NOVEL STUDY GUIDE

The Great Gatsby

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON

A Study Guide to
The Great Gatsby
F. Scott Fitzgerald

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Introduction

Holt, Rinehart and Winston's *Elements of the Novel* Study Guides are designed to accompany the ***Elements of Literature*** Pupil's and Teacher's Editions, offering both you and your students a rich fund of information for understanding, interpreting, and appreciating a variety of novels commonly taught in seventh through twelfth-grade classrooms but not included in the ***Elements of Literature*** anthologies. Each *Elements of the Novel* Study Guide is designed to be a valuable tool for both teachers and students. Teachers, whether they are intimately familiar with the novel being covered or have never before taught—perhaps even never before read—the novel, will find that the Study Guide is an informative, time-saving resource. Students will find that the material contained in each Study Guide greatly enriches their experience of the novel by providing the same interesting, high-quality background information and questioning strategies that they have come to expect from their ***Elements of Literature*** Pupil's Edition. The Study Guide aids students' literal comprehension of their reading, deepens their interpretations of the author's meaning, increases their recognition of and facility with literary elements, stimulates their creative response to literature, and exercises their critical thinking and writing abilities.

Each *Elements of the Novel* Study Guide is designed to provide maximum versatility and flexibility to allow you to teach the novel in the way that seems best for your students and most comfortable for you. Most sections of the Study Guide are blackline masters designed to be duplicated and passed out to your students, either as the entire class reads a novel together or as individual students or small groups study a particular novel on their own. Though suggestions and teaching guidance are offered, in the end it is you, the teacher, who must decide which materials in the Study Guide to share with students, in what manner, and in what order, according to the needs and preference of the particular class. The materials in the Study Guide are not intended to lead to one prescribed interpretation of the novel, but to act as a catalyst for discussions, analyses, interpretations, conclusions, and further research.

Following is a description of the eleven major sections in the Study Guide, with suggested uses for and approaches to each.

Focusing on Background Because an essential part of fully appreciating any novel in a critical sense is a knowledge of relevant background information, this section supplies important information about the author's life and work, the critical response to the novel, and other facts that may be brought to bear on an interpretation and appreciation of the novel: its historical context, the author's philosophical orientation, the particular genre to which the novel belongs, and so on. All or any part of this material may be duplicated and handed out to students or provided by you via lectures and discussions. Some subsections in *Focusing on Background* may be particularly helpful to students before they begin to read the novel; other subsections, such as those dealing with the critical response to the novel or the author's philosophy, may be more profitably shared with the students after an initial reading of the novel has been completed.

Elements of the Novel In order to provide a focused, unified, and purposeful approach to each novel, the Study Guide presents an overview of the salient literary elements of the novel being studied. The material in this section will be valuable to you as a quick introduction to and understanding of the elements at work in the novel. Some of the material in this section may be useful for students to know before they read the novel, but you must decide which information to share and which to withhold. Study Guides containing a list of the major characters in the novel with a brief description of each could be helpful to students as they read; on the other hand, information about such elements as theme, foreshadowing, and irony, if presented too early, may deny students their own valid personal responses to their reading and rob them of any original interpretations, analyses, and conclusions about the work. It is a decided danger that, if students are told beforehand what a work is "about," what it "means," they will mindlessly accept these conclusions rather than exercise their critical thinking abilities to arrive at their own analyses and interpretations.

It is a good idea to review with your students the definitions of the salient literary elements in the novel they are about to study. For a quick review of literary elements, refer students to the *Handbook of Literary Terms* in the back of the ***Elements of Literature*** Pupil's Edition.

Teaching the Novel This section provides suggestions that will help you to effectively teach the novel. It offers pragmatic advice about how long the novel might take to teach, how to introduce the novel, how to pace the assignments, and how best to use the material presented in the Study Guide. Also included in this section are ideas for motivating and aiding student reading, suggestions for using journals or Reading Logs, examples of discussion questions that might serve as good prereading strategies, and approaches for helping students to deal with particular difficulties the novel may present.

Vocabulary from the Novel This valuable feature is intended to be shared directly with students to aid them in their reading of the novel. Words in the novel that students are likely to be unfamiliar with are listed by chapter (or chapter grouping) in their order of appearance in the novel. Words are defined according to the context in which they are used in the novel. Two types of words appear in the *Vocabulary from the Novel* section: general vocabulary words with utilitarian value (i.e., words that should be a part of the students' working or recognition vocabularies) and specialized vocabulary words (idioms, foreign words and phrases, archaic or obsolete words, geographical terms, allusions, jargon terms, technical terms, and the like) that are peculiar to that novel and necessary for reading comprehension. General vocabulary words are preceded by an asterisk, alerting students to the fact that they may be held responsible for learning the meanings of these words. Most or all of the asterisked

words will appear in the *Testing on the Novel* section of the Study Guide, in the Developing Vocabulary test.

You may wish to duplicate the entire vocabulary list and hand it out to your students prior to their reading of the novel, or give them the vocabulary lists in chapter-by-chapter order. Students' comprehension and retention of the words will increase if you discuss the vocabulary in class. A periodic review of the asterisked words from previous chapters may also be helpful.

Since no such list of vocabulary from a novel can be exhaustive or fulfill every classroom need, students should be urged to keep a school or college dictionary within easy reach as they read the novel, whether at home or in the classroom.

Plot Synopsis and Literary Focus A complete plot synopsis (a summary of the novel's events) with an accompanying Literary Focus (a summary of what is happening on a literary level) is provided for each chapter (or chapter grouping) of the novel. This section, intended for teacher use only, is particularly helpful as a handy reference to the specific chapters in which various pivotal events occur, and as an assurance that the most important events and literary elements in each chapter are being covered. It is particularly time-saving and helpful if you are teaching the novel for the first time or have not read the novel in many years. The *Plot Synopsis and Literary Focus* may also provide you with suggestions for literary interpretation and serve as a source of ideas for focused instruction.

You will probably not wish to duplicate this section for your students because of the possibility that some students would substitute its use for a reading of the novel itself. However, at your discretion, the material may be shared with students for review, reteaching, or enrichment after the novel has been read and fully discussed in class.

Reading Guide Questions This section provides three sets of questions that will aid students in arriving at their own understanding and interpretations of the novel. The first two sets of questions, Identifying Facts and Interpreting Meanings, appear after each chapter (or chapter grouping); the third set, The Novel as a Whole, appears at the very end of the section. Identifying Facts questions test literal understanding of the events in the chapter and serve to demonstrate whether the students read the work and understood its main events. Interpreting Meanings questions address higher-level critical thinking skills, asking students to interpret, make connections and inferences, predict, or draw conclusions about the material they have just read. The Novel as a Whole questions require students to make informed judgments about the novel they have just completed, drawing on the skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The *Reading Guide Questions* are designed for maximum flexibility, and you can use them in several ways. The Identifying Facts and Interpreting Meanings questions accompanying the individual chapters may be duplicated for students prior to their reading of a chapter or section, enabling them to read the material with more focus and with more depth of understanding. Both sets of questions may be used orally for classroom discussion; alternatively, they can be written as homework or in-class assignments. Many Identifying Facts questions can be adapted to a true/false format to serve as quick objective "check tests" or "pop quizzes" that test literal recall of events in the chapter(s) or section the students have read.

The Interpreting Meanings questions lend themselves to being recorded in a journal or Reading Log. Reading Logs—notebooks in which students record their creative, critical, and/or emotional responses to the text as they read—may be used interactively between student and teacher or student and peer (or peer response group), if you desire. Students should be encouraged to respond to at least some of the Interpreting Meanings questions in writing, even if such questions are used primarily as classroom discussion questions.

The Novel as a Whole questions at the end of the Reading Guide Questions section may also be used for class discussion, as in- or out-of-class writing assignments, or as part of an essay test. You may wish to save these broader questions as material for midterm or final exams.

Writing About the Novel This section provides two categories of writing assignments: A Creative Response and A Critical Response. Assignments taken from both categories will enrich and broaden students' interpretations of the novel.

The assignments in A Creative Response ask students to take their understanding of the novel into new territory. For example, students may be asked to alter the ending of the novel or retell an important episode from a different point of view; they may be asked to write a synopsis of an imagined sequel to the novel or cast appropriate contemporary actors in the roles of the novel's main characters. Although imaginative and sometimes fanciful, these assignments enable students to creatively demonstrate a deep understanding of the elements of the novel they have just read.

The assignments in A Critical Response ask students to evaluate and analyze the novel by taking a more critical/analytical route. Students may, for example, be asked to respond to a critic's derogatory comments about the novel, supporting or refuting those comments with specific evidence from the book. They may be asked to compare and contrast two characters in the novel, or to demonstrate how the overall theme of a novel is captured in a recurring symbol.

You may opt to provide students with the entire *Writing About the Novel* list of activities and let them choose one assignment from each category to complete. Alternatively, you may select appropriate activities for individual students, according to their level of mastery. Additional activities may be assigned to students who work quickly, need an extra challenge, or desire extra credit. Some of the assignments in A Critical Response may be used to supplement discussion of the novel as a whole; other assignments may be suitable for a midterm or final exam.

Going Beyond the Novel This section offers research projects and other major assignments that take the student beyond the novel itself. As in the preceding category, *Writing About the Novel*, these assignments fall under two categories: A Creative Response and A Critical Response.

Assignments under A Creative Response might ask students to write about such topics as an imaginary encounter between the protagonist of the novel they have just read and the protagonist from another, related novel, or write a letter of rebuttal to the head of a censorship group that

finds the novel they have just completed to be unsuitable for high-school students. A typical assignment from A Critical Response might ask the students to research the life of the novel's author, find out more about the historical context that informs the novel's themes, or compare and contrast two novels by the same author.

As in the *Writing About the Novel* section, you may elect to have the students choose an assignment from one or both categories, assign an activity for extra credit, or use one or more of the activities as topics for the year's major research project.

Testing on the Novel This section provides you with the following three kinds of tests, reproducible for classroom use:

- Developing Vocabulary—An objective test on the general vocabulary words asterisked in the *Vocabulary from the Novel* section. Occasionally, a Study Guide will contain two or more complete Developing Vocabulary tests.
- Understanding What Happened/Recognizing Elements of the Novel—An objective test based on literal recall of events in the novel and an understanding of the elements of the novel
- Critical Thinking and Writing—Short essay questions covering interpretation, evaluation, and analysis of the novel

A suggested scoring system is provided for each test, and answers are given in the Answer Key in the back of the Study Guide.

Note: Although suggested point values are given for each question in the Critical Thinking and Writing test, some questions may warrant treatment at greater length than can easily be covered in a brief essay. Thus, you may wish to assign only one or two of the questions given, weighting them more heavily than the twenty or twenty-five points that is usual for questions on this test. For example, two questions may be assigned at fifty points each.

Answer Key The Study Guide Answer Key is complete and extensive, providing answers not just to objective questions but also to subjective questions for which there is no one "correct" answer. This section provides answers or suggested responses to all *Reading Guide Questions* (Identifying Facts, Interpreting Meanings, and The Novel as a Whole), *Writing About the Novel* assignments, and *Testing on the Novel*'s Developing Vocabulary, Understanding What Happened/Recognizing Elements of the Novel, and Critical Thinking and Writing tests. Answers to the interpretive questions in these sections will of course vary, but suggestions are included for what the students' responses should include or achieve. Note that answers are usually not provided for *Going Beyond the Novel* creative and critical assignments, as these do not often lend themselves to suggested responses.

For Further Reading This section is included for both teachers and students who wish to extend their reading or research. It lists, where applicable, additional works by the author, works about the author (biographical and autobiographical), critical texts and articles about the author and his or her work, and, occasionally, related works with a similar topic or theme that may be of interest to those who enjoyed the novel.

Approaches to Teaching the Novel

You may choose to approach the teaching of a novel for which an *Elements of the Novel* Study Guide is provided in one of three ways: through in-class individual reading, through an oral-reading in-class group approach, or through the traditional independent reading method detailed in the *Teaching the Novel* section of this Study Guide. The traditional method assumes that students will do a good deal of their reading of the novel outside of class, and that copies of the novel are available for them to take home. However, when there is only one classroom set of a novel available for use by several classes, you may have to stagger class times or employ the individual in-class or oral group method discussed in this section as an alternative teaching approaching.

The suggested teaching times discussed in this section are approximate and will, of course, vary with the size and abilities of a specific class. The suggestions offered are thus only basic guidelines for helping you to determine an appropriate reading schedule and teaching approach for your particular class.

In-Class Reading: The Individual Approach

If there is only one classroom set of a novel and the reading of the novel must take place entirely during class time, with each student reading by him or herself, you should plan for approximately one week (five days) to cover fifty to seventy-five pages of text in class. This estimated time depends upon the book's print size and number of lines per page, the complexity of the novel's content and the author's style, and your students' reading abilities. (A class composed of a majority of reluctant readers will require several additional days.) For example, a typical paperback edition of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* runs approximately 184 pages, with as many as 40 lines per page. Golding's style (sentence structure and vocabulary) is sophisticated; there are subtle shifts in tone and point of view, a good deal of complex imagery that serves a symbolic function and informs the main theme, and many allusions that must be explained to students. These factors combine to require a heightened effort on the reader's part to achieve comprehension. On the other hand, the novel *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, though it contains roughly the same number of pages, does not present the difficulties in reading comprehension that Golding's novel does, and thus will not take students as long to read. Knowles's style is less intellectually demanding than Golding's; his themes and symbolism are more overt and less complicated. The first-person narration of the novel provides a conversational tone that makes the material less intimidating and easier for students to identify with. The style and content both promote rapid reading and easier comprehension. Thus, whereas the first three chapters of *Lord of the Flies* could easily take in-class readers five class sessions to complete, the first *five* chapters of a novel such as *A Separate Peace* could be covered in the same length of time. At this approximate rate, then, an in-class individual reading of *Lord of the Flies* could take up to twenty class sessions; *A Separate Peace*, no more than fifteen or sixteen.

In-Class Reading: The Group Approach

Assuming your class's ability to work productively in small groups, you may decide to divide a class into groups of five or six students to read a novel orally, taking turns so that each member of the group gets a chance to read aloud. While this approach does create a certain noise level and takes longer (approximately five to seven days longer than the individual in-class reading approach), there are multiple benefits that you may wish to consider. Reluctant readers are less hesitant to read aloud in small groups, and students are not inclined to be unkindly critical of each other in such a setting. Indeed, the better readers often quietly help and encourage the reluctant readers, and students often turn out to be fine tutors to other students. In addition, this approach gives students much-needed practice in oral reading and teaches them valuable skills for cooperating with others to complete a given task. When students are given a daily schedule to follow, and when the success of a group is incumbent upon the contributions of all its members, students are more productive and more conscious of time factors—much more so than when they are simply told, "Read this novel by the end of next week." Daydreaming and passivity are discouraged, since students must be "on task" for the oral reading. And since all the group's members are responsible for the group's grade, there is more incentive for individual input and cooperation. Another benefit of the group approach is that it provides students with a support group that allows them to share and clarify their ideas about the responses to their reading.

The group approach also has benefits for you, the teacher, with regard to the volume of paperwork involved in teaching a novel in depth. Since the *Reading Guide Questions* in this Study Guide are answered by the group as a whole rather than written out by individual students, you will find a significant reduction in the volume of papers that you have to deal with—yet students still enjoy the benefit of exercising their critical thinking skills. Additionally, you need only make one set of photocopies of *Reading Guide Questions* per group as opposed to one per individual.

The following basic guidelines will help you to successfully implement the in-class group approach.

- You should deliberately form groups based on a good match of better readers with more reluctant ones. Students should remain in the same groups throughout the reading of the novel.

- Students should be provided with a reading schedule that tells them exactly how much material they are responsible for covering and by what date. Before

they actually begin reading the novel, you should give them copies of any *Focusing on Background, Elements of the Novel,* and *Vocabulary from the Novel* material deemed necessary for an understanding of the novel they are about to read, as well as refer them to the *Handbook of Literary Terms* in their ***Elements of Literature*** Pupil's Edition for a review of important literary elements.

- Each student should be assigned a numbered copy of the novel and provided with a numbered set of *Reading Guide Questions* as well. Students should use the same assigned materials each day and return them at the end of each class period. There should be approximately ten extra sets of these questions and ten extra copies of the novel for students who miss class to check out on an overnight basis. Students who miss class should work on their own until they are back "on track" again, according to the reading schedule.

- Unless you have scheduled a quiz at the beginning of a class period, students should obtain their materials and immediately form their assigned groups upon entering the classroom. (**Note:** Chapter or section quizzes are not provided in the Study Guide; however, you can easily construct quizzes by adapting the *Reading Guide Questions*' Identifying Facts questions into an objective "check tests" format. You may dictate quizzes orally, limiting them to five true/false questions per chapter or chapter grouping. The answers should be checked immediately afterward by having students exchange papers.)

- The *Reading Guide Questions* should be answered in writing, and students should use complete sentences. A different member of the group should act as recorder of responses for each chapter or chapter grouping. The group should review their answers and make any necessary changes/revisions before the responses are submitted to you for evaluation. There should be a labeled folder for each group; group members should place the *Reading Guide Question* responses—whether they are in-progress or completed—in their assigned folder at the end of each class period. At times, it may be appropriate for students to answer the Interpreting Meanings questions in a journal or Reading Log as homework assignments.

- Groups that are able to move at a faster pace than the schedule calls for should be allowed to do so. You may determine what reward these groups receive—perhaps in-class time for leisure reading.

- After groups have completed their reading of the novel, they should discuss the questions under The Novel as a Whole. It may be interesting to see what insights the various groups have come up with by having the class as a whole discuss their responses to these questions.

Following is a model Reading Schedule of the type you may wish to create and provide for students involved in an in-class reading group. This model is based on a novel of medium length—the twelve-chapter-long *Lord of the Flies*—and may be adapted to novels of varying lengths.

Day 1: Read orally the *Reading Guide Questions* (hereinafter labeled *RGQ*) for Chapter One. Begin the oral reading of Chapter One.
Day 2: Complete the reading of Chapter One. Begin answering the *RGQ* for Chapter One.
Day 3: Complete the answers to the *RGQ* for Chapter One, review them, make needed changes and corrections, and turn them in.
Day 4: Quiz on Chapter One—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Two. Begin reading Chapter Two.
Day 5: Complete reading of Chapter Two. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 6: Quiz on Chapter Two—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Three. Read Chapter Three. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 7: Quiz on Chapter Three—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Four. Begin reading Chapter Four.
Day 8: Complete reading of Chapter Four. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 9: Quiz on Chapter Four—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Five. Begin reading Chapter Five.
Day 10: Complete reading of Chapter Five. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 11: Quiz on Chapter Five—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Six. Begin reading Chapter Six.
Day 12: Complete reading of Chapter Six. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 13: Quiz on Chapter Six—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Seven. Begin reading Chapter Seven.
Day 14: Complete reading of Chapter Seven. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 15: Quiz on Chapter Seven—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Eight. Begin reading Chapter Eight.
Day 16: Complete reading of Chapter Eight. Begin answering the *RGQ*.
Day 17: Complete answering the *RGQ* for Chapter Eight and turn them in. Quiz on Chapter Eight—optional.
Day 18: Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Nine. Read Chapter Nine.
Day 19: Answer the *RGQ* for Chapter Nine and turn them in.
Day 20: Quiz on Chapter Nine—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Ten. Begin reading Chapter Ten.
Day 21: Complete reading of Chapter Ten. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 22: Quiz on Chapter Ten—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Eleven. Begin reading Chapter Eleven.
Day 23: Complete reading of Chapter Eleven. Answer the *RGQ* and turn them in.
Day 24: Quiz on Chapter Eleven—optional. Read the *RGQ* for Chapter Twelve. Begin reading Chapter Twelve.
Day 25: Complete reading of Chapter Twelve. Begin answering the *RGQ*.
Day 26: Complete answering the *RGQ* for Chapter Twelve and turn them in.
Day 27: Quiz on Chapter Twelve—optional. Begin discussion of The Novel as a Whole questions.

Independent Reading

If each student has a copy of the novel being studied, then outside reading—including the use of the *Reading Guide Questions* and written answers to them—should take at least a week less than the total number of days the Individual In-Class Reading method would require, assuming that about an hour of homework per night is expected.

Since Study Guides are available for several different novels at each grade level, students may be allowed to read an "extra" novel as a completely independent assignment. You may wish to select the novel that is most appropriate to the abilities and interests of the student; this is especially important for reluctant readers, so that they will be assured of success. Both the *Vocabulary from the Novel* and the *Reading Guide Questions* should be given to the student before he or she begins the independent reading. Instead of testing the student, you may wish to have him or her complete one or more of the activities provided in the *Writing About the Novel* or *Going Beyond the Novel* sections of the Study Guide to culminate the student's independent effort.

Focusing on Background

The Life and Work of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940)

Of all the tragic stories told by the chronicler of the Jazz Age, F. Scott Fitzgerald, none is so poignant as his own. A best-selling novelist by the age of twenty-four, and "in love with a whirlwind," as he described his wife, Zelda, Fitzgerald was at the center of the Roaring Twenties. His novel *This Side of Paradise,* as fellow novelist Glenway Wescott wrote, "haunted the decade like a song." Critics praised Scott's books, while newspapers recorded his wild escapades. He was "our darling, our genius, our fool" as one contemporary put it, embodying the values, the way of life, and the aspirations of his generation. The speed of his success was phenomenal. In 1919, his income from writing was $800; by 1920, it was $18,000. The rocket, once launched, rose higher every year, until it seemed that it would rise forever. Yet just twenty years later, Fitzgerald would be dead of a heart attack in Hollywood, a hopeless alcoholic with only seven hundred dollars to his name, and his beautiful whirlwind wife in a mental hospital in North Carolina, too ill to attend the funeral.

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (the author of "The Star Spangled Banner" was a distant ancestor) was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1896. His father, Edward Fitzgerald, was an elegant, well-dressed, and chronically unsuccessful man who drifted from job to job during Scott's youth. They lived for several years in Buffalo, New York, where Scott's father got a job as a salesman for Proctor and Gamble. In 1908, when Scott was twelve, his father lost this job and the family returned to St. Paul. There they lived on the charity of his mother's well-to-do family.

At fifteen, Scott went East to a Catholic prep school in New Jersey. He was an indifferent student, not because he was unintelligent, but because he was interested in so many things. He got poor grades, a school friend explained, because he read too many books. He also spent a good deal of time acting and playing football. Both of these activities brought him opportunities for attention that he eagerly sought.

Throughout his prep school years, Scott was convinced that it was his destiny to go to Princeton. In 1913, after a number of make-up tests to satisfy the entrance requirements, this destiny was fulfilled. Almost from his first day at Princeton, though, Scott sacrificed academic responsibilities to his extracurricular interests, especially writing. He wrote plays, stories, and poems, and told one of his teachers, poet Alfred Noyes, that he didn't know whether he should devote himself to writing work that would last or work that would be greatly popular. This conflict would haunt Fitzgerald for his entire career. Fitzgerald's great love at Princeton was the Triangle Club, a dramatic group that performed original plays and musicals. The lyrics Scott wrote for a number of Triangle's musicals were praised by New York critics.

In 1917, with the European war raging and his academic career at Princeton languishing, Fitzgerald took a commission in the army. Despite his eagerness to join the fighting, he was sent to several postings in the States, and eventually went to Montgomery, Alabama. There, at a country club dance in July of 1918, he met Zelda Sayre, the eighteen-year-old daughter of a local judge. From that moment on, his life was entwined with hers. Zelda was a kindred spirit: lively, intelligent, and ready to do almost anything to bring excitement to a dull evening. Scott courted Zelda during the fall and winter, but in February of 1919 he was demobilized and went to New York to win his fortune. Zelda had refused to marry him, not because she didn't love him, but because she wanted a man who could support her in the lavish style she wished. In New York, Scott worked at an ad agency and revised a novel he had begun at Princeton, hoping to write the golden book that would attract the golden girl.

In the summer of 1919, the Volstead Act prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages was passed. In the autumn of that year, Scott's novel, *This Side of Paradise,* was accepted by Scribners, and Zelda agreed to marry Scott. It could be said that these events inaugurated the Jazz Age. When Scott told his publishers that he didn't think his book would sell more than twenty thousand copies, they laughed—the average sale for a first novel in 1920 was five thousand. The book sold twenty thousand copies in the first week, and suddenly Fitzgerald was a celebrity.

Scott and Zelda quickly became the darlings of "fast" New York society, ready to do almost anything for excitement and attention. Scott stood on his hands one day in the lobby of the elegant Biltmore Hotel because, he explained, he hadn't been in the news that week. He and Zelda rode

to parties on the roofs of taxis, ran through busy traffic holding hands, and drank, as it seemed everyone in the early days of Prohibition was doing, far too much.

In 1920, a collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers*, appeared, followed two years later by *The Beautiful and Damned* and another selection of stories, *Tales of the Jazz Age*. From the beginning of his career, Fitzgerald's stories provided the cash that made the high life and the leisure necessary to write his serious novels possible. When he started writing, he made thirty dollars a story; at the height of his career, *The Saturday Evening Post* was paying $4,000 a story. These stories were generally superficial, popular works written in a matter of days or less, and Scott was ashamed of them, but he continued to turn them out until the end of his career.

In October of 1922, Scott and Zelda moved to Great Neck, Long Island, the West Egg of *The Great Gatsby*. By this time they had a year-old baby daughter, Frances Scott (Scottie), and although they hoped to settle down to quiet life, they quickly found themselves caught up in a riotous social life that seemed to follow them wherever they went. They spent a year in Great Neck, and the parties they attended in that wealthy and stylish suburb provided the models for the parties in *The Great Gatsby*.

Gatsby itself was written in France, during the second of a number of sojourns the Fitzgeralds would make abroad, all in the hopes of finding peace and a stable environment in which Scott could write. *Gatsby* was the first of Fitzgerald's novels which was not autobiographical. "I'm thrown directly on purely creative work," he wrote his editor at Scribner's, Maxwell Perkins, "not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere yet radiant world. . . . This book," he went on, "will be a consciously artistic achievement & must depend on that as the 1st books did not." The novel was written in ten months, and Fitzgerald was intensely concerned during this period to maintain the purity of his artistic vision. *Gatsby* was well received by critics and reviewers, but its sales were disappointing—a total of twenty-two thousand copies that year, less than half the sales of *This Side of Paradise*.

During the next few years, the Fitzgeralds alternated between living in France and the United States. When in France, they lived either on the Riviera or in Paris. On the Riviera, their friends Gerald and Sara Murphy formed the core of a group of expatriate writers, artists, and actors. Fitzgerald's experiences there provided the material for *Tender is the Night*, and Murphy was the model for Dick Diver. In Paris, Fitzgerald met Ernest Hemingway, whose spare stories he greatly admired, and Gertrude Stein, the doyenne of American literary expatriates. After the publication of *Gatsby*, Scott did little work in Europe. His and Zelda's drinking had become so intemperate that even the resolute partygoers of the Riviera found it unattractive.

In the late twenties, it became clear that Zelda was suffering from more than alcoholism. Her attempts to become a ballerina had failed, and Scott was unsupportive of her attempts at writing. Her character began to disintegrate, seemingly as a result of these failures, and she began to act as though she were mad. Her increasingly bizarre behavior finally led Scott to have her examined by a psychiatrist. He sent her to Switzerland, where she was diagnosed as a schizophrenic. Zelda's mental and emotional decline was later transformed into Nicole Diver's decline in *Tender Is The Night*.

In the early thirties, after Zelda had suffered several breakdowns, the Fitzgeralds moved to Baltimore, where they could be near the mental hospital. Scott made several trips to Hollywood, where he wrote for the movies—though not very successfully. The Great Depression that followed the stock market crash of 1929 had little effect on the Fitzgeralds, but Scott continued to spend money faster than he made it, and his debts—mostly to Maxwell Perkins, who advanced him money in order to keep him writing—mounted.

Tender Is the Night, Fitzgerald's last completed work, was published in 1934. This novel, much of it wrung out of Fitzgerald's painful troubles with Zelda, was, like *Gatsby*, a critical success but only a moderately commercial one. *Gatsby* had sold twenty-two thousand copies; *Tender is the Night* sold thirteen thousand. Hemingway, for whom Fitzgerald had the greatest respect, wrote Scott a scathing letter criticizing him for airing his personal difficulties in public. "Forget your personal tragedy," Hemingway wrote. "We are all [cheated] from the start and you especially have to be hurt . . . before you can write seriously. But when you get the . . . hurt use it—don't cheat with it." In 1935, after Fitzgerald published *The Crack Up*, which detailed his own emotional breakdowns, Hemingway attacked him publicly in his story "The Snows of Kilamanjaro." "He thought [the rich] were a special glamorous race and when he found they weren't it wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him." Fitzgerald, already depressed by his problems with Zelda and difficulties he was having writing, was stunned by these attacks from a friend.

Fitzgerald spent the last years of his life, 1937–1940, in Hollywood, writing for film studios. Though just over forty, he looked decades older. The years of drinking and abusing his body had caught up with him. Scott hated writing for the screen, and was greatly upset at seeing his work entirely rewritten—a common practice in screenwriting, but a shock to Fitzgerald, who was used to having his work treated with respect. "You *had* something," he wrote to producer Joseph Manckiewicz after one of his screenplays was redone, "and you have arbitrarily and carelessly torn it to pieces."

In Hollywood, Fitzgerald met Sheila Graham, a newspaper columnist who had originally come from England to be an actress. Zelda was institutionalized in the East, and soon Scott and Sheila began an affair that would last until the end of his life. It was not an easy time for either of them. Scott was in the last phases of alcoholism and, dependent on drugs as well as alcohol, he was frequently uncontrollable and abusive. In 1938, his contract with MGM was not renewed, and his last dependable source of income dried up. He did freelance work and started *The Last Tycoon,* a novel about the movie business based on the life of the producer Irving Thalberg. Unfortunately, he didn't have time to finish it. In December of 1940, sitting in Sheila Graham's living room, Fitzgerald clutched his heart, stood up, grabbed at the mantelpiece, and collapsed, dead of a heart attack. He was buried in Baltimore. Zelda, in an asylum in North Carolina, was too ill to attend the funeral. She lived seven years longer, sometimes at home in Montgomery, sometimes in institutions. It was in one of these, Highland Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, that she died, trapped with six other patients in a fire.

The Critical Response to the Novel

A few reviewers disliked *Gatsby*. H. L. Mencken said it was "no more than a glorified anecdote," and another reviewer called it "a book for the season only." But most critics and writers considered it an important work. "You are creating the contemporary world much as Thackeray did in his *Pendennis* and *Vanity Fair,*" Gertrude Stein wrote to Fitzgerald, adding, "this isn't a bad compliment." T. S. Eliot said that "it has interested and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years." Edith Wharton, for whom Fitzgerald had the greatest respect, wrote to Fitzgerald to say "how much I like Gatsby, or rather His Book, & how great a leap I think you have taken this time—in advance upon your previous work." However, she went on to say that "my present quarrel with you is only this: that to make Gatsby really Great, you ought to have given us his early career (not from the cradle—but from his visit to the yacht, if not before) instead of a short resumé of it. That would have situated him, & made his final tragedy a tragedy instead of a 'fait divers' for the morning papers."

Fitzgerald himself thought there was something missing in *Gatsby*. In a letter to Edmund Wilson, he wrote: "The worst fault in it I think is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feeling about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe. However the lack is so astutely concealed by the retrospect of Gatsby's past and by blankets of excellent prose that no one has noticed it."

Toward the end of his life, Fitzgerald's work was forgotten. In 1939, the Modern Library edition of *Gatsby* was out of print. After his death, though, his reputation began to grow, and critics today consider *The Great Gatsby* one of the most important twentieth-century American novels. A good deal of criticism focuses on the novel's symbolic and thematic elements.

> The cause of [the spiritual horror] is, in *The Great Gatsby,* the terrifying contrast between the Buchanans, Jordan Baker, the obscene barflies who descend in formless swarms on Gatsby's house, all symbolized by the gritty disorganized ash heaps . . . And over it all brood the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg, symbols—of what? Of the eyes of God, as Wilson . . . calls them? As a symbol of Gatsby's dream, which like the eyes is pretty shabby after all . . . Or—and I think this most likely—do not the eyes in spite of everything they survey, perhaps even because of it, serve both as a focus and an undeviating base, a single point of reference in the midst of monstrous disorder?
>
> —from "The Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg: A Re-examination of *The Great Gatsby*"
> Tom Burnam

> *The Great Gatsby* has its interest as a record of contemporary manners, but this might only have served to date it, did not Fitzgerald take the given moment of history as some-

thing more than a mere circumstance, did he not . . . seize the moment as a moral fact. The same boldness of intellectual grasp accounts for the success of the conception of its hero . . . For Gatsby, divided between power and dream, comes inevitably to stand for America itself.

—from "F. Scott Fitzgerald," *The Liberal Imagination*
Lionel Trilling

The Great Gatsby is an exploration of the American dream as it exists in a corrupt period, and it is an attempt to determine that concealed boundary that divides the reality from the illusions. The illusions seem more real than the reality itself. Embodied in the subordinate characters in the novel, they threaten to invade the whole of the picture. On the other hand, the reality is embodied in Gatsby; and as opposed to the hard, tangible illusions, the reality is a thing of the spirit, a promise rather than the possession of a vision, a faith in the half-glimpsed, but hardly understood, possibilities of life.

—from "Fitzgerald and the Collapse of the American Dream"
Marius Bewley

Historical Context of *The Great Gatsby*

Gatsby is very much a novel of the early 1920s. Reading *The Great Gatsby* should give the reader a good feeling for what it was like to live at the beginning of the flapper era. Much of what is described in the novel is based on fact. Gatsby's parties are based on equally lavish parties that the Fitzgeralds attended while they lived in Great Neck in 1922, the year in which the novel takes place. Bootleggers and stock swindlers, like Gatsby, were making millions of dollars, and when they were arrested, their cases got a great deal of publicity. Fitzgerald followed one particular case in 1922 very closely. Edward Fuller, a stockbroker, was charged with selling stocks that didn't exist—a case that he used when he had Gatsby involved in selling counterfeit stocks.

In 1919, a gambler and gangster named Arnold Rothstein fixed the World Series, causing a scandal that rocked America. Rothstein was protected by New York City's corrupt political machine, and he made millions in gambling and bootlegging until his murder in 1928. Meyer Wolfsheim in *Gatsby* is based on Rothstein, and readers at the time would have recognized him immediately.

Two important historical events play an important role in *Gatsby*. The first is World War I, in which Gatsby and Nick both fought. The war, which was protracted and ugly, produced a generation of disillusioned veterans. The second event is of course the Volstead Act of 1919, which ushered in the years of Prohibition. Prohibition, which was one of the most widely ignored laws in United States history, made almost everyone a criminal, at least technically, and contributed to the moral laxity which is evident in *Gatsby*.

Elements of the Novel

The Themes of *The Great Gatsby*

One important theme in *Gatsby* is expressed in words Fitzgerald used at the beginning of "The Rich Boy," a story written at about the same time: "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful . . ." The rich in *The Great Gatsby* are represented by Tom, Daisy, and to some extent Jordan. At several crisis points in the novel, one or all of them retreat into their wealth, which serves as a protective cocoon. The most obvious of these movements is after Myrtle's death. But this pattern actually begins at the beginning of Gatsby's and Daisy's relationship. Daisy is said to have done the same thing after her first night with Gatsby, years before in Louisville: "She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing."

The rich, in Fitzgerald's world, are almost always those who are born rich, not those who make money, even if it is a great deal of money. Gatsby, for all of his wealth, never becomes one of the rich. "The whole idea of Gatsby," Fitzgerald told a friend, "is the unfairness of a poor young man not being able to marry a girl with money. This theme comes up again and again because I lived it."

A related theme is love. Modern love in this novel is a matter of violence and egoism rather than tenderness and affection. Tom causes Daisy untold anguish, and yet she cannot bring herself to leave him. If Tom is emotionally brutal toward Daisy, he is both emotionally and physically brutal toward Myrtle. Myrtle herself treats her husband, George, with great scorn. Nick comes close to loving Jordan, but despite the fact that he says that "dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply," her character flaws utlimately make it impossible for him to love her. The purest love in the novel is Gatsby's love for Daisy, but Daisy, like Jordan, is too flawed for such an emotion.

The thing that makes Gatsby great is his capacity for dreaming. He creates his very identity, his "Platonic conception of himself," out of his dreams. One of the major conflicts in the novel is between Gatsby's dreams and the material world in which they must find their fulfillment. The object of all his dreaming is Daisy: she is the part of the material world that will fulfill his dream. But Daisy is shallow, unfaithful, and selfish—she is not really worthy of his devotion.

The great theme in *Gatsby*, the one which brings together all the others is, in Marius Bewley's words, the "exploration of the American Dream as it exists in a corrupt period." The corruption runs through the behavior of almost all the characters: Meyer Wolfsheim fixes the 1919 World Series, Jordan Baker cheats at golf, and most of the guests at Gatsby's parties serve this corruption either directly (by being criminals) or indirectly (by catering to cheap popular tastes). Daisy, the wealthy golden girl, is a symbol for the American Dream, and in pursing her, Gatsby is pursing that dream. But Daisy is a corrupt symbol since she only stands for money, not for the ideals behind the dream. But a society that produces the valley of the ashes and the corrupt characters mentioned above cannot produce a better goal for Gatsby. The greatness of the Dream is present in the intensity of Gatsby's feelings, but it is also present in Nick's descriptions of his Midwest at the end of the book and in his description of how awe-inspiring America must have been when it was unsettled and unspoiled.

Point of View and Style

The story is told in the first person, from Nick Carraway's point of view. Nick is a reliable narrator and the reader comes to trust him and share his values and attitudes. Nick's admiration for Gatsby, expressed at the very beginning of the book, keeps the reader aware of his good points. No matter how foolish or corrupt he may act later on, we know that at core Gatsby is great. Similarly, Nick's increasingly harsh and objective view of Tom and Daisy prevents the reader from over-romanticizing the lives of the wealthy. In terms of background and values, Nick is in between Gatsby and the Buchanans. Like Gatsby, he is from the Midwest, and he shares with Gatsby that great formative experience of young men of the period, the war. But he is related to Daisy and went to school with Tom, so he is really a part of both worlds.

This dualism extends to Nick's language, which varies from the lyric to the satiric. At its lyric best (as for example at the end of the novel) Nick's language expresses the rich dreamlike quality of American life. In its satiric mode, Nick's language scornfully rejects the corrupt materialism of modern American life. Nick is a master of deadpan humor, and the novel has a myriad of small comic touches (in the parties, in the byplay between Tom and Daisy, in Gatsby's behavior) which should not be overlooked.

The Setting

Gatsby's story could have taken place in no other setting and no other period. The twenties was a time of extravagant behavior, in business and public life and in private life. The automobile, fast and dangerous, and only just becoming available in great numbers, was practically a symbol of the period. Fitzgerald had lived in Great Neck, Long Island, the model for West Egg, and he had attended parties as lavish as any that Gatsby threw.

Physically, the setting helps to emphasize the novel's dualistic thematic elements (rich/poor, dreams/material reality). East Egg and West Egg face each other across the bay, West Egg being a kind of arrivistes' version of East Egg. Gatsby's house faces the Buchanans' across the bay. He is within sight of the realization of his dream, but will get no closer.

Midway between West Egg and New York lies the "valley of ashes," the poor area where Myrtle lives. Fitzgerald's description of this region makes it clear that it is most important to him (see "Symbolism," below).

Satire

The Great Gatsby provides a clearly satiric portrait of life in the twenties. The behavior of the guests (many of whom were not invited) at Gatsby's parties shows them, mostly in a comical way, to be venal, superficial, ego-centered, and dissolute.

The portrait of Meyer Wolfsheim, the gangster who fixed the World Series, wears cufflinks made of human teeth, and offers Nick a "gonnegtion," satirizes the romantic gangster of the twenties, as common a figure of the period as the speakeasy.

Symbolism

The symbolic elements of *Gatsby* help to give a universal resonance to the story. Gatsby is not just a young man from the Midwest who made a lot of money in questionable ways, and West Egg is not just an affluent suburb. Fitzgerald's use of symbolism helps to make this clear. The green light on Daisy's dock that Gatsby stares at longingly from his beach comes to represent the essence of Gatsby's dreams, "the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us."

The center of the setting, the valley of ashes with its ash-gray men and impenetrable dust, is a symbolic representation of the setting as a whole, the wasteland of twentieth-century American life. The "dust that floated in the wake of [Gatsby's] dreams" comes from the valley of ashes. At the center of the valley of ashes is the billboard containing the "eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg." This surreal image is for George Wilson a symbol of the eyes of God, and many critics agree.

Note that symbolism does in its way what the satire does in *its*, that is, presents a portrait of a corrupt twentieth-century America. The disparate elements of the novel work together in support of its principal themes.

Teaching the Novel

Introducing the Novel/Pacing the Assignment

The Great Gatsby is a short novel and can probably be taught over a two or two-and-a-half week schedule. Two days can be devoted to each chapter, and a few days can be spent summing up the novel as a whole. You may wish to begin with a review of the literary terms that will feature most prominently in a study of the novel. (See *Important Elements of This Novel*.) Formal definitions of literary terms can be found in the back of the ***Elements of Literature*** Pupil's Edition, in the section entitled *A Handbook of Literary Terms*. Then you may wish to give the students the necessary background information: a description of Fitzgerald's life and work, a discussion of the critical response to the novel, and a brief overview of the novel's themes. You may choose, on the other hand, to provide much of this information after the students have finished reading the novel, to avoid biasing their response. In this case, they should be given enough historical context to understand the important aspects of the setting. You may wish to review the *Vocabulary from the Novel* list in this study guide either before or just after their reading of each chapter. (Note that general vocabulary words asterisked in the vocabulary list are testable. Other words—specialized vocabulary necessary for an understanding of this particular novel—are not.)

The *Reading Guide Questions* that correspond to each chapter of the novel can be used in either of two ways: They can be read by students before they begin reading a chapter (thus serving as prereading information that will focus students' attention on the most important points in their reading), or they can be used in a more traditional way as a discussion guide after the chapter has been read. If you wish to begin a discussion of each chapter with a quiz to see if students have read and understood the reading, the Identifying Facts questions can be adapted into a quick objective test.

After the students have completed the entire novel, you may wish to fill them in on any background information that was withheld at the beginning. Then the students can begin the questions in the section called The Novel as a Whole. These questions, like the others, can be used either for discussion or as written exercises. You may wish to use some of the more general questions on examinations or as topics for longer papers.

Motivating and Aiding Student Reading

On the surface, *The Great Gatsby* is relatively easy reading and there should be little difficulty in keeping students interested in the story. The difficulties will come in understanding all of the elements of the novel. You may wish to begin by asking students what they expect from a novel called *The Great Gatsby*, and ask them to decide as they read whether Fitzgerald satisfies these expectations or not. Then read the epigraph and ask how that helps to formulate their expectations about what is to come.

You may wish to tell them that this is a book about wealth and the American Dream. Get them to define "the American Dream" and discuss American attitudes toward wealth and poverty.

Since so much of the action of the book takes the form of parties, you might ask students to be prepared to compare and contrast these social events and explain what each reveals about its participants.

You might also ask students to be attentive to several themes as they emerge in the novel, such as love, or Gatsby's dreams and aspirations. Discuss how it feels to dream about something for a long time and how it feels to finally have that dream come true. Is the reality always as good as the dream? How does it feel to no longer have something to dream about?

Vocabulary from the Novel

Words are listed by chapter in their order of appearance. Words preceded by an asterisk (*) are general vocabulary words that may appear in *Testing on the Novel:* Developing Vocabulary.

Chapter One

***banns** — public announcement of intention to marry

***deft** — dexterous; skillful

Dukes of Buccleuch — Scottish nobility descended from Charles I

***extemporizing** — speaking on the spur of the moment without preparation

***fractiousness** — quarrelsomeness

Hotel de Ville — a town house

***hulking** — large and threatening

***incredulously** — with disbelief

***languidly** — slowly and listlessly

Maecenas — a wealthy Roman

Morgan — J. P. Morgan, a wealthy American industrialist

***peremptorily** — in a harshly decisive manner, allowing no response

rotogravure — the picture section of an old newspaper

***supercilious** — haughty; contemptuous

Chapter Two

***contiguous** — adjacent; next to each other

crepe-de-chine — a thin silk material

***ectoplasm** — a ghostly emanation

***hauteur** — haughtiness; arrogance

***incessant** — constant

***pastoral** — relating to an idealized natural setting

***saunter** — to stroll

***strident** — harsh sounding; shrill

Chapter Three

***ascertain** — to find out

***cataracts** — floods of water; waves

***constrained** — compelled

duster — a long coat that protects against dust used by drivers of open cars

***echolalia** — babble; the habit of repeating what other people say

***innuendo** — a derogatory hint or insinuation

***permeate** — to spread through a substance

***staid** — very proper and conservative in behavior

***vacuous** — empty

Chapter Four

***denizen** — inhabitant

***disconcerting** — upsetting; confusing

***fluctuate** — to vary; to change

hydroplane — a type of motorboat

***jauntily** — gaily; stylishly

***olfactory** — referring to the sense of smell

***somnambulatory** — in a sleepwalking manner

Chapter Five

***defunct** — completely broken; dead

***harrowed** — distressed; vexed

***nebulous** — vague

pompadour — a hair style in which the hair is brushed high over the forehead

postern — a private gate

***reproach** — blame

***serfs** — a slave bound to the land and owned by a lord

***vestige** — trace; remnant

Chapter Six

conceits — thoughts; conceptions

***dilatory** — tardy; slowmoving

***laudable** — praiseworthy

Madame de Maintenon — the mistress, and later the wife, of the French King Louis XIV

***proximity** — nearness

***septic**—dirty; infectious

***turgid**—inflated in language; bombastic

Chapter Seven

***caravansary** — a large inn, usually in the Middle East, to accommodate caravans

clog — a kind of dance

***meretricious**—characteristic of a prostitute; cheap and gaudy

***portentous** — ominous

***precipitately** — hastily

***prig** — an overly proper or punctilious person

Trimalchio — a vulgar party-giver in *Satyricon*, a novel written by the Roman Gaius Petronius in the first century A.D.

***truculent**—cruel; savage; destructive

Chapter Eight

***forlorn** — forsaken; pitiable

***fortuitously** — by chance

***garrulous** — talkative

grail — the cup Christ used at the Last Supper, and often sought in Medieval times; hence, the goal of a quest

***indiscernible** — imperceptible

***pervading** — spread throughout

pneumatic — of, related to, or using air

***redolent** — fragrant; imbued with an odor

sharper — a con man

vestibule — the enclosed entrance to a passenger car on a train

Chapter Nine

***adventitious** — accidental

***commensurate** — equal

***complacent** — self-satisfied

***deranged** — driven mad

inessential — having no material existence; unnecessary

James J. Hill — a famous American railway builder

pasquinade — a lampoon posted in a public place

***transitory** — quickly passing, momentary

ulster — a long overcoat

Plot Synopsis and Literary Focus

Chapter One: In the spring of 1922, the narrator of the novel, Nick Carraway, a young man from the Midwest, takes a job in the bond business in New York. He rents a modest house in West Egg, Long Island, next door to the mansion of a man named Gatsby. Across the bay, in the more fashionable East Egg, lives a second cousin of Nick, Daisy Buchanan, with her husband, Tom. Nick had been at Yale with Tom, who comes from an enormously wealthy family. At Yale, Tom had been an extraordinary football player, "a national figure," Nick says. In recent years, he and Daisy have drifted from one exclusive area to the next.

Early in the summer, Nick has dinner with the Buchanans and a friend of theirs, Jordan Baker, a young woman whose "self-sufficiency" attracts him. Tom is aggressive and argumentative—during dinner he harangues Nick over a book he has been reading about the superiority of the white race. When he is called away to the phone, Jordan tells Nick that Tom has a mistress in the city. Later, Daisy and Nick talk by themselves. Daisy tells Nick that she has become cynical, and that she hopes that her daughter, now three, will be "a beautiful little fool," which is "the best thing a girl can be in this world."

When Nick returns home, he sees Gatsby standing in his back yard and looking out across the bay. As Nick watches, Gatsby stretches out his arms toward the water. On the other side of the bay a single green light glows.

Literary Focus: In this chapter and the two following ones, Gatsby is more of a presence than a character. This is appropriate, since Gatsby's mysteriousness is one of his most important attributes. The relationship between Tom and Daisy is clearly established in this chapter. It is important to note that despite their obvious problems, they are unified by wealth and character. After Daisy complains to Nick about her cynicism ("you see, I think everything's terrible now") she looks at Nick "with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom 'belonged.' "

This chapter contains the first mention of Daisy's "thrilling" voice, which is full of "promise" to men and which will fascinate Gatsby. It also provides the first mention of the "single green light" which will become the symbol of all of Gatsby's dreams.

Chapter Two: On the way to New York on the train one Sunday, Nick meets Tom, who takes him to meet his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, wife of the owner of a gas station midway between New York and West Egg. Nick, Tom, and Myrtle travel to the city together, buy a dog on the street, and have a long drunken party at an apartment with Myrtle's sister Catherine and some neighbors, the McKees. At the end of the party, Tom, angered that Myrtle insists on talking about Daisy, breaks Myrtle's nose. At this point a drunken Nick leaves the party and finds his way back to the train station to wait for the four A.M. train.

Literary Focus: Two important aspects of this chapter are "the valley of ashes" and "the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg." The valley of ashes is symbolic of the wasteland that America has become and is clearly related to the "foul dust that floated in the wake of [Gatsby's] dreams." George Wilson will later associate the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg directly with God, and even at this stage they imply a *deus absconditus*, a God who has removed Himself from the landscape.

Myrtle is a low-class woman, vocally unhappy with her marriage and eager to put on airs, and yet she has a kind of primitive vitality that transcends her sordid background. Tom's attack on her is another indication of his cruelty and the violent scorn he and Daisy have for the rest of the world.

Chapter Three: Nick finally meets Gatsby at a party at Gatsby's house. The party is typical of the kind of affairs that Gatsby regularly has. It is large and lavish: caterers set up tents, buffet tables, and bars; a large orchestra provides the music; and the guests, most of them uninvited, behave with drunken abandon. The mysterious Gatsby is a common topic of conversation—one woman thinks that he has killed a man, another is sure that he was a German spy during the war. Nick feels somewhat out of things until he meets Jordan Baker, who invites him to join her group. At one point during the evening, Nick has a brief discussion about the war with a man in his early thirties who turns out to be Gatsby. Gatsby is a man of extraordinary charm, and Nick is very impressed by him. At the end of the party there is a car accident in the driveway, and the drunken drivers and their passengers seem incapable of resolving the confusion.

Later that summer, Nick begins seeing Jordan

more frequently, and he learns two troublesome facts about her—she is a careless driver and she is a fundamentally dishonest person. Neither of these facts bothers him too much, though, and he expects to become more romantically involved with Jordan when he has broken off a relationship with a girl back home.

Literary Focus: Nick has his first face-to-face meeting with Gatsby, which only serves to increase Gatsby's mysterious aura. Personally, he is utterly charming, with "one of those rare smiles . . . that you may come across four or five times in life." At the same time, there is an artificial quality about Gatsby, especially in his elaborately formal speech, that implies a well-prepared persona. And while the guests speculate about his dark and possibly criminal past, Gatsby is interrupted by mysterious phone calls from Chicago (in the twenties, a center of mob activity) and Philadelphia.

Jordan's carelessness, both in her driving and in her sense of honesty, prepares us for the more serious carelessness of Tom and Daisy.

Chapter Four: Nick has lunch with Gatsby in the city. On the drive in, Gatsby tells Nick the story of his life—a story which later turns out to be a mixture of fact and romantic fiction. He comes from a wealthy family in the Midwest, he tells Nick, and attended Oxford University. After his parents' deaths he traveled through Europe "trying to forget something very sad that had happened to [him] long ago." He was a hero in the war, getting medals from all the Allied countries. Nick is skeptical of this romantic background, but Gatsby shows him a picture of himself at Oxford and a medal from Montenegro. Gatsby tells Nick that he wants a favor of him, but refuses to say what the favor will be. Instead, Jordan Baker is going to present the request to Nick that afternoon.

Gatsby and Nick are joined at lunch by Meyer Wolfsheim, a shady Broadway character who is a gambler and, according to Gatsby, the man who fixed the 1919 World Series.

At tea, Jordan Baker tells Nick the story of Gatsby's love for Daisy. He met her in Louisville, when he was in the army and she was a debutante. Daisy's parents prevented her from running away with him when he was sent overseas. While Gatsby was overseas, Daisy married Tom Buchanan. Gatsby bought the house in West Egg because it was across the bay from Daisy's house. The favor he wants of Nick, Jordan says, is for Nick to invite Daisy over for tea one afternoon so that Gatsby can drop by and see her.

Literary Focus: The chapter begins with a list of names of the people who visited Gatsby during the summer. These names serve to create an image of the type of people who participated in the high life of the twenties—people whose wealth came from indeterminate or suspect sources (or, almost as bad, from show business). An indication of Fitzgerald's view of the pointlessness and the underlying violence of such lives is provided by the descriptions of what has happened to some of these people since that summer: Doctor Civet drowned, Ripley Snell went to prison, Earl Muldoon's brother strangled his wife, and so on.

Despite the medal from Montenegro and the photo from Oxford, much of what Gatsby says remains suspect. There is no evidence, for example, that he collected rubies or hunted big game. And when Nick asks him where in the Midwest he grew up, Gatsby replies "San Francisco." His association with Meyer Wolfsheim reinforces the suspicion that Gatsby's fortune has an unsavory background.

Jordan's description of Daisy's relationship with Gatsby emphasizes how desperately she loved him, and clarifies Gatsby's behavior for Nick. "He came alive to me," Nick says, "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor."

Chapter Five: Gatsby finally meets Daisy at Nick's house, and the three of them go next door to Gatsby's mansion after tea. For Gatsby, this is the culmination of a dream; he shows Daisy his house and possessions as if they were trophies won in her honor, as, in a sense, they are. After their tour of the house, Gatsby gets his house guest, Klipspringer, to play the piano, and when Nick leaves, Gatsby and Daisy are sitting in the living room, wrapped up in each other.

Literary Focus: The culmination of Gatsby's dream is also, Nick notes, the beginning of its destruction, for the merely real, even in the person of Daisy, cannot live up to the intensity of Gatsby's capacity for dreaming. Thus, when Gatsby tells Daisy of the green light on her dock, Nick suspects that its significance for Gatsby "had now vanished forever . . . . His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one." The lack of symbols sufficient for an expression of his love is evident in the shower of shirts that he presents as a kind of love offering to Daisy. She is deeply moved, but they are after all only shirts. Nick is aware of both the pathos and the comedy inherent in the situation.

Chapter Six: Nick describes Gatsby's real background. Born James Gatz, the son of "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people," he was raised in North Dakota. He left home at sixteen, bumming around the Midwest in pursuit of a dream image

of himself and the world. At seventeen, he met Dan Cody, a millionaire miner, and he worked for Cody in a number of capacities until Cody's death. Nick tells us this, he says, to explode "those first wild rumors about his antecedents."

Gatsby succeeds in inviting Tom and Daisy to one of his parties. The party is the same as the others, yet Nick feels a harshness and unpleasantness about it that he had not felt before. After the party, Gatsby tells Nick his plan. He will get Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him, and then Daisy and Gatsby will return to Louisville and get married, as they should have five years before.

Literary Focus: The thematic center of this chapter is Gatsby's idealism. The young Gatsby's dreams are "a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing." Gatsby's Platonic conception of himself extends to his relationship with Daisy. He really believes that the past, which is merely real, can be wiped out. "Can't repeat the past?" he says to Nick, "Why of course you can!" But in falling in love with Daisy, he "wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath," and made his dreams subject to the contingencies of reality.

Chapter Seven: After the party that Tom and Daisy attended, Gatsby stops having parties. He fires his servants and hires some friends of Meyer Wolfsheim's to take care of the house. He sees Daisy discreetly in the afternoons. One particularly hot day, Tom, Daisy, Gatsby, Jordan, and Nick go to the city. Gatsby and Daisy take Tom's car, and Tom, Jordan, and Nick go in Gatsby's big car. On the way, they stop at Wilson's garage for gas, and Mrs. Wilson sees Tom and appears to think that Jordan is Tom's wife.

In the city, more out of boredom than anything else, they rent a suite at the Plaza, but this party quickly turns into a confrontation between Tom and Gatsby. Gatsby insists that Daisy doesn't love Tom and never has loved him, but when he tries to get Daisy to say this, she can't; she loves them both, she says. Tom reveals that Gatsby and Wolfsheim have been running a bootlegging operation, and eventually Tom defeats Gatsby. Exposed as a cheap crook, Gatsby can't compete for Daisy's attentions.

Gatsby and Daisy drive back to Long Island in his car. Tom, Jordan, and Nick follow some time later in Tom's car. As they approach Wilson's garage, they see that there has been an accident. Myrtle Wilson has been killed by a hit-and-run driver, and the car, from its description, is obviously Gatsby's. They return to the Buchanans' house. Tom and Jordan go in, but Nick, having had "enough of all of them for one day" waits for a cab outside. While he is waiting, he sees Gatsby, who is keeping a watch over Daisy. Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy was driving, but that he is prepared to take the blame. He is waiting to make sure that Tom won't hurt Daisy. Nick leaves Gatsby to his vigil.

Literary Focus: Gatsby's insistence that Daisy share his version of the events of the last five years allows Tom to win the competition for her. The incompatibility of Gatsby's dream with "perishable" reality, in the person of Daisy, brings about the death of the dream, and all the subsequent deaths follow this one. Nick roots for Gatsby when he demonstrates that in the story about attending Oxford, Gatsby's version and reality are linked. But Gatsby's identity gradually crumbles in the face of Tom's repeated assaults on it. When Tom asserts that Gatsby and Meyer Wolfsheim are in the midst of some big illegal activity, Gatsby breaks, his carefully prepared identity shattered, and finally "only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible."

The strong unity of Tom and Daisy, hinted at in the first chapter, is triumphant here. Despite Tom's philandering and Daisy's sincere love for Gatsby, the two are unified at the end of the chapter. When Nick looks through the pantry window, he sees them sitting together with "an unmistakable air of natural intimacy." Gatsby, as so often before, is alone and watching, but now, instead of watching his dream in the image of the green light, he is "watching over nothing."

Chapter Eight: That night, after Gatsby returns to West Egg, he tells Nick the story of his youth and of his relationship with Daisy. "She was the first 'nice' girl [Gatsby] had ever known," Nick says, and falling in love with her "committed him to the following of a grail." But even then Daisy retreated into her wealth, and unable to wait until Gatsby returned from the war, she married Tom.

After breakfast, Nick leaves to go to work, and Gatsby plans on using his pool for the first time that season while he waits for Daisy to call. In the city, Nick gets a call from Jordan, but he is emotionally incapable of seeing her after the events of the day before, and they hang up on each other.

During the day, Nick later learns, George Wilson, crazed by the death of his wife, somehow learns Gatsby's name and seeks him out. Wilson shoots him in the pool and then shoots himself.

Nick returns to West Egg in mid-afternoon, but by the time he reaches Gatsby's house, Gatsby and Wilson are both dead.

Literary Focus: Gatsby's evaluation of Daisy's relationship with Tom—that if she loved him, "it was just personal"—indicates how powerful his conception is of his own relationship with her. This is a puzzling remark, but Gatsby's meaning is clear: if Daisy loved Tom at all, it was an inconsequential love. Loving her, Gatsby really is "following a grail," but from their first meeting she has been inaccessible. The night after they make love, we are told, Daisy "vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing." This is exactly what she does the night of the accident. At the end of Chapter Seven, Daisy is in her house and Gatsby is outside, "watching over nothing."

When Nick says goodbye to Gatsby, he says "They're a rotten crowd," and adds, "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." Despite the fact that he disapproves of Gatsby's actions, he admires the essence of his quest.

George Wilson associates the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg with the eyes of God. There is a strong implicit contrast between the image of Dr. Eckleburg, the vanished God whose vacant eyes stare out over the wasteland we have made of His creation, and the image at the end of the book: "I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes." The contrast between the sailors' eyes and those of Dr. Eckleburg and between the "fresh, green breast of the new world" and the ashheaps of the valley of ashes describes Fitzgerald's criticism of modern life and contains the seeds of Gatsby's tragedy: a society that produces the valley of ashes also produces Daisy, an unworthy object of the great capacity for dreaming that Gatsby has.

Chapter Nine: Nick feels a responsibility to get some of Gatsby's "friends" to come to the funeral, but the man who was surrounded by hangers-on during his life is alone in death. Daisy and Tom have left, leaving no forwarding address, and although Nick expects to hear from Daisy, he doesn't. Meyer Wolfsheim refuses to come, even after Nick visits him in person to ask him, and Klipspringer, the "boarder," calls, not to say he's coming, but to ask Nick to send him his tennis shoes, left at Gatsby's house. A phone call Nick answers at Gatsby's house indicates that Gatsby was involved in selling stolen bonds (ironically, since Nick sells legitimate bonds). The call clarifies a phone call Gatsby got in Chapter Five, when Nick and Daisy were at his house.

Three days after Gatsby's death, his father, Henry C. Gatz, shows up, having read about the death in the Chicago papers. Gatsby's father is proud of his son's accomplishments and shows Nick a schedule for self-improvement that Gatsby had written on the flyleaf of a book when he was a child.

Nick runs into Tom late in October, and Tom admits to telling George Wilson that Gatsby had killed his wife. Nick, tired of the East, decides to return to the Midwest. He breaks off definitively with Jordan, and on the night before he leaves, goes over to Gatsby's empty house. Someone has scrawled an obscene word on Gatsby's steps, and Nick rubs it out. On the lawn, looking out across the bay, Nick thinks about Gatsby's dream and the dream of the first settlers of the region.

Literary Focus: This chapter makes clear that Gatsby's story is really a story about the subversion of the American Dream. James Gatz's childhood schedule is like the one Ben Franklin followed when he was young, but his ambition and capacity to dream found as a goal only Daisy—rich, narrow, and spoiled. For a self-image James Gatz found only Jay Gatsby, a man who owns beautiful shirts and gives vulgar parties. The famous closing passage describes America at the beginning of its history, when it was still the equal of man's imagination: "for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder," Gatsby saw the American Dream as "the green light, the orgiastic future." But the true Dream, Nick implies, lies in ideals of the past, in the island as it was at the beginning, full of promise.

Reading Guide Questions

Responding to the Novel

Analyzing the Novel

Chapter One

Identifying Facts

1. How does Nick describe himself at the beginning of the book?
2. How does Nick describe Tom Buchanan?
3. Who is Jordan Baker? What does Nick find appealing about her?
4. What is Gatsby doing when Nick first sees him?

Interpreting Meanings

5. Describe the ambiguity in Nick's initial descriptions of Gatsby.
6. How does the **tone** of Nick's description of Tom reveal Nick's feelings about Tom?
7. How would you describe Daisy's state of mind during dinner? What does she say and do that helps reveal her inner conflicts?
8. Nick thinks that, given the state of their marriage, Daisy should leave Tom, but it is clear to him that she has no intention of doing so. What indication is there that Tom and Daisy are closely linked despite their marital difficulties?
9. What indications are there that the green light will have a powerful emotional significance to Gatsby?

Chapter Two

Identifying Facts

1. How does Nick meet Tom's mistress?
2. How does Myrtle react to Tom's arrival?
3. Describe George Wilson. How does he react to Tom's arrival?
4. How does Myrtle behave as the party progresses?

Interpreting Meanings

5. Describe the **setting** of the valley of ashes where George and Myrtle live. What aspects of the setting imply that it is intended to have a **symbolic** meaning as well as a literal one?
6. How does Fitzgerald describe Myrtle Wilson? Does her physical appearance reflect her character in any way?
7. Compare the **setting** of the party in this chapter with the setting of the party in Chapter One.
8. Why does Tom attack Myrtle at the end of the party? How does this exemplify Fitzgerald's description of Tom in Chapter One?

Chapter Three

Identifying Facts

1. Describe the two ways in which Nick differs from the other guests at Gatsby's party.
2. What does Nick think of Gatsby when he first meets him?
3. Describe the events and atmosphere of the party.
4. What does the owl-eyed man in the library find extraordinary about Gatsby's library?
5. What does Nick learn about Jordan Baker after he has spent some time with her?

Interpreting Meanings

6. Why does Fitzgerald describe the party (in the passage beginning "By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived") in the present tense?
7. How does Nick characterize the guests at Gatsby's party? What do his characterizations tell us about how Nick feels about most of these people? What sense of life in the Jazz Age do we get from the description of this party?
8. Describe the ambiguity in Gatsby's character that strikes Nick.
9. Describe two incidents involving automobiles in this chapter. What role do automobiles seem to play in the novel so far?

Chapter Four

Identifying Facts

1. What does Gatsby tell Nick about himself?
2. What accomplishment of Meyer Wolfsheim's

does Gatsby describe to Nick? How does Nick react?

3. According to Jordan, what did Daisy do on her wedding day? Why?
4. Why does Gatsby want to have tea with Daisy in Nick's house? Why doesn't Gatsby ask Nick for this favor himself?
5. What does Tom do when he and Daisy return from their honeymoon?

Interpreting Meanings

6. Aside from the improbability of his story, what other evidence is there that Gatsby is lying when he tells Nick about his background?
7. What does Gatsby's friendship with Meyer Wolfsheim imply about his own background?
8. How does Daisy behave after Gatsby goes overseas? What does her behavior show about her feelings for Gatsby?
9. After Jordan tells Nick the story of Gatsby and Daisy, Nick says that Gatsby "came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless spendor." How does the **metaphor** of birth help explain what Gatsby's behavior had meant to Nick up to then?
10. With Jordan in his arms, Nick thinks of a phrase: "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired." How do you think this phrase reflects on the events of the novel so far? Do you think that Gatsby would agree with the phrase?

Chapter Five

Identifying Facts

1. What does Gatsby offer Nick in return for Nick's cooperation in inviting Daisy to his house?
2. What is the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy like initially?
3. How are Daisy and Gatsby different when Nick returns to the house after a half an hour?
4. What are Gatsby's feelings by the end of the chapter?
5. What does Gatsby reply when Nick asks him how he makes his money? Why does Nick find that significant?

Interpreting Meanings

6. What is Gatsby's dialogue like in this chapter? What does it tell us about Gatsby?
7. Why do you think Daisy sobs when Gatsby shows her his shirts?
8. What is the weather like in this chapter? How does it reflect on the emotional climate of Gatsby and Daisy?
9. In this chapter, Gatsby's dream seems to be fulfilled. What indications are there, though, that reality cannot satisfy his dream?

Chapter Six

Identifying Facts

1. When does James Gatz change his name? Why?
2. What is Daisy's real response to the party, according to Nick?
3. What does Gatsby tell Nick he wants Daisy to do?

Interpreting Meanings

4. Plato held that reality was an imperfect reflection of an ideal, permanent realm. With this in mind, what would you say Nick means when he says that "Jay Gatsby sprang from his Platonic conception of himself?"
5. How is the comparison of Gatsby with Christ ("he was a son of God . . . and he must be about his Father's business") ironic? If the comparison with Christ were to continue through the book, what would happen to Gatsby?
6. Tom, Mr. Sloane, and a young lady visit Gatsby and the lady invites Gatsby to come to dinner with them. What does Gatsby's response tell us about his social sensitivity? What connection, if any, do you think this scene might have with Gatsby's love of Daisy?
7. What is Gatsby's view of the past? When Nick says that Gatsby "wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy," what do you think he means?
8. At the end of the chapter, Nick describes Gatsby kissing Daisy in Louisville five years before. What is Gatsby giving up when he kisses her? Why?

Chapter Seven

Identifying Facts

1. Why does Gatsby stop giving parties?
2. When does Tom first realize that Daisy loves Gatsby?

3. Why is Myrtle Wilson upset when she sees Tom and Jordan?
4. Why does George Wilson lock Myrtle in the bedroom?

Interpreting Meanings

5. How does Gatsby characterize Daisy's voice? What do you think he means by this?
6. Why does Gatsby lose Daisy during the confrontation at the Plaza? Could he have done anything to win her, do you think? If he could have, why doesn't he?
7. Why does Tom insist that Daisy go home with Gatsby? What do you think this tells us about Tom's character and his relationship with Daisy?
8. What indications are there at the end of the chapter that Tom and Daisy are going to stay together despite his philandering and her love for Gatsby?
9. At the end of the chapter, Gatsby is standing alone, looking out at Daisy's house. Where else in the novel does he do this? How is this different?

Chapter Eight

Identifying Facts

1. What does Gatsby tell Nick the night of the accident? Why?
2. Did Gatsby want to go to Oxford?
3. How does George Wilson spend the night after the accident?
4. What evidence had Wilson found that his wife was having an affair?

Interpreting Meanings

5. What would you say is the principal reason for Daisy's appeal to Gatsby?
6. How is Nick's attitude toward Gatsby ambivalent even at the moment when he says goodbye to him?
7. What do the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg **symbolize** to George Wilson? What is significant about this symbol?
8. How do you think Wilson got Gatsby's name? Does any evidence in this chapter point to a particular person?
9. How does Nick characterize Gatsby's state of mind before he is killed?

Chapter Nine

Identifying Facts

1. What is the motive publicly given for Wilson's murder of Gatsby?
2. What does the telephone call from Chicago tell us about Gatsby's business?
3. What does Klipspringer want from Nick? How does Nick react to this?
4. Why is Gatsby's father so proud of him?
5. What does Tom confess to Nick when they meet that fall? Does he regret what he has done?

Interpreting Meanings

6. Nick says that "this has been a story of the West, after all." What do you think he means by that?
7. How does Nick characterize Tom and Daisy at the end of the book? What has each of them "smashed" during the course of the novel?
8. At the end of the book, Nick imagines what the continent must have been like when it was first seen by Dutch sailors. How does this contrast with the environment described in the novel?
9. What does the green light **symbolize** at the end of the novel?

The Novel as a Whole

1. Discuss Nick Carraway's **character.** How reliable is he as a narrator? What aspects of his character make him an effective narrator?
2. Why is **first-person narrative** an effective and appropriate way of telling this story?
3. Discuss the title of the book. In what way is Gatsby "great?"
4. An **epigraph** is a quotation at the beginning of a work that reflects on that work. How does the epigraph to *The Great Gatsby* reflect on Gatsby's story?
5. Discuss the relationship between Tom and Daisy. What do they have in common? Why do they stay together? Does their relationship change at all during the course of the novel?
6. How does Fitzgerald use Gatsby's parties to present a **satirical** portrait of the Roaring Twenties?
7. Compare and contrast the character of Daisy and Myrtle Wilson.
8. Discuss the relationship between Nick and Jordan Baker. How does it reflect, if at all, on the story of Gatsby and Daisy?

9. Discuss Fitzgerald's use of the automobile in this novel. What do you think might have made the automobile an appealing **symbol** to Fitzgerald in the early 1920s?
10. Contrast the setting of the valley of ashes with that of East Egg and West Egg.
11. Describe the gradual revelation of Gatsby's **character.** What do we learn about him and when? Why is this an appropriate way of learning about him?
12. Tom and Daisy, we are told, drifted around before settling in East Egg, and Nick expects them to continue to drift. Other characters in the novel, while not drifters, appear to be rootless. How much does rootlessness have to do with the characters' problems, do you think?
13. How would you describe the **theme** of this novel?
14. Gatsby's tragedy is that he chooses the wrong dream (Daisy). Has he been corrupted by society? Or is his choice an indication that he is part of the corruption?

Writing About The Novel

A Creative Response

1. **Writing an Additional Chapter.** Fitzgerald said that he thought the biggest fault in *Gatsby* was that he didn't provide a picture of Daisy and Gatsby's relationship after they get together at Nick's house and before the blowup at the Plaza. Write a brief chapter that does this. Use Nick's point of view, and assume that either Daisy or Gatsby (or both) told Nick what the relationship was like.
2. **Using Another Point of View.** Write an account of the meeting with Gatsby at Nick's house and the subsequent tour of Gatsby's house from Daisy's point of view. What did it feel like to see Gatsby again after so many years?
3. **Writing a New Ending.** Assume that George Wilson did not kill Gatsby, and describe Gatsby's life after the end of the novel. Keep your characterization consistent with Gatsby's characterization in the novel.

A Critical Response

4. **Discussing a Theme.** Corruption of people and society is one of the themes in *Gatsby*. What characters may be said to be corrupt, and why? How is corruption related to the setting and to other themes, such as Gatsby's dream?
5. **Analyzing a Character.** Why does Tom behave the way he does? Is he all bad, or a mixture of bad and good?
6. **Comparing the Characters.** One critic has compared Nick and Gatsby in the following way: "Nick's mind is conservative and historical, as is his lineage; Gatsby's is radical and apocalytpic—as rootless as his heritage. Nick is too much immersed in time and in reality; Gatsby is hopelessly out of it. Nick is always withdrawing, while Gatsby pursues the green light. Nick can't be hurt, but neither can he be happy. Gatsby can experience ecstasy, but his fate is necessarily tragic." Write a brief essay either in support of or disagreement with this estimation, using details from the novel to back up your points.
7. **Analyzing a Character.** Philosophically, **idealism** places reality not in the material world but in a world of ideas. Discuss Gatsby's idealism, pointing out its origins, its growth, and its end in the novel.

Going Beyond The Novel

A Creative Response

1. **Writing a New Ending.** Assume that Daisy and Tom divorce a year after Gatsby's death. Write a description (using Nick's point of view) of the life of either of them now that they are separated.
2. **Describing a Character.** Assume that you are Gatsby, the year before the novel takes place. Write a letter to your father describing your accomplishments and aspirations.
3. **Extending the Story.** Assume that Nick has become an old man. Write a diary entry in which he describes how knowing Gatsby has changed his life.

A Critical Response

4. **Researching Historical Background.** Research the Volstead Act and write a paper describing the effects of prohibition on American life in the twenties.
5. **Learning More About the Author.** Using several biographical sources, research Fitzgerald's years in Hollywood, and write a paper discussing his reputation at the time, how he lived, and what he wrote.
6. **Reading Other Works by Fitzgerald.** Read the short stories collected in *Babylon Revisited* and compare them to the *The Great Gatsby*. How are they related in subject and theme? How are they different?
7. **Researching Historical Background.** Research the importance of the automobile in the twenties. How many were there, what did they cost, how did people feel about them?
8. **Learning More About the Author.** Read a biography of Fitzgerald and describe his life just before, during, and after the composition of *The Great Gatsby*.
9. **Reading a Biography.** Read a biography of Zelda Fitzgerald and describe her life with Scott.

NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____

Testing on the Novel

Developing Vocabulary

Directions: For each of the items below, circle the letter of the definition that comes closest in meaning to the given vocabulary word. *(4 points each)*

1. languidly
- a. wryly
- b. slowly
- c. quickly
- d. emphatically

2. incessant
- a. constant
- b. vague
- c. intermittent
- d. willful

3. defunct
- a. dead
- b. purified
- c. active
- d. helpless

4. portentous
- a. affected
- b. heavy
- c. ominous
- d. important

5. disconcerting
- a. harmonious
- b. restless
- c. vague
- d. upsetting

6. deft
- a. skillful
- b. angry
- c. clean
- d. eager

7. vacuous
- a. empty
- b. unexpected
- c. pleasant
- d. unhelpful

8. vestige
- a. value
- b. weight
- c. remnant
- d. capacity

9. meretricious
- a. deserving
- b. spiteful
- c. powerless
- d. cheap and gaudy

10. contiguous
- a. adjacent
- b. beneath
- c. constant
- d. expected

11. commensurate
- a. easily measured
- b. equal
- c. part of a group
- d. more important than

12. strident
- a. exact
- b. important
- c. walking quickly
- d. harsh

13. fractiousness
- a. being a part of
- b. quarrelsomeness
- c. expectancy
- d. awareness

14. staid
- a. helpful
- b. studied
- c. unduly frightened
- d. overly proper

15. laudable
- a. funny
- b. easily heard
- c. praiseworthy
- d. wealthy

16. saunter
- a. fall
- b. stroll
- c. speak loudly
- d. trip

17. nebulous
- a. vague
- b. prejudiced
- c. enormous
- d. continuous

18. fortuitously

a. fortunately
b. improperly
c. by chance
d. unmistakably

19. supercilious

a. unnecessary
b. only on the surface
c. haughty
d. enraged

20. redolent

a. unimportant
b. helpful
c. expectant
d. fragrant

21. turgid

a. dark
b. bombastic
c. playful
d. grateful

22. forlorn

a. forsaken
b. knowledgeable
c. unknown
d. unintelligent

23. fluctuate

a. estimate
b. intensify
c. agree
d. vary

24. dilatory

a. expansive
b. talkative
c. slow
d. ready

25. adventitious

a. dangerous
b. worthwhile
c. adventurous
d. accidental

NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____

Testing on the Novel

Understanding What Happened/Recognizing Elements of the Novel

A. *Directions:* In the blank, write **T** if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false. (*4 points each*)

_____ **1.** George Wilson owns a garage.
_____ **2.** Nick was in France during the War.
_____ **3.** Gatsby and Nick go into business together.
_____ **4.** Daisy and Jordan both come from Louisville.
_____ **5.** Meyer Wolfsheim is a dentist.
_____ **6.** Nick meets Tom's mistress at a wedding at the Plaza.
_____ **7.** Tom and Daisy have a ten-year-old daughter.
_____ **8.** Throughout the novel, Gatsby gets mysterious phone calls from cities in the Midwest.
_____ **9.** Tom reads books about the decline of civilization.
_____ **10.** One of Jordan's faults is that she is dishonest.
_____ **11.** George Wilson gets Gatsby's name from Michaelis.
_____ **12.** With the exception of Nick, Gatsby's father, and the minister, no one attends Gatsby's burial.
_____ **13.** Attendance at Gatsby's parties is by invitation only.
_____ **14.** Daisy is driving the car that kills Myrtle Wilson.
_____ **15.** Daisy seems especially impressed by Gatsby's shirts.

B. *Directions:* Fill in the blank in each of the following sentences with the correct word or words. (*4 points each*)

16. Gatsby's real name is _____.

17. After _____ attends a party at his house, Gatsby stops having parties.

18. Tom buys Myrtle a _____ when they go to the city.

19. The area where the Wilsons live is referred to as _____.

20. Gatsby attended _____ University.

21. Tom was an excellent _____ at Yale.

22. Gatsby insists that Daisy tell Tom that _____.

23. The expression Gatsby most frequently uses in conversation is _____.

24. On the day of her wedding to Tom, Daisy _____.

25. Gatsby's father shows Nick a _____ that Gatsby had written in the flyleaf of a book when he was young.

NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____

Testing on the Novel

Critical Thinking and Writing

Directions: Write the answers to each of the following on a separate sheet of paper. (*20 points each*)

1. Nick says that Gatsby "represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn," and yet he also says that Gatsby "turned out all right at the end," and he tells Gatsby that he is "worth the whole damn bunch put together." With these quotes in mind, write a brief essay analyzing Nick's attitudes toward Gatsby.
2. Using the descriptions of Gatsby's parties as your principal evidence, write an essay analyzing Fitzgerald's **satirical** portrait of modern society.
3. Compare and contrast the characters of Tom and Gatsby. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?
4. One critic has written that "the theme of *Gatsby* is the withering of the American Dream." Write an essay which outlines the evidence you can find in the novel which supports this contention.
5. In a brief essay, analyze Fitzgerald's use of **symbolism** in *The Great Gatsby*. How does his use of symbolism help advance Fitzgerald's thematic interests?

ANSWER KEY

Reading Guide Questions

Responding to the Novel

Analyzing the Novel

Answers to Identifying Facts questions may sometimes vary slightly. Answers to Interpreting Meanings and The Novel as a Whole questions, and Writing About the Novel assignments, will vary from those given in this Answer Key. "Answers will vary" responses should thus be used as guidelines only, and not as model responses.

Chapter One

Identifying Facts

1. He is tolerant and doesn't make snap judgments about people. People therefore tend to confide in him. He is also restless, seeking something he cannot name.
2. Tom is aggressive, arrogant, pugnacious, and extremely wealthy.
3. A friend of Daisy, she is aloof and self-sufficient.
4. Gatsby is standing in his back yard with his arms reaching out toward a green light across the bay.

Interpreting Meanings

5. Answers will vary. Nick says that Gatsby represented "everything for which I have an unaffected scorn," yet he also says that "there was something gorgeous about him," and that he "turned out all right."
6. Answers will vary. He describes Tom's manner as "supercilious," his body as "cruel," and his voice as gruff and husky, which "added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed." These physical descriptions indicate the flaws that Nick sees in Tom's character.
7. Answers will vary. Daisy seems flighty and upset. She confesses to Nick that she has become cynical and overly sophisticated and implies that she is deeply unsatisfied with her marriage.
8. Answers will vary. The most significant deep link between Tom and Daisy is implied after Daisy's outburst to Nick, when she smirks "as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged."
9. Answers will vary. Gatsby's gesture and his trembling help to highlight the significance of the green light.

Chapter Two

Identifying Facts

1. Tom meets Nick on a train to New York, and while the train is stopped at a crossing he takes Nick to the garage where she lives.
2. Myrtle is excited by Tom's presence. She makes no effort to hide her feelings from her husband.
3. George appears to be a meek, unassertive and unperceptive man. He is interested in Tom's arrival because of a business deal, and apparently he doesn't notice his wife's feelings.
4. She becomes more affected and arrogant as the evening goes on.

Interpreting Meanings

5. Answers will vary. It is a desolate area where everything is covered with dust and ash. The "eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg" on an old billboard overlook it. The surreal description of the valley (e.g., "a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat," or "ash-gray men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air") emphasizes the symbolic aspects of the valley.
6. Answers will vary. She is in her mid-thirties, stout, and not particularly beautiful. Her physical coarseness reflects her inner coarseness. However, she also has a sensuality and vitality about her that account for Tom's attraction.

7. Answers will vary. The Buchanan mansion is light, airy, and elegant, while the apartment is small, dark, and filled with tasteless appointments. Like Myrtle, the apartment is a kind of parody of "gracious living."

8. Answers will vary. He attacks her because she mentions Daisy's name. His cold cruelty is displayed by the attack, which is swift, brutal, and without remorse.

Chapter Three

Identifying Facts

1. Nick has been invited to the party by Gatsby. Once he is there, he tries to find Gatsby and introduce himself.

2. Nick finds Gatsby charming. He is totally different from what Nick expected. Nick is fascinated, and now wants to know the truth about Gatsby.

3. The party is very crowded with wealthy people, most of whom were not invited by Gatsby. No one really knows the truth about him, but they all spread rumors they have heard. There is a lot of drinking and dancing. The atmosphere gets more wild and desperate as the evening progresses.

4. The owl-eyed man is amazed by the fact that the books are real.

5. He learns that she is "incurably dishonest."

Interpreting Meanings

6. Answers will vary. He uses the historic present because the party he is describing is a typical party rather than a particular one.

7. Answers will vary. Nick characterizes most of Gatsby's guests as self-indulgent and ill-mannered. They are rude to each other and often comically, but hopelessly, drunk. Nick clearly scorns their behavior, and the party as a whole provides a cutting satirical portrait of the Jazz Age.

8. Answers will vary. Gatsby seems both charmingly sincere in his interest in other people and artificial in his behavior, especially his speech.

9. Answers will vary. The two major incidents are the accident at the end of the party and Jordan's near-accident later in the summer. Automobiles are status symbols, but they are also dangerous implements in the hands of careless people.

Chapter Four

Identifying Facts

1. He says that he comes from a wealthy family in the Midwest and was educated at Oxford. When his parents died he inherited their money. He traveled the world trying to forget something from his past and eventually became a war hero.

2. Meyer Wolfsheim fixed the 1919 World Series. Nick is shocked by this piece of information. He never realized that one man could have the power to do something that could affect so many people.

3. She got drunk, presumably because she got a letter from Gatsby on the same day.

4. Nick wants to be alone with Daisy. He also wants to show her his house, which will be right next door. He is afraid Nick will be offended by his request and has Jordan ask him. He hopes that Jordan will be able to influence Nick to agree.

5. Tom is already being unfaithful to Daisy. He is having a fling with a hotel maid. This comes out in the open when they are in an auto accident.

Interpreting Meanings

6. Answers will vary. Gastsby has a shifty look when he says he went to Oxford, and when asked where in the Midwest he grew up, replies "San Francisco." Moreover, the phrases that he uses (like "trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago") are, as Nick points out, "worn threadbare."

7. Answers will vary. It implies that there is something sinister in it.

8. Answers will vary. At first she dates only men who have no chance of getting into the army. Then in February she gets engaged to one man and in June marries another. This behavior shows emotional desperation and implies that she might really be in love with Gatsby.

9. Answers will vary. Gatsby is born to Nick as a complete, understandable person. Before this "birth," Gatsby had not been fully alive to Nick because his behavior was inexplicable. Now Nick understands why Gatsby gazes out over the bay at the green light, and why Gatsby gives lavish parties for strangers. In addition Gatsby had seemed sheltered from the emotions and strife of life. His mansion was his safe "womb." Gatsby has come alive

to Nick now because Nick realizes that Gatsby, like everyone else, has a dream he is striving for.

10. Answers will vary. It is a good, cynical view of the characters and their behavior. Gatsby, with his extreme idealism, would probably not agree—it is the kind of phrase that arises from association with the "universal skepticism" of Jordan.

Chapter Five

Identifying Facts

1. He offers to give Nick some business.
2. They are very embarrassed and awkward with each other.
3. They are no longer embarrassed. Daisy has been crying. Gatsby is glowing and confident.
4. Gatsby seems dazed and bewildered. He's been living with a fantasy of Daisy for so long that he doesn't quite know how to react to the reality of her.
5. Gatsby says, "That's my affair." Gatsby has once again given contradictory information about his background. However, Nick realizes that right now Gatsby is so preoccupied with Daisy that he doesn't know what he is saying.

Interpreting Meanings

6. Answers will vary. Gatsby's speech is stiff and formal. This might make him seem artificial, or it might show how nervous and insecure he feels in Daisy's presence.
7. Answers will vary. One answer might be that she is moved by the intention behind Gatsby's gesture—that all of this acquisition is somehow in the service of his love for her.
8. Answers will vary. It alternates between rain and sun, which reflects the emotional swings that Gatsby and Daisy are experiencing.
9. Answers will vary. Two principal indications are Nick's thoughts after Gatsby tells Daisy about the green light on her dock and the "expression of bewilderment" that Nick sees on Gatsby's face at the end of the chapter, when Nick realizes that "there must have been moments . . . when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion."

Chapter Six

Identifying Facts

1. He changes his name when he first meets the millionaire, Dan Cody. Gatz knows this is the chance he's been waiting for to change his life, and wants to put his new image of himself forward.
2. She was offended by its vulgarity.
3. Gatsby wants Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him.

Interpreting Meanings

4. Answers will vary. The young James Gatz was unsatisfied with the imperfect reality of himself. He therefore created a new, more perfect self based on an ideal conception in his mind of what he could be.
5. Answers will vary. The father in this case is Gatsby's conception of the beautiful ("a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty"). The comparison is ironic because this conception is virtually the opposite of Christ's ideals. If the comparison were continued, Gatsby would be betrayed and killed, as in fact he is.
6. Answers will vary. Gatsby has very little social sensitivity. He is eager to be liked and doesn't realize that the woman doesn't mean what she is saying. He exhibits a similar blindness in his relationship with Daisy. He thinks her attitude toward him is simpler than it actually is.
7. Answers will vary. He thinks that the past can be repeated. It is difficult to say exactly what Gatsby wants to recover—perhaps an innocence, an integrity of his dream which, because it now rests with Daisy, is in danger of being destroyed.
8. Answers will vary. Up to this point, Gatsby's dreams had been free—unconnected to reality. By loving Daisy, his imagination is now attached to a particular breathing and "perishable" entity. He loses the freedom of purely dreaming—he knows that "his mind would never romp again like the mind of God."

Chapter Seven

Identifying Facts

1. Gatsby stops giving parties because Daisy disapproves of them.
2. When Daisy stares at Gatsby and says he always looks so cool.
3. Myrtle thinks Jordan is Tom's wife and is jealous.

4. He has realized that she is having an affair, but he doesn't know with whom. He wants to prevent her from seeing her lover until they can move away.

Interpreting Meanings

5. Answers will vary. He says that her voice is "full of money." He associates her confident, charming voice with his fairy-tale dreams of wealth, "the king's daughter, the golden girl."
6. Answers will vary. The main reason is his insistence that she deny the truth and claim that she loved only him. He could have compromised at almost any point and avoided the confrontation, but to do so would have been to violate the principal aspect of his relationship with Daisy, which is to possess her in a dream world of the past, before she knew Tom.
7. Answers will vary. He does it to emphasize his defeat of Gatsby. It shows his cruelty and demonstrates that much of his relationship with Daisy is based on power rather than love.
8. Answers will vary. They are seated together at the kitchen table with an air of intimacy—"anybody would have said they were conspiring together," Nick says.
9. Answers will vary. He is standing in the same way at the end of Chapter One, but then he was watching over a dream. Now he is watching over nothing.

Chapter Eight

Identifying Facts

1. Gatsby tells Nick the story of his origins and his love for Daisy. He tells him because "Jay Gatsby," the identity Gatsby had so carefully built up, has been destroyed by Tom.
2. No, he wanted to get back to Daisy.
3. He spends the night talking with a neighbor, Michaelis, about his relationship with Myrtle.
4. He found a dog's leash.

Interpreting Meanings

5. Answers will vary. One important reason is her wealth, mentioned repeatedly as providing the aura of romance that enchants Gatsby (e.g., "Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.")
6. Answers will vary. Nick tells Gatsby (sincerely) that he is "worth the whole damn bunch together," but he still disapproves of him "from beginning to end."
7. Answers will vary. The doctor's eyes symbolize the eyes of God. They are looking over the valley of ashes, or the wasteland that modern life has become.
8. Answers will vary. Nick says that he might have gotten the name by inquiring after the car with garage men, but then adds that "perhaps he had an easier, surer way of finding out what he wanted to know," i.e., Tom.
9. Answers will vary. He images that Gatsby has discovered a grotesque and frightening new world, "material without being real."

Chapter Nine

Identifying Facts

1. He is "deranged by grief."
2. It tells us that Gatsby is definitely involved in the big criminal activity that Tom referred to in Chapter Seven.
3. Klipspringer wants his tennis shoes. Nick is frustrated and angry, since none of Gatsby's so-called friends want to come to his funeral. Nick hangs up on Klipspringer.
4. Mr. Gatz believes that his son was a hard working, self-made man who achieved great success. He shows Nick a schedule Gatsby had written for himself as a boy, which showed that he was ambitious and hardworking even then.
5. He admits that he told George Wilson that Gatsby killed Myrtle. He believes that Gatsby killed Myrtle and did not even stop his car; he feels Gatsby got what he deserved.

Interpreting Meanings

6. Answers will vary. He implies that there is an innocence about the West that becomes corrupted when it comes into contact with the success-driven, vulgar East.
7. Answers will vary. He says that they were "careless people" who smashed things up and then "retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness." Both Tom and Daisy have literally smashed Myrtle, and they have smashed Gatsby as well, Daisy emotionally and Tom both emotionally (in the

confrontation at the Plaza) and physically (by telling Wilson that Gatsby had killed Myrtle).

8. Answers will vary. The contrast is between a fresh environment, so rich in possibility that it is the equal of man's capacity for wonder and a corrupted modern world composed of the ash-heaps of Queens and the vulgar ostentation of Gatsby's mansion.
9. Answers will vary. The green light symbolizes the future, that always is beyond our grasp. It symbolizes the promise of a dream, something we strive for, rather than its fulfillment, which may or may not make us happy.

The Novel as a Whole

1. Answers will vary. "I am one of the few honest people I have ever known," Nick says at the end of Chapter Three, and this seems true. He is judicious, unwilling to jump to conclusions, and he has a sense of humor that enables him to portray the grosser excesses of Gatsby's world in the proper perspective. He is both an insider and an outsider, and this gives him the perfect perspective for telling Gatsby's story. He is related to Daisy and he went to Yale, but he is not wealthy in the way Tom and Daisy are. He is something of a snob (he claims his family goes back to the Dukes of Buccleuch) but not enough of one to be taken in by the Buchanans (or Gatsby).
2. Answers will vary. By filtering Gatsby's experience through Nick's consciousness, Fitzgerald is able to give us a portrait that is both objective and sympathetic, something that would have been difficult to do in third-person narration. Because we trust Nick, we trust all of Nick's ambivalence toward Gatsby. And since Gatsby's story is one of revelation, beginning with the artificial exterior and working down toward Gatsby's complex core, it is appropriate that we see the effect of these revelations as they occur on a relatively objective observer.
3. Answers will vary. In terms of Gatsby's substantial material success, the word "great" must be considered ironic. The "greatness" that Gatsby's father admires is clearly just vulgarity. Gatsby's greatness lies in his capacity for dreaming and pursuing his dream. Unfortunately, society offers him no appropriate object for his dreaming except Daisy.
4. Answers will vary. Like the young man in the D'Invilliers poem, Gatsby took on an identity to impress the woman he loves. The gold hat and the high bouncing are accurate analogues to Gatsby's extravagant and foolish style of life.
5. Answers will vary. The most important thing that Tom and Daisy have in common is their wealth, which makes them careless of other people's lives and insulates them from the consequences of their behavior. Tom is intentionally cruel, while Daisy is not. Daisy has a fundamental vulnerability, which opens her to Gatsby's love and which makes her clearly suffer in the face of Tom's philandering. They stay together because they have more in common than not. Daisy married Tom, we are told in Chapter Eight, because she wanted her life shaped. Their courtship involved "a certain struggle and a certain relief." The same may be said of their relationship over the course of the book. There is little change—just a certain struggle in Daisy's attraction to Gatsby and a certain relief in losing the struggle.
6. Answers will vary. The guests are drunken and inconsiderate, willing to gossip about their host but unwilling to introduce themselves to him or thank him. They represent, in their names and occupations, an unproductive and vulgar stratum of society. (The few "society" guests at Gatsby's parties keep themselves isolated from the masses.) The satire is often quite funny—the car accident at the end of the first party, for example, or the woman who hates to "get her head stuck in a pool" in the second.
7. Answers will vary. Physically, Myrtle and Daisy are virtually opposites. Myrtle is in her mid-thirties, lower class, coarse, "faintly stout," and not particularly beautiful. Daisy is twenty-three (she was eighteen in 1917, Jordan says), upper class, sophisticated, and lovely. Myrtle has an air of vitality about her, while Daisy is languid. (When we first see Daisy she is lying on a couch, too languid to rise.) When Myrtle gets to New York, she is almost a parody of Daisy—a woman of breeding looking down on her inferiors.
8. Answers will vary. Nick is attracted to Jordan at first because of her self-sufficiency and the fact that she is a famous golfer. Then he is curious about what she conceals behind her affectations. Gradually, he begins falling in love with her. Jordan is part of Tom and Daisy's world, and Nick, like Gatsby, is an outsider. As Gatsby gets closer to Daisy, Nick gets closer to Jordan, but when Gatsby and Daisy split, so do Nick and Jordan. After the accident, Tom and Jordan join Daisy in the Buchanans' house, while Gatsby and Nick

stand outside. However, while Gatsby pursues Daisy and loses her, Nick makes a conscious choice to break with Jordan and everything she represents of the corrupt East.

9. Answers will vary. The automobile is the instrument of Myrtle's death, of course, and is a source of disaster, both comic and serious, in several other instances in the novel. At the end of Gatsby's first party, there is a comic accident at Gatsby's gate, when a drunk runs into a ditch and loses a wheel. Daisy first discovered Tom was a philanderer in California when he was in a car accident with a hotel maid. Jordan is a careless driver, but claims that since other people are careful, she doesn't have to be. Gatsby's car is an ostentatious status symbol, too ornate to be genteel. (Tom makes fun of it, calling it a "circus wagon," just as he makes fun of Gatsby's pink suit.) The automobile was a perfect symbol for the Roaring Twenties—modern, gaudy, fast, and dangerous.

10. Answers will vary. In a social sense, the valley of ashes is the lower-class foil to the upper-class East and West Egg. But as its name implies, it is more important as a symbolic setting than as a realistic one. It is a wasteland—a physical representation of what can happen when the American Dream goes bad. Thus it is symbolic of the lives of the characters, who have corrupted the American Dream and created a spiritual wasteland.

11. Answers will vary. We first see Gatsby from afar and learn about him through hearsay. Myrtle's sister Catherine thinks he's a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm, guests at his party claim he's a German spy or that he's killed someone. After Nick meets Gatsby, he learns a little more—that he's from the Midwest, that he was in the army during the war, that he won medals. Much of the information that he provides himself at this stage is suspect, since it is a part of his campaign to win Daisy. The information that comes from Jordan regarding his courtship of Daisy is accurate but limited. Gatsby tells Nick the true facts of his background only after his identity has been destroyed by Tom, but Nick tells us most of this information right after Gatsby wins Daisy—at the high point of his career. This is fitting, since what Nick has to tell us here concerns the "success" of Gatsby's identity. Gatsby's loss of Daisy five years before is described after his permanent loss of her at the end of the book. Gatsby is an artificial, layered, and complex creation, and the gradual revelation of his character reinforces this.

12. Answers will vary. Daisy and Tom drift, we are told, because Tom is "forever seeking . . . for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game." Gatsby has wandered in pursuit of his dream, Jordan in pursuit of her sport. Nick is the one who remembers his roots best, and it is his connection with the moral traditions of the Midwest, where "dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name" that gives him a moral center. The implication of Nick's meditation on the Midwest at the end of the book is that one of the things Americans have lost is connection with a moral tradition rooted in place. Gatsby's rejection of his roots has contributed to his downfall.

13. Answers will vary. One way to describe it would be to say that it is about the subversion of the American Dream. The original American Dream is symbolized by the pure untouched landscape seen by the Dutch sailors. The dream essentially was the freedom for each person to pursue his or her own star. However, the society that Fitzgerald shows is pursuing a corruption of the original dream, its outer trappings only—power and money. Gatsby is pursuing a symbol of the corrupt dream in the person of Daisy.

14. Answers will vary, but students should indicate that Gatsby is both a victim and a perpetrator. He is a victim because he not only loses Daisy but is betrayed by her. An argument could be made for the idea that society offers him nothing better as an object of his dreams. However, he is also a perpetrator because he chooses someone unworthy of his dreams and becomes corrupt (although he never acknowledges this) in order to achieve his goals.

Writing About the Novel

A Creative Response

1. Answers will vary. A complete response might include Gatsby's expectation that he and Daisy can go back to the past, that their relationship will be just like it was before Daisy met Tom. Students should also address Daisy's ambivalence—she is flattered by Gatsby's devotion and she does love him, but she is still attached to Tom.

2. Answers will vary. Students should explore all the changes of feeling Daisy would go through during the course of the afternoon—

how she feels when she first meets Gatsby, what she and Gatsby talk about while Nick is gone, and what she is thinking during the tour of Gatsby's mansion.

3. Answers will vary. Based on the events in the novel, the student should assume that Daisy does not leave Tom to be with Gatsby. A case could be made for Gatsby's continuing to live the lavish empty life he has been living up till now. Or, he may find a replacement for Daisy to act as the green light for his dreaming.

A Critical Response

4. Answers will vary. With the exception of Nick, virtually all of the characters are corrupt in one way or another. Jordan Baker cheats at golf, Tom cheats on Daisy, and Myrtle Wilson cheats on George. Meyer Wolfsheim fixed the World Series and helps Gatsby's friends find "a gonnegtion." And, naturally, Gatsby is corrupt as well. All of the personal corruption is a part of the corruption of the times.

5. Answers will vary. A good discussion of Tom's character will start with his background. Too much privilege has led him to seek only personal satisfaction. He had too much success as a football player at Yale to be satisfied with a commonplace existence, and so he roves around, looking for the ego satisfaction that football used to provide. He has a very limited intelligence, as is indicated by his reading and his arguments. There is very little good to be found in Tom, but Nick excuses him because of the limitations of his point of view; he is the way he is, and can't grow or change.

6. Answers will vary. The portrait of Nick is really the only controversial one here. Students who agree with Raleigh's description will find a good deal of corroborating evidence, concentrating on Nick's portrayal of himself as a conservative Midwesterner and on his behavior during the novel. He does withdraw in awkward situations (at Gatsby's first party, for example), and his relationship with Jordan can be seen as the opposite of Gatsby's relationship with Daisy. He chooses not to pursue the dream, in part because he is too clear-minded for Jordan ever fully to be a dream for him. Some students may find this judgment of Nick too harsh, and point out that despite his conservatism, Nick is the only one who really understands Gatsby. Nick is certainly "immersed in time and reality," but some students might argue that his realism is clear-eyed. Gatsby's character leads to tragedy and Nick's to disillusionment, but disillusionment is not perhaps the same as unhappiness.

7. Answers will vary. Gatsby's idealism began before he met Dan Cody, with his invention of Jay Gatsby, his "Platonic conception of himself." Cody just allowed Gatsby to fine-tune this conception. Gatsby's dreams didn't find a satisfactory outlet until he met Daisy, and Nick describes a crisis when Gatsby realizes that he could either remain independent and "suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder," or "wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath." His tragedy really has its roots in that choice—the rest is merely the working out of the consequences of that decision. When Gatsby gets together with Daisy at Nick's house, Nick suspects that some of the dream must have already been tarnished by the (material) reality. His final fall, though, takes place (as Nick speculates) the day after Myrtle's death, when Daisy doesn't call, and Gatsby discovers "a new world, material without being real."

Going Beyond the Novel

A Creative Response

Responses to Creative Response assignments will vary greatly.

A Critical Response

Responses to Critical Response assignments will vary greatly.

Testing on the Novel

Developing Vocabulary

1. b	**2.** a	**3.** a	**4.** c	**5.** d
6. a	**7.** a	**8.** c	**9.** d	**10.** a
11. b	**12.** d	**13.** b	**14.** d	**15.** c
16. b	**17.** a	**18.** c	**19.** c	**20.** d
21. b	**22.** a	**23.** d	**24.** c	**25.** d

Understanding What Happened/ Recognizing Elements of the Novel

A.	**1.** T	**2.** T	**3.** F	**4.** T	**5.** F
	6. F	**7.** F	**8.** T	**9.** T	**10.** T
	11. F	**12.** F	**13.** F	**14.** T	**15.** T

B. 16. James Gatz

17. Daisy

18. dog

19. the valley of ashes

20. Oxford

21. football player

22. she never loved him

23. old sport

24. gets drunk

25. self-improvement schedule

Critical Thinking and Writing

1. Answers will vary. What Nick finds admirable about Gatsby is his "extraordinary gift for hope," his ability to dream great dreams. What he dislikes in Gatsby is his vulgarity and his dishonesty, both arguably a product of the society Gatsby is a part of, rather than faults in Gatsby himself. A good essay will mention Gatsby's conspicuous displays of wealth, his lying about his background, and his questionable business "gonnegtions" as elements Nick disapproves of. On the other hand, Nick admires Gatsby's idealism and his belief that one can turn an idea into reality by pursuing it intensely enough. At the end of the novel, after Gatsby's fall, Nick says he must have discovered "a new world, material without being real." Throughout most of the novel, Gatsby inhabits a world that is real without being material. It can be argued that what is material about the vulgar Gatsby, the ostentation and deceit, is a part of the diminished American environment, not a part of Gatsby. Like his affected language, Gatsby's clothes and parties are materials he found around him, unconnected with his essence, which is to be a dreamer.
2. Answers will vary. Although Gatsby has his reason for giving the parties, the parties themselves, based on real parties of the time, are examples of the worst sort of conspicuous consumption. The types of people who come provide a satirical cross section of "high" society in the twenties, and a good answer will discuss the list of attendees at the beginning of Chapter Four. The drunken and irresponsible behavior should also be noted, from the car accident after the first party to the girl afraid of being ducked in the pool in the last one. In summary, the parties describe a society gone slightly mad, with too much wealth spent on too many frivolous pursuits.
3. Answers will vary. They are both used to getting what they want, Tom through his inherited wealth and social position, Gatsby by using whatever means are necessary. And they are both drifters, rootless, unable to stay in one place for long. But the differences are more striking than the similarities. The most important difference, of course, is that Gatsby, for all his wealth, is poor, while Tom is rich. Tom is socially adroit, while Gatsby is not. Gatsby's taste is that of a *nouveau riche;* Tom's is bred in the bone. Tom is pure ego, driven by desire for his own pleasure. Gatsby is driven by his dream of Daisy. Tom is brutal and consciously cruel, while Gatsby, despite his shady background, is not.
4. Answers will vary. One approach is to compare the past and the present. The key is in the final paragraphs of the novel, and a good essay will either use this as a springboard or a conclusion, comparing America as it was when it was still "commensurate to [man's] capacity for wonder" and the society of the twenties portrayed in the novel. Gatsby's dream is the American Dream, but in the twenties there is no means for realizing such a grand dream and so it is expressed in Gatsby's rather shoddy career and in his pursuit of Daisy.
5. Answers will vary. The most important symbols in the book are the green light, the valley of ashes, and the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. A good essay will discuss the symbols as aspects of the setting which take on symbolic significance because of the attention the author or characters give them. The green light is Gatsby's symbol, and in it reside all of his dreams—so near, yet so far. Its greenness is related to motion ("go") and also to the greenness of the natural world, the "fresh green breast of the new world" described at the end of the novel. The valley of ashes assumes symbolic significance because of the attention the author invests in it when it is first described. Its symbolic elements (the smoke, the dust, the ash-gray men) are emphasized so much it is almost more a symbol than an actual place where characters live and act. The dust is connected to the "foul dust" that Nick says "floated in the wake of [Gatsby's] dreams," and the valley itself is the symbolic equivalent to the society that

Fitzgerald describes in the rest of the novel—a wasteland. The eyes of Dr. Eckleburg assume symbolic significance both because of the author's attention and because George Wilson finds them symbolic. Most critics accept and extend George's interpretation of the eyes as the eyes of God. The valley of ashes allows the novel to have significance beyond its immediate time and place—it sets the period as not just the twenties, but a wasteland at the end of a long historical decline. The eyes help place the novel in a metaphysical context.

For Further Reading

Other Works by the Author

This Side of Paradise (1920)
The Beautiful and Damned (1921)
Tender Is the Night (1934)
The Last Tycoon (1941)
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