b> (Chapter 7)</p> <p>This outlines the <b>power dynamic</b> in the novel: Tom knows that Daisy would never actually leave him for someone like Gatsby from a <b>New Money background</b>, as she cares more for her <b>social stability</b> than their <b>romantic connection</b>. Although initially <b>panicked</b> about their affair, Tom comes to realise that no matter what Gatsby <b>promises</b> Daisy it would not be <b>sufficient</b> for her to consider jumping ships. By permitting (or commanding) Daisy to accompany Gatsby home, he demonstrates his nonchalance.</p>
9	<p><b>"What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car"</b> (Chapter 9)</p> <p>Tom here coldly recounts what he said to George about Gatsby's role in Myrtle's death. He is literally the definition of a character with a strong <b>victim complex</b>, based on <b>hypocrisy</b> and the need to maintain the <b>status quo</b>. He argues that Gatsby deserved to be <b>punished</b> for <b>tricking</b> Daisy, when realistically it was snobbery which <b>forced</b> Gatsby to pretend he was from a wealthy old money background so as to be <b>accepted</b> by Daisy. This line also alludes to Daisy, as it appears she did not tell Tom the <b>truth</b> in fear he had <b>feelings</b> for Myrtle, or what is more likely is that they were truly <b>conspiring</b></p>



	<p><b>together</b>” after the accident to <b>frame</b> Gatsby as the murderer. Tom uses this as an excuse for Gatsby’s death as he argues for a <b>dark deceptive</b> Gatsby instead of simply an <b>ambitious dreamer</b> and <b>romantic hero</b>.</p> <p>The irony in Tom’s narration is that it is Tom who has treated Myrtle like the <b>“dog”</b> he allowed her to buy, and while he feigns grief to Nick in Chapter 9 (<b>“When I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard I sat down and <b>cried like a baby</b>”</b>), it is likely that Tom himself would have run over Myrtle <b>“like a dog”</b> without much remorse.</p>
8	<p><b>“‘Jay Gatsby’ had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice”</b> (Chapter 8)</p> <p>The <b>physicality</b> of this <b>simile</b> evokes Tom’s threatening muscular physicality, although it is words that Tom ultimately uses to ‘break’ Gatsby, rather than physical violence. It reveals the psychological devastation Tom unleashes.</p>

