



THE GREAT GATSBY



1. Nick Carraway reveals he is narrating a story of the previous summer. This begins with him arriving in New York. Invited to his cousin Daisy's for dinner, he finds out her husband is having an affair and meets Jordan Baker. Ends with Nick witnessing Gatsby alone on his dock.

2. Nick travels, via the Valley of Ashes, to New York with Tom to attend a party hosted by Myrtle, his mistress, at an apartment he pays for. Tom breaks her nose when she taunts him about Daisy whilst Nick gets very drunk

3. As the summer progresses, Nick eventually gets an invite to one of his mysterious neighbour's parties. Here he meets Gatsby and Jordan. Gatsby speaks with Jordan alone and requests more of Nick's company. The chapter ends with Nick narrating details of his everyday life

4. Gatsby invites Nick to lunch and introduces him to Meyer Wolfsheim. During this time, he learns lots about Gatsby's past, some of it true. Afterwards, he bumps into Jordan who tells him about Gatsby and Daisy's past and asks him to arrange a meeting.

5. Gatsby nervously talks to Nick, offering to pay to sort out the meeting. It rains on the day of the reunion, which is an awkward affair culminating in Gatsby throwing shirts as Daisy cries and them staring at the green light together.

6. Rumours spread about Gatsby, and a reporter turns up at his house. Here, Nick decides to narrate Gatsby's past in Dakota, and how he gained and lost his fortune through meeting Dan Cody. Having not seen either G or D for weeks, Nick bumps into Tom at Gatsby's house. Tom is highly critical of Gatsby. Later, at another one of G's parties Tom reveals to D that G's wealth is made through bootlegging

7. G fires all his staff now the parties have served their purpose. On the Gatsby's hottest day of the year, they all meet for a drink in New York. G can hardly believe that D's daughter is real. Tom's suspicions of an affair are confirmed and a confrontation ensues. G and D drive off together, and on the way home, Nick, Tom and Jordan learn that Myrtle has been stuck and killed. Back at the Buchanan house, Nick sees G in the bushes who tells him D hit Myrtle.

8. Nick meets G at his house, who tells him of his idolization of D. Later, Nick learns from Michaelis, what happened at the garage after the death. Wilson finds Tom who hints that it was Gatsby. Wilson kills Gatsby and himself. Nick rushes back but finds Gatsby dead and then imagines Gatsby's final thoughts

9. Writing two years on, Nick narrates the details of G's funeral. Few came, although G's father did, and he tells Nick of G's boyhood. Nick meets Tom in NY who tells him it was him who told Wilson that it was Gatsby. All westerners, Nick muses that the east might have corrupted him and his friends. Sitting on the beach outside Gatsby's house, he imagines the East before it was settled.

AO1 Key Quotations

"I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (Daisy – Chapter 1)

"I married him because I thought he was a gentleman . . . I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe." (Myrtle - Chapter 2)

"He had one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it...It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself." (Nick – Chapter 3)

"I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited — they went there." (Nick - Chapter 3)

"It takes two to make an accident." (Jordan - Chapter 3)

"So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end." (Nick – Chapter 6)

"So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight." (Nick - Chapter 7)

"So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight." Chapter 7

"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money of their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." (Nick - Chapter 9)

"Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life." (Nick - Chapter 9)

"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" (Nick – Chapter 9)

AO1 Themes

Gatsby shows how **dreams and desire** are always paradoxical; we pine for what we cannot have and if we get what we want, we lose desire itself. **The American dream** is equally debauched in the book; glamour and wealth with excess and pretence all at the same time.

Gatsby explores many of the **myths of America**. The east draws people away from the **western frontier** and corrupts them; **the American Dream** is debauched by excess; America as a place of **creation and exploration** is shown to be false.

In its exploration of **class**, *Gatsby* shows the supercilious and elitist nature of old money America, challenging the country's **meritocratic** ideals. The working poor are exploited to the point of ruination, and those who try enter the elite are judged on their manners and style by a new **aristocracy**.

Gatsby's **gender roles** are rigid. Women are to look pretty, be subservient to men, and to embody masculine desires. Whether Fitzgerald's characterization of Daisy and Jordan is reflective or critical of its time is open to interpretation. Even the men, however, are unfulfilled.

With all aspects of the text open to interpretation, all of its characters putting up facades and most of the narrative filtered through many lenses, *Gatsby* questions our ability to truly **perceive**, and explores the binary between **illusion** and reality.

Gatsby's world is an **amoral** and **secular** one. The only hint towards **religion** is the mock omnipotence of Eckleberg. Does Fitzgerald believe that America has become debased in a more **secular** age, or does the period simply lack a **moral** core?

AO2 Symbols and Motifs

Fitzgerald uses **selective details** to describe his characters, typifying them with one feature, such as Daisy's voice. For Gatsby in particular, this adds to his elusive mystique and comments upon our inability to truly perceive reality.

Colour

Green is clearly associated with Gatsby's dream, but also with the new world, exploration and discovery. **White** is most closely associated with Daisy, could this be ironic?

Yellow is associated with money and death, like the car, Jordan's arms, and .

Blue is closely associated with Gatsby and his parties, perhaps signifying their illusory nature.

Grey is associated with lifelessness and death often in the Valley of Ashes and with Wilson.

Fitzgerald uses **romantic** and **modernist** language at the same time. **Romantic language** shows the beauty in nature, and the transcendental power of human imagination. The **modernist** imagery is closely tied with the technological innovation of the **Jazz age**. Does Fitzgerald debase the romantic ideal via association with the superficiality of the jazz age, or does he show us the beauty in the jazz age itself? In its more modernist moments, the book is a highly experimental text.

Glasses Both T.J Eckleberg and Owl eyes wear glasses. Both seem to have unique powers of perception. Eckleberg oversees the Valley of Ashes and inspires Wilson to murder Gatsby, perhaps representing some kind of omnipotence? Owl Eyes is able to see through Gatsby's facade.

Fitzgerald's structure is a **disrupted chronology** that has many **filters and layers**. Firstly, we have the **unreliable** viewpoint of its **participant narrator** who regularly shows both his inadequacy as an impartial observer. Secondly, many of the vignettes of Gatsby's life are repeated to Nick second hand, most tellingly is Jordan revealing Gatsby and Daisy's past. This shows that there is no 'true' account of the story, and that reality is always **mediated**.

The Valley of Ashes

The Valley of Ashes represents the impact of capitalist excess. Its denizens are dull and lifeless, almost inhuman, and as such, it is closely tied to the idea of class. Initial reviewers, especially **H.L Mencken** were highly critical of the text, seeing it as a reflection of the Jazz Age's superficiality.

Later, it was seen as a visionary critique of the Age's superficial, greedy and consumerist ethic, prescient in light of the 1929

Wall Street Crash.

Gatsby's mansion

Gatsby's mansion and parties represent the excess and glamour of the Jazz age. Yet they are also clearly superficial and pretentious, representing the binary of glamour and repulsion Fitzgerald felt towards the **Jazz Age**.



Myth and Symbol scholars highlighted three common tropes in early American literature: **The machine in the garden, The American Adam, and the Virgin Land**. As a text regularly regarded as one of America's true literary masterpieces, *Gatsby* can be seen to explore and subvert all these tropes.

Geography

East vs West, old money vs new, establishment vs progress. *Gatsby* is a novel about the American frontier. A period of many contradictions, the 1920s, commonly known as **the Jazz Age**, were a period of glamour and affluence for some, and prejudice and disenfranchisement for others. Whilst women got the vote, African Americans were still denied it..

Whilst the middle-class boomed, industrialisation and urbanisation meant the working class were exploited with poor working conditions. Whilst high cultural forms such as Jazz and modernism proliferated, the era witnessed the first mass-media in the form of paperbacks, radio and cinema. Alcohol became illegal, but this simply fuelled mass illegality and made gangsters billionaires. Cars and money liberated many young people, whilst advertising increasingly homogenised them into consumers.

AO3 Context

Fitzgerald was the most famous chronicler of 1920s America, an era that he dubbed "the Jazz Age."

Prohibition, the ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1919), made millionaires out of bootleggers, and an underground culture of revelry sprang up.

Fitzgerald met and fell in love with a wild seventeen-year-old beauty named Zelda Sayre. Zelda finally agreed to marry him, but her overpowering desire for wealth, fun, and leisure led her to delay their wedding until he could prove a success – mirrored in the novel through Daisy

Fitzgerald is reflected in Nick Carraway: a thoughtful young man from Minnesota, educated at an Ivy League school (in Nick's case, Yale), who moves to New York after the war.

Post WW1 – created a lost generation Mass media and advertising changed during this period as consumerism took hold

Conspicuous consumption was seen visibly, especially in housing The Jazz age/Roaring Twenties/Golden Twenties

Analogy	Motif	Postmodern	Satire	Paradox
Metaphor	Personification	Tragedy	Symbol	nouveau riche
Parody	Allusion	Neologism	Bildungsroman	
Allegory	Metanarrative	Flashback	Oppression and rebellion	