*The Great Gatsby*

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Discussion Questions

AP English 11

Allen

Chapter 1

1. What tone is immediately established?
2. What is your first impression of Nick? Do you believe he is a reliable narrator?
3. What is the first impression of Gatsby?
4. Describe Daisy Buchanan. Use specific textual evidence to support your description.
5. What information about the Buchanan’s marriage is revealed in the first chapter?
6. Fitzgerald associates color with people and objects in the novel. List at least 3 examples of color and explain the association.
7. How does the impression of Gatsby expand at the end of the chapter?
8. In the beginning of the novel Nick says Gatsby represents “everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.” (20) Shortly thereafter he says “Gatsby turned out all right at the end;…” (20) Explain what he means.
9. From his first appearance, Tom Buchanan is a mouthpiece of racism. For instance, he sees

himself as one of the “Nordics” who “make civilization;” and who must prevent “these other races” from having “control of things” [p.13]. Elsewhere, he complains of the lack of “self-control” of people who “begin by sneering at family life and family institutions,” and threaten to “throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white” [130]. How does Tom’s expression of such attitudes illuminate his character, his relations with Daisy, and his sense of his place in the world?

Chapter 2

1. What is the Valley of Ashes?
2. If T.J. Eckleburg symbolizes God why does Fitzgerald place this symbol in the Valley of Ashes?
3. How does Myrtle differ from Daisy?
4. Describe the Wilson’s marriage and compare their marriage to that of the Buchanan’s.
5. What happens at the Tom’s apartment in the city?
6. How does Tom further his reputation as “hulking”?
7. At the end of the chapter Nick reveals the titles of Mr. McKee’s photographs. How might these titles reflect an idea from the novel?
8. The introduction of Myrtle and George Wilson underscores the importance of social class in

the novel. How does their presence sharpen Fitzgerald’s characterization of the rich, and what

might the resulting contrasts suggest about the role of class in shaping social experience in The

Great Gatsby?

Chapter 3

1. In this chapter Nick goes to his first party at Gatsby’s house. Describe the party and explain how it further reflects the enigmatic character of Gatsby.
2. How do the party and the partygoers convey Fitzgerald’s comment on wealthy society in the 1920s?
3. Describe Jordan Baker.
4. Describe Nick’s first meeting with Gatsby.

Chapter 4

1. What is the difference between West Egg and East Egg?
2. How does Gatsby make his money?
3. Describe Meyer Wolfsheim. Why does Fitzgerald include him in the novel? How is Wolfsheim, along with the anti-Semitism informing his characterization, important to

shaping the conflicts of the novel?

1. Explain what is revealed in the flashback in this chapter. Does your impression of Daisy change with this new information? Explain.
2. Explain why Fitzgerald includes the poem (75) in this chapter.
3. What plan is revealed at the end of this chapter? Do you think the plan is a good one?

Chapter 5

1. Describe the conversation between Gatsby and Nick at the beginning of the chapter. What more does it reveal about Gatsby?
2. Why does Gatsby panic and leave?
3. What happens during the reunion between Gatsby and Daisy?
4. What does the clock symbolize?
5. How does Daisy’s reaction to Gatsby’s mansion further characterize her? How does it confirm Gatsby’s planning for the past 5 years?
6. Who is Klipspringer?
7. At the end of Chapter Five, Nick makes much of the power of Daisy’s voice over Gatsby: “I

think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn’t be overdreamed—that voice was a deathless song” (p.96). Later on, Gatsby observes that “Her voice is full of money,” and Nick develops the point: “That was it, I’d never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it.” Is it possible for characters in Gatsby’s world to disentangle different kinds of value: In particular, do the social conventions and self-understandings of the main characters allow them todisentangle the material value associated with economic wealth, the value attributed to a human object of desire, the aesthetic value of a beautiful object, and the moral values by which one assesses a person’s character? Why, if it all, does this matter?

Chapter 6

1. Describe Gatsby’s real background.
2. What has been happening between Daisy and Gatsby since they reunited? How does this add to their characterizations?
3. Gatsby believes Daisy does not enjoy herself at the party and Nick describes Gatsby wanting “ nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: “I never loved you.” (100) Nick continues by describing Gatsby as saying: “I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” Nick says “You can’t repeat the past.” “Can’t repeat the past?” Gatsby cries out. “Why of course you can!” (p. 110). How does the past impinge upon the present in the lives of both Nick and Gatsby? Should we see Gatsby as eccentric in his view that one can not merely repeat, but change, the past by starting over?

Chapter 7

1. Many significant events happen in this chapter. Describe those events, the effect each has and what is revealed about all the main characters in this chapter.
2. Is this chapter the climax? Support your view.
3. At the end of the chapter Nick leaves Gatsby “watching over nothing.” (127) What does Fitzgerald convey about his protagonist with this statement?

Chapter 8

1. What is your impression of Gatsby in this chapter considering everything that has happened?
2. Is Gatsby a hero?
3. According to one of the characters in Azar Nafisi’s contemporary memoir, Reading Lolita in

Tehran,, the only “sympathetic“ person in the novel is “the cuckolded husband, Mr. Wilson.”

What aspects of The Great Gatsby might be offered as grounds for such a claim, and is the claim ultimately convincing?

1. Nick describes the events of this chapter as a “holocaust”. Do you agree with this description? Explain.

Chapter 9

1. At Gatsby’s funeral, Nick remembers “without resentment, that Daisy hadn’t sent a message

or a flower”. Should Nick’s attitude surprise us, and how might it illuminate the world that

Gatsby, Nick, and Daisy inhabited, and the value of Gatsby’s “incorruptible dream”?

1. One of the concluding images of The Great Gatsby is Nick’s description of “the old island here

that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes---a fresh, green breast of the new world.” (180). This

imagery reminds us of the predominance in the novel of fantasies insistently associated with men. What is the place for Daisy, and for the novel’s female characters generally, in such fantasies? Are the dreams of the women in the novel consistent with those fantasies, or do we encounter any points of resistance?