

The Great Gatsby Summary by Chapter

**Chapter 1 (The First Dinner):** Introduction of Nick Carraway as the narrator as well as the setting of the novel. Nick moved to the West Egg of Long Island in the pursuit of a bonds business. His neighbour happened to be Jay Gatsby. He lived across the East Egg, which is where the aristocratic families lived. One of them was the Buchanan family. Tom Buchanan is then introduced as Daisy's husband, a man with a big built who oozed dominance. He was Nick's college club mate at Yale. Nick was invited to the Buchanan's place for lunch, where he met Jordan Baker, Daisy's friend. As they all have dinner together, Tom gets a phone call, Daisy freaks out and goes to yell at him, and Jordan reveals that Tom is having an affair on the side. As Nick returns home, he notices Gatsby out on his lawn, with his arms outstretched toward a green light across courtesy bay.

**Chapter 2 (New York Affair):** Tom Buchanan takes Nick to the Valley of Ashes, which falls between New York and the East egg. He wanted to go meet Myrtle Wilson, his extramarital lover. She was married to a humble and passive man named George Wilson, who owned a garage. Tom goes to their place and asks Myrtle to go the city with him while George is completely oblivious, thinking that his wife just goes to visit her sister, Catherine McKee. On the way there, Myrtle asks Tom to buy her a puppy and he does. At the party, Nick gets drunk for the second time in his life. After having several drinks, Myrtle keeps teasing Tom about Daisy and begins chanting her name. Tom then breaks her nose in anger. Nick then somehow ends up next to Chester McKee in his underwear. It was about 4am, and soon after, Nick was waiting for the 4 o'clock train back home.

**Chapter 3 (Gatsby's Party):** Gatsby held grand and luxurious parties at his mansion every Saturday night, and this chapter was a glimpse into one of them. There were wealthy folks coming from all over New York and Long Island to his party, without knowing what he even looked like or how he even got to where he was. Nick was the only one who had been officially invited to the party, where he bumped into Jordan Baker. He then decided to look for Gatsby with her, and finally found him alone on the marble steps watching his guests have a ball of a time from a distance (everyone at his party seemed to be drinking bootlegged alcohol except Gatsby himself). After speaking to Nick for a while, Gatsby receives a phone call and sends his butler to get Jordan for a private chat, while Nick continued to enjoy the party. Jordan returns and tells Nick she has exciting things to tell him, but wants him to meet her at her aunt's house. Gatsby says goodnight to Nick as they have plans to go on his hydroplane the next day. Nick then sees that a car leaving the driveway had hit the wall and lost its wheel. Nick falls into his usual routine again until mid summer, when he starts hanging out with Jordan.

**Chapter 4 (Nick meets Wolfsheim):** Gatsby comes to get Nick for lunch in his fancy yellow Rolls-Royce. He explains his history to Nick and how he was educated at Oxford. He also tells Nick about a medal that reads 'Major Jay Gatsby' and a photograph of him with his Oxford mates. He then gets pulled over by a policeman, who lets him go after Gatsby tells him who he is. Once they arrive in New York, he introduces Nick to Meyer Wolfsheim, Gatsby's business partner. Nick notices Tom Buchanan at the same restaurant and wants to introduce Gatsby, but he had already bolted off. After his lunch with Gatsby, he had arranged to meet with Jordan Baker, who then finally told Nick about what Gatsby had said to her on the night of the party. He told her about his history with Daisy and that he was in love with her, and that he wanted Nick to arrange a reunion with her at his place.

**Chapter 5 (The Reunion) :** When Nick was returning home, he saw Gatsby standing out at his lawn, with wild eagerness and excitement. He then tells him that he is willing to do him the favour and invite Daisy over for tea the following afternoon. This is when Gatsby offers him a part in his business to thank him, which Nick rejects, but offers the favour anyway. The next day, Gatsby arrives at Nick's place, absolutely ecstatic, and waits impatiently for Daisy. Its raining heavily outside but Gatsby still sends his servants to get the room decorated with flowers for Daisy. As soon as she comes, Gatsby disappears through the backdoor and goes around the house in the rain and comes back from the front door. It is initially very awkward and Gatsby even knocks over Nick's clock, then takes Nick away to bitch about how shitty the meeting is. Nick decides to give them space and leaves for a bit. They start warming up and the romantic intimacy is soon rekindled. Gatsby then offers to take Daisy to his house to show her around, and invites Nick too. It becomes clearer that he bought the house and everything in it to impress her. When Daisy sees Gatsby's collection of expensive shirts, she starts crying. They then head down and have Klipspringer play the piano, after which Nick heads home, leaving the two of them alone together.

**Chapter 6 (The Second Party) :** Nick hasn't seen Daisy and Gatsby in weeks, and the last time he saw them was when he arranged their reunion. One afternoon, when he stopped by Gatsby's place, he saw Tom Buchanan having a drink with Gatsby, a man named Sloane and this pretty woman he was with. Gatsby proposed that they stay for dinner but Sloane's girl instead asks him and Nick to come over to her place. Since Tom Buchanan didn't particularly like Gatsby, he thought that the invitation was insincere and was in disbelief that he was actually coming. At this point, even though Tom was uncomfortable with how Daisy visited Gatsby's place alone so often, he was not aware of the love between them. The following Saturday, Tom and Daisy attend a party at Gatsby's Mansion. This is where Nick is not too happy with the oppressing atmosphere, and Daisy is not having a great time either. Tom didn't want to be there, but he followed Daisy just to keep an eye on her. After they left, Nick told Gatsby how Daisy felt about the party, which really made him upset. All Gatsby wanted was for Daisy to leave Tom and be with him, just like the old days in Louisville.

**Chapter 7 (The Confrontation) :** It was the following Saturday, but there was no party at Gatsby's. He had locked himself in and fired all his servants, afraid they would gossip since Daisy was coming over so often. Gatsby then telephones Nick and invites him to go to Daisy's place for lunch the following day, upon her request. The next day is the warmest day of summer and Nick takes the train to East Egg. He finds Gatsby and Jordan Baker there as well. The nurse brings in Daisy's child (Gatsby's shocked but otherwise nobody cares). It's pretty awkward as Gatsby and Daisy cannot hide their love for one another. Daisy suggests that they all go to Town, after which Gatsby and Daisy gaze at each other intently, but Tom notices in disbelief. Itching for a confrontation, he agrees and exclaims that they should all go to New York together. They reach New York and decide to chill at Plaza Hotel. As Tom mocks and questions Gatsby, a heated argument unfolds and Gatsby finally reveals that Daisy loves him, not Tom. Daisy, torn between the two men, is unable to handle the pressure and breaks down. Tom, confident that he has bested Gatsby, sends the two of them back to Long Island in Gatsby's car. Nick then realises that it's his thirtieth birthday. Driving back to Long Island in Tom's car, Nick, Tom, and Jordan discover that someone has been hit by a car on the border of the Valley of Ashes. Michaelis then tells them that Myrtle was the victim. Nick realises that it must have been Gatsby's car and Tom assumes that Gatsby was the one driving. Back at Tom's, Nick waits outside but finds Gatsby in the bushes, keeping a lookout in case Tom tried to hurt Daisy. Gatsby asks for him to check on them. Nick then leaves Gatsby there alone.

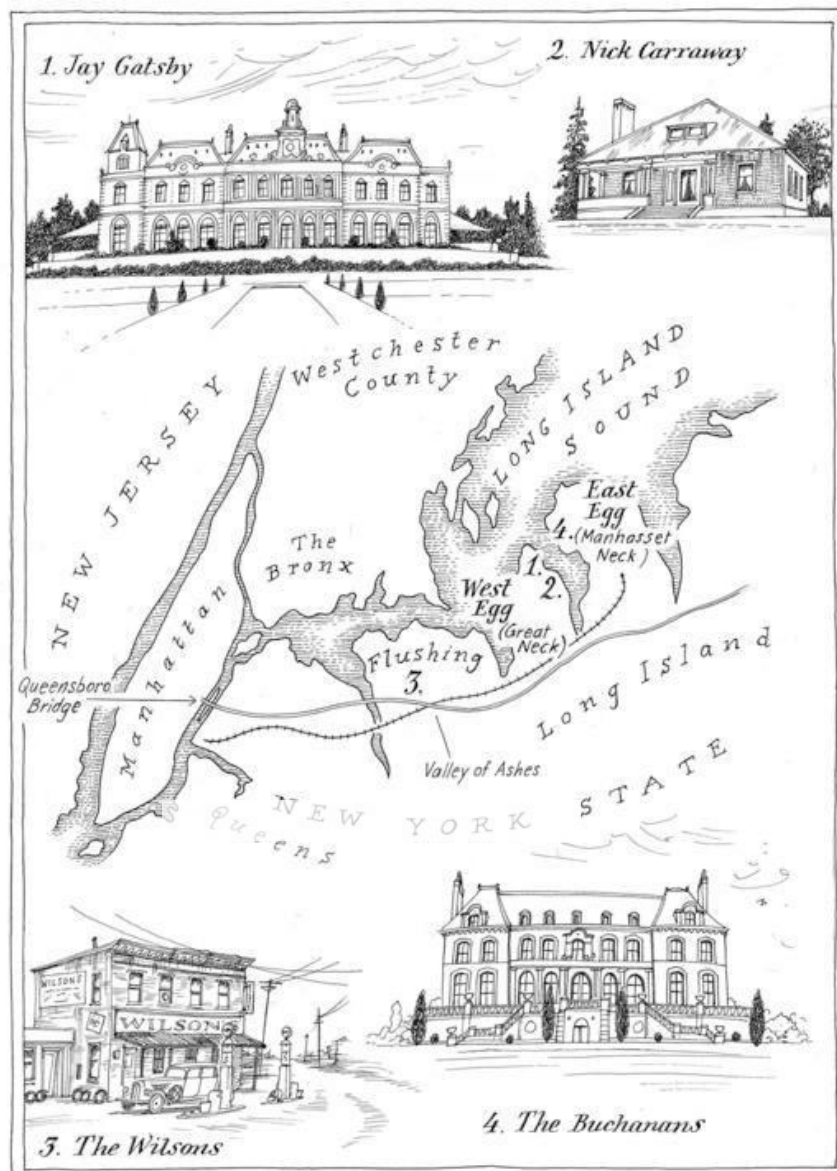
**Chapter 8 (Gatsby's Death):** After a sleepless night, before dawn, Nick goes to visit Gatsby at his mansion. Gatsby mentions that he waited till 4am but nothing happened. Nick suggests that Gatsby forget Daisy and leave Long Island, but he refuses. Gatsby explains how he felt when he was courting Daisy and how she had promised to wait for him when he left for the war, but then she married Tom. Gatsby's gardener interrupts the story to tell Gatsby that he plans to drain the pool. The hint of autumn is now in the air. Gatsby asks that the gardener wait a day, since he had not used the pool all summer and wanted to go for a swim. Nick then says goodbye to him and leaves for work. A narrative shift occurs and Nick describes what happened at George Wilson's garage after Myrtle's death (he got to know the details from Michaelis). Wilson believes that whoever was driving the car must have been her lover, as he had confronted her about it just before she ran out onto the road. He wants to track the car down, so he looks for Tom. Tom tells him it was Gatsby, and Wilson shows up at Gatsby's mansion then shoots him. He then shoots himself. Nick hurries back to West Egg and finds Gatsby floating dead in his pool.

**Chapter 9 (The Funeral):** Writing two years after Gatsby's death, Nick describes the events that surrounded the funeral, such as the swarms of reporters and journalists and the exaggerated rumours. Nick tries to hold a large funeral for him, but all of Gatsby's former friends and acquaintances have either disappeared (Tom and Daisy) or refuse to come (Wolfsheim and Klipspringer). The only people to attend the funeral are Nick, Owl Eyes, a few servants, and Gatsby's father, Henry C. Gatz, who has come all the way from Minnesota. Nick decides to move back to the Midwest. He breaks off his relationship with Jordan, who suddenly claims that she has become engaged to another man. Just before he leaves, Nick encounters Tom on Fifth Avenue in New York City, who confirms that he was the one who told Wilson that it was Gatsby who killed Myrtle. On his last night in West Egg before moving back to Minnesota, Nick walks over to Gatsby's empty mansion and erases an obscene word that someone has written on the steps. He sprawls out on the beach behind Gatsby's house and looks up, uttering the most beautiful quote of the novel at the end of it all.

Context (Historical, Social and Cultural)

*The Great Gatsby* (TGG) is by F.Scott Fitzgerald and was published 10th April 1925. TGG was set in 1920's East America, the spring of 1922 to be exact, a time when the economy was booming and new social and cultural boundaries were being drawn. Economic growth was arguably caused by American participation in the First World War the decade before. This was also why it was known as the roaring twenties, a period of pleasure seeking, reckless exuberance. Conspicuous consumption, a term coined by social scientist Thorstein Veblen, referred to the display of wealth through extravagant behaviour and ostentatious houses. This became a measure of social status, as evident from Gatsby's parties, Daisy's necklace, cars and mansions.

During this time (also known as the Jazz Age due to the rapidly increasing popularity of Jazz music, a flamboyant era where many embraced frivolity and lived a carpe diem lifestyle), the production and sale of alcohol was illegal in accordance with the 18th amendment to the US constitution. This resulted in the illegal production and supplying of alcohol, known as bootlegging. Bootleggers resultantly earned significant amounts of money, with many, such as Gatsby, becoming part of the nouveau riche. This period of American prosperity ended with the Great Depression.

Map of East America (As described in *The Great Gatsby*)

Fitzgerald's Background

- Born September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota (a part of midwest, like Gatsby)
- In 1914, while home in St. Paul for the Christmas holiday, Fitzgerald met Ginevra King, a daughter of a socially prominent St. Paul family. She's the one who inspired Daisy's character. The early encounter of Gatsby and Daisy is a romanticised version of Fitzgerald and Ginevra's early encounters.
- At Princeton, he saw the morally harsh aspects of American society at the time, as well as the deep divides along religious, social, economic and regional lines, which probably lead to the recurring idea of the corruptibility of the American Dream in his novels
- In 1917, he received a commission as 2nd Lieutenant for the army (and he had to leave Ginevra just as how Gatsby left Daisy) but never fought; he was stationed in bases around the country
- Was unable to complete his academic endeavours as he had to leave Princeton for the U.S. army, but was socially successful (Like Gatsby and Oxford in which he only stayed for 5 months)
- Fell in love with Zelda Sayre at Camp Sheridan outside of Montgomery, Alabama (Daisy is a conflation of both Zelda and Ginevra)
- After being dismissed from camp, Zelda left him as he had no prospects of wealth (Just like how Gatsby couldn't obtain Daisy)
- Fitzgerald went to New York and worked in the advertising industry (while Gatsby also went to New York but became a bootlegger)
- Fitzgerald then went to New Orleans to try to write to and pursue Zelda (just like how Gatsby pursued Daisy when he became wealthy)
- A week later, Zelda and Fitzgerald were married at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. (Fitzgerald successfully obtained Zelda, unlike Gatsby with Daisy)
- Fitzgerald became extremely rich through his career in literature, and spent his money lavishly (just like Gatsby did with his mansion and parties)
- In 1922, the couple moved to Great Neck (the inspiration for West Egg)
- Zelda started an affair with a French aviator, which might have been inspiration for the extramarital affairs and infidelity present in The Great Gatsby
- In April 1925, The Great Gatsby was released. Initially, it was not very well received since the rich, the main audience for literature, began to boycott the novel as they felt it mocked the upper class.
- In 1940, he died of a heart attack. On his gravestone is etched the famous last line of *The Great Gatsby*:  
"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Themes**A. The corruptibility of The American Dream and its emptiness as an ideal**

- The American Dream is the idea that suggests that any individual can obtain success if he or she works hard enough and puts his or her skills to good use.
- This idea dominated the minds of Americans, especially during the Jazz Age
- Through TGG, Fitzgerald intends to show the corruption of The American Dream from an idea of meritocracy and ambition to using desperate means to gain success
- By chronicling the tragic pursuit of The American Dream, Fitzgerald re-creates the universal conflict between illusion and reality

**B. Social stratification and the immobility of society (Through a Marxist Lens)**

- A Marxist reading of the text will be concerned with representations of the social class as well as the abuse of power and wealth
- Through TGG, Fitzgerald provides an accurate exposition on the presence of social stratification in 1920s America



- It is however important to note that complete immobility didn't exist, since Gatsby was still able to go from living in poverty on a North Dakota farm to living the high life as a multi-millionaire in New York
- There are three main social strata being examined in the book, although the first two are more explored than others:
- The Aristocrats ("Old Rich"): Those who have been born into the wealth they own
- The Nouveau Riche ("Newly Rich"): Those who had obtained wealth within their generation
- The Proletariats (Working Class): The poorer blue collar workers

### C. Gender roles and increasing female emancipation (Through a Feminist Lens)

- A feminist reading of the novel will be concerned with the representation of the female gender and the roles they play in a seemingly patriarchal (dominated by men) society. Feminist critics will tend to challenge the negative portrayal of women (Daisy, Myrtle) but support emancipation (Jordan, Party women)
- 1920's America was the age when several taboos such as women getting drunk and the open discussion of sex ceased to be taboos. As such, traditional gender roles were occasionally warped.
- Men are expected to be strong, like Tom Buchanan.
- Women are expected to be weak, dependent, and chained to men, like Daisy
- However, an emancipation of women seems to occur, as is the case with Jordan Baker, a sportswoman, and other examples.

### D. Corrupt obsession with material possessions and social class

- With increasing prosperity due to the economic boom and the widespread idea of Conspicuous Consumption, materialism also spread
- There was an increasing obsession with money and wealth since these material possessions were linked to class
- Uninhibited consumption was also common

### E. Psychological Hedonism

- The view that humans are psychologically constructed in such a way that we exclusively desire pleasure
- The purpose of life is pleasure and any action that would result in pleasure will be the desired action, regardless of the consequences
- Infidelity was one of the most common forms of hedonism in the novel

## Narrative Techniques and Stylistic Features

### 1. Characterisation

#### a) Women

- **Myrtle Wilson**
  - "Attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream coloured chiffon" (B)
    - She dressed and behaved differently around Tom as she wanted to feel as though she belonged to the upper class
    - She saw Tom as the key to wealth and riches, so she made sure to look her best around him to grab his attention, which clearly shows her desperation to part of or accepted by the upper class
  - "Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand" (B)
    - Violent kinaesthetic image- When she tries to act as though she belongs to the upper class and thinks she has the freedom to say what she wants (chants Daisy's name), she is beaten down and violently reminded of her inferiority, both as a woman and as a member of the lower social class
    - Also hints at Tom's misogyny and the discrimination and ill-treatment of women
  - "Beat me, you dirty little coward!" (C)
    - Was not afraid of George, and even talked back at him, which shows a reversal of gender roles
    - The intonation of her speech makes it seem as though she enjoyed George finally showing dominance over her, just like Tom did.
    - Reflects the dominant role of men in relation to women in 1920's America, which will be opposed by feminist critics
  - "He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him" (D)

- Myrtle was more attracted to Tom's elaborate and exquisite clothing which insinuated his wealth rather than Tom himself, which shows her obsession with material possession
- "He wasn't fit to lick my shoe" (D)
- Thinks George is not worthy of her just because he is a poor garage mechanic, she values wealth and would only open up to someone of high status such as Tom, which hints at her raw materialistic nature
- "they saw that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap" (D)
- Gory and visceral kinaesthetic image- Parallels how her pursuit of power and wealth lead to her inevitable death and in the form of perhaps a punishment for her sexuality
- "She carried her flesh sensuously as some woman can" (E)
  - Sexual motivations
  - Increasing obsession with sex, outward appearance and pleasure in 1920's America
- **Daisy Fay/Buchanan**
  - "What do people plan?" (A)
    - Daisy has no mind of her own, and she needs to be told or rather ordered around for her to live a functional life, which reflects the emptiness of her character. Perhaps, Daisy herself is representative of the American Dream and the revelation of her emptiness parallels the emptiness of The American Dream as an ideal
  - Daisy VS Gatsby (B)
  - "Across the courtesy bay" (B)
    - Fitzgerald's attempt to portray the extent of the divide between them and the fact that it is so defined, it is physical. One which he can only seem to reach out to, but never cross over and touch
  - "Indiscernible barbed wire" (B)
    - Tactile imagery which suggests that the barrier between them is dangerous for Gatsby to attempt to cross. This negative image foreshadows Gatsby's impending doom and the severe consequences of his pursuit
  - "She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand" (B)
    - Daisy felt out of place at Gatsby's party due to them being of a lower social class than her. She didn't enjoy herself only because she could not have the company she was used to- that of the aristocrats.
    - Reflects pure social rift and foreshadows how Gatsby and her were fated never to be together
  - Daisy vs ash grey men (B)
  - Daisy "dressed in white and had a little white roadster" (B)
    - Daisy is shown to be pure as a woman of the upper class
    - Her car is also a symbol of wealth and luxury
  - "Line of grey cars" and "ash grey men" in the Valley of Ashes (B)
    - Contrasted with daisy's car, and is shown to be tainted and dirty
    - Fitzgerald thus highlights the differences between the upper and lower class through their physical portrayal
  - "oh, you want too much! I love you now — isn't that enough?" (B)
    - This is the epitome of social immobility, which exists both upward and downward. She refuses to leave Tom and the aristocracy for Gatsby as her love for Gatsby cowers before her love for privilege
  - "I did love him once, but I loved you too" (B)
    - Daisy loved Tom's wealth and aristocratic status while she loved Gatsby as a person
    - She eventually chose to stay with Tom because she cared much more about the happiness he gave her with his money, she felt a sense of security with him that Gatsby couldn't give her because Gatsby didn't have the same social status that Tom was associated with
  - "Buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon" and "ballooned down slowly to the floor" (C)

- A simile in which Daisy and Myrtle are likened to balloons- They try to gain freedom but they are held down and restricted by the domineering males aka Tom, common in the patriarchal society they live in
- “And I hope she’ll be a fool — that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world” (C)
  - Daisy is not a fool herself but is the product of a social environment that does not value intelligence in women. The older generation values subservience and docility in women. She believes that if a girl sticks to the stereotypical notion of a woman, she will be happy.
- Daisy’s name is also a flower, one that is white on the outside but yellow in the core. The whiteness represents her purity whereas the yellow connotes gold and wealth. She is beautiful on the outside but on the core, there is nothing to her except her wealth. This is Fitzgerald’s play on materialism in 1920s. (D)
- “At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete” (E)
  - Natural imagery which beautifies the romance between Gatsby and Daisy and intensifies the desire they have for each other
- “Tom’s got some woman in New York” (E)
  - Daisy is resigned to his affairs. Infidelity is so widespread that it is not even given a second thought, accepted by everyone as if it were the normal way of life
- **Jordan Baker**
  - “she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round” (B)
    - Criticised from a Marxist lens since the wealthy always get away with cheating, giving them an unfair privilege they don’t seem to deserve
  - “I don’t give a damn about you now” (C)
    - She did not care about how Nick felt, and didn’t allow him to have that sort of control over her either. A more emancipated and independent portrayal of women which a feminist critic would support
  - “Again a sort of apology arose to my lips” (C)
    - She intimidated Nick and seemed much more confident and dominant than he was
    - Breaks free from the social stereotype of a passive woman
  - “Hard, jaunty body” (C)
    - Emphasis on Jordan’s lack of femininity as she was a sportswoman, unusual for a lady at that time
  - “Slender, small breasted girl” (E)
    - Nick seems to notice her physical appearance a lot and focuses on her breasts, which reveals his sexual desire for her. Another hint at the hedonism present in the novel

## b) Men

- **Jay Gatsby (Protagonist)**
  - “He had an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person” (A)
    - Hope is the one thing that fuels The American Dream, a hope for success and fruitfulness
  - “Somebody told me he killed a man once” and “they say he’s a nephew or cousin’s of Kaiser Wilhelm’s. That’s where all his money came from.” (A)
    - All the rumours about Gatsby create a mysterious aura about him which gives an illusion of depth and richness to his character
  - “found to my disappointment, that he had little to say” and “began leaving his elegant sentences unfinished” (A)
    - Gatsby is in reality an underwhelming character who’s unable to live up to all the hype and mystery surrounding him. This is paralleled to the loftiness of The American Dream and its emptiness as an ideal
  - “they’re a rotten crowd. You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together” (A)
    - Despite the corrupt means he used, Gatsby’s intentions were always pure. Nick cannot help but admire him for his heroic qualities such as his nobility, passion, hard work and visionary attitude.
  - “His mind would never romp again like the mind of God” (A)

- Simile which explains the free and boundless mind of God, which he will never experience because he is weighed down and restricted by his blind devotion to Daisy
- He feels that Daisy is what he needs for a perfect life, because getting the golden girl will be a testament to his success and Gatsby will finally be able to experience true satisfaction
- It is ironic that the reason his life is actually imperfect and so fatally flawed is the very reason he thinks it is perfect: his love for Daisy
- “white flannel suit, silver shirt, a gold coloured tie” (A)
  - These possessions are an overt reminder of his amassed wealth and he wants to make sure that Daisy doesn't miss the fact that he now has what he didn't have before: money.
  - He continually attempts to compensate for his past poverty with an overt display of extravagance. Thus, he has this hardworking quality which constitutes an American Dreamer. However, the manner in which he tries to convince Daisy of his wealth only shows his desperation. As such, the American Dream seems to have decayed from an idea of hard work to pitiful desperation
- “Her voice is full of money” (A)
  - Superficial love, he is attracted to the idea of wealth and riches, not Daisy as a person, which shows the corruption of his ambitions and The American Dream
  - To Gatsby, Daisy became a symbol of everything he wanted to possess as she was the epitome of wealth and sophistication, she was his key to the aristocracy
- “Many men had already loved Daisy- it increases her value in his eyes” (A)
  - Creates a sense of competition where if Gatsby is able to get the girl, he proves himself better than the other men. To him, Daisy is like a trophy
  - Corruption and moral decay which comes with ambition and The American Dream. It created a flawed, superficial society beyond repair
- From “looked at Daisy in a way every girl wanted to be looked at sometimes” to => “the golden girl” and “her voice is full of money” (A)
  - Shows the full process of the corruption of The American Dream. It started off as young innocent love which developed into blind passion, then obsession and finally desperation, evident through the corrupt means with which he amassed his wealth just so he could be close to Daisy.
  - Gatsby's love for Daisy became poisoned by his greed for riches, to a point where her only appeal to him was her wealth and the fact that she was part of the coveted social circle he wanted so desperately to be a part of, the aristocracy.
  - Hence, the corruption of The American Dream from hopeful ambition to maddening desperation.
- “The chauffeur...heard the shots” (A)
  - Auditory imagery which heightens the intensity of the killing. Gatsby's pursuit of wealth and power was diluted by his dreams for Daisy and eventually lead to his death
  - Gatsby's death represents the inevitable failure of The American Dream as an ideal
- “a high price for living too long with a single dream” as Nick writes (A)
  - It is significant that Gatsby is not murdered for his criminal connections but his unswerving devotion to Daisy
- “taking a white card from his wallet” and “I was able to do the commissioner a favour once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year” (B)
  - Presentation of the unfair privilege enjoyed by the wealthy which will definitely undergo Marxist critique. This however also shows the subservience of the proletariats to the wealthy and highlights the distinct difference in social class
- “He's a bootlegger, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers” (B)
  - Bootlegging is also another form of cheating and deceit. Thus, Gatsby's success will be questioned by Marxists as he didn't earn it with honesty but cheated his way to it, again hinting at Fitzgerald's representation of unfair advantage
- “she has a big dinner party and he won't know a soul there” “doesn't he know she doesn't want him?” (A) + (B)



- Even amongst the wealthy, social immobility was present. Even though Gatsby was as wealthy as Tom, Sloane and his girl, he isn't part of the aristocracy and is still regarded as socially inferior, which shows the exclusivity of the upper class
- The emptiness of The American Dream as an ideal arises due to the rigidity and social immobility present in 1920s America
- Nobody will truly be able to succeed in a society biased against the Nouveau Riche, despite the insurmountable handwork they put in
- Gatsby's plight, suffering and inability to include himself in this elite social circle known as the aristocracy is the prime representation of the emptiness and impossibility of The American Dream
- "his rolls royce became an omnibus" and "gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another" (D)
- Idea of flamboyance and conspicuous consumption evident through his extravagant parties and display of wealth
- "Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me" (E)
  - Gatsby is not the least bothered about the consequences his actions have, because he is blinded by his love for Daisy. This is the rawest form of hedonism as he blindly seeks the pleasure of Daisy's love, wanting her to belong to him again.
- **Meyer Wolfshiem**
  - "began to eat with ferocious delicacy" (B)
    - Oxymoron which suggests the contradictory nature of Wolfshiem
    - Delicacy suggests fine dining, however his manner is "ferocious", crude and unrefined
    - Tries to show he is part of a higher social class, when, in reality, he never will be
    - Fitzgerald thus portrays social rigidity as an unalterable part of society
  - "they can't get a hold of him, old sport. He's a smart man." (B)
    - This shows the unfair advantage gained by the wealthy and their ability to get away with it. This representation of the wealthy as privileged and unfairly advantaged is an idea protested against by Marxists
  - "Meyer Wolfshiem? No, he's a gambler. He's the man who fixed the World's series back in 1919" (E)
    - Gangsterism and gambling highlights the social decay present as well as widespread hedonism as many, such as Wolfshiem, focused on immediate gain of pleasure no matter the consequences
- **Tom Buchanan VS George Wilson (Foil to Tom)**
  - Wilson's "Ashen figure" vs Tom's "Shining arrogant eyes" and "glistening boots" (B)
    - The stark contrast between the physical appearance of both men reflect the class division
    - Wilson is shown to be filthy and poor while Tom, royal and pure
  - Wilson was "Spiritless, anaemic" while Tom was "a great pack of muscle" with a "cruel body" (B)
    - Brute, animalistic imagery used to describe Tom
    - Stereotypical masculine features have been tied with social status and success
    - Just because Tom belonged to the upper class, he was portrayed in a more dominant and authoritative manner, which will be scrutinised by Marxist critics as it contrasts with Wilson's representation of a weak and powerless man
  - "Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand" and "That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen" (B)
    - Shows Tom's dominant and violent nature
    - Hints at some form of physical abuse, reinforcing Tom's dominance and control over Daisy
  - "I don't mean that, I just meant—His voice faded off" (B)
    - George Wilson is a representative of the proletariat (working class) and is clearly suppressed in his encounters with the wealthy (Tom). Thus, he is subservient and knows his place in society, doesn't cross the line. Shows the difference in power and authority between the wealthy and the poor, highlighting the stratification that is clearly present
  - Tom's threat: "and if you feel that way about it, maybe I'd better sell it somewhere else after all" (B)

- Shows the power Tom has over George and therefore the helplessness of the proletariat class in comparison to the powerful aristocracy
- “Sit back and let Mr Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife” and “she’s certainly not leaving me, not for a common swindler who’d have to steal the ring he put on her finger” (B)
- Tom seems less disturbed about Daisy’s infidelity than he is by the fact that she is involved with a man of an inferior social class, which shows the negative attitude of the aristocrats towards the lower classes
- Ironical that he’s concerned about Daisy’s involvement with Gatsby but completely disregards his own involvement with Myrtle, someone of an even lower social class. Shows his own hypocrisy and character flaw
- This also hints at how common infidelity was in that era
- “The gardener saw Wilson’s body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete.” (B)
- Wilson’s death was the third and final death of the lower class characters in the novel. A holocaust refers to destruction or slaughter on a mass scale. It thus could be a reference to the complete annihilation of the lower class, signifying the lack of a place for them in society.
- “I want you to meet my girl” (E)
- Tom was referring to Myrtle, his extramarital affair. Tom only sought physical pleasure and often met Myrtle with sexual intentions despite being married to Daisy. Physical desire clouded his mind and he didn’t stop once to think of the consequences of his actions
- Idea of infidelity as a form of pleasure as well as a manifestation of sexual desire
- “Neither of them can stand the person they’re married to” (E)
- Infidelity is seen through both Tom and Myrtle, who are both married but are having extra marital affairs simply out of sexual desire and a need for pleasure, not the least bit concerned about the feelings of their spouses. Very hedonistic of them.
- “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money” (E)
- The wealthy seemed to indulge in all things that brought pleasure without having to work as hard for it, simply because most of their riches were inherited. Shows their irresponsible nature and abuse of authority. The carelessness here refers to Daisy running over Myrtle.
- **Party Guests**
- “they conducted themselves according to the rules of behaviour associated with an amusement park” (E)
- An amusement park connotes fun and carefreeness
- The party-goers go to Gatsby’s parties to have fun and to feel as if they have no responsibilities.
- They are child-like, with simple intentions and motivations.
- Gatsby’s extravagant parties with the excessive consumption of alcohol and exquisite food is a prime example of hedonism in the novel as it serves only to provide pleasure to Gatsby’s guests, to the point where they feel as though they are at an amusement park (often associated with fun and pleasure)
- “East Egg condescending West Egg” (B)
- There is social divide even amongst the party goers based on whether they belong to the aristocracy or the nouveau riche
- Women at Gatsby’s party- “The remaining women were having fights with men said to be their husbands” (C)
- Shows that the women were so drunk that they couldn’t recognise their own husbands
- Women getting drunk was not usual, as that was not that comprised of the social stereotype of a restricted, passive woman. Shows increasing emancipation of women
- **Nick Carraway**
- “All the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.” (B)
- Hints at the advantages enjoyed by the rich

- “You make me feel uncivilised, Daisy. Can’t you talk about crops or something?” (B)
- Hints at a social divide between Nick and Daisy, even though they are cousins. Nick himself is aware of this divide in class due to the difference in their wealth

## 2. Setting

- Long Island, West Egg: Home to the nouveau riche
  - “Less fashionable” – the most “superficial tag” (D)
  - Comparison between East and West egg is made by outward appearance instead of the people that live in them, shows the increasing obsession with material possession, portrayed through Nick’s description
  - “My own house was an eyesore” and “consoling proximity of millionaires” (D)
  - Nick’s insecurity derived from the importance of material possessions to be considered important in society
  - He aspired to be as rich as the owners of these mansions
  - Highlights the idea of Conspicuous Consumption
  - “Marble swimming pool and more than forty acres of lawn” (D)
  - Gatsby’s mansion is a symbol of his wealth, which he flaunts by having parties every weekend. His ostentatious residence and lifestyle encompasses the notion of Conspicuous consumption
- Long Island, East Egg: Home to the aristocrats
  - “White palaces of fashionable East egg glittered along the water” (B)
  - Image of majesty and grandeur
  - Contrast between East and West Egg: Mansions can be bought with money but palaces have a royal connotation, where inheritance of the throne cannot be bought. Shows a distinct divide in class even amongst the rich and foreshadows the social immobility which will unfold in the rest of the novel
  - “white” suggests purity in class while “glittered” suggests value, alluding to white diamonds
  - “bright rosy-coloured space” and “wine coloured rug” (B)
  - Bright colours which connote richness in contrast to the dull greys of the Valley of Ashes, clear physical distinction in the portrayal of the wealthy vs the proletariats
- Valley of Ashes (Fitzgerald based this location on the Corona Ash Heaps, a place where ashes were dumped from coal furnaces)
  - A Marxist interpretation of the representation of the Valley of Ashes as a waste product of a booming industry is perhaps analogous with the idea of the proletariats being dispensable and worthless
  - The Valley of Ashes and its portrayal as a wasteland doesn't just link to uninhibited consumerism and build up of ash from excessive production, but also hints at the notion of a moral wasteland, where the pursuit of progress and success leads to moral decay
  - “ashes take the form of houses and chimneys and rising smoke” (B)
    - Connotes impurity, contrasted to the “white palaces” of East Egg
    - Social divide between the aristocrats in East Egg and the proletariats in the Valley of Ashes
  - George Wilson’s garage’s interior was “unprosperous and bare” (B)
    - Stark contrast with the houses in the East and West Eggs
    - Fitzgerald’s physical representation of the class divide between Wilson and the people of the upper class

## 3. Weather (Setting)

- “Sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees”
  - The conviction that Nick speaks of and the favourable weather at the beginning of the summer and the beginning of the story symbolises the promise that lies ahead, it is an optimistic and hopeful beginning
- “The day agreed upon was pouring rain”
  - Represents the overwhelming emotional state that Gatsby was in, as the day he dreamt of for the past 5 years was finally here and took away his sense of rationality as he went out the backdoor into the rain and came back from the front door
- “It’s stopped raining...he smiled like a weatherman”

- Once Gatsby spent some time with Daisy, he was a lot more calm. The calmness of the weather reflected his peaceful inner state
- “The next day was broiling, almost the last, certainly the warmest, of the summer”
- In the scene of climax and tension, the weather is at its hottest and it is the peak of summer. The heat represents rising action and foreshadows conflict
- “But it’s so hot,” insisted Daisy, on the verge of tears”
- Signals the rising action along with the discomfiting heat, building tension
- “Leaves’ll start falling soon” and “there was an autumn flavour in the air”
- Signals the falling action of the story. This hint of autumn and dying leaves comes just before Gatsby is shot and killed while in his pool, signalling a conclusion. The weather therefore follows the action throughout the whole story.

#### 4. Motif of Time

- Gatsby (A)
  - Initially, he seems to represent the future, a hopeful tomorrow, and wants only success, both socially and in his romantic quest for a future with Daisy
  - Gatsby is stuck in the past and is obsessed with having things back the way they were in Louisville
  - Delusional and stubborn, his love for Daisy is causing his mental decline- “Running down like an overwound clock” the pain of reminiscence overwhelms him.
  - “I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before”- Evident from Gatsby’s diction that he wanted to repair something that he felt was broken; his relationship between him and Daisy. But it also shows his obsession with the past and re-creating it. It is this very obsession with the past which prevents Gatsby from being able to live in the present. Without living the present, a hope for tomorrow or a future immediately vanishes, seen through his eventual downfall
  - Gatsby seems to plan his entire future around his past, which is why his future is empty, non-existent. He is living an empty dream, an empty life, one which cannot be brought back or repeated
  - His visions thus fall apart along with his obsession with the past- “Can’t repeat the past? Why of course you can!”
- Daisy’s entrapment (B)
  - Embodies the stereotypical idea of a woman in 20th century who were expected to act a certain way, she is stuck in that notion
- Tom
  - Obsessed with History, reads “Rise of The Coloured Empire”
  - Aristocrat or “Old Money”, stuck in the past as he is forced to live up to his ancestors’ wealth, by amassing his own
  - Tries to relive his youth by having a mistress- Myrtle Wilson “my girl”
- “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (A) + (B)
  - Represents the obsession with the past which everyone in the novel had, because the past seemed to represent brighter and more hopeful days
  - Struggling for progress but there is constant force resisting them, dragging them back into the past
  - While Gatsby never loses his optimism, he expends all his energy in pursuit of an ambition that only moves farther away. This is apt metaphor characterises both Gatsby’s struggle and the American dream itself

#### 5. Symbols

- Billboard of the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg
  - “God sees everything” said George Wilson while looking at the billboard (B)
    - Billboard represents the eyes of God staring down upon and judging American society as a moral wasteland. The upper class are likened to God, which highlights the divine and inescapable divide between the wealthy and the poor that George recognised.
  - “his eyes, dimmed a little by many countless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground” (D)

- Represents the higher class, since doctors and oculists tend to be richer and part of the higher classes
- Ironical considering it is an advertisement for an oculist yet his eyes dim
- “brood(ing) on over” suggests that the higher classes are looking down on the poor and lower classes
- Fitzgerald paints 1920s America as world absent of God’s presence, hence a sense of displaced spirituality where religion is replaced by materialism
- The Green Light
  - “He stretched out his arms to a single green light” (A)
  - Represents Gatsby’s hopes and dreams for the future, a future he can only imagine with Daisy in it
  - Green is the colour of hope and also represents Gatsby’s “extraordinary gift for hope” that he will get Daisy back and return everything to how it was 5 years before
  - It is also the colour of money, which links to Gatsby’s ambitions for wealth and how they are all linked to Daisy. It is the single most prominent symbol of the American Dream in the novel
  - In committing his extraordinary capacity for dreaming to his love for Daisy, Gatsby devoted himself to nothing more than pure material gain
- The Valley of Ashes
  - It represents the moral and social decay that results from the uninhibited pursuit of wealth, as the rich indulge themselves with regard for nothing but their own pleasure (uninhibited consumption)
  - Symbolises the plight of the poor, like George Wilson, who live among the dirty ashes and lose their vitality as a result.
- Motif of Cars
  - “It’s pretty isn’t it, old sport?” (D)
  - While introducing his car to Nick, he seems as though he himself is in awe of it, and wants Nick’s acknowledgement as well. Gatsby’s car epitomises the height of consumerism as ‘everybody had seen it’ and it was of ‘monstrous length’
  - “the death car” (A) + (D)
    - It is the very materialistic dream that Myrtle chased which ‘violently extinguished’ her life
- String of Pearls
  - “he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars” (C)
    - Like a chain, a metaphor for the restrictions that Tom will place on her after they are married
  - “She... pulled out the string of pearls” (C)
    - After reading the letter from Gatsby, Daisy did not desire to marry Tom, and she breaks the string of pearls, symbolic of her breaking the restrictions imposed on her.
  - “the pearls were around her neck” (C)
    - she has the pearls back on her neck, which means that she has accepted these restrictions. She is thus an easy victim of circumstance and doesn’t seem to have the power to fight for what she really wants

## 6. Epigraph

- “Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her; If you can bounce high, bounce for her too, Till she cry ‘Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover, I must have you!’” - Thomas Parke D’Invilliers (D)
- Fitzgerald begins the novel with an epigraph which consists of a poem, supposedly written by Thomas Parke D’Invilliers, who’s actually a character Fitzgerald’s first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, so this poem is in fact written by Fitzgerald.
- A construct by Fitzgerald which functions to draw attention to the theme of superficiality and manipulation of appearances which is at the heart of the corrupt world described by Nick. The lover here will succeed because of his outward appearance and actions, rather than because of some deep emotional connection with the woman.

## 7. Narrator Bias

## 8. Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action

## 9. Bildungsroman (Psychological and moral development of a character from youth to maturity)

## 10. Conflict and Resolution



11. First person narrative: Stream of Consciousness (replicates the thought processes of characters without much intervention from the narrator)