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Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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The Great Gatsby

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. pick out the nuances that contribute to a character's development.
2. pick out those elements and nuances of plot that are often missed by the casual reader.
3. pick out those significant incidents and comments that signal the author's theme.
4. identify and comment on these symbols in this novel: Dr. Eckleburg's eyes; the Valley of Ashes; the light at the end of the dock; the West and the East.
5. write a one-and-a-half page essay on "Jay Gatsby and His American Dream."
6. discuss the significance of the novel's title, *The Great Gatsby*.
7. discuss the following themes that appear in the story:
 - a. As American society becomes more materialistic and loses faith in ideals, the green land turns to a valley of ashes.
 - b. The very rich are a different kind of people who are insensitive to others and exhibit a moral laxness because of their wealth.
 - c. Because he does have a dream, energy, and enthusiasm, Gatsby is superior to the idle rich that he wishes to emulate.
8. state what an allusion is, identify at least three that are used in this novel, and point out the significance of each to the story.

The Great Gatsby

Questions for Essay or Discussion

1. Explain the following: “Gatsby’s death, like his life, is the product of an illusion.”
2. In your mind, does Gatsby’s “incorruptible dream” cancel out his business activities?
3. Since Gatsby and Wilson both lose the women they love to Tom, they die together. What does Tom’s victory represent?
4. Prove that the following is an idea developed in this novel: *America’s loss of devotion to an ideal has turned the “green land” into an ash heap.*
5. In the last chapter, Nick compares the green new world with the green light at the end of the dock. How do they represent similar things?
6. In the prologue, we see that Nick has arrived at a definite point of awareness. Trace his developing consciousness in the novel and comment on how he functions as the narrator.
7. Explain why Fitzgerald’s style is described as “lushly evocative.”
8. Support the following themes referring to comments and incidents in the novel:
 - A. The extremely rich are careless, arrogant people who retreat behind their money.
 - B. While the East may hold more excitement, the Midwest offers continuity and stability.
 - C. Some dreams can hold on too long and require too high a price.
 - D. We spend our lives running to catch the dreams from our past.
 - E. The life of modern man is loud, raucous, and expensive; like the valley of ashes, it is a burnt-out affair with little meaning, significance, or joy.

The Great Gatsby

Introductory Lecture - Outline

I. Setting for novel:

The Roaring Twenties – The Jazz Age

- A. World War I is over. This has brought great relief but also some disillusionment.
- B. This period is characterized by:
 - 1. spectacular economic growth
 - 2. a general rise in prosperity but still great disparity between the rich and everyone else
 - 3. far-reaching social changes:
 - a. The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the Volstead Act, ushered in Prohibition. This law created an atmosphere which led to violence, crime, bootleggers, and rumrunners. It also allowed women to assert their independence by drinking illegally, along with men.
 - b. The Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Women's Suffrage, was a result of the struggle of women to assert their rights and independence.
 - c. A breakdown in morals including the following scandals:
 - (1) Chicago Black Sox Scandal
 - (2) Teapot Dome Scandal
 - (3) Gangsters and Police Corruption (Chief Becker electrocuted)
 - d. "The Age of the Automobile"; cars increased from 7 million in 1919 to 23 million in 1929.
 - e. The era is pictured as marked by jazz, drinking, and partying.

II. The Author

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

A. Life

1. He was born and grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota.
2. He enrolled in Princeton but left in 1917 to join the army.
3. As a young army lieutenant stationed in the South, he met and courted Zelda Sayre.
4. After the success of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), he and Zelda married.
5. This turbulent marriage was marked by an extravagant lifestyle, alcoholism, and Zelda's emotional breakdown.

B. Works

1. Two collections of short stories
2. Four novels, of which *The Great Gatsby* is most highly praised.
 - a. Because his stories took place in the Roaring Twenties, he is called "a chronicler of his age."
 - b. His style is described as "lushly evocative."
 - c. Because of his subject matter and style, the critics initially overlooked the thematic depth of *The Great Gatsby*.

Note: All quotations come from Scribner's *The Great Gatsby: The Authorized Text* (1995)

The Great Gatsby

Test

I. Multiple choice

- In this novel the, “Midas” referred to is
 - the Buchanan’s chauffeur.
 - a business associate of Gatsby.
 - the nickname Tom gives to his boss.
 - an allusion to the legendary King Midas.
 - Both B and D
- This story is narrated by
 - Nick, in flashback.
 - Nick, as the events unfold.
 - the all-knowing narrator.
 - Nick and Gatsby.
 - Both Nick and the all-knowing narrator.
- What Nick thinks is “gorgeous” about Gatsby was his
 - splendid physique.
 - parties.
 - “heightened sensitivity to the promises of life...a romantic readiness.”
 - style of moving and living coupled with his extravagant spending.
 - Both A and D.
- At the opening of the story, Nick tells us that he has become disillusioned by
 - Gatsby.
 - Tom and Daisy.
 - what preyed on Gatsby and “floated in the wake of his dreams.”
 - promises made but never kept.
 - a sense of man’s relative unimportance in an indifferent cosmos.
- We are told repeatedly that Daisy’s most notable feature is
 - her slim and elegant waist.
 - her long, gorgeous hair.
 - her “languid” manner of walking.
 - her voice.
 - Both A and C.

6. Which fact about Jordan Baker is *not* true?
 - A. She is a professional golfer.
 - B. She eavesdrops on the personal conversations of her friends.
 - C. She has been accused of cheating in a golf game.
 - D. When Nick tells her he is leaving, she tells him she is engaged to someone else.
 - E. When the Buchanans lived in Chicago, she and Tom had an affair.

7. The specific symbol used in this novel to represent the empty lives, devoid of any ideals or spirituality, is
 - A. the green light at the end of the dock.
 - B. the valley of ashes.
 - C. Dr. Eckleburg's eyes.
 - D. Gatsby's yellow roadster.
 - E. the church that is turned into a dance hall.

8. The night before Daisy and Tom's wedding
 - A. Daisy gets drunk and cries.
 - B. Daisy gets a letter that one assumes is from Gatsby.
 - C. Nick tries to talk Daisy out of getting married.
 - D. Tom is seen going into a hotel with a waitress.
 - E. Both A and B.

9. What do Nick and Gatsby have in common?
 - A. They both were in the Third Division during the war.
 - B. They both love Daisy.
 - C. They both run away from home when only sixteen.
 - D. They both hate, yet love, the rich.
 - E. A, C, and D.

10. Jay Gatsby drops the name James Gatz because he
 - A. is wanted by the police for a crime.
 - B. hates his father and everything about him.
 - C. wants a name that has a romantic sound to it.
 - D. uses the name of the wealthy man who befriends him as a youth.
 - E. Both A and D.

11. How does Tom first find out that there is a love affair between Gatsby and Daisy?
 - A. He sees the way they look at each other.
 - B. A private detective tells him.
 - C. He sees them walking into a hotel in the city together.
 - D. Gatsby tells him.
 - E. Daisy shouts it at him to get even for all he has done to her.

12. Which of the following statements, if any, is *not* true of Gatsby?
- A. His parents are poor and unsuccessful farmers.
 - B. He attends Oxford College for several months.
 - C. He is cheated out of the \$25,000 Dan Cody left him.
 - D. He has made most of his money in illegal activities.
 - E. All the statements are true.
13. The scene in which Nick observes Tom and Daisy through the kitchen window is important to a major theme in this novel because it shows
- A. the final dissolution of the Buchanan marriage.
 - B. Tom and Daisy planning to put all the blame on Gatsby.
 - C. Tom and Daisy coming together in a conspiracy of the rich against everyone else.
 - D. that Tom really does love Daisy.
 - E. Both A and D
14. The relationship between Nick and Jordan falls apart because
- A. Nick is going back to the Midwest.
 - B. Nick realizes that Jordan is not an honest person.
 - C. Nick is disillusioned with Jordan, Tom, Daisy, and all the careless, rich people.
 - D. Nick is returning to his former love.
 - E. Jordan has gotten bored with Nick.
15. By the end of the story, Nick has come to
- A. love the East and reject the West.
 - B. love the East but accept the West.
 - C. reject the East and what it stands for.
 - D. reject the West and what it stands for.
 - E. reject both the East and West.
16. By the end of the novel, Nick has come to the realization that
- A. Gatsby is a phony.
 - B. Tom and Daisy are devoid of any real values and insensitive to most of life.
 - C. Jordan is a faithless creature who can never be true to him.
 - D. life is not always as bad or as good as it seems.
 - E. the rich have problems, too.

17. East Egg and West Egg are unlike in what respect(s)?
- A. physical terrain and geography
 - B. amount of wealth and material goods
 - C. the source of their wealth
 - D. their spiritual values
 - E. Both A and D
18. To Nick, those people who came from the East to the West seeking freedom from oppression and spiritual values were
- A. the early Dutch settlers.
 - B. the Buchanans.
 - C. Dan Cody.
 - D. Gatsby, Wolfsheim, and the rest of the entrepreneurs.
 - E. the McKees, Catherine, and the Wilsons.
19. Who represents the “new money,” the wealthy, and vulgar people?
- A. Jordan Baker and Daisy
 - B. The West Eggers
 - C. The people from the West
 - D. The people in the East
 - E. The Buchanans and people like them
20. Who represents the arrogance and moral laxness of the rich?
- A. Meyer Wolfsheim
 - B. Jay Gatsby
 - C. Dan Cody
 - D. Tom Buchanan
 - E. Henry Gatz
21. Who is alarmed by the changes she/he perceives are taking place in society?
- A. George Wilson
 - B. Tom Buchanan
 - C. Nick Caraway
 - D. Jay Gatsby
 - E. Daisy Buchanan
22. Nick concludes that Gatsby is better than Daisy and Tom because
- A. even though he may have gotten it illegally, he has worked for his money.
 - B. he is the son of a poor farmer.
 - C. Gatsby at least has a dream or an ideal, limited and materialistic as it is, while the others have none.
 - D. he is a loyal friend one can count on, and the others are not.
 - E. Gatsby is plain and straight forward, but the others are dishonest.

23. For Gatsby, Daisy represents
- A. youth and beauty.
 - B. wealth and glamour.
 - C. sensuality and physical attraction.
 - D. power and wealth.
 - E. Both A and B.
24. Who represents the pursuit of The American Dream that is based on the accumulation of material goods and wealth?
- A. Tom Buchanan
 - B. Meyer Wolfsheim
 - C. Jay Gatsby
 - D. Nick Caraway
 - E. Both A and C

II. Essays (Answer any two)

1. Arthur Mizener has said of Fitzgerald, “[He] realized the central moral dilemma of American life, the conflict between the possibilities of life which are made available by wealth, and the lack among the rich of that heightened sensitivity to these promises.”
How does this quote apply to Tom, Daisy, Gatsby, and Nick?
2. In the last chapter, Nick makes his last comparison/contrast between the East and the West. (The paragraph begins: “Even when the East excited me most...”) Then he relates the grotesque dream he has of four men carrying a drunken woman on a stretcher and going into the wrong house. In what way does this dream represent Nick’s final feelings on the East?
3. Over the course of the three months Nick spends in New York (the East), he changes his thinking; that is, he comes to a realization. What is it?
4. By citing incidents and/or comments from the novel, show that Nick has a high opinion of Gatsby, at least in retrospect, and state Nick’s reasons for thinking of Jay Gatsby as “the Great Gatsby.”

The Great Gatsby

Answer Key

1. D	7. B	13. C	19. B
2. A	8. E	14. C	20. D
3. C	9. A	15. C	21. B
4. C	10. C	16. B	22. C
5. D	11. A	17. C	23. E
6. E	12. E	18. A	24. C

The Great Gatsby

Alternate Test

1. In the prologue, Nick tells us of his disillusionment with people. This disillusionment is caused by
 - A. Jordan Baker and her dishonesty.
 - B. Gatsby and his lifestyle.
 - C. what preyed on Gatsby.
 - D. Both A and B.
 - E. A, B, and C.

2. Nick tells us that when he returns from the war, he thinks the "ragged edge of the universe" is
 - A. Europe.
 - B. the West.
 - C. the East.
 - D. West Egg.
 - E. New Haven.

3. West Egg is different from East Egg in
 - A. size and shape.
 - B. that West Egg is where the nouveau riche live.
 - C. that West Egg is less fashionable.
 - D. Both B and C.
 - E. A, B, and C.

4. In Chapter One when Nick says that no one was "able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind," the person he is referring to is
 - A. Myrtle.
 - B. George.
 - C. Gatsby.
 - D. Tom.
 - E. Wolfsheim.

5. Chapter One ends with a notable image. What is it that Gatsby is doing the first time Nick sees him? Gatsby is
 - A. standing on a balcony at his party.
 - B. stretching his trembling arms out in the darkness.
 - C. arguing with a man on the telephone.
 - D. dancing with a beautiful woman.
 - E. sailing his boat swiftly across the sound.

6. The Valley of Ashes is
 - A. literally piles and piles of ashes dumped by railroad cars.
 - B. symbolically the ash heaps which represent something burned out, perhaps the lives of modern Americans.
 - C. presenting us with a picture of the waste products of our industrial age as they blight the landscape.
 - D. B and C.
 - E. A, B, and C.

7. Just before Daisy's marriage to Tom,
 - A. Gatsby gives Daisy an expensive string of pearls.
 - B. Nick tries to talk Daisy out of the marriage.
 - C. Jordan tells Daisy of Tom's affair with the maid.
 - D. Daisy receives a letter from Gatsby.
 - E. Tom begins to cry when Daisy tries to cancel the wedding.

8. In the early chapters, the green light at the end of the Buchanan's dock is a symbol for
 - A. Tom's wealth and power.
 - B. Nick and his relationship with Daisy and Tom.
 - C. Daisy and her proximity, but also her distance, from Gatsby.
 - D. all that is wrong in East Egg.
 - E. a striving for equality and brotherhood.

9. When Gatsby tells Nick that he is "trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me a long time ago," why does Nick have to restrain his laughter?
 - A. Because of the serious but comical look on Gatsby's face.
 - B. Because he has just heard Tom say the same thing.
 - C. Nick can not feel sad for a man with all the money Gatsby has.
 - D. Because Gatsby is always saying the same line.
 - E. Because the line and the image Gatsby is trying to create is so trite.

10. Nick thinks Gatsby is making up most of the story until
 - A. Gatsby swears it is true.
 - B. Gatsby shows him a picture.
 - C. Gatsby shows him a medal.
 - D. Jordan confirms Gatsby's story.
 - E. Both B and C.

11. James Gatz changes his name to Jay Gatsby because
 - A. he thinks Gatz is too German sounding at a time Germany is at war.
 - B. he does not want his father to find him.
 - C. he is running from the police.
 - D. he wants a more romantic-sounding name.
 - E. Both B and C.

12. Considering his dream, Gatsby receives a most appropriate education from
 - A. Oxford College.
 - B. Dan Cody.
 - C. Nick.
 - D. Wisconsin State University.
 - E. Meyer Wolfsheim.

13. What is it that Gatsby hears in Daisy's voice?
 - A. A promise of long, beautiful nights.
 - B. It is "full of money".
 - C. Contempt for everything foreign.
 - D. A compassion for the poor.
 - E. A knowledge of higher truths.

14. When Daisy hears how Gatsby has made his money, she
 - A. says it does not matter.
 - B. draws away from Gatsby.
 - C. tells Tom to leave.
 - D. refuses to believe Tom.
 - E. Both C and D.

15. Nick stops seeing Jordan because he believes
 - A. that she told Wilson that Gatsby killed Myrtle.
 - B. she is a dishonest person.
 - C. she can never love a man who is not rich.
 - D. she is like Tom and Daisy.
 - E. B, C, and D.

The Great Gatsby

Alternative Test Answer Key

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. E | 11. D |
| 2. B | 7. D | 12. B |
| 3. D | 8. C | 13. B |
| 4. A | 9. E | 14. B |
| 5. B | 10. E | 15. D |

The Great Gatsby

Study Guide

Teacher's Copy

Chapter I

Vocabulary

abortive – fruitless; cut short
abruptly – suddenly
acute – sharp; keen
audible – able to be heard
banns – public announcement of a proposed marriage
ceased – stopped
coherence – clarity
compelled – drove; forced
complacency – self-satisfaction
conferred – bestowed
contemptuous – disdainful
contour – shape
conviction – certain belief
corroborated – confirmed
deft – skillful
divan – couch
elations – joys
epigram – short, witty poem or saying
erect – upright
extemporizing – improvising
fervent – intensely glowing
fractiousness – quarrelsomeness
hardy – tough
imperatively – commandingly
incredulously – skeptically
infinitesimal – incalculably small
intimation – hint
irrelevant – wholly unimportant
languidly – sluggishly
levity – lightness; frivolousness
parcelled – given; measured
paternal – fatherly
peremptorily – urgently; commandingly
pessimist – negative thinker
preceded – went before

prominent – at the forefront; well-known
proximity – nearness
pungent – strong-smelling
reciprocal – returned
riotous – exuberant
rotogravure – old method of developing photographs
sedative – calming
submerged – put under
supercilious – coolly haughty
superficial – shallow; surface-level
tangible – solid; touchable
turbulent – disturbed; in commotion
unaffected – natural
uninflected – toneless; unaccented
unobtrusively – without getting in the way
vigil – watch
wan – pale; sickly

1. In Chapter One we meet the narrator, Nick Carraway. These first four paragraphs serve as a prologue that introduces the rest of the story. What information does Nick give us about himself in this prologue?

He tends to reserve judgment about people. Last autumn, he came back home (to the Midwest) from the East, and he wants the world to stand at moral attention. He wants no more glimpses into the human heart. He still has a great affection for Gatsby.

2. What does Nick say is “gorgeous” about Gatsby? (Find the quotation in the fourth paragraph.)

“...there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life...it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness...”

3. In the same paragraph, Nick tells us of his disillusionment with mankind. In your opinion, is it Gatsby or something else that causes this disillusionment? (Be prepared to defend and/or explain your answer.)

“...it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dream...”

4. What is Nick’s socio-economic background?

There is a family tradition that his family had descended from Dukes, but actually they are descended from a founder of a wholesale hardware business.

5. When Nick returns from the war, why does he decide to go East?

He is going to support himself by learning the bond business, but apparently he is motivated by a desire to move from the “ragged edge of the universe” to the center of it.

6. The action in this story takes place over the course of one summer. What occurs that makes Nick feel that his life is beginning over again?

He moves to West Egg in the spring and has a sense of being a part of it (note the incident with one stranger asking directions).

7. How is West Egg different from East Egg?

They are dissimilar in every way but size and shape. East Egg is more fashionable; the residents are from “old money.” West Egg is “nouveau riche,” the newly rich, which is a somewhat disparaging reference.

8. Before meeting him, what do we learn of Tom Buchanan?

He is very rich, thirty years old, and was a football hero at Yale. He came East from Chicago looking for something, but the reader does not know what. Buchanan has a powerful body and is perhaps cruel and arrogant. “Now don’t think my opinion on these matters is final” he seemed to say, “just because I’m stronger and more of a man than you are.”

9. Find the words used to describe Daisy’s most noticeable feature.

She had a “low thrilling voice.” “...there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget...” “[her voice suggested] that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.”

10. At this point, what is your opinion of Daisy?

She is pretty and perhaps a little vain.

11. Daisy says, “Tom’s getting very profound.” What do you think her tone might have been? Present support for your answer.

Her tone seems sarcastic, possibly sad. Just prior to this she had said somewhat petulantly, “That’s what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great big, hulking physical specimen...” Later in regard to Tom’s comment on the “colored races,” she says sarcastically, “We’ve got to beat them down,” while “...winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.”

12. At this point, why does Nick observe, “There was something pathetic in his [Tom’s] concentration...”?

Tom, who has always been smug and complacent, is even more so now. But at this point, he is trying to deal with ideas, and thinking appears to be a difficult task for Tom.

13. We find out that Tom has a woman in New York. What unflattering feature of Jordan Baker’s personality is revealed?

She is an unabashed eavesdropper who will listen in on a personal conversation between her best friend and husband.

14. When the telephone rings a second time, why does Nick say, “No one was able utterly to put this fifth guest’s shrill metallic urgency out of mind”?

All four of the people at the table suspect that it is Tom’s mistress calling back.

15. Why is Nick’s instinct “to telephone immediately for the police”?

Nick views the situation between Tom, Daisy, and Tom’s woman as a nasty one that can lead to trouble. This can be a subtle foreshadowing.

16. What three sentences indicate that Nick thinks Daisy’s cynical outburst is fake?

“The instant her voice broke off...I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me 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.”

17. What is the reader left to think about Daisy’s emotional state and her relationship with Tom?

While Daisy is something of a phony, she is genuinely disturbed about Tom’s philandering and other women. While she may poke fun at his intellectual ability, she does share some bond with him; that is, they have a “membership in a rather distinguished secret society.”

18. Who is Jordan Baker, and what has Nick heard about her?

She is a professional golfer, and Nick has heard a critical, unpleasant story about her, but he cannot remember what it is.

19. Daisy says, “I think the home influence will be good for her [Jordan].” What do you think her tone may be? Offer support for your answer.

Daisy is not serious. In fact, there is probably a sarcastic edge to the words “home influence.” After she says this, “Daisy and Tom looked at each other for a moment in silence.” Then, Tom, ignoring Nick’s question, asks him, in so many words what complaints Daisy made about Tom. He tells Nick not to believe everything Daisy said about him.

20. As Nick drives away from their house, he experiences a number of conflicting emotions. Why does he feel touched? Why does he feel confused and disgusted?

He feels touched because their interest in his life make Tom and Daisy seem a little less aloof and remote, as most rich people are.

He would have liked to see Daisy act more maternal, more like a wife and mother. He is not surprised by Tom’s infidelity, but Nick is surprised by the fact that Tom was depressed by a book. He concludes that Tom is nibbling “at the edge of stale ideas” because “his physical egotism” is not enough for him any more.

21. At the end of this chapter, Nick sees Gatsby on the lawn and is about to call to him but does not. What stops him? What does Gatsby’s “trembling” suggest?

Gatsby seems to be content to be by himself as he stretches his arms toward the dark water in a curious way.

This stretching of his arms into the darkness is not a casual act for him; the action carries an emotional importance for him.

22. The green light that Gatsby is staring at is mentioned several more times, and it assumes a symbolic significance. Where do you think the green light might be?

It is probably East Egg, across the bay from West Egg.

23. The differences between the East (the East Coast, particularly New York) and the Midwest (Minneapolis, Louisville, and Chicago) are mentioned frequently. What does Nick say about each?

The MIDWEST

the ragged edge of the universe

*dinner and the evening were
"hurried from phase to phase
toward its close in a continually
disappointed anticipation or else
in sheer nervous dread of the
moment itself"*

The EAST

the center of the universe

*Tom echoes at this point, Jordan,
Daisy, and Nick's feelings when
he says "Oh, I'll stay in the East,
. . . I'd be a God Damn fool to live
anywhere else."*

*dinner in the East "would be over and
casually put away"*

*"I began to like New York. The racy
adventurous feel of it at night... I liked to
walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out
romantic women from the crowd and
imagine...I was going to enter their lives."*

*The East, in short, is sophisticated and
exciting, a place of great promise.
Apparently to all of the refugees
from the Midwest, the Midwest is
not so sophisticated or exciting.*

Chapter II

Vocabulary

ambiguously – capable of being understood in more than one way
anemic – lacking vitality
commenced – began
contiguous – next to; adjacent
countenance – appearance
deferred – postponed
discreetly – unnoticeably
hauteur – arrogance; haughtiness
incessant – constant and uninterrupted
indeterminate – vague; indefinable
initiative – enterprise
jovially – merrily
mincing – affectedly dainty
obscure – vague
oculist – optometrist
pastoral – peaceful; rural
proprietary – possessive
strident – harsh and insistent
transcendent – overcoming; rising (above)
vicinity – surrounding area
wag – joker

1. The description of the “valley of ashes” opens Chapter Two. On a literal level, what is the valley of ashes? What might it represent on a symbolic level?

It is a large dump for ashes. The piles of ash take on the appearance of houses, chimneys, and men. They even “grow like wheat.”

Since ashes are the residue of something which has burned, it is safe to assume that symbolically the “valley of ashes” represents something used up, burnt out, ruined, corrupted, changed, or wasted. Since the ashes take the form of houses and men, the suggestion is that the ash heaps represent wasted, burned-out lives. “Whose lives?” is the question Fitzgerald wants us to answer.

2. Compare and/or contrast

George Wilson

And

Tom

poor, blond, anemic, spiritless

rich, well-built, athletic, aggressive

Myrtle Wilson

And

Daisy

*slightly heavy but very sensuous;
strong vitality, coarse*

slim, languid, refined

3. In what way does Fitzgerald indicate that Myrtle Wilson is not an intellectual?

This is shown by her reading material (scandal magazines) and her interests or, more appropriately, lack of interests.

4. At the party in the apartment, what social classes are represented and by whom?

working class - Myrtle, George Wilson's wife

middle class - The McKees

upper class - Tom

5. In what social class does Nick belong?

He is not from the middle class, nor the upper. He has many of the advantages and tastes of the upper class, but not the money.

6. In what way is the party in the apartment different from the dinner at the Buchanans' in Chapter One? In what way is it similar?

The dinner party at the Buchanans' is more elegant, more refined. The party in the apartment is a raucous, drunken affair. But in both parties an air of boredom from a sense of meaninglessness is pervasive. In both there is also a good deal of unhappiness and posturing.

7. The McKees appear only in Chapter Two. Why does Fitzgerald bring them into the story?

There can be a couple of reasons for this. Along with Catherine they make up Tom and Myrtle's social life in the city. Fitzgerald depicts them as counterpoints to the Gatsby crowd; however, both ends of Nick's social spectrum share common traits: boredom, a contempt for "these people," concern (or lack of concern) for money, and an affinity for alcohol. Nick describes the wife as "shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible." In addition, like Catherine and Myrtle, she seems to be a little dim-witted and insensitive. While Mr. McKee is a little brighter and, perhaps, even a talented photographer, he is just as acquisitive as the three women and not any more likable. As a middle-class couple, they highlight the social class stratification we find in the novel.

8. Notice how often and in what context Doctor Eckleburg's eyes are mentioned. What may be the significance of these eyes?

They are mentioned several times. The eyes always seem to be observing or staring at what is going on. They "see" Nick and Tom, Wilson's repair shop and seem to "oversee" the "valley of ashes." The eyes are blue, in contrast to the omnipresent grey.

9. Do you think Tom will leave Daisy for Myrtle? Support your answer.

Tom gets mad at Myrtle for using Daisy's name, and he breaks her nose. This indicates his lack of tenderness for Myrtle and his sense of propriety for Daisy. We can be fairly sure that for Tom, Myrtle is simply a fling with a sensual, working-class woman that, despite the attraction, Tom would not let break up his marriage.

Chapter III

Vocabulary

apparition – vision; ghost
ascertain – determine
asunder – apart
cataracts – waterfalls
caterwauling – noisily crying
convivial – festive
cordial – warm; heartfelt
corpulent – stout
credibility – believability
credulity – a willingness to believe on slight evidence
crescendo – rise in volume
deplorably – lamentably
discordant – clashing; out of harmony
dissension – disagreement
divergence – departure
echolalia – condition in which one repeats what others have said
eluded – escaped
erroneous – mistaking
florid – ruddy
fortnight – two weeks
fraternal – friendly; brotherly
harlequin – multicolored
homogeneity – sameness; similarity
impetuously – impulsively and forcefully
ineptly – foolishly
innuendo – reference
insolent – overbearing
loitered – lingered
malevolence – ill will
notorious – well-known
obligingly – in an accommodating way
permeate – spread through
poignant – moving; affecting
prodigality – lavishness
provincial – unsophisticated

rent – torn
retracted – took back
speculation – wondering
subterfuges – deceptions
tortuously – in a winding, circuitous manner
tumultuous – confused and disorderly
vacuous – empty of content
vehemently – powerfully; passionately
vinous – wine-induced

1. Find support for this statement: “Gatsby’s parties were expensive, elaborate, raucous affairs; but they were not gatherings of his friends who brought warmth and happiness with them.”

Whole orchestras, not five-piece bands, play for these parties. His guests swim, boat, water-ski, and eat and drink grandly. On Mondays, it takes eight servants and an extra gardener to clean up and repair everything after these weekend parties. Many of the guests do not even know Gatsby and do not care about him. While they gossip about him a great deal, they appear to make little effort to search him out and extend any genuine warmth or friendship toward him.

2. What is Nick’s opinion of the people at the parties when he says “that once there, the guests “conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks”?

He shows contempt for their rude behavior.

3. Explain Nick’s comment, “It was testimony to the romantic speculation he [Gatsby] inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.”

Gatsby is a figure of mystery to most of the people at his parties. Knowing little about him, they tend to make up and spread the wildest of gossip. Surprisingly, these people, who seem to be neither discreet, polite, nor open to wonder, whisper when they gossip about Gatsby. Thus, while they may take advantage of his hospitality, they do have a respect for or, possibly, a fear of him.

4. Why do Jordan and Nick leave the group from East Egg?

The group is too polite, staid, and reserved.

5. What is the great quality in Gatsby's smile?

"It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it...[it] concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you,...believed in you...assured you..." Obviously, Fitzgerald wants the smile to represent Gatsby himself. This usage is a form of synecdoche.

6. What do Gatsby and Nick have in common?

During the war, they were both in the Third Division in France.

7. What does Fitzgerald subtly wish to convey about Gatsby when he has Nick say, "...I was looking at an elegant young roughneck,...whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care"?

The Dictionary of American Slang defines "roughneck" as "an ill-mannered rough person: a rowdy, a tough guy, or hard guy." Since we have seen nothing ill-mannered or rowdy about Gatsby, we can assume that Fitzgerald means to suggest that, despite Gatsby's elegant dress and appearance, there is something hard-looking about him. That he is "picking his words with care" suggests he is speaking in a manner that is not entirely natural to him, a manner with which he is not comfortable, or one which his family has not taught to him.

8. Why do you suppose that Jordan does not believe Gatsby when he says that he had attended Oxford College in England?

At the time, Oxford was the college that the upper-class in England attended. Presumably, Americans who went there are also from wealthy, socially prominent families. Gatsby must not fit Jordan's image of an Oxford man, which is that of a wealthy and polished gentleman, who behaves gracefully and speaks fluently.

9. In what way is Gatsby's behavior at his party quite unlike the behavior of most of his guests?

He does not drink, and he seems to stay aloof from most everyone. Rather than dancing, singing, and partying, his behavior becomes more correct as the evening progresses.

10. What do you think Fitzgerald wishes to convey about Gatsby's parties through the incident with the drunks and the car and the husbands and wives arguing?

For all their opulence, poshness, entertainment, and elaborateness, Gatsby's parties generally end in mindless drunkenness for most of the people there. Few people appear to leave the party sober or happy.

- 11 What is the purpose of the last section of this chapter that begins, “Reading over what I have written so far...”?

Nick has spent much time talking about Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom; this break shows us his life apart from them: his work, his affair with a girl from the office, and both his positive and negative thoughts and feelings about New York. We also learn more about Jordan Baker and Nick’s opinion of her.

Chapter IV

Vocabulary

bootlegger – maker of illegal whiskey (especially during Prohibition)

denizen – regular; frequent visitor

monopolizing – having sole access to

disconcerting – embarrassing; jarring

dispensed – gave out

fluctuate – rise and fall

gilt – golden

inevitably – unavoidably

knickerbockers – loose, short pants gathered at the knee

penitentiary – prison

punctilious – careful; exacting

roved – wandered

sauterne – white wine

sporadic – infrequent

succulent – juicy

unfathomable – immeasurable

1. Since most of his guests ignore him, why do they come to Gatsby’s house?

It is a popular place with free food, drinks, and amusement.

2. In the list of guests, what further indication is there that the old money is in East Egg and the new money in West Egg?

Generally, the people from East Egg have fancy, elitist-type names, while the people from West Egg have ethnic names. In addition, the people from West Egg are identified as show business people, gamblers, a lower class.

3. Why is Nick a little disappointed with Gatsby?

Gatsby has very little to say, so it is hard to establish a relationship or become interested in him.

4. Why does Nick have to restrain his laughter when Gatsby says he is “...trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me a long time ago”?

That line and the image he is trying to create is too trite. The words and the idea must have appeared in countless romantic novels.

5. What does this conversation reveal about Gatsby?

As suggested in Chapter One, Gatsby seems to have a romantic disposition and a tendency to depend on overused phrases.

6. Why does Nick say that listening to him “was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines”?

In his conversation he covers many topics, briefly; perhaps, too, they smack of fiction. For the time being, however, Nick is captivated and believes Gatsby completely.

7. What changes Nick’s mind about the veracity of Gatsby’s stories?

The medal from Montenegro and the picture from Oxford seem to convince Nick that Gatsby is telling the truth. “Then it was all true,” he says.

8. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim, and what do we know of him?

He is an acquaintance of Gatsby and a gambler. He and Gatsby seem to know some people in common. While Wolfsheim does not appear to be an educated man, he is, apparently, clever. He is, in Gatsby’s words, “...the man who fixed the World’s Series back in 1919.” He is a wheeler and a dealer, who has underworld and business “gonnegtion[s].”

9. With the line, “One October day...” Jordan recalls the time in 1917 when she saw Gatsby and Daisy together. What indication is there that Daisy really likes Gatsby?

While he is in town, she goes out only with him; that winter after he leaves, she tries to go to New York and see him before he goes overseas. For almost a year she rarely goes out; then, quite suddenly, she marries Tom.

10. How does Daisy behave the night before her wedding? Why?

She gets drunk, cries, and talks about breaking off her engagement to Tom and returning the pearls he has given her. She considers not even getting married to Tom.

11. From whom do you suppose the letter in her hand comes, and what do you think the letter may have said?

Presumably it is from Gatsby, and he is probably speaking of his love for her.

12. To what is Nick referring when he says, “Then it had not been merely the stars to which he [Gatsby] had aspired on that June night”?

Nick is referring to Gatsby stretching his arms toward the green light. Earlier (Chapter 1) Nick concluded that Gatsby was stretching arms toward the stars, but now he realizes that it was really toward Daisy, or rather toward the abstraction of Daisy, the idealization of her he has created.

13. What is happening in the relationship between Nick and Jordan?

At the end of this chapter, they seem to be very close.

Chapter V

Vocabulary

corrugated – wrinkled; having alternating ridges and grooves

demoniac – fiendish

gaudily – flashily

harrowed – tormented

innumerable – countless

nebulous – indistinct

obstinate – not easily subdued

postern – back gate; private entrance

remotely – distantly

reproach – disappointment; blame

rout – disorganized retreat

scanty – less than sufficient

scrutinized – carefully inspected

swathed – draped

vestige – trace

1. What does Nick mean when he says, “I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there”?

He realizes that at a different time he might have been interested in the offer; given Gatsby’s reputation, the offer might have involved something shady. He refuses the offer without thinking at all about it, because he realizes that Gatsby is only making the offer as payment for the favor of arranging the meeting with Daisy.

2. In this chapter, what stages does Gatsby go through as he waits for and then meets with Daisy?

“After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea so long, ... he was running down like an overwound clock.”

3. How does Daisy react to the meeting? Try to point out several specifics throughout the chapter.

“Her throat, full of aching, grieving beauty, told only of her unexpected joy.” Later she takes him by the arm and looks out the window at the clouds. She breaks into tears and puts her face in the shirts. All in all, she seems pleased with the meeting and is still fond of Gatsby.

4. When Nick asks Gatsby what business he is in, Gatsby responds, “That’s my affair,” before he realizes that it is not an appropriate reply. Why does Gatsby give that answer, and why is *not* it an appropriate reply?

Gatsby’s mind is elsewhere or he would not be so curt. Throughout, he has tried to give the impression that he comes from money; in some way he has tried both to use and befriend Nick. Under those circumstances, Gatsby should not have answered in that manner.

5. Why does Gatsby throw all his shirts on the table?

He is proud of his shirts because they represent his wealth, like his house, his cars, and his parties.

6. Obviously, Daisy, with all her money, is not going to cry over some shirts; why does she cry?

Possibly it is an emotional reaction to this reunion with Gatsby, especially since she had been crying earlier. Daisy is overwhelmed that Gatsby has built this mountain of expensive trifles just for her.

7. As the three of them look across the bay toward Daisy's house, the narrator states, "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one."

What does Fitzgerald mean by:

- A. "Compared to the great distance" between Gatsby and Daisy?

Gatsby had moved across the bay from Daisy and spent a great deal of energy dreaming about her, but realistically, his chances of being reunited with her must have seemed remote. The green light had been close to her, previously, as Gatsby is now.

- B. "Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one?"

Now that his dream has been realized, the green light becomes just a light and is no longer a symbol for Gatsby. For however brief a time, the girl is with him again, so he no longer needs to sustain himself with symbols.

8. In the third to last paragraph of this chapter what does Nick mean when he says, "even that afternoon Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault...?"

Over the five years, Gatsby has built Daisy up in his dreams so much that she can not possibly live up to his image of her.

Chapter VI

Vocabulary

antecedents – predecessors

conceits – fanciful ideas

contingencies – possible outcomes

debauchee – person – person corrupted by indulgence

dilatory – tardy

euphemisms – inoffensive expressions that stand in for potentially offensive ones

foliage – leaves; brush

ineffable – indescribable

ingratiate – to gain favor by flattery

insidious – treacherous

laudable – commendable; praiseworthy

lethargic – sluggish

meretricious – pretentious

notoriety – fame

oblivious – forgetful

perturbed – bothered

profusion – abundance

ramifications – consequences

reposing – placing

robust – healthy; thriving

septic – toxic

transpired – developed; become apparent

turgid – excessively embellished

1. In the first five pages of Chapter Six, we learn of Gatsby's background and more about his romantic disposition.

- A. Who are Gatsby's parents and what is he leaving when he leaves home at 16?

“His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people; his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all.” Remember that this is, of course, Nick's description, as supplied by Gatsby. Certainly his parents are never as ambitious, exciting and glamorous as he [Gatsby] would have liked, but objectively they may not be as bad as Gatsby describes them to Nick.

- B. When and why does James Gatz change his name to Jay Gatsby?

Apparently, “he'd had the name ready for a long time,” because he thinks it a more glamorous name than his own. When he rows out to Dan Cody's yacht, he uses it for the first time.

2. Nick says, “So he [Gatsby] invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.” For James Gatz, what will the ideal Jay Gatsby be, do, and have? Specifically, at night, what sets James’ heart “in a constant, turbulent riot” (seventh paragraph)?

He apparently imagines himself as the wealthy, glamorous, suave, sophisticated man of the world, the idealized Jay Gatsby. “A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain.... Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies...”

3. To young Gatz, what does Dan Cody’s yacht represent?

It symbolizes all the beauty and glamour in the world.

4. Why does Gatsby not get the \$25,000 left him in Cody’s will?

Somehow, Ella Kaye cheats him out of it.

5. Referring to the aftermath of Dan Cody’s death, at the end of the first part of Chapter Six, Nick says, “He [Gatsby] was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.” In your own words, explain Nick’s two points.

In spending five years traveling the world in Dan Cody’s service, Gatsby received his education. That it is a “singularly appropriate education” indicates that it enables James Gatz to develop fully his idea of the Jay Gatsby persona: idle, traveled, sophisticated. At the age of 22 he is on his own, without any resources but with a burning desire to be Jay Gatsby. At 25, as a dashing, but probably still-poor officer, he meets Daisy. At 30, the wealthy, fully realized Gatsby comes to West Egg.

6. Knowing Tom as we do, how can we account for his comment about being “old-fashioned” and “women run[n]g around too much these days to suit [him]”?

He is quite sincere, and he obviously believes in a double standard of behavior. That he, of all people in the book, says this and does not see the irony in it may probably be attributed to a combination of limited intelligence and arrogance.

7. What is Daisy’s opinion of Gatsby’s party?

Except for the half hour she spends with Gatsby, she does not like it. To her and Tom, it is probably typical West Egg: too many nouveau riche, ethnic people pushing, dancing, and singing too loudly and too much.

8. While the reader can have easily predicted Daisy and Tom's reactions to his party, Gatsby cannot. Why not?

Gatsby has the money and some of the airs of old money, but he does not have the values, and so he cannot perceive the Buchanans' snobberies. Because of his wealth, he probably imagines himself to be superior to Tom.

9. When Gatsby says that he cannot make Daisy understand, what is it that he wants her to understand?

Gatsby expects Daisy to know that he loves her; she should leave Tom so that she and Gatsby can be together and get married.

10. What is Nick's view of repeating the past, and what is Gatsby's opinion? Why is Gatsby's opinion unrealistic?

Nick's view is that we cannot repeat the past at all. Gatsby, on the other hand believes that the past can be repeated by "...fix[ing] everything just the way it was before." This view is foolish, since people and circumstances change drastically in five years; money can never restore things to the way they were before.

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

boisterously – rowdily

caravansary – hotel

irreverent – lacking proper respect

libertine – a person unrestrained by conventions or morality

morbid – gloomy; gruesome

portentous – overwrought; pompous

precipitately – suddenly

prig – obnoxiously proper person

stagnant – stale

1. How is the behavior of the characters linked to the hottest day of the summer?

Tom appears short-tempered, and Daisy is on edge. In this heat, the smallest frustration can anger any one of them.

2. What does Tom discover that unnerves him, and how does he discover it?

He sees the look in her eyes, and he realizes that Daisy actually loves Gatsby.

3. What does Gatsby understand about Daisy's voice that Nick does not?

Daisy's voice is "full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it..." Nick had been fascinated by Daisy's voice, but the exact quality of it had always eluded him; Gatsby, however, knows and understands all its varied forms.

4. In what cars do the five of them travel into the city?

Tom, Jordan, and Nick go in Gatsby's car. Gatsby and Daisy go in the Buchanans' coupé.

5. Why do you suppose that Tom decides to let Wilson finally have the car he has been promising him?

A generous interpretation might be that Tom sees Wilson for the first time as a betrayed husband, possibly like himself, and feels some pity for him. On the other hand, Tom may see it as a way to avoid having Wilson become suspicious of him.

6. What indication is there at this point that Tom means quite a bit to Myrtle?

As she looks from the window, Nick notes "...that her eyes, wide with jealous terror, were fixed... on Jordan Baker, whom she took to be his wife."

7. Besides Myrtle's, what other eyes "kept their vigil"?

Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's.

8. As always, there is a grain of truth in what Gatsby says. In what sense is he an Oxford man?

In a program for former officers, he attended Oxford for five months.

9. What does Nick mean and why does he say, "Angry as I was..., I was tempted to laugh whenever [Tom] opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to prig was so complete"?

Tom, the libertine, who has had many women in his life and who is having an affair, is shouting about the absence of morality and fidelity in the world.

10. Why does Daisy say that Tom is "revolting"?

She is tired of his philandering and his passing it off as a "little spree."

11. Why does Daisy have a tough time saying, as Gatsby wishes, that she never loved Tom?

It can be a very final act and can, so to speak, force her to change her life. There was a time when she did love Tom.

12. Why is it important to Gatsby that Daisy say she never loved Tom, only him?

It is part of Gatsby's attempt at controlling his world. If he can persuade Daisy to renounce any feelings of love for Tom, she will become part of Gatsby's dream/creation/universe/possessions.

13. How has Gatsby gotten some of his money, and what does Tom say that startles Gatsby?

Tom says that Gatsby's drugstores sell illegal alcohol. Tom also says that Gatsby has "something" big going on, but Tom's friend, who gave him the incriminating evidence, is terrified to say in what Gatsby is involved.

14. What is Daisy's reaction to this news?

She withdraws into herself, away from Gatsby.

15. How does Fitzgerald prepare the reader for what is about to happen? What words are used? What figure of speech is employed?

Nick says Gatsby's dream is "dead"; Daisy's courage is "gone"; the couple leaves like "ghosts"; there is a "menacing" ahead; Nick's new age of thirty "died away"; and he and Jordan "drove on toward death." This remarkable collection of references to dying, all within one page, foreshadow the upcoming tragedies.

16. Why does Tom make the point to Wilson that he just drove the coupe from New York and the yellow car is not his?

He wants Wilson to know he was not driving the yellow car, in case it is the one that killed Myrtle.

17. What indication is there that Tom really is fond of Myrtle?

He is crying as they drive off.

18. Why does Nick not wait for the taxi inside the Buchanans' house?

He says, "I'd had enough of all of them for one day and suddenly that included Jordan too." He seems disgusted with them and what they represent: the careless, self-absorbed attitude of the rich.

19. What does the reader learn Tom does not know?

Daisy, not Gatsby, was driving the death car.

20. What is the scene that Nick observes taking place between Tom and Daisy in the kitchen?

They are sitting opposite each other. Tom, talking intently, puts his hand on Daisy's, and once in a while she looks up at him and nods in agreement. "They weren't happy...and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together."

21. Why does this scene suggest ill for Gatsby?

Tom and Daisy seem to have drawn very close, which might cause Gatsby to be excluded from her life.

Chapter VIII

Vocabulary

amorphous – shapeless
benediction – blessing
cahoots – partnership; league
commensurate – proportionate
divot – loose piece of turf
fortuitously – happening by chance
grail – the object of an extended, difficult search
holocaust – great destruction of life
humidor – case in which cigars are kept fresh
orgastic – climactic; intensely exciting
pandered – gratified
pneumatic – inflated
protégés – persons trained, influenced, and helped along by others
redolent – aromatic
strata – level (of society)
transitory – brief; temporary
unscrupulously – in an unprincipled manner
vestibule – lobby

1. Why does Nick say... “[Gatsby] couldn’t possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn’t bear to shake him free”?

Nick believes that the affair between Daisy and Gatsby is finished. He bases this on the kitchen scene from the last chapter.

2. At this point, why does Gatsby tell everything to Nick?

He “...told it to me because ‘Jay Gatsby’ had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice.” Apparently Gatsby is feeling vulnerable.

3. In what way is Gatsby’s uniform an “invisible cloak”?

In the uniform of an army officer, all men look equal, socially.

4. Why is the young Gatsby drawn to Daisy?

He is drawn by her beauty, her home, and the fact that many men love her; “...it increased her value in his eyes.” This is yet another reminder that Gatsby has always viewed life, and everything in it, in terms of worth.

5. As he is leaving, why does Nick say to Gatsby, “They’re a rotten crowd....You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together”?

Nick believes that the dream and the world he entered is finished and he feels that Gatsby suspects the same. Nick must know that the Buchanans are not worth all the trouble and heartbreak that they have brought Gatsby.

6. What is the cause of the problem between Jordan and Nick?

Nick thinks of Jordan in the same way that he thinks of the Buchanans. At this point he cannot bring himself to see her.

7. In what context do Dr. Eckleburg’s eyes appear in this chapter?

Before her death, Wilson took Myrtle to the window, “–and I said ‘God knows what you’ve been doing...You may fool me, but you can’t fool God!’” In front of Wilson were the giant eyes, observing all that happened.

8. When Wilson disappears for three hours, where do you guess he might have gone?

Answers may vary, but later it becomes apparent.

9. What does Nick mean when he says, “If that was true [that Gatsby might have realized that Daisy was not going to call] he must have felt that he had lost the old, warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream”?

Nick surmises that if Gatsby has guessed the truth about Daisy, he knows the relationship and his cherished dream are over. For this dream that he has cherished too much and held on to too long, he pays a dear price.

10. How can Wilson’s actions at the end of this chapter be explained?

He kills Gatsby because he is under the impression that Gatsby has had an affair with Myrtle and killed her.

Chapter IX

Vocabulary

addenda – addition

adventitious – happening by chance; accidental

bulbous – bulb-like

circumstantial – detailed; inferred from direct evidence

pasquinade – lampoon; satire

raspingly – abrasively; irritatingly

resolves – resolutions

reverent – awed and respectful

superfluous – excessive; unnecessary

surmise – conjecture; idea based on little evidence

ulster – a long, loose overcoat

1. Why does Nick feel responsible for getting people to the funeral? Why do you suppose Wolfsheim reacts the way he does?

Nick has been Gatsby's friend; at this point, his only friend, it seems. Wolfsheim and Gatsby were business associates, but Wolfsheim does not want to get involved in his death because it can hurt his business.

2. What does young Jimmy Gatz's daily schedule say about him?

Gatz set a strict schedule and program for himself; self-improvement was the immediate goal with success in life being the ultimate goal.

3. Is Nick surprised that Daisy has not sent a message or flowers? Are you?

He says he remembers it without resentment; one infers that he did not really expect her to, so he was not surprised.

4. Throughout the story, Nick has criticized the West. At this point, what is it about the middle-west that he appreciates?

He praises the stability and continuity.

5. Nick's fantastic dream involves El Greco figures. What is the dream, and what might this dream represent in regard to Nick's present feelings about the East?

Four solemn men in dress suits are carrying a drunken woman on a stretcher. They go into the wrong house. "But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares." At this point, Nick views the East as a cold, heartless place.

6. What is Nick's final feeling about Tom and Daisy?

They are careless people who smash things up and then retreat back into their money. He cannot forgive them or like them, but it seems pointless to hate them since they are unaware of everything, except themselves.

7. In the last three paragraphs, Nick makes the symbol of the green light very concrete. What does the green light symbolize?

It represents the rich, full future of our dreams "that year by year recedes before us," almost graspable at the beginning, but always beyond reach.

8. Keeping the last three paragraphs in mind, what does the last sentence in the story mean?

We row against the current, not moving forward, but always returning to the dreams of our past.

The Great Gatsby

Study Guide

Student Copy

Chapter I

Vocabulary

abortive – fruitless; cut short
abruptly – suddenly
acute – sharp; keen
audible – able to be heard
banns – public announcement of a proposed marriage
ceased – stopped
coherence – clarity
compelled – drove; forced
complacency – self-satisfaction
conferred – bestowed
contemptuous – disdainful
contour – shape
conviction – certain belief
corroborated – confirmed
deft – skillful
divan – couch
elations – joys
epigram – short, witty poem or saying
erect – upright
extemporizing – improvising
fervent – intensely glowing
fractiousness – quarrelsomeness
hardy – tough
imperatively – commandingly
incredulously – skeptically
infinitesimal – incalculably small
intimation – hint
irrelevant – wholly unimportant
languidly – sluggishly
levity – lightness; frivolousness
parcelled – given; measured
paternal – fatherly
peremptorily – urgently; commandingly
pessimist – negative thinker
preceded – went before

prominent – at the forefront; well-known
proximity – nearness
pungent – strong-smelling
reciprocal – returned
riotous – exuberant
rotogravure – old method of developing photographs
sedative – calming
submerged – put under
supercilious – coolly haughty
superficial – shallow; surface-level
tangible – solid; touchable
turbulent – disturbed; in commotion
unaffected – natural
uninflected – toneless; unaccented
unobtrusively – without getting in the way
vigil – watch
wan – pale; sickly

1. In Chapter One we meet the narrator, Nick Carraway. These first four paragraphs serve as a prologue that introduces the rest of the story. What information does Nick give us about himself in this prologue?
2. What does Nick say is “gorgeous” about Gatsby? (Find the quotation in the fourth paragraph.)
3. In the same paragraph, Nick tells us of his disillusionment with mankind. In your opinion, is it Gatsby or something else that causes this disillusionment? (Be prepared to defend and/or explain your answer.)
4. What is Nick’s socio-economic background?

5. When Nick returns from the war, why does he decide to go East?

6. The action in this story takes place over the course of one summer. What occurs that makes Nick feel that his life is beginning over again?

7. How is West Egg different from East Egg?

8. Before meeting him, what do we learn of Tom Buchanan?

9. Find the words used to describe Daisy's most noticeable feature.

10. At this point, what is your opinion of Daisy?

11. Daisy says, "Tom's getting very profound." What do you think her tone might have been? Present support for your answer.

12. At this point, why does Nick observe, "There was something pathetic in his [Tom's] concentration...?"

13. We find out that Tom has a woman in New York. What unflattering feature of Jordan Baker's personality is revealed?
14. When the telephone rings a second time, why does Nick say, "No one was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind"?
15. Why is Nick's instinct "to telephone immediately for the police"?
16. What three sentences indicate that Nick thinks Daisy's cynical outburst is fake?
17. What is the reader left to think about Daisy's emotional state and her relationship with Tom?
18. Who is Jordan Baker, and what has Nick heard about her?
19. Daisy says, "I think the home influence will be good for her [Jordan]." What do you think her tone may be? Offer support for your answer.
20. As Nick drives away from their house, he experiences a number of conflicting emotions. Why does he feel touched? Why does he feel confused and disgusted?

21. At the end of this chapter, Nick sees Gatsby on the lawn and is about to call to him but does not. What stops him? What does Gatsby's "trembling" suggest?

22. The green light that Gatsby is staring at is mentioned several more times, and it assumes a symbolic significance. Where do you think the green light might be?

23. The differences between the East (the East Coast, particularly New York) and the Midwest (Minneapolis, Louisville, and Chicago) are mentioned frequently. What does Nick say about each?

The MIDWEST

The EAST

Chapter II

Vocabulary

ambiguously – capable of being understood in more than one way
anemic – lacking vitality
commenced – began
contiguous – next to; adjacent
countenance – appearance
deferred – postponed
discreetly – unnoticeably
hauteur – arrogance; haughtiness
incessant – constant and uninterrupted
indeterminate – vague; indefinable
initiative – enterprise
jovially – merrily
mincing – affectedly dainty
obscure – vague
oculist – optometrist
pastoral – peaceful; rural
proprietary – possessive
strident – harsh and insistent
transcendent – overcoming; rising (above)
vicinity – surrounding area
wag – joker

1. The description of the “valley of ashes” opens Chapter Two. On a literal level, what is the valley of ashes? What might it represent on a symbolic level?

2. Compare and/or contrast

George Wilson

And

Tom

Myrtle Wilson

And

Daisy

3. In what way does Fitzgerald indicate that Myrtle Wilson is not an intellectual?

4. At the party in the apartment, what social classes are represented and by whom?
5. In what social class does Nick belong?
6. In what way is the party in the apartment different from the dinner at the Buchanans' in Chapter One? In what way is it similar?
7. The McKees appear only in Chapter Two. Why does Fitzgerald bring them into the story?
8. Notice how often and in what context Doctor Eckleburg's eyes are mentioned. What may be the significance of these eyes?
9. Do you think Tom will leave Daisy for Myrtle? Support your answer.

Chapter III

Vocabulary

apparition – vision; ghost

ascertain – determine

asunder – apart

cataracts – waterfalls

caterwauling – noisily crying

convivial – festive

cordial – warm; heartfelt

corpulent – stout

credibility – believability

credulity – a willingness to believe on slight evidence

crescendo – rise in volume

deplorably – lamentably

discordant – clashing; out of harmony

dissension – disagreement

divergence – departure

echolalia – condition in which one repeats what others have said

eluded – escaped

erroneous – mistaking

florid – ruddy

fortnight – two weeks

fraternal – friendly; brotherly

harlequin – multicolored

homogeneity – sameness; similarity

impetuously – impulsively and forcefully

ineptly – foolishly

innuendo – reference

insolent – overbearing

loitered – lingered

malevolence – ill will

notorious – well-known

obligingly – in an accommodating way

permeate – spread through

poignant – moving; affecting

prodigality – lavishness

provincial – unsophisticated

rent – torn

retracted – took back

speculation – wondering
subterfuges – deceptions
tortuously – in a winding, circuitous manner
tumultuous – confused and disorderly
vacuous – empty of content
vehemently – powerfully; passionately
vinous – wine-induced

1. Find support for this statement: “Gatsby’s parties were expensive, elaborate, raucous affairs; but they were not gatherings of his friends who brought warmth and happiness with them.”
2. What is Nick’s opinion of the people at the parties when he says “that once there, the guests “conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks”?”
3. Explain Nick’s comment, “It was testimony to the romantic speculation he [Gatsby] inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.”
4. Why do Jordan and Nick leave the group from East Egg?
5. What is the great quality in Gatsby’s smile?
“
6. What do Gatsby and Nick have in common?

7. What does Fitzgerald subtly wish to convey about Gatsby when he has Nick say, "...I was looking at an elegant young roughneck,...whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care"?
8. Why do you suppose that Jordan does not believe Gatsby when he says that he had attended Oxford College in England?
9. In what way is Gatsby's behavior at his party quite unlike the behavior of most of his guests?
10. What do you think Fitzgerald wishes to convey about Gatsby's parties through the incident with the drunks and the car and the husbands and wives arguing?
11. What is the purpose of the last section of this chapter that begins, "Reading over what I have written so far..."?

Chapter IV

Vocabulary

bootlegger – maker of illegal whiskey (especially during Prohibition)

denizen – regular; frequent visitor

monopolizing – having sole access to

disconcerting – embarrassing; jarring

dispensed – gave out

fluctuate – rise and fall

gilt – golden

inevitably – unavoidably

knickerbockers – loose, short pants gathered at the knee

penitentiary – prison

punctilious – careful; exacting

roved – wandered

sauterne – white wine

sporadic – infrequent

succulent – juicy

unfathomable – immeasurable

1. Since most of his guests ignore him, why do they come to Gatsby's house?
2. In the list of guests, what further indication is there that the old money is in East Egg and the new money in West Egg?
3. Why is Nick a little disappointed with Gatsby?
4. Why does Nick have to restrain his laughter when Gatsby says he is "...trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me a long time ago"?
5. What does this conversation reveal about Gatsby?

6. Why does Nick say that listening to him “was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines”?
7. What changes Nick’s mind about the veracity of Gatsby’s stories?
8. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim, and what do we know of him?
9. With the line, “One October day...” Jordan recalls the time in 1917 when she saw Gatsby and Daisy together. What indication is there that Daisy really likes Gatsby?
10. How does Daisy behave the night before her wedding? Why?
11. From whom do you suppose the letter in her hand comes, and what do you think the letter may have said?
12. To what is Nick referring when he says, “Then it had not been merely the stars to which he [Gatsby] had aspired on that June night”?
13. What is happening in the relationship between Nick and Jordan?

Chapter V

Vocabulary

corrugated – wrinkled; having alternating ridges and grooves

demoniac – fiendish

gaudily – flashily

harrowed – tormented

innumerable – countless

nebulous – indistinct

obstinate – not easily subdued

postern – back gate; private entrance

remotely – distantly

reproach – disappointment; blame

rout – disorganized retreat

scanty – less than sufficient

scrutinized – carefully inspected

swathed – draped

vestige – trace

1. What does Nick mean when he says, “I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there”?
2. In this chapter, what stages does Gatsby go through as he waits for and then meets with Daisy?
3. How does Daisy react to the meeting? Try to point out several specifics throughout the chapter.
4. When Nick asks Gatsby what business he is in, Gatsby responds, “That’s my affair,” before he realizes that it is not an appropriate reply. Why does Gatsby give that answer, and why *is not* it an appropriate reply?

5. Why does Gatsby throw all his shirts on the table?

6. Obviously, Daisy, with all her money, is not going to cry over some shirts; why does she cry?

7. As the three of them look across the bay toward Daisy's house, the narrator states, "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one."
What does Fitzgerald mean by:
 - A. "Compared to the great distance" between Gatsby and Daisy?

 - B. "Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one?"

8. In the third to last paragraph of this chapter what does Nick mean when he says, "even that afternoon Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault...?"

Chapter VI

Vocabulary

antecedents – predecessors

conceits – fanciful ideas

contingencies – possible outcomes

debauchee – person – person corrupted by indulgence

dilatory – tardy

euphemisms – inoffensive expressions that stand in for potentially offensive ones

foliage – leaves; brush

ineffable – indescribable

ingratiate – to gain favor by flattery

insidious – treacherous

laudable – commendable; praiseworthy

lethargic – sluggish

meretricious – pretentious

notoriety – fame

oblivious – forgetful

perturbed – bothered

profusion – abundance

ramifications – consequences

reposing – placing

robust – healthy; thriving

septic – toxic

transpired – developed; become apparent

turgid – excessively embellished

1. In the first five pages of Chapter Six, we learn of Gatsby's background and more about his romantic disposition.
 - A. Who are Gatsby's parents and what is he leaving when he leaves home at 16?
 - B. When and why does James Gatz change his name to Jay Gatsby?

2. Nick says, “So he [Gatsby] invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.” For James Gatz, what will the ideal Jay Gatsby be, do, and have? Specifically, at night, what sets James’ heart “in a constant, turbulent riot” (seventh paragraph)?
3. To young Gatz, what does Dan Cody’s yacht represent?
4. Why does Gatsby not get the \$25,000 left him in Cody’s will?
5. Referring to the aftermath of Dan Cody’s death, at the end of the first part of Chapter Six, Nick says, “He [Gatsby] was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.” In your own words, explain Nick’s two points.
6. Knowing Tom as we do, how can we account for his comment about being “old-fashioned” and “women run[ning] around too much these days to suit [him]”?
7. What is Daisy’s opinion of Gatsby’s party?

8. While the reader can have easily predicted Daisy and Tom's reactions to his party, Gatsby cannot. Why not?

9. When Gatsby says that he cannot make Daisy understand, what is it that he wants her to understand?

10. What is Nick's view of repeating the past, and what is Gatsby's opinion? Why is Gatsby's opinion unrealistic?

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

boisterously – rowdily

caravansary – hotel

irreverent – lacking proper respect

libertine – a person unrestrained by conventions or morality

morbid – gloomy; gruesome

portentous – overwrought; pompous

precipitately – suddenly

prig – obnoxiously proper person

stagnant – stale

1. How is the behavior of the characters linked to the hottest day of the summer?
2. What does Tom discover that unnerves him, and how does he discover it?
3. What does Gatsby understand about Daisy's voice that Nick does not?
4. In what cars do the five of them travel into the city?
5. Why do you suppose that Tom decides to let Wilson finally have the car he has been promising him?
6. What indication is there at this point that Tom means quite a bit to Myrtle?

7. Besides Myrtle's, what other eyes "kept their vigil"?

8. As always, there is a grain of truth in what Gatsby says. In what sense is he an Oxford man?

9. What does Nick mean and why does he say, "Angry as I was..., I was tempted to laugh whenever [Tom] opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to prig was so complete"?

10. Why does Daisy say that Tom is "revolting"?

11. Why does Daisy have a tough time saying, as Gatsby wishes, that she never loved Tom?

12. Why is it important to Gatsby that Daisy say she never loved Tom, only him?

13. How has Gatsby gotten some of his money, and what does Tom say that startles Gatsby?

14. What is Daisy's reaction to this news?

15. How does Fitzgerald prepare the reader for what is about to happen? What words are used? What figure of speech is employed?

16. Why does Tom make the point to Wilson that he just drove the coupe from New York and the yellow car is not his?

17. What indication is there that Tom really is fond of Myrtle?

18. Why does Nick not wait for the taxi inside the Buchanans' house?

19. What does the reader learn Tom does not know?

20. What is the scene that Nick observes taking place between Tom and Daisy in the kitchen?

21. Why does this scene suggest ill for Gatsby?

Chapter VIII

Vocabulary

amorphous – shapeless

benediction – blessing

cahoots – partnership; league

commensurate – proportionate

divot – loose piece of turf

fortuitously – happening by chance

grail – the object of an extended, difficult search

holocaust – great destruction of life

humidor – case in which cigars are kept fresh

orgastic – climactic; intensely exciting

pandered – gratified

pneumatic – inflated

protégés – persons trained, influenced, and helped along by others

redolent – aromatic

strata – level (of society)

transitory – brief; temporary

unscrupulously – in an unprincipled manner

vestibule – lobby

1. Why does Nick say... “[Gatsby] couldn’t possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn’t bear to shake him free”?
2. At this point, why does Gatsby tell everything to Nick?
3. In what way is Gatsby’s uniform an “invisible cloak”?
4. Why is the young Gatsby drawn to Daisy?

5. As he is leaving, why does Nick say to Gatsby, “They’re a rotten crowd....You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together”?

6. What is the cause of the problem between Jordan and Nick?

7. In what context do Dr. Eckleburg’s eyes appear in this chapter?

8. When Wilson disappears for three hours, where do you guess he might have gone?

9. What does Nick mean when he says, “If that was true [that Gatsby might have realized that Daisy was not going to call] he must have felt that he had lost the old, warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream”?

10. How can Wilson’s actions at the end of this chapter be explained?

Chapter IX

Vocabulary

addenda – addition

adventitious – happening by chance; accidental

bulbous – bulb-liked

circumstantial – detailed; inferred from direct evidence

pasquinade – lampoon; satire

raspingly – abrasively; irritatingly

resolves – resolutions

reverent – awed and respectful

superfluous – excessive; unnecessary

surmise – conjecture; idea based on little evidence

ulster – a long, loose overcoat

1. Why does Nick feel responsible for getting people to the funeral? Why do you suppose Wolfsheim reacts the way he does?
2. What does young Jimmy Gatz's daily schedule say about him?
3. Is Nick surprised that Daisy has not sent a message or flowers? Are you?
4. Throughout the story, Nick has criticized the West. At this point, what is it about the middle-west that he appreciates?
5. Nick's fantastic dream involves El Greco figures. What is the dream, and what might this dream represent in regard to Nick's present feelings about the East?

6. What is Nick's final feeling about Tom and Daisy?

7. In the last three paragraphs, Nick makes the symbol of the green light very concrete. What does the green light symbolize?

8. Keeping the last three paragraphs in mind, what does the last sentence in the story mean?

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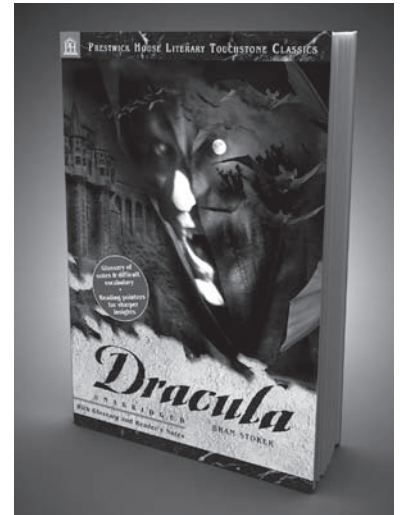
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