

The Great Gatsby

by

F. Scott Fitzgerald

1925



MonkeyNotes Edited by Diane Sauder

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The novel is set in New York in the 1920's, at Nick Carraway's bungalow and Gatsby's mansion on West Egg, at the Buchanan's mansion on East Egg, in various places in New York City, including Myrtle's apartment, the Plaza Hotel, and a restaurant across from The Metropole, and in the Valley of Ashes.

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Nick Carraway - the narrator of the novel and the protagonist of the frame narrative. He is a conservative young man from the Midwest, who comes to New York to seek freedom and escape his small-town background. During the course of the novel, he turns thirty and decides to leave the East, judging it to be shallow and meaningless. At the end of the book, he has decided to return home to the Midwest and marry the girl who has been waiting for him.

Jay Gatsby - the protagonist of the main plot of the novel and the character who is referenced in the book's title. A poor young man in the army, he falls in love with Daisy Fay, a wealthy and shallow "golden girl." He spends the rest of his short life trying to win Daisy's love. In order to attract her attention, he amasses a fortune, earned from bootlegging and other illegal means, and builds a huge, gaudy mansion across the bay from the home of Daisy and her husband. He convinces Nick, Daisy's distant cousin, to bring the two of them together, and for awhile Gatsby and Daisy have an affair. She, however, only uses Gatsby for entertainment, to break the boredom of her life. In the end, he is shot by Wilson, who believes that Gatsby was having an affair with his wife and was responsible for her accidental death.

Daisy Fay Buchanan - an attractive, wealthy, and shallow young lady. She had a fling with Gatsby when he was stationed in the army in Louisville, her hometown, and fancied that she loved him. When Gatsby was sent to Europe to fight in the war, she waited for him to return for a short while. Soon bored and impatient, she began to date other men of her same social class. She met and fell in love with the wealthy Tom Buchanan, whom she married. The young couple moved to East Egg, where they led a meaningless and shallow existence. When Daisy meets Gatsby again at Nick's house, she has an affair with him; but she will never leave Tom for Gatsby. Throughout the novel, Daisy is the object of Gatsby's dream; even in the end, he does not realize that she is not worthy of his adoration.

Tom Buchanan - Daisy's wealthy husband. He is a symbol of the shallowness and carelessness of the very rich. He plays with cars and race horses, has sordid affairs, and treats Daisy shabbily. She, however, will always remain with Tom, for he offers her security and the life style to which she is accustomed.

Myrtle Wilson - the gaudy mistress of Tom Buchanan and the wife of George Wilson. Tom keeps an apartment for her in the city, which is the scene of a rather wild party during the book. When George realizes she is having an affair, he locks her in her room and plans to move her out West. She, however, is killed in a car accident by a hit-and-run driver, who is Daisy Buchanan.

Minor Characters

Jordan Baker - Daisy's good friend. She is an attractive and wealthy young golfer whom Nick dates while he is in New York. A compulsive liar and a cheat, she is almost as shallow and careless as Daisy.

George Wilson - Myrtle's husband and the owner of a garage in the Valley of Ashes. He idolizes his wife and goes crazy when she is killed. Thinking that Gatsby is responsible for her death, he shoots him and then kills himself.

Catherine - the sister of Myrtle who is as tacky and ostentatious as Myrtle.

Mr. and Mrs. McKee - the couple who lives in the apartment below the one that Tom keeps for Myrtle in the city. They come to the party at Myrtle's apartment.

Meyer Wolfsheim - the shady Jewish business associate of Gatsby. He wears human molars as cufflinks, fixed the world series, and makes his money through gambling and racketeering.

Michaelis - one of the few friends of George Wilson. He is a young Greek man who owns a coffee shop in the Valley of Ashes, located next to Wilson's garage. He is the only eye witness to Myrtle's accidental death and tries to comfort Wilson over the loss.

Owl-Eyes - a middle-aged man who frequents Gatsby's parties. He is one of the few people who show up at Gatsby's funeral.

Klipspringer - a frequent guest at Gatsby's parties, who is called "the boarder" and often plays the piano.

Dan Cody - the wealthy man who employed Gatsby as a youth and taught him about business. Although he is never actually seen in the novel, Gatsby explains all about him to Nick, and he is instrumental in shaping Gatsby's life.

Henry C. Gatz - Gatsby's father. He is seen for the first time when he comes to his son's funeral. He is an old, nervous man who is proud of Gatsby's wealth.

Pammy Buchanan - the daughter of Tom and Daisy. She appears only for a moment in the book to show that Daisy is incapable of any depth of maternal love; for her, Pammy is a toy or plaything.

CONFLICT

The novel is really a combination of two plot lines developing simultaneously, creating two sets of protagonists, antagonists, climaxes, and outcomes. Both are given below.

Nick Carraway's plot:

Protagonist - Nick Carraway, the proper young man with roots in the Midwest, is the narrator of the story and the protagonist of his own plot, which forms the frame narrative of the novel. He tries to escape his limited, small town experience in the Midwest and to find himself in New York.

Antagonist - Nick's antagonist is his past and his own limited view of things. Although he tries to run away from his Midwestern heritage, he cannot escape it. His values and beliefs are too entrenched in his whole being. At the end of the book, after becoming totally disillusioned with the world of Daisy and Tom, Nick accepts who he is and returns to live an orderly life in the Midwestern town from which he came.

Climax - The climax for Nick comes in the eighth chapter, after the blow-up between Tom and Gatsby. The next morning Nick goes over to Gatsby's house. Although he has been critical of his neighbor all through the novel, he now realizes that Gatsby is worth more than all of "them" put together. He finally sees that Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and the entire monied class of society is purposeless and devoid of moral value. He then realizes that his place is not in New York.

Outcome - Nick's story ends in comedy, for he reckons with and accepts his past and who he is and returns home to the Midwest to the orderly life of his youth and upbringing. He is really the only truly moral character in the novel.

Jay Gatsby's plot:

Protagonist - Jay Gatsby, the symbol of new money, is the protagonist of a second plot that is totally interwoven into Nick's plot. His gauche behavior and extravagant display of wealth is somewhat purified by his dream of being able to have Daisy Buchanan. Since he met her when he was stationed in Louisville in the army, he has devoted his whole life to obtaining his dream – to winning Daisy for himself.

Antagonist - Gatsby's protagonist is reaching his goal, his dream of being meritorious of Daisy. The irony is that Daisy is not worthy of Gatsby, for she is a selfish, thoughtless young woman who is restless and devoid of value. Gatsby, however, never realizes this fact, for he has put her on a pedestal and spent his adult life idolizing and trying to win her. Until the very end, he sadly believes his dream is obtainable.

Climax - The climax for Gatsby occurs in the seventh chapter when he and Tom fight about Daisy. Hoping to make his dream come true, he tries to make Daisy say that she loves him and has never loved Tom. Although she utters the words, they are not said with any sincerity, for what Daisy wants is to have both Gatsby and Tom. When forced to choose, she will not desert the comfortable life of the wealthy, established society in which she has always lived; thus, Gatsby's dream is destroyed, Daisy has chosen Tom over him.

Outcome - The plot ends in tragedy for Gatsby. He is tragically shot by George Wilson, who believes that Gatsby is his wife's lover and her murderer. In fact, had he not been killed, Gatsby's life would have been miserable, for he would have realized that Daisy would never again be part of his existence; his holy grail, the dream of possessing Daisy, is obliterated forever when Daisy chooses Tom over Gatsby.

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

In the spring, Nick Carraway, a young, moral, and conservative young man from the Midwest, has come to New York to learn the bond business and to escape the confining small town environment of his youth. He rents a small bungalow on West Egg, next door to the mansion of Jay Gatsby and across the bay from the home of his cousin, Daisy Buchanan. Shortly after his arrival, Daisy invites him to come for dinner with her, her husband, Tom, and her friend, Jordan Baker. When he arrives at their home, Nick is amazed at the size of it; he is also amazed at the purposelessness of their lives. Daisy, always dressed in white, seems to float about without a serious thought or any ability to plan anything meaningful; Jordan is no better. Tom seems to care only about his polo ponies and his mistress. When he leaves the Buchanan's, Nick feels disgusted and unsettled by what he has seen. When he arrives home, he spies his neighbor, Jay Gatsby, for the first time. He is standing out back, looking across the bay with his hands outstretched towards a green light at the end of some dock in East Egg.

In July, Nick finds himself on the train into the city with Tom Buchanan. When they stop near the Valley of Ashes, Tom insists that the two of them get off the train so that he can introduce Nick to his mistress, Myrtle Wilson. It is decided that they will all go in to the city and have a party at Myrtle's apartment, which Tom keeps for their affair. Nick tries to get out of it, but Tom is insistent that he joins in the fun. Several people come to the party, and it gets out of hand with too much liquor being served. Even the moral Nick admits he has too much to drink. It is Tom and Myrtle, however, who seem the most inebriated. When she taunts her lover by shouting Daisy's name to him, he hits her and breaks her nose. Nick is repulsed by the violence.

Later in the month, Jay Gatsby sends his chauffeur over to Nick's house with an invitation for him to attend a party the next Saturday night. Nick accepts and arrives at the party with great curiosity. He is amazed at the lavishness he sees. A full bar, with a brass rail, has been set up, and the back yard has been turned into a ballroom, complete with orchestra. Nick carefully surveys the crowd, trying to find the host, whom he has never met. He wanders through the house, encountering several strange characters including a drunken man in

the library whom he calls "Owl Eyes." Not finding his host, however, he is relieved to see Jordan Baker. They spend most of the evening together. At one point, as they are seated at a table, they are joined by a young man in his thirties. He seems to recognize Nick, and they discover that they were in the same division in the army. When the newcomer asks Nick to take a hydroplane flight with him the next day, he discovers he is talking to his host and neighbor, Jay Gatsby. Nick had imagined him to be much older.

Not long after Nick's first experience at a Gatsby party, his host comes for a visit in order to take Nick into New York for lunch. It is obvious that Gatsby has something on his mind. During their journey, he gives Nick information about his past, trying to impress him by saying he won war medals and attended Oxford. He also reveals that he has a favor to ask of Nick, but says that Jordan Baker will tell him what it is. Nick is a bit miffed, for he cannot understand why Gatsby does not just ask himself, and he does not want to spend his evening with Jordan discussing Gatsby.

At lunch, Nick is horrified to learn that Gatsby's other guest is Meyer Wolfsheim, the man who fixed the World Series in 1919. He is also horrified that his host slips away without saying a word of good-bye when they bump into Tom Buchanan. Nick departs and goes to meet Jordan Baker for tea. She tells him that Gatsby's request is for Nick to invite his cousin Daisy over to his house and invite Gatsby as well. Daisy, however, is not to know that Gatsby is coming. Jordan then tells Nick that Daisy had dated Gatsby when she was eighteen and he was a soldier stationed in Louisville. When he received orders to leave Louisville and go to Europe to fight in the war, Daisy planned to run away and marry him, but her parents stopped her. For awhile, she remained faithful to Gatsby; soon, however, she tired of waiting and began to date Tom Buchanan, a wealthy young man from a socially prominent family in Chicago. Before long, she accepted his proposal of marriage and wrote Gatsby a letter to end their relationship.

On the day of the tea to be held at Nick's bungalow, a very nervous Gatsby arrives, worried that Daisy will not come. When she drives up in her convertible, Gatsby can hardly stand it; in fact, he runs out of Nick's house to gain control and to allow Daisy to come inside. He then comes from the back to ring the front doorbell. The first few minutes are very awkward, but the two of them are soon talking about old times. Gatsby insists that he take Daisy on a tour of his house and asks Nick to come along. Gatsby seems to rejudge the value of everything in his house according to Daisy's reaction to it. He simply cannot believe that after all these years of waiting and planning his dream girl is actually in his home.

Nick interrupts the normal narrative of the story to give some background information on Gatsby. He was born as James Gatz to poor farmers in North Dakota. At the early age of sixteen, he decides he wants more out of life and leaves home. When he sees a yacht docked out from the beach, it is a symbol to him of the wealthy existence he desires. He rows a borrowed boat out to the yacht and introduces himself to Dan Cody, a fabulously wealthy man given to wild parties and excessive drink. Cody is impressed with the intelligence and determination of the young lad and takes him on as his assistant and protector. From that point forward, James Gatz leaves his real world behind and fabricates his dream world in which he is Jay Gatsby. When he winds up as a soldier, stationed in Louisville, Daisy becomes part of that dream existence.

In reality, the dream is beginning to break up for Gatsby even though he is not aware of it. When Tom brings Daisy to Gatsby's next party, she finds the whole affair to be gaudy and ugly, with women who drink too much and men who are too familiar. Her only pleasures at the party are spending a little time with Gatsby and watching a lovely movie star. She immediately judges this West Egg crowd to be crass; however, when Tom criticizes the party and the guests, Daisy finds herself defending the host, even claiming the people at the party are more interesting than their own friends. She also defends Gatsby, telling Tom that he has made his money from owning a chain of drug stores. When all the guests, including Daisy, have gone home, Gatsby asks Nick to

stay for awhile and talk. He is miserable because he feels Daisy has not had a good time. Gatsby's long-held dream is being challenged by reality.

Since Daisy is now a part of his life, Gatsby no longer has to throw his extravagant parties in hopes of attracting her attention. It is never clear to what degree the two of them are involved, but Gatsby dismisses his entire staff of servants to prevent gossip, for Daisy often comes to his house. When Daisy invites Nick and Gatsby over for lunch, Daisy gives Gatsby a kiss on the mouth the minute that Tom walks out of the room. Before long, Tom realizes that there is something going on between Gatsby and his wife and is totally outraged. As a result, he agrees to go into the city, as Daisy has suggested; he is ready for a confrontation with Gatsby.

On the way into town, Tom insists upon driving Gatsby's yellow car, which he calls a circus wagon. Since the car is low on fuel, he stops at Wilson's garage and learns that Wilson has found out that Myrtle is having an affair and is planning to move his wife and him out of town. The news is almost more than Tom can bear; within the last couple of hours, he has learned that his wife is having an affair with a "clown" and that his mistress is moving away. Myrtle, who has been locked away upstairs, is equally panicked. When she looks out and sees Tom, she thinks it may be for the last time. When she spies Jordan Baker, who is riding with Tom, Myrtle thinks it is Tom's wife and is insanely jealous. The mood of the story is definitely intensifying towards the climax of the plot.

Daisy, Tom, Nick, Jordan, and Gatsby rent a suite at the Plaza Hotel. It is like a small party, reminiscent of the one held in Myrtle's apartment and almost as violent. Tom immediately begins to verbally attack Gatsby, questioning his past and his involvement with Daisy. Gatsby stands up to Tom, saying that Daisy does not love him and has never loved him. Gatsby even makes Daisy say the same words to Tom, but she says them without sincerity. In the end, she confesses that she has loved Tom in the past and asks Gatsby why it is not good enough that she loves him in the present. Gatsby's dream, however, does not allow for Tom to be in the picture; he wants to blot out the last five years and recreate them in his own image. Daisy is unwilling to do this; as a result, Tom is the victor. It is obvious that Daisy will not leave Tom and the security and status that he offers in order to go with the vulgar Gatsby, who is only a trifling plaything to her. When forced to choose between her husband and her temporary lover, the choice is easy for the golden girl.

On the way back to the Eggs, Daisy asks Gatsby if she can drive his car in order to calm her nerves. When the car approaches the Valley of Ashes, Myrtle sees it and thinks that Tom is inside. She runs toward the car, waving her hands and hoping to see him before Wilson moves her away. When Daisy sees the woman, it is too late. She hits Myrtle, but keeps on driving, even though Gatsby tells her to stop. In the end, he pulls the emergency brake to halt the car and takes the driver's seat. He has already decided that he will take the blame for hitting Myrtle if it is ever discovered; Daisy must be protected. When Tom, Nick, and Jordan reach the accident, Tom is curious enough to stop. When he learns that Myrtle has been killed by a new, yellow car, he is crushed and infuriated. He believes that it is Gatsby who has killed his mistress and kept on going.

This eventful day is a turning point for Nick; ironically, it is also his thirtieth birthday. He finally sees the shallowness and carelessness of Daisy, Tom, and all the wealthy Easterners. As a result, he decides he does not want to spend the rest of his life in New York, married to some woman like Jordan Baker. He will move back to the Midwest and marry the girl back home. He knows for sure he has made the right decision when he learns that it was Daisy who was driving the car and never stopped and when Gatsby is needlessly shot by Wilson, who thinks Gatsby is his wife's lover and murderer. Daisy does not even call to express her sorrow or send flowers to the funeral. In fact, no one other than the hired help comes to Gatsby's funeral except for Nick, Gatsby's father (Mr. Gatz), and "Owl Eyes" from Gatsby's parties. It is a sad ending to a tragic life; but Nick knows that the ostentatious Gatsby, because of the purity of his dream and his devotion to it, is better than the "whole damn lot" of the Buchanans and their likes from East Egg.

THEMES

Major Theme

Wealth usually corrupts; it leads to a life of materialism and purposeless drifting and ends in the ugliness of the Valley of Ashes, a symbol of wasted life. This theme is clearly developed in the characters of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. In contrast, the pursuit of a dream is a lofty and noble thing that gives meaning to life, as proven by Gatsby's lifelong pursuit of Daisy. Gatsby is never corrupted by his wealth, for it is amassed for a sole purpose – to prove his worth to Daisy.

Minor Themes

The East is a symbol of shallowness, carelessness, and corruption, as evidenced by characters such as the Buchanans, Jordan Baker, Meyer Wolfsheim, and Dan Cody. In contrast, the Midwest is a symbol of morality, conservatism, and practicality, as evidenced by the narrator, Nick Carraway. He tries to flee from his Midwestern morals by going to New York, but within a matter of months, he is horrified at what he sees and judges the East as corrupt; as a result, he chooses to move back home to the stability of the Midwest.

MOOD

The mood is largely dark, pessimistic, and vapid as set by the purposelessness and carelessness of the wealthy, the ongoing string of meaningless parties, the ugliness of the Valley of Ashes, and the tragic deaths of Gatsby and Myrtle. Only Nick Carraway's honest and moral view of life breaks the sense of tragedy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Francis Scott Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 24, 1896. He was the only son of his middle class Catholic family. His father worked for Proctor and Gamble, but he failed in his career. Although his mother's family was wealthy and well-known in the Midwest, she was rather eccentric. As a youth, F. Scott was taught the traditions of the upper class, but his family did not have the financial means to live that way. Fitzgerald strove, however, to be a good student and a successful athlete; as a result, he was a promising and popular young man. He also had an interest in literature and published fiction in his high school magazine. In 1911, Fitzgerald went to Newman Academy, a Catholic preparatory school in New Jersey. Here he continued to write fiction and also developed an interest in drama and had two of his plays produced by a local company.

In 1913, Fitzgerald was accepted to Princeton, where he continued to write. He also fell in love with Ginerva King, a girl from the upper crust of Chicago Society. Distracted by her and his extracurricular activities, his grades dropped so low in 1915 that he had to leave school for a while. He returned to Princeton in 1916, but was distraught when his love affair with Ginerva was terminated by her. As a result, he decided to quit college and join the army in 1917, wanting to experience the war in Europe. Instead, he was sent to Alabama, where he met the lovely, wild, and undisciplined socialite, Zelda Sayre. She refused to marry him, for he could not support her. As a result, he went to New York in 1919, after being discharged from the army, in hopes of earning a fortune in the literary world so he could win Zelda as his bride. When his first novel was accepted for publication, Fitzgerald had the success and acclaim he had sought.

In 1920, Fitzgerald married the eighteen year-old Zelda, and they moved to New York City. Soon afterwards, they had a daughter, "Scottie." In spite of their parenthood, Fitzgerald and Zelda played hard and drank excessively, living beyond their means and becoming famous for their partying and outrageous scenes. They also traveled extensively and knew all the expatriate American writers in England and France. Despite their glamorized marriage, it was very tumultuous.

With no real career, F. Scott had time to devote to writing. *This Side of Paradise*, his first novel, was published in 1920. Encouraged by the attention it drew, Fitzgerald began to devote more time to his literary career. *The*

Beautiful and the Damned, his second novel, and *Tales of the Jazz Age*, a collection of stories, were both published in 1922 and won Fitzgerald additional praise. In 1923, he produced a play, *The Vegetable*, which did not do well at all. His next novel, however, became his greatest success; he published *The Great Gatsby* in 1925, and it quickly brought him praise from the literary community, but it failed to give him the needed financial security he sought. A year later he published, *All the Sad Young Men*, a collection of short stories.

Increasingly, Fitzgerald's lifestyle and problems with Zelda negatively affected his writing. During the 1920s, he often tried reordering his life by moving from place to place; but he could not escape from his problems or his reputation. By 1930, Zelda had her first breakdown and went for treatment to a Swiss clinic. Fitzgerald tried to write during this period and finally completed his next novel, *Tender is the Night*, which was published in 1934. His last novel, *The Last Tycoon*, was published in 1940 and made into a film.

In 1934, Zelda was hospitalized in the United States for treatment and never came out of an institution again. In response to the loss of Zelda, Fitzgerald totally drowned himself in alcohol, and his later works do not have the polish or control of his earlier ones. In order to support himself and pay Zelda's hospital bills, he went to Hollywood to try his hand at screen writing. While in California, he met Sheila Graham, a twenty-eight year old British newspaper correspondent. She became his dear friend and helped Fitzgerald fight his alcoholism.

Fitzgerald died of a heart attack in 1940, a time when he was almost forgotten as an author; in fact, by 1939, none of his previous books were even in print. Zelda died eight years after her husband, when her mental hospital residence caught fire. Since their deaths, there has been a great deal of interest in their lifestyle, and a movie was even made about her. There has also been a new interest in Fitzgerald as a writer. He is now remembered as an uneven writer, a troubled man, and a representative of the golden age of American modernism. *The Great Gatsby*, however, is now accepted as a remarkable piece of literature.

LITERARY/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Great Gatsby is set in the 1920's, a period known in America as the Roaring Twenties. After the end of World War I and before the stock market crash of 1929, there was a spirit of rebellion in the United States. The people attacked the old-time stability and respectability, represented by Nick in the novel. In its place, they drank, partied, and grew liberal, as represented by the Buchanans and the Fitzgeralds themselves.

In the 1920's, the United States went on a joy ride. Fuelled by the war, the economy was booming. The value of stocks steadily rose, spending was at an all time high, and real estate boomed. The people flocked to the city from the country and purchased Model T's to gain mobility. They danced to jazz music, drank bootleg liquor, attended sporting events in record numbers, went to the movies, and dressed in new fashions that shocked the more conservative citizens. The women, often known as flappers, wore short skirts, cut their hair, and frequently dared to take a job outside the home. Radios kept everyone abreast of what was going on in this age of excess.

It is not surprising that during this rebellious period, a change was brewing in literature. Writers such as Edith Wharton and Henry James had brought a new realism to literature, and H.L. Mencken was calling for even greater literary freedom. Authors were encouraged to cease using restrained language, to write with realism about the problems of city life, and to incorporate bold new themes, including sex. In his writing, Fitzgerald followed the call of this new realism; so did other writers of the 1920's, such as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, and Sinclair Lewis.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

CHAPTER I

Summary

The main purpose of this first chapter is to introduce the characters and setting of the book. Nick Carraway, the narrator of the entire story, is clearly depicted. He is a young man in his late twenties who grew up in the Midwest in a prominent, respected middle class family with Scottish ancestry. He says he is a decent human being who was taught at an early age to reserve judgement, a trait which has made him a confidante to many people in his life. He graduated from New Haven (Yale) in 1915, and then served in the military in World War I. When he returned to the Midwest after the war, he quickly grew restless and found his small hometown to be too confining. As a result, he has come to New York City to learn the bond business, like many of his friends. He has rented a home on West Egg, one of two identical (in appearance) egg-shaped islands located on Long Island Sound, twenty miles from the city. His house is a small bungalow, renting for \$80 per month; it is really an eyesore located between two large mansions. The one on his right is a "colossal affair," fashioned after a City Hall in Normandy, France, complete with marble swimming pool and forty acres of lawn and gardens. Nick has learned that a Mr. Jay Gatsby owns and inhabits the mansion.

East Egg is located across a small bay from West Egg, but they are separated by more than a body of water. West Egg is the less fashionable island, peopled with flashy mansions built by new money; in contrast, East Egg is filled with the fashionable, substantial, and sturdy palaces representing the old guard and inherited wealth. It is on East Egg that Nick Carraway's distant cousin Daisy lives with her husband Tom Buchanan. Tom, who was at Yale with Nick, was a football hero in college and comes from an enormously wealthy Chicago family. After marrying Daisy, the two of them "drifted" for several years from place to place, including a year's stay in France. Now Tom has brought his polo ponies east and established himself and his family in an elaborate Georgian Colonial mansion on East Egg, of which he is very proud.

Nick has been invited to dinner at the Buchanans. When he arrives at their home, he is amazed at its size and the expansive grounds that run from the house for a quarter of a mile down to the beach. Tom Buchanan, his thirty year old host, is standing on the wide front porch, dressed in his riding clothes. Nick immediately notices that Tom has changed since his college days. Although still blond, handsome, and muscular, he appears more sturdy and arrogant; in fact, Nick comments that Tom has a "cruel body, capable of enormous leverage," an analysis which foreshadows Tom's future actions.

In total contrast to Tom's appearance, Daisy, Tom's wife and Nick's cousin, appears to be light as a feather. It is an appropriate image, for there is not much depth to her. She sits inside the living room on a sofa and is dressed in a lightweight, white garment that is rippling in the breeze, giving the young woman the image of floating. Her voice, light and thrilling to Nick, intensifies the cool, airy picture of her appearance, but as she speaks, Daisy reveals that her purpose in life, like her looks, is also "flitting." She tells Nick that they will all have to plan to do something, but it is beyond Daisy to make any plans. She even says of herself that each year she looks forward to June 21, the longest day of the year, and then manages to miss it each time. Throughout the evening, she continues with such inconsequential chatter. When Nick looks in her eyes, he sees the true Daisy, for they hold a sadness and absence of desire.

During the course of the dinner, part of the reason for Daisy's unhappiness is revealed. When Tom receives a phone call and leaves the table, followed by his wife, a second guest, Jordan Baker, tells Nick that Tom has a mistress in the city. In a conversation after dinner, Daisy also reveals other "turbulent emotions" to Nick. She tells him that when she had her daughter two years ago, Tom was no where around. She is glad that the child is a daughter, for she feels she can raise her to be "a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in the world, a beautiful little fool." She then admits her misery to Nick and says, "I've had a very bad time, and I'm pretty cynical about everything." The noble Nick, hesitant to make judgements, feels very uneasy about Daisy's confessions and the smirk that spoils her lovely face. He also feels like an outsider, excluded from the distinguished secret society to which the Buchanans belong.

After their private conversation on the porch, Nick and Daisy go inside to join Tom and Jordan. Tom warns Nick about Daisy's complaints and says, "Don't believe everything you hear." Nick then learns that Jordan is a well-known golf star, and Daisy teases them both about arranging their marriage. They then quiz Nick about his being "engaged to a girl out West," but he explains that she is only a friend and part of the reason he has escaped to the East coast. Since Jordan must depart to rest before her morning golf tournament, Nick also takes his leave. As he drives away, he has feelings of confusion and disgust about the Buchanans. He really feels that Daisy and her daughter should rush out of Tom's house forever, but he also knows that will never happen. When Nick arrives home, he stands outside to take in the view of the bay. He notices that his neighbor is also outside, staring at the stars with hands in his pocket. Just as Nick prepares to greet him, the neighbor stretches out his arms to the dark water and appears to tremble. Nick looks out to the bay to see what attracts the neighbor's attention, but he sees only a single green light, probably at the end of a dock in East Egg. When Nick looks back toward his neighbor, the man has vanished. What an appropriate first glimpse of the mysterious Gatsby!

Notes

Nick Carraway, the narrator of the book, tells the story from his memory in the first person point of view, participates in the action of the plot from time to time, and evaluates the events occurring in the story. He also tells his own story, which serves as the frame narrative to Gatsby's own plot. It is significant to note that Nick, after he has returned to the Midwest, opens the first chapter with a reflection about Gatsby, before the main character is ever seen or even introduced:

When I came back from the East last autumn, I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction -- Gatsby who represented everything for which I have unaffected scorn....There was something gorgeous about him....it was an extraordinary gift for hope; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams, that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short winded elations of men.

This early foreshadowing (about the outcome of the plot that is soon to unravel) serves several purposes. It builds dramatic effect and emphasizes that Nick's experience in New York has profoundly changed him, that he is capable of making a moral judgement, and that Gatsby is judged to be a romantic who is better than all of the others in the East who suffer from foulness and meaninglessness.

After these opening comments, Nick explains his Midwestern background and ethics in some detail. The action of the entire novel, set mainly on the flashy islands of East and West Egg, New York, is in total contrast to Nick's stable background; and yet Fitzgerald makes Nick's participation in the story plausible by creating him as a well-to-do young man with social graces. He happens to be the cousin of Daisy Buchanan and the neighbor of Jay Gatsby. He also prides himself in not judging people, therefore, often serving as a confidante.

The contrast between Nick's background and the East is the first of many in this chapter. West Egg, peopled by the "nouveaux riches" is contrasted to East Egg, home of the old money. Gatsby's gaudy mansion, full of flash, imitation, and newness, is contrasted to the stately Georgian mansion belonging to Tom and Daisy Buchanan. Tom's dark, sturdy, powerful image is in stark contrast to the airy, floating, white image of his wife Daisy. Nick's purpose and planning in life (he is all business between soldiering and learning bonds) is in contrast to the aimlessness and drifting of Tom and Daisy.

Not surprisingly, Nick is uncomfortable with the contrast to the Buchanans that he feels. His decent Midwestern upbringing is shaken by Daisy's wanting to bring her daughter up to be a fool, by Tom's having a mistress who is bold enough to call his home, by Tom's open hostility to his wife in conversation, and by their drifting nature and inability to plan. It is no wonder that when he leaves the Buchanans after dinner, he feels unsettled - - "confused" and "disgusted." Fitzgerald is already developing the theme that "money corrupts." Daisy and Tom have unlimited wealth, but limited inner strength or purpose.

Ironically, when Nick returns home from East Egg, he receives his first glimpse of his neighbor, Jay Gatsby, and it is a symbolic image. Gatsby, already defined as a romantic, is outside in the dark, staring at the stars, almost in the appearance of worship. He then stretches out his hands toward a green light on the shore of East Egg. The green light, which is at the end of the Buchanans' dock, is the visible representation of Gatsby's unattainable vision - - to be something he can never be, to have something he can never have. The light, significantly, is green -- the color for "go," the color of new life, and the color of hope. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the identical Egg Islands, the color of green is also money, a corrupting influence in life.

CHAPTER II

Summary

This chapter opens with a description of the Valley of Ashes, a desolate area of land between West Egg and New York City. In this industrial wasteland, through which the commuter train must pass, everything is covered with dust, smoke, and ashes. But above this gray, ashen land, there is a sign of hope - a huge advertisement painted on the side of a building. The ad shows the large, blue eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckelberg, oculist, looking out from an enormous pair of yellow glasses. The eyes, which are just beginning to fade in color, appear to be brooding over the gray wasteland below them.

This bleak setting is the appropriate home of Tom Buchanan's mistress, Myrtle Wilson. One Sunday afternoon in July, when Nick and Tom are riding into the city, the train stops at a drawbridge in the Valley of Ashes. While the train is at a standstill, Tom grabs Nick's elbow, forces him from the car, and says, "I want you to meet my girl." They walk through several blocks of nothingness until they enter Wilson's Garage and Repair Shop. George Wilson, like the building and its surroundings, is covered in ash and spiritless in nature. In contrast to him, his wife Myrtle, in her mid thirties, is very sensuous, with an air of vitality about her even though she is faintly stout and unattractive. Tom taunts George with a promise to sell him his automobile and tells Myrtle to get on the next train. She is always ready to escape from the Valley of Ashes, and gladly obliges Tom. She discreetly sits in the next car, away from her lover. In New York, however, the three of them get in a cab together and head towards the apartment that Tom rents for her.

On the way to the apartment, Myrtle, possessed with purchasing things, insists upon stopping to buy a puppy being offered by a gray old man on the street corner. Tom pays the man for the dog and comments that "it's a bitch," words that Myrtle ironically could not say even though she is a mistress herself. Nick tries to leave the cab to take a pastoral stroll through the park in the soft warmth of the bright afternoon, but Tom insists that Nick come up to the bleak apartment, which is a small, crowded one bedroom flat on the top floor. (Symbolically, Nick is torn between the order of his pastoral Midwest and the chaos and flash of New York.)

The crowded apartment is soon packed with additional guests -- Myrtle's sister Catherine (described in ashen terms) and the McKees, who are neighbors from downstairs. A party of sorts ensues with much drinking and inane conversation. Myrtle, who has changed her clothes for the third time in a matter of hours, also changes her personality from the earlier vitality found in the garage to one of false pretension, with exaggerated laughter and phony gestures. She loudly complains to everyone present about her husband George and says, "I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...I thought he knew something about breeding." She next goes on to tell how she was horrified to discover that he had borrowed the suit he had worn to their wedding. She then

tells Nick about meeting Tom on the train for the first time, being attracted by his clothing, and convincing herself to go off with him since “you can’t live forever.”

By nine o’clock, Mr. McKee has fallen asleep, and Nick quickly goes over and wipes from his face a spot of dried lather that has bothered him all afternoon. Myrtle, by this time, is orally making a list of all the things she has planned to buy: a massage, a permanent wave, a collar for the puppy, a special kind of ash tray, and a wreath with a black silk bow that will last all summer for her mother’s grave. She then states, “I got to write down a list so I won’t forget all the things I got to do.” In the midst of it all, people seem to disappear and reappear, to make plans to go somewhere and then lose each other. Nick admits that he has had too much to drink and that everything appears vague and shadowy, as if Myrtle has brought the Valley of Ashes with her.

Nick describes himself at the party as being “within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.” The spell of the party, however, is broken around midnight when Tom and Myrtle argue loudly over her talking about Daisy. Tom insists that she not even mention his wife’s name. When Myrtle taunts him by shouting, “Daisy! Daisy!...I’ll say it whenever I want to,” Tom answers by striking her face and breaking her nose. Nick’s sense of moral order is repulsed by the violence, and he leaves in an alcoholic stupor, finally catching the 4:00 a.m. train back to West Egg.

Notes

It is intentional that Chapter I ends with Gatsby reaching out to his dream, a hope for something concrete, as symbolized by the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. By contrast, Chapter II opens with a description of the Valley of Ashes, a symbol of the hopelessness produced by modern, industrialized society in its thoughtless search for money. The ashes are the by-product of the wealthy, the foul dust that destroys dreams and the symbol of the spiritual decay of the times.

The contrasts and symbolism continue throughout the chapter. The eyes of Dr. Eckelberg, painted on a building overlooking the wasteland known as the Valley of Ashes, symbolize the all knowing eyes of God, but the eyes are beginning to fade, as if the owner is losing hope, as if he can do nothing to control the ashes that mankind continues to create in abundance. Dr. Eckelberg’s large blue eyes are then contrasted to the eyes of George Wilson, a pathetic and spiritless product of the wasteland who is blinded and obliterated by the ashes. In contrast to her husband, Myrtle Wilson at first seems to have some vitality left in her despite her life in the Valley of Ashes. When she goes to the apartment in New York, however, she seems to bring the ashen life with her, creating a smoky air and disguising her vitality, which is replaced with false pretension to be something she is not and can never be. Throughout the chapter, Myrtle is developed in total contrast to the light and airy Daisy, who has no purpose or plan. Myrtle, a heavysset, plain woman, is preoccupied with appearances (she constantly worries about clothing) and petty planning (to buy a dog collar, an ash tray, a massage, and a wreath for her mother’s grave - all of seeming equal importance to her). Myrtle wants more than anything to permanently leave the Valley of Ashes, to rise above her low class, and pretends that dresses and purchases elevate her lifestyle. Her pathetic existence, while more active and organized than Daisy’s, is equally meaningless.

A sharp contrast is also developed between Nick and Tom. Nick, who longs several times in the chapter to take a pastoral walk through the park (subconsciously reflecting his desire to return home to the pastoral Midwest), is still a product of his orderly upbringing. He is horrified by Tom’s behavior and driven to distraction by a bit of dried shaving cream on Mr. McKee’s face. As soon as McKee falls asleep, Nick wipes the spot away, trying to put everything back in order. Tom, on the other hand, is violent and compulsive. He spiritually strikes out at Daisy by having this petty affair and displaying his common mistress for the world to see (much like he parades his horses) and he physically strikes out at Myrtle, breaking her nose in total brutality. In perfect contrast to the orderly Nick, Tom is a symbol of disorder and destruction -- the product of his extreme wealth.

Tom is also contrasted to George Wilson, Myrtle's husband. She claims that she married him because she felt he had "good breeding" but betrays him when she thinks that he does not act or dress like a gentleman. Ironically, she is attracted to Tom because he wears nice clothing and appears to be well bred. But George Wilson, covered in ashes and destined to poverty, really has better breeding than Tom. Incapable of violent action, George can only stand by and long for the woman he truly loves. The violent Tom, on the other hand, was born to wealth and class, but has no capacity to truly love.

It is significant to note that Gatsby is not seen and only mentioned in passing in this chapter. When Myrtle's sister Catherine learns that Nick lives on West Egg, she inquires if he knows Jay Gatsby. She explains that she recently went to a party at his mansion. She also tells Nick that rumor says Gatsby's money comes from being a relative of Kaiser Wilhelm. She ends her conversation about him by adding that "I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me." Such brief and mysterious comments about the main character serve to heighten his intrigue and the reader's interest in him.

It is also significant to note that Nick describes himself as both within and without the action in this chapter, just as he, as the narrator, within and without the plot of the story. Nick also shows he is within and without when trying to deal with his moral, orderly past. He does not want to meet Tom's mistress, does not want to go to her apartment, wants to leave the party and take a peaceful walk, wipes the spot from McKee's face (his moral order at work) and yet, because of Tom and Myrtle (symbols of depravity) and his fascination with them, he is caught up within the party, drinking himself into a stupor (for only the second time in his life). As his inebriation progresses throughout the chapter, the details of the evening and the conversations begin to blur, just like Nick's moral stance is blurred at the party; but the bizarre gathering, that ends in ugly violence, clearly reflects the moral decay of the age. The chapter ends, as it begins, in a symbolic valley of ashes.

CHAPTER III

Summary

This chapter opens with a general description of another party scene, this one set at Gatsby's mansion. Nick describes how "there was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights" with sunning on the beach, diving into the pool, drinking champagne, and dancing to the orchestra from early evening until the wee hours of the morning. Gatsby's Rolls-Royce becomes a shuttle bus for the party-goers, and cars were still parked five deep in the drive. A "corps of caterers" arrives once a week to set up buffet tables filled with gourmet treats, and the main hall is transformed into a bar complete with brass rail and every type of liquor. Nick then describes more specifically the first party that he attends at his neighbor's house. Gatsby has sent his chauffeur next door with a formal invitation to Nick to attend a "little party" on Saturday night. Nick accepts the offer, dresses in white flannels, arrives at Gatsby's around 7:00, and wanders, rather ill at ease, among the swirls of unknown partyers. He is delighted to find Jordan Baker among the guests, greets her warmly, and remains by her side for much of the evening.

During the course of the party, Nick looks several times unsuccessfully for Gatsby in order to formally introduce himself; he overhears much talk about the host, including rumors that he is an Oxford graduate, that he has killed a man, and that he served as a German spy during the war; he also learns that Gatsby has sent an expensive dress to a young lady as a replacement for one torn at a previous Gatsby gathering. He visits the library and meets a middle-age man, who has been drinking for a week and who wears "enormous owl-eyed spectacles" (recalling the image of T.J. Eckelberg). The man is absolutely amazed that the titles in Gatsby's library are actually real books with real pages. He then exclaims, "It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! --- didn't cut the pages." It is as if this drunken gentleman knew the real Gatsby and believes he is hiding behind a facade that includes his mansion, his parties, and his library.

At midnight, the party is still going strong with dancing, music, and “stunts” in the garden. Nick notes that “the hilarity had increased. . .while happy vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky.” Nick is sitting at a table with Jordan and an unknown man of his approximate age. The man tells Nick that his face looks familiar, and the two of them discover that they had both been in the Third Division during the war. The gentleman then warms towards Nick, calls him “old sport” repeatedly, and asks him to take a ride in his newly purchased hydroplane on the next morning. After accepting the invitation, Nick is surprised to learn that this gentleman is Jay Gatsby himself. Nick then notes the warmth and reassurance of his neighbor’s smile that seems to be an appearance that vanishes too quickly. When Gatsby leaves to take a phone call, Nick admits to Jordan, “I had expected that Mr. Gatsby would be a florid and corpulent person in his middle years.” He then asks Jordan to tell him more about this mysterious man. Jordan simply replies, “He’s just a man named Gatsby,” a classical example of understatement.

Later at the party, Nick has a chance to study his host from a distance and without detection:

Gatsby was standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed everyday. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased.

As Nick makes these observations, he and Jordan are interrupted by a butler sent by the host. Mr. Gatsby has requested to see Jordan, so she takes her leave. Alone again, Nick surveys the degenerating party scene. The orchestra has left, but the room is still crowded. A drunken red-headed woman is singing loudly and weeping at the same time. Most of the women are fighting with their husbands or dates about leaving the party, and two women are physically carried out. As Nick prepares to leave the party himself, Jordan emerges from the library with her host and tells Nick, “I’ve just heard the most amazing thing,” building even more suspense about the mysterious Gatsby. Nick promises to call Jordan and then bids Gatsby goodnight with new apologies for not having known him earlier in the garden. Gatsby says, “Don’t mention it,” and reminds Nick of their morning hydroplane plans.

As Nick turns towards his home next door, he finds an accident has just occurred outside. A car has left Gatsby’s drive, run into a wall, and lost its wheel. The first person to emerge from the wreck is Owl-Eyes, the drunken man with the spectacles found earlier in the library. When questioned about the accident, he “washes his hands of the whole matter,” just as he washes his hands of his careless, drunken behavior and lack of moral responsibility. He is followed out of the car by the driver, “a pale, dangling individual,” an apparition of a man (with flashback to the valley of ashes). He is also quite drunk and cannot quite understand that the wheel is gone from the car, rendering it undrivable. Nick, disgusted with this drunken scene of destruction and the attendant cacophony of impatient horns, goes home. As he glances back to Gatsby’s mansion, he is struck by the sudden emptiness he sees and by the isolated figure of the host waving upon the porch.

Nick closes the chapter with explanations about himself, to fill in his life between the parties. Most of his time is spent working at Probity Trust and studying about investments. He says he is learning to like the “racy feel” of New York, but dreams of finding a romantic attachment. He also admits that he sometimes, in the hustle and bustle, feels a “haunting loneliness” in himself and others, and personally longs for “gayety and...intimate excitement.” He also reveals that he has dated Jordan Baker during the latter part of the summer and developed a tenderness for her. He was shocked, however, to learn that she was “incurably dishonest” and terribly careless. At least Jordan admits that she “hates careless people. That’s why I like you.” Despite their mutual interest in one another, the noble Nick puts the brakes on their relationship because he has still not settled his

feelings for the girl at home. Nick believes that relationship had to be “tactfully broken off before I was free.” Nick ends the chapter by proudly stating he is the only honest person he knows.

Notes

This chapter presents the third meaningless party in a row for Nick Carraway, and this one, held at Gatsby’s mansion, has similarities to and differences from the small, classy dinner party at the Buchanan’s and the raucous, drunken gathering at Myrtle’s apartment. Like the party at the Buchanan’s, Gatsby’s party is held in a mansion, is attended by denizens of the fashionable Egg Islands (including Jordan and Nick), is well prepared, is filled with vacuous chatter, and ends in fighting. (Tom and Daisy fight over his mistress at the end of the dinner; the husbands and wives at Gatsby’s fight about leaving the party.) In contrast to the small dinner party, this one is a huge gathering, complete with orchestra and dancing, and it drags on forever in a drunken stupor until the wee hours of the morning. In that respect, Gatsby’s party is more like the one at Myrtle’s. Although her party is an impromptu gathering, like Gatsby’s it is crowded, filled with inane conversation, and ends in a drunken, disastrous scene. (There is a definite comparison between the carelessness of Tom’s breaking Myrtle’s nose to the carelessness of the broken wheel on the automobile.) Fitzgerald, through Nick Carraway’s narration, is showing the sad emptiness of the parties (symbolic of the rich) and the lives of the people who attend them. After the fun and frivolity of the evening comes the reality of life: the news of Tom’s mistress spoils the dinner party, Tom’s violence breaks up Myrtle’s party; the automobile accident mars Gatsby’s party - - and on Monday morning, the gardeners and the butlers (and other non-wealthy souls) will be left to repair the “ravages” from the party and the damage caused by the wealthy.

Gatsby’s party is described in greater detail than the other two parties in order to introduce the character of the host and to emphasize the purposeless nature of his gatherings. Most of his guests have not been invited to the party but have been brought by others or just drop in. With no moral consciousness, they drink Gatsby’s liquor and eat his food without even attempting to meet him or express appreciation (in contrast to Nick who is obsessed with finding Gatsby and introducing himself). The women, purposefully dressed in silvers and golds (symbolic of money), only pretend to have fun. (They even weep as they sing.) There are no real relationships here, only inane chatter, wild speculation, and drunken antics; it is a false appearance of happiness that covers up the lack of moral responsibility and misery of the soul.

The whole swirling party scene is orchestrated by Jay Gatsby, who like his party, appears to be a splendid illusion. He has borrowed the design for his mansion from France; he has created an impressive library filled with real books that are never opened or read; he gives wild parties in which he never really participates; he speaks with elaborate formality saying words of little meaning; and he flashes a vibrant, understanding smile that quickly vanishes to reveal the true Gatsby. Just as the party lies to cover up the misery beneath, underneath Gatsby’s smooth appearance, Nick recognizes “a young rough-neck.” But Gatsby is not a party-goer by nature. He stands alone, distant from the action. The first image of him in the book was at the end of Chapter 1, standing in isolation in the darkness with hand outstretched to the green light. In a similar manner, at the end of this chapter, he stands alone on his porch, waving from a distance to his last departing guests. Gatsby does not join in with the drinking and merriment, but orchestrates it all for a purpose, for he is an incurable romantic, a man with a dream.

Jordan Baker, who appears repeatedly through the night at Gatsby’s party and is described in shades of gold, is the perfect representation of the wealthy who attend his gatherings. She tells Nick that she loves Gatsby’s parties, for they are “large and intimate,” seemingly contradictory words. Like many in attendance, she is haughty in demeanor, contemptuous of others, impersonal in relationships, and adrift in life. With no permanent home, family, or occupation, she floats without purpose from golf tournament to golf tournament, from party to party, and from Daisy’s house to her aunt’s. Jordan, like most of the other inhabitants of the Egg Islands, has no moral decency. She borrowed a convertible, left it out in the rain with its top down, and then lied about it. She listened to Gatsby’s private story, promising secrecy, then immediately tempts Nick about it

and tells him to call her for more information. At her first golf tournament, she moved her ball from a bad position in order to win during the semi-final round. Nick recognizes her weakness and describes her as “incurably dishonest” and capable of subterfuge. He also sees her as a totally careless person. When he accuses her of being a rotten driver, she says that others just need to keep out of her way, as if she is the most important person on the road or in the world. Nick quizzes her further and asks, “Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.” Jordan shrugs off his question and ironically claims that she avoids all careless people.

Dressed in white flannels (as a symbol of purity) at the party, Nick Carraway is a complete contrast to Jordan Baker and the other wealthy party-goers. In this chapter, Nick’s Midwestern upbringing and “provincial inexperience” once again come into play, for their mix has given him moral decency and firm roots. He is appalled at the extravagance of Gatsby’s gatherings and pities the eight servants and gardeners who must clean up the “ravages” each Monday morning. Even though invited to this particular party, he feels bad about being present and not knowing the host; therefore, Nick seeks out Gatsby throughout the evening in order to introduce himself and express his appreciation. He cannot relax and enjoy the party until everything is put in order. In a similar manner, his everyday life must be orderly. He works very hard at Probity Trust, eats the same kind of lunch each day, takes his dinner each evening at the Yale Club, and studies books on investments and securities each evening (unlike Gatsby, who never opens a book in his library). He dates Jordan Baker for a while during the summer, but is bothered by her careless approach to life and her incurable dishonesty. He puts the brakes on the relationship because of their differences and because he feels guilty about the girl back home with whom he has not made a clean break. Nick closes the chapter by describing himself as “one of the few honest people that I have ever known.” The irony of his claim is that at this point in the story, he is not totally truthful with himself. He lies about Jordan, saying her dishonesty “made no difference to me,” and he lies about the East, saying he has begun to like New York “the racy, adventurous feel of it.” He has not yet come to reckon with the importance of his past and his need to return home to the moral order that gives life meaning.

CHAPTER IV

Summary

This chapter also opens with another small glimpse into a party at Gatsby’s house with the guests still gossiping about their host. Nick interrupts his description of the party to list some of the guests that came to Gatsby’s house during the summer. He had jotted down the names on a railroad time table. Many came from East Egg, including the Leeches, the Voltaire’s, the Blackbuck’s, the Dancies, Mr. Whitebait, the Fishguard’s, Maurice Flink, and the Hammerhead’s. Guests from West Egg included the Poles, the Catlip’s, and James B. (“Rot-gut”) Ferret. Other guests included Francis Bull and George Duckweed (theatrical people), Klipspringer (who came so often he was called the boarder), the Chromes, the Backhysson’s, S.W. Belcher, Miss Haag, P. Jewett, and Claudia Hip.

Nick turns from the long list to tell about the first time Gatsby comes to his home. He has arrived in his elegant automobile to take Nick into the city for lunch. During the drive, Gatsby asks Nick, “What’s your opinion of me anyhow?” and then launches into an explanation of his background. He first says he is the son of a wealthy family from the “middle-west”. He then adds he was educated at Oxford, inherited a great deal of money, and then “lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe...collected jewels, hunting big game, painting a little...and trying to forget something very sad that had happened.” He then tells about joining the war in hopes of getting killed, but instead he receives decorations for his bravery from every Allied government. Nick’s first reaction to these tales is to laugh incredulously, but he is also fascinated with Gatsby’s story. Then his neighbor pulls out a war medal from Montenegro, and to Nick’s astonishment, it almost looks real. So does the picture of Gatsby supposedly taken in front of Oxford when he in school there. After showing these souvenirs to Nick, Gatsby tells his neighbor, “I’m going to make a big request of you today.” That is why he has told Nick about his background, for Gatsby does not want him to think he is “just some nobody.”

Nick then learns that Gatsby will not make his request personally. Instead, he has asked Jordan Baker to discuss the matter with Nick at tea. Nick's reaction to this is to be annoyed, for he feels the request will be something fantastic, and he does not want to waste his date with Jordan discussing Gatsby. During the rest of the drive into New York, Gatsby sits silent and correct, except when he is stopped by a policeman for speeding. Gatsby pulls out a card from his wallet and shows it to the officer, who then replies, "Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!" Nick's sense of wonder expands, but he says little to Gatsby. Instead, he sits and observes the passing surroundings. He spies Mrs. Wilson at her husband's gas pump in the Valley of Ashes. He sees a dead man in a hearse, followed by two carriages filled with mourners that have "tragic eyes." He notices a limousine driven by a white chauffeur and carrying "three modish Negroes." He stares at the city skyline rising ahead "in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money." Then Nick reflects that anything can happen in New York, a city filled with mystery and beauty.

When Nick joins Gatsby for lunch, he finds him seated with Meyer Wolfsheim, a man in his fifties who wears human molars as cuff links. During their meal, Wolfsheim broods about Rosy Rosenthal's murder at the Metropole years before; after lunch, Gatsby tells Nick that Wolfsheim is the man who fixed the World Series in 1919. Nick, with his proper Midwestern upbringing, is shocked about everything relating to this gentleman and curious about Gatsby's relationship to him. When Gatsby goes to make a phone call, Nick quizzes Wolfsheim, who says he has known their host for several years. He then brags on Gatsby as "a fine man of breeding," and a handsome and perfect gentleman who is "very careful about women." When Gatsby returns, Wolfsheim takes his leave in order to let the two younger men discuss their sports and young ladies. Gatsby then apologizes for making Nick angry earlier in the car, and Nick explains that he does not like mysteries, and he does not like requests going through Jordan Baker. Gatsby responds by saying, "Oh, it's nothing underhand. Miss Baker's a great sportswoman, you know, and she'd never do anything that wasn't right," humorous words spoken to a man who knows that Jordan is "incurably dishonest." As the two of them leave the restaurant, Nick spies Tom Buchanan and goes up to him and introduces Gatsby, who suddenly has "a strained, unfamiliar look of embarrassment." Gatsby then suddenly disappears without saying good-bye, and Nick goes to meet Jordan for tea.

As they have tea in the Plaza Hotel, Jordan begins telling Nick a story about Daisy when they were both young girls back in Louisville in 1917. Daisy, at age 18, was the richest and most popular girl in town. One spring day Jordan spied her sitting in her white roadster with a handsome lieutenant, whom Daisy introduced as Jay Gatsby. Jordan thought little about the meeting except to feel pangs of jealousy over the romantic way the soldier looked at Daisy. Soon, however, rumors circulated about Daisy trying to run away to say good-bye to a soldier who was going overseas, but her family stopped her. Daisy seemed to brood for a few months, but by autumn she appeared as happy as ever. In winter, she became engaged to Tom Buchanan, a very wealthy young man from Chicago. But the night before her June wedding, Daisy got drunk and told Jordan she had changed her mind about the marriage. As Daisy cried, Jordan noticed a crumpled letter in her hand, and Daisy refused to let go of it. By the next day, the episode had passed, and Daisy married Tom Buchanan and soon began their lengthy travels. Almost immediately, Tom started to see other women, and Daisy's misery began.

As Jordan and Nick leave the Plaza Hotel, they hear children in the park singing "The Sheik of Araby," an appropriate song that seems to foreshadow Gatsby's sneaking into Daisy's life, just as the Sheik of Araby was sneaking into a tent. With this song in the background, Jordan tells Nick the most astonishing news of all. "Gatsby bought the house so Daisy would be just across the bay." Then Jordan reveals Gatsby's request, which Nick had expected to be something fantastic. "He wants to know if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over." He wants to see Daisy, and he wants Daisy to see his house; but Daisy is not to know ahead of time that Gatsby will be there, for he is afraid she might choose not to come. Nick is totally amazed at the modesty of Gatsby's small request. After five years and the purchase of a grand mansion,

all he wants is to “come over some afternoon to a stranger’s garden.” The mystery fades, and the real Gatsby comes alive to Nick; his neighbor is a man with a noble dream, and he is “delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.”

Notes

Nick begins this chapter with another reference to a party at Gatsby’s with the young ladies still speculating about the past of their mysterious host. This brief introduction to Chapter IV serves two purposes. It reminds the reader that no one seems to know much about Gatsby; but by the end of the chapter, Nick will have gathered much information that helps him to understand and appreciate his neighbor. The brief party description also serves as an introduction for Nick to tell about his list of party-guests. During his summer in New York, he kept track of many of the names of the people who attended Gatsby’s gatherings. Most of the names, such as Leech, Blackbuck, Dancies, Whitebait, Hammerhead, Ferret, Bull, Smirkes, Belcher, and Hip, are to poke fun at the society of the roaring 20’s. But Nick’s description of some of their activities is not funny. Mr. Civet drowned in Maine, the Blackbucks flipped up their noses at the world like goats, Snell was drunk for three days before going to the penitentiary, Muldoon’s brother strangled his wife, and Palmetto jumped in front of the subway to kill himself. Such events paint a pathetic picture of the Jazz Age Society. Appropriately, Nick has written the names and events on a fading train schedule dated July 5, 1922. This “roaring” generation comes after July 4th, after the great American Declaration, after the holiday, but they are nothing to celebrate; they are a sad and corrupt group that is temporary and disintegrating from within, just like the railroad time table on which Nick has written their names and just like the vehicles they drive and wreck.

Throughout the novel Nick pays particular attention to the automobile as part of the action of the plot (remember Mr. Wilson owns an automobile repair shop and a car accident is the ending to the first party that Nick attends at Gatsby’s house). More importantly, the automobile is used as a symbol of the materialism of the age. In Chapter II, Nick states that Gatsby drives a Rolls-Royce, the most pretentious of all cars. In this chapter, Nick has an opportunity to ride with Gatsby in his vehicle, for they are going into New York City for lunch. Because cars will remain important to the action of the story, as well as to the central theme of the devastation of materialism, Nick describes Gatsby’s ostentatious automobile in detail.

It was a rich cream color bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of windshields.

As Nick admires the car, Gatsby says, “It’s pretty isn’t it, old sport.” He then asks Nick to climb inside to the handsome green leather interior. On the way into New York, Nick describes two other vehicles. The first is a hearse carrying a dead man and the second is a limousine, driven by a white chauffeur and carrying “three modish Negroes,” who regard the Rolls-Royce in haughty rivalry. Nick mentions both of these to show that anything can and does happen in New York. Although at a distance it looks like a fairy tale city “made of white heaps and sugar lumps,” New York is the center of money where wealth corrupts, as depicted by Meyer Wolfsheim, whom Nick is soon to meet. New York is a place that also produces ostentatious wealth (symbolized by the Rolls-Royce and the limousine) and death (symbolized by the hearse) with the resulting reality of the Valley of Ashes, which is in contrast to the white sugar lumps of New York.

Gatsby has a “big” favor to ask of Nick, so he feels he should tell his neighbor something about himself, and the story is as extravagant as Gatsby’s car. He says he is from the Midwest (like Nick himself) and then adds specifically from San Francisco (far from Nick’s middle west both geographically and spiritually). He says he is the son of a wealthy family that has passed away, leaving him a large inheritance. He also claims he was educated at Oxford, for “it is a family tradition.” After college, he chooses to live the life of luxury in Europe, collecting rubies and hunting big game, with no real purpose. Then he enlists in World War I, where Gatsby

hopes to be killed, but instead becomes a decorated war hero. Since the war, he has drifted here and there, trying to forget a very sad thing that has happened to him. To Nick, this story is so obviously exaggerated and told in such poor taste that it is comical.

Even though Nick finds Gatsby's manufactured history to be a fascinating and incredible story, Gatsby himself is not as bizarre as Meyer Wolfsheim, Gatsby's business partner who joins them for lunch. He is "a small flat-nosed Jew" with a large head, tiny eyes, and large nostrils and obviously a member of the underworld, who like Gatsby is nervous and suspicious by nature and in perpetual motion. During lunch Wolfsheim tells about the night he was with his friend Rosy Rosenthal who was "shot three times in his full belly" at The Metropole, which is located across the street from where they are having lunch. Nick then learns that this astonishing man also fixed the 1919 World Series, an action which staggered Nick's moral Midwestern mind, and he says, "It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people--with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing up a safe." Appropriately Wolfsheim proudly wears cuff links made from human molars, symbolizing the corrupt nature of the wealthy who will do anything to obtain and maintain their materialistic goals. Gatsby's association with this incredible man sheds light on how he has likely amassed his fortune.

Nick leaves this luncheon with the West Eggers (the new money) to have tea with an East Egger (the old money), but the only differences between them are in appearance and background. Both East Egg and West Egg are characterized by materialism and purposelessness, as revealed in Jordan's upcoming story. Over tea she tells Nick new information about Gatsby. He has been in love with Daisy Fay (her maiden name appropriately means fairy) since 1917, when he was a young lieutenant stationed near Louisville. Daisy, the most wealthy and popular girl in town with her fancy white roadster, was very attracted to this handsome, young soldier, and even tried to run away with him during the war. Her "monied" family would have no part of an unknown Gatsby, who offered no riches or stability, and made certain that Daisy soon forgot the soldier and became engaged to Tom Buchanan, who, being from a similar background to herself, could offer wealth and stability (and ironically one affair after another). Daisy (having no moral character or backbone) flits into Tom's arms, ignoring her true emotions. On the night before her marriage to Tom, however, an inebriated Daisy was obviously thinking about Jay Gatsby and clutching a tear-stained letter from him in her hand. In spite of her real feelings, she marries Tom the next day and begins her purposeless travels through California, France, and Chicago, tolerating her husband's affairs and indulging herself. When she hears the name of Gatsby mentioned again five years later, she tells Jordan "in the strangest voice that it must be the man she used to know."

Gatsby has also never forgotten Daisy. She is the "sad event" in his life, the unfulfilled dream. It is for her that he has amassed his wealth, driven his fancy car, and purchased his fantastic mansion (so he could be just across a small bay from her -- but it is a huge gulf that separates the background of East Eggers and West Eggers). Then Jordan explains that Gatsby's "huge" favor is for Nick to invite Daisy over one afternoon and let him drop in as well. He wants Daisy to see his wealth -- his gaudy mansion and his flashy car. He wants her to think he is successful, even if the riches are immorally obtained. But he cannot buy his background, so he has had to manufacture it and pretend to be something he can never be.

Jordan's revelation about Gatsby totally changes Nick's opinion of him. At the beginning of this chapter, Nick's sense of wonder about his neighbor and belief that he was a man of consequence have faded into his being "simply the proprietor of an elaborate roadhouse next door." When Gatsby manufactures the story of his past on the drive to New York, Nick begins to wonder "if there wasn't something a little sinister about him after all," but the story is so far fetched that Nick has to laugh it off with new fascination. Then at lunch Nick is made aware of Gatsby's "underworld" connections, and the proper Midwesterner is appalled. But when Nick realizes that Gatsby has done everything, obtained his riches, bought his mansion, driven his car, in order to catch Daisy's attention, the man was "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor" to an elevated

plain of pure motive, the endless pursuit of a dream. Nick, with his moral Midwestern mind, can only admire such incredible purpose and drive. Unfortunately, Nick knows that his cousin, the purposeless, drifting Daisy, is not worthy of such devotion.

At the end of the chapter, Nick's morals and motives also become a little less pure. He agrees to Gatsby's subterfuge and plans to arrange a meeting of his neighbor and Daisy, without any knowledge on Daisy's part. It is almost as if he supports Jordan's idea that "Daisy ought to have something in her life," even if it is totally immoral. It is also obvious that Nick is attracted to Jordan for all the wrong reasons. He knows that she is incurably dishonest, limited, and skeptical (in complete contrast to Nick himself) and still he pursues an affair with her, a product of New York and the times.

CHAPTER V

Summary

When Nick returns home from his date in the city with Jordan Baker, Gatsby's house is ablaze with lights from tower to cellar, but there is no party and no sound. Instead, Gatsby walks over and invites Nick to go to Coney Island or for a swim. Nick declines the invitations but tells Gatsby what he really wants to hear. He will invite Daisy over the day after tomorrow. Gatsby again emphasizes that he does not want to put his neighbor to any trouble, says he will have Nick's lawn mowed for him before her arrival, and offers Nick the opportunity to make a nice bit of money on the side (without any involvement with Wolfsheim). Nick, appalled that Gatsby is tactlessly offering payment for a service to be rendered, says he cannot take on any more work. In spite of Gatsby's "faux pas," Nick calls Daisy the next day, invites her to tea, and tells her not to bring Tom.

On the morning of Daisy's visit, scheduled for 4:00 p.m., it is pouring rain, but a gardener, sent by Gatsby, still comes and cuts Nick's grass. At 2:00 p.m., a virtual greenhouse of flowers, complete with containers, arrives from Gatsby. At 3:00 p.m., Gatsby, looking nervous and tired, arrives, dressed in a white flannel suite, silver shirt, and gold tie. He tries unsuccessfully to calm his nerves by reading. Finally, at a little before four o'clock, he announces that obviously no one is coming to tea, and he is going home. Before he can depart, Daisy's open car comes up the drive, and Nick goes out to greet her with her "bright ecstatic smile." She asks Nick in her rippling voice, "Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one?" She is obviously amazed at the size and appearance of the small bungalow. When Daisy and Nick enter the house, Gatsby has disappeared. He soon, however, knocks at the front door, and Nick finds him outside "pale as death with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets and standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes." Gatsby comes inside to the living room, and Daisy, in a clear, artificial voice, tells him how glad she is to see him again. Nick can barely hear her voice above the pounding of his own heart. He wants this meeting at his house to be a success, so he leaves the two of them alone for awhile.

When Nick re-enters the living room, Gatsby is reclining against the mantel in a "strained counterfeit of perfect ease or boredom...and his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy, who was sitting frightened but gracefully on the edge of a stiff chair." Daisy explains to Nick that she has not seen Gatsby for many years, and Gatsby immediately adds that it has been five years next November, betraying his devotion to Daisy. Fortunately, the awkward moment is broken with the Finnish housekeeper bringing in the tea. In the confusion of cups and cakes, Gatsby gets up, stands away in a shadow, and surveys the scene with tense, unhappy eyes. When Nick goes out to the kitchen, Gatsby follows and moans, "Oh, God! This is a terrible mistake." Nick tries to comfort his neighbor by telling him that Daisy is as embarrassed as he is. Nick then scolds Gatsby, saying he is acting like a little boy and being rude by leaving Daisy all alone. When Gatsby returns to the living room, Nick goes outside to the back yard, observes his neighbor's house for thirty minutes, and gives the history of the mansion.

When Nick rejoins the pair in the living room, Daisy is wiping her eyes, which are filled with tears. Gatsby, on the other hand, is glowing with a new well-being. He insists that both Nick and Daisy come over to his house.

While the men wait for Daisy to freshen up, Gatsby admires his house and tells Nick that it took him three years to earn the money to buy it. When Nick questions his neighbor about having inherited money to purchase the house, Gatsby covers up once again and says that he lost his inheritance in the big panic of the war. When Nick questions him further about what kind of business he is in, Gatsby, without thinking, says, "That's my affair," and then, realizing his rudeness, adds he has dabbled in the oil business and the drug business.

Daisy emerges from Nick's house to join them on the lawn and exclaims that she loves Gatsby's huge house, but does not see how he could possibly live there all alone. He responds by telling her that he keeps it filled with interesting and celebrated people both night and day. The three of them then enter the mansion through the front door with the gold kiss-me-nots at the gate. Inside, the trio wanders through the music rooms, the salons, and the library (where Nick recalls the owl-eyed visitor). Upstairs they visit the bedroom, poolrooms, and dressing rooms, finding Mr. Klipspringer, the "boarder," in one of them. Finally they come to Gatsby's own apartment, which is the simplest room in the whole house except for the solid gold toilet set. Nick, Gatsby, and Daisy sit down and have a drink.

During the entire tour, Gatsby has not once stopped looking at Daisy, and he seems to revalue everything in his house according to Daisy's response to it. In Daisy's presence, he has passed through three states of mind -- from embarrassment, to joy, to a sense of wonder at her being in his house. He has dreamed about her for so long, and with such intensity, that he is almost dazed in her presence. He nearly falls down a flight of stairs, and he wildly shows off his rows of suits and piles of shirts, which he tosses before his guests in a heap. In reaction, Daisy bends her head into the shirts, cries stormily, and moans that she has never seen such beautiful shirts before. Like Gatsby, she is overcome with her own emotion.

The tour of the gardens, the pool, and the hydroplane is postponed due to the rain. Gatsby tells Daisy if it were not for the weather, she could see her own house across the bay with the green light burning at the end of her dock, the same green light that Gatsby stretched his hands toward at the end of Chapter I. Now the green light has changed forever. "Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy, it (the green light) had seemed very near to her, almost touching her...Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one."

Talk then turns to the photographs in Gatsby's room. He explains that the elderly gentleman is Mr. Dan Cody, who, before his death, used to be Gatsby's best friend. Daisy proclaims that she adores the picture of an eighteen-year-old Gatsby in a yachting outfit. He then shows her newspaper clippings that he has cut out about her; he is interrupted, however, by the ringing of the phone. Gatsby takes the call, explains he cannot talk, and quickly hangs up on the business connection. Daisy then calls him over to the window to look at the pink and golden clouds formed above the sea and tells him that she would like to put him in one of the clouds and push him around. With nothing left to explore, Gatsby calls Klipspringer to entertain them on the piano. The "boarder" protests that he is out of practice, but Gatsby commands him to play, so he taps out "The Love Nest" and "Ain't We Got Fun."

At dusk, Nick takes his leave from Daisy and Gatsby. Gatsby's performance is over, and it is "the hour of profound human change," when the world rushes home from work. As he bids farewell, Nick notices that Gatsby's face shows bewilderment, "as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness (after) almost five years." How could Daisy possibly live up to the illusion that he created about her? She was a dream into which he had thrown himself "with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way." But Daisy's voice would always be enchanting "with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed -- that voice was a deathless song."

Notes

In this chapter, Gatsby repeatedly reveals his ignorance of proper social or ethical behavior, betraying his total lack of understanding of how Daisy's aristocratic society and Nick's moral society act. Although he has amassed plenty of wealth, Gatsby has been unable to purchase an ounce of class. This is first revealed in Chapter 5 when he wants to take Nick to Coney Island, a place where true society would never tread. (Appropriately, Gatsby's parties have a Coney Island atmosphere about them.) Next Gatsby wants to "pay off" Nick for setting up the meeting with Daisy by offering him an underworld business deal that could make Nick a handsome sum of money. Then Gatsby comes to Nick's house for tea, improperly dressed in a silver shirt and gold tie (symbolic of his gaudy, ill-gotten wealth); in contrast Nick is dressed conservatively, the image of propriety. Gatsby obviously feels his appearance must be flamboyant, just like his house, his parties, and his car. Daisy may admire Gatsby's material extravagance, but the admiration will be short-lived and at a distance, for Daisy's world is surrounded with tradition and family inheritance.

During the tea with Daisy, Gatsby's behavior borders on the absurd. He stalks about the room, feigns boredom, knocks a clock off the mantel, dashes after Nick into the kitchen while leaving his dream by herself, and moans to Nick about it all being a terrible, terrible mistake. Nick tells him he is acting like a little boy, and, in fact, that is what Gatsby really is. He is a romantic youth who has no idea of the reality behind his dream. With youthful passion, he has idolized Daisy from afar and not realized that she is unworthy of his vision. He also is too immature to realize that money alone cannot "buy" Daisy, and he lacks the tradition or family background to win her permanently. Like the man who originally built Gatsby's mansion, Gatsby puts all his energy into an impossible dream that must eventually be destroyed by reality. Daisy could never live with the vulgar Gatsby as he believes, just as Tom could never live with the vulgar Myrtle. The Buchanans just want diversions and excitement.

The tour through Gatsby's mansion is extremely important to the story. Gatsby has purchased the house in order to be close to Daisy and has dreamed of the day she will enter it. But in the act of possession, Gatsby has become proud of his house, his car, and his parties, not for his own enjoyment, but in anticipation of Daisy's reaction to them. He says to Nick, as they wait for Daisy to freshen up, that his house truly is grand, just as he had earlier praised his Rolls-Royce. When Daisy tours the mansion, however, Gatsby and his belongings are forced to undergo change. He must revalue everything based on Daisy's reaction. His belongings are no longer mere material possessions or symbols of his wealth, purchased to attract Daisy; instead, they are now a part of Daisy, his dream come to reality. Gatsby's clothing takes on particular importance in the chapter. He shows her his rows of suits and piles of shirts, not mere garments to wear, but part of that pure dream, like the green light. But Gatsby gets carried away and begins tossing the shirts one by one into a heap. Daisy, understanding the motivation behind the action, puts her head in the shirts and weeps, while assuring Gatsby they are the most beautiful clothes she has ever seen.

Gatsby's attitude changes drastically and rapidly in the chapter. Initially, he is embarrassed by the meeting with Daisy, feeling that to have planned it was a terrible mistake. After Daisy relaxes and seems to enjoy Gatsby, he is filled with pure joy. After five years, his dream is actually sitting next to him in person and talking to him in that luscious voice. His attitude then turns to a sense of wonder, that Daisy is actually touring his house, responding to his possessions. But Gatsby's attitude ends in bewilderment. He has mixed emotions about having achieved his goal, having visited with Daisy. When he talks about the green light on Daisy's dock, he realizes that it is no longer the symbol of his dream, but only a green light rooted to a real person in a real place. His life has been dedicated to the quest, and now the dream is flesh and blood. He has nothing left to seek, no illusion to pursue. He is now like the other wealthy people in America who find that amassing the fortune is the excitement. When the wealth has been acquired, there is nothing left to do but drift from place to place, like Jordan, Daisy, and Tom.

At the end of the chapter, it is clear that Gatsby does not want to give up the dream, does not want to pull Daisy from the pedestal that he has created for her. Fortunately for him at this point, her voice allows Gatsby to still live in an illusion, for Daisy's voice is thrilling and enchanting, promising much more than the person behind it can offer. Gatsby wants desperately to cling to that illusion. The rest of the book promises to be his efforts towards preserving the dream that has sustained him for so long.

CHAPTER VI

Summary

The wild rumors about Gatsby still abound, and because of them a young reporter from New York shows up at Gatsby's door to interview him. After reporting this incident at the beginning of the chapter, Nick begins to set the record straight about his neighbor. He again interrupts the real chronology of the story to explain Gatsby's past. He was born as James Gatz, and his parents were "shiftless and unsuccessful" North Dakota farmers. The son never accepted them as his parents, but dreamed, even as a boy, of a better life for himself. At age sixteen, he set off to make his own way as a clam digger and salmon fisherman on the shore of Lake Superior. He knew women early and quickly grew contemptuous of them for their ignorant and hysterical behaviors. He went to St. Olaf Lutheran College, hoping to pay for an education by being a janitor, but he scorned the manual work and left after two weeks. Still dreaming of material greatness for himself, he drifted back to Lake Superior, searching for something to do with his life. One day as he loafed on the beach, he spied a large yacht drop anchor nearby. James Gatz rowed a borrowed boat out to the "Tuolomee," which represented all of the beauty and glamour in the world to a young, idealistic boy. The seventeen year old pulled up beside the yacht and introduced himself to Dan Cody, the boat's owner. He gave his name as Jay Gatsby, giving birth to a new person. Along with the new name came a new image of himself, and it was an image to which he would remain faithful.

Dan Cody, at the time, was fifty years old and worth millions due to his Montana copper mining venture. With vast wealth and no purpose, he became a drifter, drinker, and womanizer, sometimes prone to violence. But this older gentleman took an immediate liking to the young Gatsby and believed him to be quick and ambitious. As a result, Cody invited the youth to sail with him to the West Indies while serving in a vague capacity as steward, mate, skipper, and secretary. In essence, Gatsby became Cody's assistant and protector, watching over him during his drunken outings and wild parties; in return, Cody trusted the young man more and more. The arrangement lasted five years and through three trips around the continent. It ended only because of Cody's premature death, likely caused by his recent lover, Ella Kaye. She inherited millions from Cody, and Gatsby came away with \$25,000, a strong belief in alcoholic temperance, and an amazing new history for himself.

Nick has not seen his neighbor in several weeks because Gatsby is devoting his time to Daisy, and Nick has been involved with Jordan. As a result, Nick decides to go over and check on Gatsby one Sunday afternoon. He has not been in Gatsby's mansion for two minutes when a party of three horseback riders stops for a drink. One of the men is Tom Buchanan, and Gatsby is "profoundly" affected by his presence. After introductions are made, Gatsby tells Tom that he knows Daisy. This confession seems to calm his nerves, and he even asks the trio to stay for dinner. The offer is declined, but the female rider casually suggests, out of politeness rather than interest, that Gatsby come to supper with them. The socially unaware Gatsby does not realize that there is no sincerity in her offer, and he goes off to prepare himself for the dinner party. Tom remarks, "My God, I believe the man's coming. Doesn't he know she doesn't want him?" The socially superior Tom immediately recognizes Gatsby's lack of class and wonders how in the world Daisy knows him. When Gatsby returns downstairs, he discovers he has been left behind by the threesome.

Tom, who is perturbed over Daisy knowing Gatsby and running around alone too often, brings his wife to Gatsby's next Saturday night gathering. It is the same kind of party with the same kind of people as always, but Nick notices that there is a "peculiar quality of oppressiveness" about his one. He tries to blame the air of unpleasantness on the repetitive nature of the parties, but he instinctively knows that is Daisy's presence that is

really causing the change. She tries to be excited about the party-goers and involved in the festivities, but everything about the party offends her. The women are inebriated and acting poorly, and Tom is chasing a girl that is “common but pretty.” Daisy is obviously “appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented place that Broadway had begotten on Long Island....appalled by its raw vigor....that herded its inhabitants along a short cut from nothing to nothing.” The only pleasures in the evening for Daisy are the time spent with Gatsby and observing a movie star, “a gorgeous, scarcely human orchid of a woman,” who sat under a white plum tree all evening being wooed by her director. Daisy’s fascination with this couple hints at her own “play-acting” in life.

As they are waiting for their car, Daisy and Tom argue about Gatsby. Tom accuses him of being a bootlegger and openly scoffs at the “menagerie” of people at the party. Daisy comes to Gatsby’s defense and falsely says that she finds most of the party-goers more interesting than their own friends. She also claims that the poorly behaved guests had not been invited and that the host is just too polite to object to their presence. She also tells Tom that Gatsby’s wealth comes from a chain of drug stores that he owns. Before she gets in the car with Tom, Daisy gives one more romantic glance back to Gatsby’s mansion and worries that some young girl may steal Gatsby’s heart and blot out five years of unwavering devotion to her.

Gatsby asks Nick to stay after the other guests have left. Nick immediately notices that his neighbor’s eyes look tired and that his face is drawn tight. He is the picture of misery. Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy did not enjoy the party, that she does not understand him, and that he feels far away from her. (Ironically, he felt very close to her when she was still only a dream represented by the green light.) What he wants is for Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him and to free herself to marry Gatsby. He wants to erase the last five years and recreate everything with Daisy as before. Gatsby, however, is beginning to sense this may never happen. In his misery over that knowledge, he paces up and down “a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.” Nick tries to warn his neighbor that it is difficult to repeat the past, but Gatsby fools himself into believing that through his wealth he can make everything right with Daisy.

Notes

In this very important chapter, Nick once again interrupts the chronology of the story to give flashbacks about Gatsby’s past. It is a very effective means of narration, for the reader can compare the present day Gatsby to a younger version and understand how the past and present fit together. The illusion surrounding Gatsby in the present is a direct result of the harsh reality of his past. His real history is very different than the made-up story of his history presented by Gatsby in Chapter 4. Gatsby’s negation of the illusion surrounding his past foreshadows the negation of Gatsby’s entire dream and, thus, the end of the man himself, who cannot exist in the real world without the dream.

The news reporter that knocks at Gatsby’s door at the beginning sets the mood for the entire chapter. He is seeking a real story to print about Gatsby in the newspaper, and the reader is about to learn Gatsby’s real history as a young boy. The important thing about Gatsby’s youth is to understand that at age seventeen, he is already unable to cope with the reality of his world and has created dreams and illusions to make life tolerable for himself. When he spies Cody’s yacht, he believes that he can change his fortune forever. He rows out to Cody, with dreams of fortune and fame. Not much has changed in Gatsby’s essential being since that time. He is still characterized by the same naive sense of wonder about life that allows him to have unbelievable faith in fulfilling his dream. That blind faith is both a strength and weakness for him.

It is important to note how completely Gatsby has cut himself off from his history. He changes his name, disclaims his parents, and leaves his hometown in North Dakota forever. He makes himself into a man without roots, with no anchor of reality. As a result, it is easy for him to live in his dream world placated by wealth and

illusion. Ironically, his dream has taken him from the West (the new frontier that typically offers opportunity) to the East (with its staid society that is filled with tradition and history).

Dan Cody, the man who makes Gatsby's dream grow, is a total contrast to Gatsby. He is the personification of the disgusting behavior of the newly rich. His life is characterized by drifting on his yacht, bouts of loud and heavy drinking, wantonly entertaining woman, and general moral degradation. His wealth means nothing, for he has no purpose in life. Gatsby, on the other hand, is driven by purpose, by his dreams of Daisy. As a result he roots himself across the bay from her, lives a quiet and sober (rarely taking a drink) personal life, and has no interest in any woman other than the one he dreams about. Despite their great differences, Gatsby explains in Chapter 4 that Dan Cody was his best friend (and probably the only friend).

Gatsby is also contrasted to Tom Buchanan in this chapter. Tom stops with his riding party at Gatsby's mansion to have a drink. Gatsby, although nervous around Tom, is polite and hospitable and tries to make the intruders feel comfortable. Tom, although ignorant of Daisy's affair with Gatsby at this point, is still extremely rude to his host. He believes this West Egger to be of a lower class, dismisses his presence as unimportant, and ignores his conversation. Tom is horrified that Gatsby plans to join them for dinner and perturbed that his wife seems to know this character.

Tom soon shows up at Gatsby's again -- this time for one of Gatsby's famous parties and with his wife Daisy. He is uncomfortable from the moment of his entry. His arrogant eyes survey the crowd and establish that he does not know a soul in the "menagerie" of party-goers. Tom is aloof and miserable amongst these West Eggers. He is successful, however, in finding a woman to pursue, but is still anxious to leave. When he finally persuades Daisy to depart, he openly laughs at Gatsby in front of Daisy, questioning the source of his wealth. Tom says he plans to find out who Gatsby really is and what he does, an ironic foreshadowing of the fact that soon Tom discovers that what Gatsby does is to have an affair with his wife Daisy.

Another contrast in this chapter is the difference in this party and the first one that Nick attended at Gatsby's. Unlike the sense of overall gaiety at the first gathering, there is a quality of oppressiveness, an air of unpleasantness and harshness, about this one. Nick attributes the difference to Tom's brooding presence and also to the fact that Daisy is observing and judging the gathering. Gatsby is aware of her reactions to the party and moans to Nick that she did not like it at all. In truth, the difference now is that Gatsby's dream is beginning to shatter. The real Daisy does not fit properly into Gatsby's world or the society of West Egg. He was really much happier when Daisy was the perfect dream across the bay. As long as Gatsby dreamed about her, he had perfect (although deluded) vision and pure purpose. Now the dream is being destroyed by the reality.

The chapter is also filled with ironies. Tom chases another woman at the party, and yet is upset that Daisy runs around by herself too much and has become acquainted with Gatsby in the process. He also harshly criticizes the guests and behavior at Gatsby's party, neither of which is as bizarre as the guests and behavior at the previous party at Myrtle's apartment. Daisy, who seems no longer concerned about Tom's infidelity and who offers him a pencil to write down the addresses of the women that he meets at the party, is worried about Gatsby finding an "authentically radiant young girl," as if Daisy recognizes that she herself is not authentic. Gatsby senses that Daisy does not like the party, but the parties and the whole illusion of his life has been created for Daisy. The final irony is Gatsby's belief that he can recapture the past, that he can "fix" everything with Daisy through his wealth. As he talks, however, he paces amid the discarded fruit rinds and crushed flowers from the party, proof that the past is history and cannot be changed, just like the crushed flowers cannot be brought back to life. The party is over, and only the residue is left behind; Gatsby's dream is soon to be over as well, leaving only a similar residue.

At the end of the chapter, Nick gives another flashback into Gatsby's past. It is a description of the first time Gatsby kissed Daisy, which is synonymous with the tangible beginning of his dream world. For five years Gatsby's dream has expanded, but remained pure and spiritual, tied to an illusion of what Daisy is. Now the dream is disintegrating into flesh and blood, and Gatsby, without the dream, really has nothing. As Nick reflects on the sad state of affairs for his neighbor, he also thinks about the sad state of affairs of Americans in the 1920's, who have lost the dream but continue the party.

CHAPTER VII

Summary

One Saturday night Nick notices that the lights do not go on at Gatsby's. Worried about his neighbor, he goes over to check on his well-being and is greeted by a rude servant he does not know. Nick inquires if Gatsby is sick; the servant says no and slams the door in his face. Later Nick learns that Gatsby has dismissed his whole staff and replaced them with some of Meyer Wolfsheimer's people. Since Daisy frequently comes to Gatsby's house, he wants to prevent any gossip. Additionally, since Daisy now visits him, he no longer has need to give his lavish parties. "His career as Trimalchio was over."

Gatsby calls Nick the next day and invites him to lunch at Daisy's house the following day. Daisy calls to confirm that he is coming. Nick has a feeling that "something was up." The day of the luncheon is miserably hot, almost the last day of summer. When Gatsby and Nick arrive at the Buchanan's, Daisy and Jordan, in their typical white dresses, lay upon an enormous couch, like silver idols. Tom is on the phone arguing with Wilson about selling him an automobile. Daisy gets up, gives Gatsby a kiss on the mouth, and tells him she loves him. She also orders Jordan to kiss Nick.

Daisy's daughter, Pammy, is then brought into the room by her nurse. Her mother calls her "blessed precious" and "absolute little dream" and shows her off to the guests, like a toy or plaything. It is obvious that Daisy is incapable of sustained or true maternal emotion. Gatsby, however, cannot take his eyes off the child, as if he cannot believe that she really exists. As the little girl is led out again, Tom comes in carrying cold gin rickeys for everyone. He then leads Gatsby and Nick out to the veranda in order to show them the place. Gatsby proudly points out his own home directly across the bay.

The group has lunch in the dining room, darkened against the heat. Daisy moans about her boredom and asks, "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon and the day after that and the next thirty years?" She then complains about the heat and says it makes her feel confused. She demands to go into town and looks to Gatsby for approval. Gatsby stares back at her with adoration. Tom sees the look and is astounded to realize that something is obviously going on between Daisy and Gatsby. Upset by his realization, Tom tries to organize everyone for the trip into town. Daisy and Jordan go upstairs to get ready. When Daisy calls down to tell Tom to bring something up for her to drink, Gatsby remarks that her voice is full of money. Nick agrees and thinks "that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it. He then thinks of Daisy as the golden girl in her white palace. Appropriately, when Daisy and Jordan emerge, they are wearing golden hats above their white dresses.

Tom insists that he drive Gatsby's car into town, while Gatsby take his coupe. Gatsby does not like the idea, but agrees to it. Tom pushes Daisy towards Gatsby's car, calling it a circus wagon. Daisy resists going with Tom and announces she will ride with Gatsby. Tom is ready to explode with anger. Once inside the car, he blurts out to Nick and Jordan that he knows what is going on with Gatsby and claims that he has been making an investigation into his past. Jordan tells Tom not to be such a snob.

Nick, Jordan, and Tom grow irritable in the heat of the car. Just as they pass the faded eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, the cautious Nick reminds Tom that he needs gas. Tom impatiently pulls into Wilson's service station. When the owner emerges, looking pale and green, he explains he is not well and apologizes for having called Tom.

He says that he needs money so he and Myrtle can move to the West, suggesting that he has finally realized that Myrtle is having an affair. Tom is suddenly in a real panic. Within a matter of hours, he has learned that both his wife and his mistress are slipping away from him. Myrtle is also in a panic. She has been watching the scene below from an upstairs window. She spies Jordan and assumes that she is Tom's wife. Her eyes flash with jealous terror.

Tom pulls away from Wilson's garage and steps on the accelerator, hoping to catch up to Gatsby and Daisy. When he pulls up beside them, they all decide to meet in front of the Plaza Hotel, where they will rent a suite for the afternoon. Once in the room, Tom is still upset and is impatient with everyone. He tells Daisy and Jordan to stop complaining about the heat, and he challenges Gatsby about being an Oxford man. Gatsby explains that he was there for five months, in 1919, after the war. Tom then asks him, "What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house?" Daisy comes to Gatsby's defense and tells her husband that it is he that is causing a row. She tells him to have some self-control. Tom is incredulous at her audacity and says, "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. . .next they'll have intermarriage between black and white." Gatsby attempts to answer Tom, but Daisy, not wanting a scene, interrupts and begs to go home. Tom will not let it drop and presses Gatsby, who tells Tom, "Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me. . .She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake." Tom argues and says that sometimes Daisy has foolish ideas and does not know what she is doing. He adds that he loves Daisy; "once in a while, I go off on a spree and make a fool of myself, but I always come back, and in my heart I love her all the time." Daisy interrupts to tell Tom that he is "revolting." When Gatsby insists, she also says that she does not love Tom and has never loved him. When Tom reminds her of past memories, she tells Gatsby that she did love Tom in the past. She adds, "I love you now – isn't that enough."

Gatsby tells Tom that Daisy is going to leave him. Tom shouts, "She's not leaving me. . . certainly not for a common swindler." Tom then questions Gatsby about his business and discloses to everyone that the man is involved in bootlegging and other illegal acts. Daisy stands between the two men, looking terrified. Gatsby's expression looks like he had just "killed a man." Gatsby tries to defend himself to Daisy, but she merely draws further and further into herself. Gatsby knows he is losing her - - that his dream is vanishing. At the same time, Tom knows he has won the battle and will never lose Daisy. Therefore, he feels comfortable in sending Daisy and Gatsby off together in Gatsby's yellow car. He has nothing to fear; Daisy will always belong to him.

Nick suddenly remembers it is his thirtieth birthday. A new decade stretches before him; he feels it will be one filled with loneliness. He also thinks of thinning hair and a thinning list of single men to know. He notices that it is seven o'clock when he and Jordan get in the car with Tom. Nick says that Tom talks incessantly, as "we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight.

Nick interrupts his narrative to give the details surrounding the accident. Michaelis, the young Greek who runs the coffee shop near the ashheaps, goes over to see Wilson around five o'clock. He finds his friend pale and shaking all over; he tries unsuccessfully to convince Wilson to go to bed. When Michaelis hears a loud noise from upstairs, Wilson explains that he has locked up his wife. He wants to make certain that she does not try and run away before they move from the Valley of Ashes in two days. Michaelis is shocked at Wilson's words, for he is normally a mild, colorless man.

Michaelis leaves the garage to return to his restaurant, promising Wilson to come back and check on him later. Then a little after seven o'clock, he comes outside and hears Myrtle screaming at her husband: "Beat me! Throw me down and beat me, you dirty little coward!" She then runs out the door of the garage waving her hands. When the "death car" hit her, it did not stop. It happened so quickly that Michaelis was not even sure of the color of the automobile. He and a passerby are the first to reach Myrtle's body. It is immediately obvious

that she is dead. Her mouth is wide open “ripped at the corners as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored for so long.”

When Tom, Nick, and Daisy approach the Valley of Ashes, a crowd has already gathered around the site of the accident. Tom decides to stop and see what is going on. When Nick emerges from the car, he hears a constant wailing sound coming from the garage. When Tom peers inside the garage, he makes a harsh sound and shoves his way through the crowd. Nick and Jordan follow Tom inside, where Myrtle’s body, wrapped in a blanket, is laying on a work table. Wilson is in his office staring down at the lifeless form and moaning, “O my Gao-od!” over and over. Tom, with a dazed look and glazed eyes, is bending over Myrtle’s body.

When Tom asks a policeman what has happened, the officer replies, “Auto hit her. Ins’antly killed. . .She ran out ina road. Son-of-a-bitch didn’t even stopus car.” Michaelis adds there were really two cars, one coming in each direction. The one coming from New York is the one that hit her. A Negro man steps forward and says that is was a big, new, yellow car. He did not see the accident, but passed the yellow car speeding away. From above, Wilson yells, “I know what kind of car it was!” Tom walks over to him and tells Wilson that he has to pull himself together. He then explains that the yellow car he was driving earlier in the day does not belong to him.

Tom physically picks up Wilson and carries him back to his office, putting him in a chair. He then orders two men to come and watch him. He then tells Nick and Jordan it is time for them to leave. As Tom drives away from the death scene and the Valley of Ashes, he moans, “The God Damn coward! . . . He didn’t even stop his car.” He obviously knows that the driver was Gatsby.

When they arrive at the Buchanan’s, Tom is relieved to see that Daisy is home. He tells Nick and Jordan to come inside and have the help prepare them some dinner. Nick, feeling a little sick about the events of the day, refuses to go inside, saying to himself, “I’d had enough of all of them for one day.” As he walks down the driveway to wait for his taxi, Gatsby steps out from the bushes and asks if Nick has seen the scene of the accident and if the woman was killed. When Nick answers affirmatively, Gatsby explains that he drove to West Egg by a side road and put the car in his garage and came to Daisy’s in a taxi. He hopes that no one has spotted the car. Suddenly Nick realizes that Gatsby was not driving the car; it was Daisy who hit Myrtle and kept going. Gatsby admits the truth and adds, “But of course I’ll say I was driving.”

Gatsby then explains what happened. A woman rushed out at the car, as if she wanted to speak to them. Daisy tried to swerve away from her, but there was a car coming from the other direction. As a result, she jerked the wheel back and hit the woman. Gatsby tried to make Daisy stop, but she stepped on the gas instead. Gatsby finally pulled on the emergency brake; when the car came to a stop, he got into the driver’s seat. After hiding the yellow car in his garage, they took a taxi. He is hiding in the bushes to make certain that Tom does not do anything cruel to her. Nick answers, “He won’t touch her. He’s not thinking about Daisy.” But he tells Gatsby he will go up to the house to make certain that nothing is going on.

When Nick peers into the window, he sees Daisy and Tom “sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table with a plate of cold fried chicken between them and two bottles of ale. 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.” Shocked at the sight, Nick crosses the porch where he had dined with the Buchanan’s for the first time -- only three months before. He finds Gatsby in the same place, tells him that all is quiet at the house, and suggests that he goes home. Gatsby insists upon keeping his vigil until he is certain that Daisy is safely in bed. Nick walks away, leaving Gatsby standing in the moonlight, “watching over nothing.”

Notes

This longest chapter of the novel provides the climax of the plot. It opens in the Buchanans' house and serves as a flashback to a similar scene that occurred three months earlier in the first chapter. Appropriately, it is almost the last day of summer and the hottest day of the year; this setting serves as a foreshadowing of the tragic events that are to occur within the chapter.

Daisy and Jordan, as always, are dressed in white and lounging on the sofa, trying to stay cool. Once again, Tom is called away to the telephone. Wilson is on the other end, and the two men argue about the car that Wilson wants to buy from Tom. All of these repeated actions, which are flashbacks to earlier events, clearly indicate that nothing has changed for Tom and Daisy; their lives go on in the same meaningless manner. It is appropriate that Gatsby says Daisy's voice is full of money, for her wealth is the only thing that characterizes her; she is and will always be a symbol of the "golden girl," shallow and rich. It is only Gatsby's world that has changed. Nick opens the chapter by saying that Gatsby's career as Trimalchio is over. In reality, he is still a Trimalchio, a vulgar character whose lack of class is reflected in his ostentatious display of wealth. It is just that Gatsby no longer feels the need to make a career of showing off his money. He no longer has to give his extravagant parties to attract Daisy's attention, for she is now part of his life.

Nick never makes it clear to what extent Daisy and Gatsby are involved, but it really does not matter; Gatsby feels that he has found his dream. He does say that Daisy often visits his house in the afternoon, and it is obvious that she is familiar with him, for she gives him a kiss on the mouth as soon as Tom leaves the room to take the phone call. She also says that she loves him, but it is uttered casually and lacks sincerity. For Daisy, her attachment to the vulgar Gatsby is a game, a fleeting entertainment. Tom, however, cannot miss the fact that something is going on between his wife and Gatsby. He explodes at the realization, especially when he figures out that Nick and Jordan have known about the relationship all along.

On this day, Daisy is bored. In spite of her wealth, she has no personal depth and no way of entertaining herself. Her life is so empty that she wonders out loud what she will do for the next thirty years. Tom is no better. Like his wife, he plays at life, racing horses and cars and having petty sexual relationships. At the moment, the two of them are at loggerheads. Daisy wants to go into the city to break the boredom and escape the heat; Tom at first refuses. Then, all of a sudden, he agrees to her suggestion after he has realized that there is something going on between Daisy and Gatsby. It is obvious that Tom has something up his sleeve.

Tom is used to having his way, and this afternoon he wants to drive Gatsby's car. When Gatsby's hesitates, Tom insists; it is almost like he wants to prove that he has power over Gatsby. Finally, Gatsby and Daisy leave in Tom's car, with Tom, Jordan, and Nick leaving in Gatsby's yellow automobile. In the Valley of Ashes, the ever cautious Nick reminds Tom that he needs to stop for gasoline. Tom impatiently turns into Wilson's garage. Wilson, looking pale and sick, apologizes to Tom for the phone call. He then explains that he needs money, for he and his wife are moving to the West in a couple of days. Tom can hardly believe his ears. It is the second shock that he has had on this hot and torrid afternoon. This man, who always wants to be in control, realizes he is losing both his wife and his mistress. It is almost more than Tom can bear. In his own way, he is as panicked as Wilson; it is also ironic that these two men, at opposite ends of the social scale, find themselves in the same situation – betrayed by their wives and fearful of losing them forever.

Locked away upstairs, Myrtle looks down and sees the yellow automobile. She then spies Tom, the man she loves. When she sees Jordan, she wrongly assumes she is Tom's wife; her jealousy is almost unbearable. She watches as her lover pulls away, knowing she may never see him again.

Tom steps on the gas to catch up with Daisy and Gatsby. They all agree to meet in front of the Plaza Hotel, where they will rent a suite. It is significant that the climax will occur on neutral ground, rather than in the home of Daisy or Gatsby. Inside the room, the air is filled with tension as Tom worries about his marriage being in jeopardy; ironically, the "Wedding March" plays in the background. It does not take Tom long to

attack Gatsby. He begins by questioning whether he is an Oxford man and then revealing that his wealth comes from bootlegging and other illegal activities. Tom is so brutal that Daisy comes to Gatsby's defense. Tom then says he is not going to stand by while some Mr. Nobody tries to steal his wife. Daisy interrupts and begs to go home. She does not want to be forced into making a decision; she wants to continue the duality of being Tom's wife and Gatsby's lover. It is a fun game for her that breaks the boredom of her existence.

Gatsby cannot stand quietly by and let his dream slip away. He tells Tom that Daisy has always loved him and never loved Tom. He claims Daisy only married Tom because as a soldier, he was too poor to support her in the style to which she was accustomed. Gatsby then turns to Daisy and insists that she tell her husband that she loves only him; he also insists that she say that she never loved Tom. Even though Daisy utters the words, it is apparent there is no truthfulness in them. When Tom brings up memories from the last four years of their married life, Daisy breaks down. She turns to Gatsby and says, "I love you now. Isn't that enough?" For Gatsby it is not enough; his dream insists that she blot out the years of separation. When she refuses to do so, Tom wins the battle, and his wife, Daisy is lost to Gatsby forever. Tom, knowing he has won, sends Daisy and Gatsby off together; he has nothing to fear.

Immediately after the hotel scene, Nick remembers that it is his thirtieth birthday. This is significant, for this day is a turning point in Nick's life, as well as Gatsby's life; and his thirtieth birthday marks his passage into full adulthood, when the carefree days of youth are behind forever. Appropriately, from this day forward Nick will judge the Buchanan's and Jordan as unworthy and vulgar, in spite of their wealth; subconsciously, he has already made the decision to leave the crazy shallowness of the East and return to the solid roots of the Midwest, where he grew up.

The falling action begins with the trip home to the Eggs. Daisy, in order to calm herself down, requests to drive Gatsby's car. When Myrtle spies the yellow automobile, she assumes that Tom is inside. She bolts out of the garage, waving her arms to stop her lover. Daisy does not see the woman until it is too late. She tries to veer away, but there is an oncoming car. She jerks the wheel back, hitting Myrtle and killing her instantly. With characteristic shallowness, she does not stop, but pushes the accelerator harder. Gatsby begs her to stop and finally uses the emergency break to halt the vehicle. He immediately knows that he will take the blame for Daisy, claiming to be driving the car himself.

When Tom arrives at the accident scene, he stops his car to see what is going on. When he realizes that Myrtle has been killed, he is in a state of shock. When he learns that it is a new yellow car that has killed her, he is beside himself with rage, thinking that Gatsby is the murderer of his mistress and the lover of his wife. He openly states that he cannot believe that the son-of-a-bitch did not even stop. He then tries to convince Wilson that the yellow car he was driving earlier in the day does not belong to him. As always, both Tom and Daisy think only of themselves.

Nick is shaken by the events of the day. The scene in the hotel has had a deep impact on him. Now the sight of Myrtle's lifeless body and the sound of Wilson's wailing is almost more than he can bear. He instinctively knows that this day will make a difference in his life; therefore, he cannot understand how Jordan can be so unaffected by everything that has transpired. She casually asks him to take her out to dinner, reminding him it is only half past nine. Suddenly, Nick realizes that he could never spend the rest of his life with Jordan.

When Nick arrives at the Buchanan's, he is a changed man; he wants nothing more to do with these frivolous people. He even refuses to go inside the house, as if some of the sickness that resides there may rub off on him. When he walks down the driveway to wait for his taxi, he encounters Gatsby, who emerges from the bushes. When Nick questions him about the accident, he admits that Daisy was driving the car and refused to stop. This news only confirms what Nick has already decided; the Buchanan's and their world are simply too shallow,

selfish, and careless for him. As if to prove his point, he goes up on the porch to see what is going on inside so that he can reassure Gatsby that Daisy is safe. Tom and his wife are in the kitchen. Two ales and a platter of cold chicken are before them. Neither happy or unhappy, it is obvious that they are conspiring together to cover up the truth of the accident. The scene literally makes Nick feel sick.

When he goes back to Gatsby to tell him that everything is calm inside, Nick asks him to come home with him. Gatsby refuses; he will keep his vigil until he is certain that Daisy is safely in bed. When Nick leaves, Gatsby is standing alone “watching over nothing.” He has lost Daisy and his dream.

CHAPTER VIII

Summary

Nick cannot sleep. He tosses “half-sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams.” At dawn he jumps out of bed and heads to Gatsby’s house. The front door is open, and Gatsby is in the hall. When Nick enters, Gatsby says in a whine, “Nothing happened. I waited, and about four o’clock she came to the window and stood there for a minute.” Nick suggests that Gatsby go away, but he will not consider it. Even though the dream is shattered, he refuses to leave Daisy.

Gatsby then tells Nick about his past, probably because “Jay Gatsby had broken up like glass against Tom’s hard malice.” Gatsby begins with an explanation of Daisy. He explains that she was the first girl he had ever really known. While he was in the army at Camp Taylor, he went to her house as often as possible. Poor himself, he had never been in such a beautiful house. As a penniless young man, he knew that he did not belong there. “So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously...eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.”

Gatsby knows he misled Daisy, for he had made her think that he came from a similar background to hers, that he could take care of her. As a result, he committed himself to someday being able to support her, to be worthy of her. She became his holy grail, his mission in life, his golden dream. In fact, “he felt married her.” Daisy seemed to care for him as well; but he was a soldier destined to be sent away. On his last afternoon with Daisy, Gatsby held her silently in his arms for a long time.

Gatsby claims he did well in the war, becoming a major and commanding the divisional machine guns. After the war, he desperately tried to get home to Daisy, but he was sent to Oxford. He was distressed because her letters indicated that she was restless and impatient; she was not sure she was doing the right thing by waiting for him. In truth, she was again mingling with her high society, having half a dozen dates a day. When she met Tom Buchanan, she felt he offered her the right things and decided to marry him, encouraged by her parents. She wrote Gatsby a letter of explanation and sent it to Oxford. Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy probably never loved Tom, or if she did, it was only for a short while when they were first married. He is still convinced that she has always loved him more.

Gatsby returned from Europe while Tom and Daisy were still on their honeymoon. He used the last of his money to go to Louisville and soak up the memories of her. As he left Louisville on the train, “He stretched out his hand desperately, as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him. . .he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.”

Although Nick needs to go to work in the city, he wants to stay with Gatsby. He misses several trains and finally makes himself get up around ten o’clock. He promises to call Gatsby from the city, around noon. Gatsby lies to himself and says that Daisy will probably phone too. As Nick walks away, he calls back to his friend, “They’re a rotten crowd. You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.” On hearing these words, Gatsby breaks into a radiant and understanding smile, “as if we’d been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the

time.” Nick realizes it is the only compliment he has ever paid Gatsby, for during the last three months he had “disapproved of him from beginning to end.”

Nick has trouble concentrating at work. When Jordan calls him at noon, she actually wakes him from dozing. She criticizes Nick by saying, “You weren’t so nice to me last night. . .however, I want to see you.” She suggests that she come into the city since she has left the Buchanan’s. Nick simply says he is too busy to see her. After they hang up, he calls Gatsby’s house four times, but the line is always busy. He decides to go home early, on the three-fifty train.

When Nick had passed through the Valley of Ashes on the way to work, he had crossed to the other side of the train. He did not want to see the curious crowds that would be gathered around the place of the accident. Nick then gives more information about the previous night. After Myrtle had been hit, Michaelis made a clumsy attempt to distract Wilson, asking how long they had been married. Wilson answered that she had been his wife for twelve years, but they had no children; he also stated they had no church. Wilson then blurted out, “He killed her. . .he murdered her.” Michaelis explained that he saw the whole thing, and it was an accident, but George insisted that Myrtle “ran out to speak to him and he wouldn’t stop.” At that moment, Michaelis noticed that Wilson’s eyes looked like ashheaps. Wilson went on to explain that he had told Myrtle on the previous night that she might fool him, but she could not fool God, for “God sees everything.” Just as Wilson spoke these words, Michaelis looked up and saw the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckelberg staring at him. Wilson seemed to be looking at them as well. Michaelis went home after dawn and slept for four hours. When he awoke, he went to check on Wilson, but his friend was gone.

Wilson had gone out on foot to search for the owner of the yellow car. At noon, he had bought a sandwich and coffee in Gad’s Hill. By half past two he was in West Egg, where he asked someone for directions to Gatsby’s house. At two o’clock Gatsby had put on his bathing suit. Before going to the pool, he blew up an air mattress, asked the servants to bring the phone out to him if there were calls, and told the chauffeur that the yellow car was not to be taken out of the garage for any reason, even though the right front fender needed repair.

The butler waited until four o’clock to see if Gatsby received a phone call; it was “long after there was anyone to give it to if it came.” Gatsby must have known the call from Daisy would never come; he must have felt “that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is.” The chauffeur heard the shots, but had not thought anything about them. Then Nick arrived at Gatsby’s house, anxiously looking for his friend. He hurried to the pool with the chauffeur, the butler, and the gardener. “The laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool,” surrounded by a red circle in the water. As they carried Gatsby’s body from the pool, they noticed Wilson’s body a little way off in the grass. “The holocaust was complete.”

Notes

This chapter gives details on the beginning and final ending of Gatsby’s dream. It opens with foreshadowing of the later tragedy of the chapter. Nick hears a mournful foghorn and has terrible nightmares. No longer able to sleep, he goes to check on Gatsby and to advise him to leave town. Gatsby will not think of leaving West Egg, for he still refuses to admit that his dream is past. He excuses Daisy’s behavior, blaming it on Tom, and still hopes she may telephone. When he goes to the pool later in the day, he leaves specific instructions that he will take a phone call, still believing it might just be Daisy.

As if to hold on to his dream. Gatsby feels compelled to tell Nick more about his early relationship with Daisy, when he first met her as a soldier in Louisville. Although much of this information has been told to Nick by others, it is the first time that Nick has heard Gatsby’s side of the story. In the flashback, Gatsby admits that he

misled the young Daisy, making her believe that he came from a similar background and could support her. He did not feel he had the right to touch her, and yet he made love to her. From that point forward, Gatsby felt married to Daisy. He decided he would spend the rest of his life proving that he was worthy of what he had taken. She became for him his "holy grail." It is sad that his quest in life, defined with sacred, religious fervor, is wasted on an object as unworthy as Daisy Buchanan. His spiritual quest degenerates into a financial quest so he can prove his worth to her. In a similar manner, the spiritual quest of the country, the American dream, degenerated into a simple search for more wealth.

It is apparent that Daisy has never had any stamina, any moral strength. She waited for Gatsby for a short while after he went to the war; but she soon became bored and impatient and started dating again. When she met Tom Buchanan, she decided to marry him, for he offered all the right things – good looks, a solid background, and lots of money. It is still those things that have made her choose her husband over her lover. Gatsby, even after the events at the Plaza Hotel, still naively holds to his claim that Daisy never really loved Tom, but has always loved him. He still clings to the dream.

It is very significant that Nick tells Gatsby that "you are worth more than the whole bunch put together." Gatsby is pleased with the assessment, as seen by the smile that he gives Nick. It is also important that these are probably amongst the last words that Gatsby will ever hear spoken, and definitely the last he will hear from Nick. Ironically, Nick remembers that it is the first compliment he has ever paid Gatsby. Most importantly, however, it is the first time in the novel that Nick takes a firm stand and makes a clear judgement. One of his faults has been to reserve judgement, holding back and not taking a stand. Now he realizes that in spite of Gatsby's vulgar, naïve ways, he must be respected for his tenacity in holding on to his dream. His words of judgement, clearly spoken to Gatsby, indicate that Nick has truly matured.

Nick proves his maturity several times in the chapter. He crosses to the other side of the train when it passes through the Valley of Ashes, for he does not want to be sickened by the sight of the curious onlookers gathered around the site of Myrtle's accident. When he arrives at work, he cannot concentrate, for he is worried about his friend Gatsby and tries to call him several times. He refuses to see Jordan Baker, even though she telephones and wants to meet him; he instinctively knows she no longer holds any appeal to him. Such realizations are part of his maturing process.

Nick's flashback about Wilson and the details of the previous night are filled with significant images. It must be remembered that Myrtle lived and was killed in a wasteland, the Valley of Ashes, underneath the watchful eyes of T.J. Eckelberg. Wilson has become so much a part of the wasteland that his eyes are even described as ashheaps. It is not surprising that he has no friends, no family, and no religion. Without Myrtle, he literally has nothing (even though the reader realizes he has had nothing for a long time.) It is intentional and significant that Wilson, like Gatsby, has held on to an empty dream. He has believed that if he moves Myrtle away from the Valley of Ashes, everything will be fine between them, just as Gatsby believed if he amassed a fortune, everything would be fine between Daisy and him.

There are many ironies in the fact that it is Wilson who kills Gatsby in the swimming pool. It is one disillusioned dreamer killing another disillusioned dreamer. Both of them are betrayed by the women they love, and both of those women (Daisy and Myrtle) love Tom Buchanan, a cruel man who is totally unworthy of being loved. By killing Gatsby and then turning the gun on himself, Wilson is destroying a lifetime of dreams; but neither man has anything left to dream about. By killing Gatsby, he is also totally clearing the way for Tom, the man that Wilson should really hate; now the careless Tom and Daisy can, without threat, continue their immoral and purposeless lifestyle. It is also significant that Gatsby is shot in the water, typically a symbol of baptism and rebirth. Ironically, Gatsby's death begins a new life for Nick. He is finally able to see the shallowness of his life on the East Coast and make the decision to start a new life for himself in the Midwest. The end of Gatsby's dream is also the end of Nick's delusion about New York.

It is important to reflect on the time frame of the novel. Nick comes to the East in the springtime, the season of new life and new beginnings. He becomes acquainted with Gatsby, Jordan, and the lifestyle of the Buchanan's during the hot, torrid months of summer. Now it is autumn, and the dead leaves are falling and Gatsby has been killed, his life snuffed out foolishly and prematurely. During the winter that is to come, Nick will prepare to return to the Midwest.

CHAPTER IX

Summary

Nick writes this chapter two years after Gatsby's death. He still clearly remembers the string of policemen and newsmen that invaded Gatsby's home after his murder. The news stories that followed were "grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue." Fortunately, Catherine, Myrtle's sister, spoke out, saying that Myrtle did not know Gatsby and was perfectly happy with her husband George. As a result, Wilson was simply called a man "deranged by grief."

Almost immediately after Gatsby's death, Nick realizes he is the only person who seemed to really care about the man and one of the few who was on his side. Nick calls Daisy to give her the news within the hour, but the servants tell him that she and Tom have gone out of town without leaving an address or a date of return. He then tries to call Meyer Wolfsheim at his office, but it is after five o'clock, and no one answers. When Nick is in the room with Gatsby's body, he imagines him saying, "Look here, old sport, you've got to get somebody for me. . . I can't go through this alone." The next day neither Wolfsheim nor Daisy telephone, even though he is certain that they would have read about Gatsby's murder in the newspaper. In fact, no one calls or comes to Gatsby's house. Nick feels very alone.

On the third day after Gatsby's death, a telegram arrives from Gatsby's father, Henry C. Gatz. It requests that the funeral be postponed until he can come from Minnesota. Upon Gatz's arrival, Nick greets him and offers him some food, which he does not eat. Nick finds Gatsby's father to be a solemn old man, physically shaken and totally dismayed; it is obvious, however, that he was proud of his son "Jimmy" and the wealth he had amassed. He tells Nick that "he had a big future. . . If he'd of lived he'd of been a great man. . . helped build up the country." Nick nods in agreement.

On the evening of Gatz's arrival, Klipspringer, "the boarder," also telephones. Nick tells him about the funeral arrangements, scheduled for the next day at three o'clock. Klipspringer indicates that he is tied up and probably will not be able to make it. He is, however, very worried about a pair of shoes that he has left at Gatsby's house. Nick is so horrified at the man's callousness that he hangs up the telephone before the boarder can give his address.

Desperate to find people to attend the funeral, Nick goes into New York to call on Wolfsheim. The sign on his office door says "The Swastika Holding Company," and a woman tells Nick that Wolfsheim is in Chicago; however, Nick hears a voice from inside the offices, and it unmistakably belongs to Wolfsheim. When Nick mentions Gatsby's name, the woman goes away and Wolfsheim appears. He first says that the loss of Gatsby is a sad thing. Then he tells Nick about how he discovered Gatsby and "made him -- raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter." Wolfsheim then says he regrets he cannot come to Gatsby's funeral, confessing "I can't get mixed up in it."

When Nick leaves the office, the sky has appropriately turned dark. By the time he arrives in West Egg, it is drizzling. He changes his clothes and goes over to check on Mr. Gatz. The old man explains he last saw Gatsby two years ago when he came home for a visit and to buy his father a house. Gatz then shows Nick a picture of Gatsby's mansion that he has carried in his wallet to show his friends. He also shows a ragged copy

of "Hopalong Cassidy," a book Gatsby owned when he was a boy. Inside, on the back cover, Gatsby had written out a detailed schedule for his day on September 12, 1906. At the bottom of the schedule were his "resolves," including "no wasting time" and "be better to parents."

A little before three o'clock the Lutheran minister arrives. Nick begins to anxiously look out the window for other cars; so does Mr. Gatz. Even though Nick tells the minister to wait for thirty minutes, no one else comes to the funeral except for the hired help. About five o'clock, three vehicles arrive at the cemetery; the first is the hearse, followed by a limousine carrying Mr. Gatz, the minister, and Nick. The last car carries the servants and the postman. This small group is joined by Owl-Eyes, the strange man that Nick had earlier encountered in Gatsby's library.

Although Nick tries to concentrate on the minister's words and remember something about Gatsby, all he can think about is the fact that Daisy never even bothered to send a wire or flowers. As he walks away from the graveside, Owl-Eyes comes up to Nick and apologizes that he could not make it to Gatsby's house. Nick sourly answers, "Neither could anybody else." Owl-Eyes is astonished at his words and says, "My God! they used to go there by the hundreds. . . The poor son-of-a-bitch."

Nick closes his narrative by stating that his story was really a tale of the West, for Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, Jordan, and he were all from the West, even though from different backgrounds. Nick's memories of his West are images of the holidays with sleigh bells in the frosty dark, trains bringing people home, and holly wreaths throwing shadows on the snow. In comparison to these images, the East seems fantastic and distorted to Nick, especially after Gatsby's death. Nick even compares the village of West Egg to a forlorn and grotesque painting by El Greco.

It is not surprising that the moral and conservative Nick decides to return home to the Midwest. Before he can leave West Egg, however, he feels obliged to put everything in order, including his relationship with Jordan Baker. He tries to tell her how he feels, but she does not seem to care. After his explanation is complete, she announces that she is engaged to another man. Since she is such a liar, Nick does not believe her, even though he knows she could have had several husbands. She then accuses Nick by saying, "You did throw me over. . . I don't give a damn about you now, but it was a new experience for me and I felt a little dizzy for awhile." She then ironically adds that she had mistakenly thought he was an honest, straightforward person. Nick, hurt by her words, answers, "I'm thirty -- five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor. After shaking hands, Nick quickly departs from Jordan forever.

In October, before he leaves for the Midwest, Nick sees Tom Buchanan on Fifth Avenue. Nick tries to avoid him, but Tom spies Nick and reaches out his hand. When Nick hesitates, Tom asks if he minds shaking his hand. The noble Nick tells him that he does mind and adds, "You know what I think of you." He then asks Tom what he had told Wilson after Myrtle's death. Tom admits he told him that Gatsby owned the yellow car. He then adds that Gatsby "had it coming to him. . . He threw dust in your eyes, just like he did in Daisy's." He then tells Nick he has suffered greatly, saying he cried like a baby when he gave up Myrtle's rented flat. Tom is truly disgusting! Nick then comes to terms with Tom and Daisy. "They were careless people. . . They smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." Once he makes this judgement, Nick realizes he is "rid of my provincial squeamishness forever."

Gatsby's house remained empty, but it haunted Nick. On weekends, he still heard the music and laughter of Gatsby's extravagant parties; as a result, he went into the city to escape the sounds in his head. On his last night on West Egg, Nick walks over to Gatsby's mansion and down to the beach. He thinks about the distant past and how the Dutch sailors must have felt when they spied this wonderful green island. He compares it to

Gatsby's probable sense of wonder when he first spied the green light of Daisy's dock. "He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it." What Gatsby never really knew or accepted was that the dream was in the past. For the Great Gatsby, however, as long as he could see the green light, he had a purpose in life.

Notes

The final chapter is significant for many reasons. It clearly shows that Nick has matured to such a degree that he becomes fully responsible. He takes charge of Gatsby's funeral, making all the arrangements and trying to make certain there are guests in attendance. In stark contrast to Nick's moral practicality, Tom and Daisy flee the scene, once again leaving their mess for someone else to clean up. When Nick runs into him later in October, he refuses to shake Tom's hand. He is also disgusted as Tom talks about how hard it was to lose Myrtle and give up the New York apartment he had kept for her. Tom, with no emotion, also admits to Nick that he had, in essence, assured Gatsby's murder by explaining to the gun-toting Wilson that Gatsby was the owner of the yellow car. The callous and selfish Tom does not care that an innocent man was killed, for the outcome saved Daisy and him from trouble.

In an attempt to befriend the dead Gatsby, Nick tries to find people to come to his funeral. He is horrified that when he calls, Klipsringer, the boarder who attended all of Gatsby's parties, he says he is too busy to come, but is very concerned about some tennis shoes he left at Gatsby's house. The moral Nick is outraged and hangs up on him. When Wolfsheim refuses to return his calls, Nick actually goes into the city to find him. He is in hiding behind the door of the "Swatstika Holding Company," but Nick finally gets him to emerge. Although Wolfsheim claims to have made Gatsby, to have pulled him out of the gutters, he does not care enough about the man to attend his funeral.

Finally, Mr. Gatz, Gatsby's nervous father arrives, adding several more interesting details about his son's life. He says that it is the first time he has been to West Egg and seen Gatsby's mansion; it is obvious that he is very impressed. He also reveals that his son came to see him in Minnesota about two years ago; during the visit, he bought his father a house, proving Gatsby basic goodness and kindness. Gatz then claims that Gatsby was always bright, hard-working, and driven. To prove his point, he shows Nick a copy of a book. On the inside back cover, "Jimmy" had written his daily schedule and included all of his resolutions. Mr. Gatz, like his son, is also a dreamer. He truly believes that Gatsby was destined for greatness, that he would do something significant to improve the country. Ironically, he has no idea that his son was a hopeless dreamer whose holy grail was nothing more than an unworthy, flighty, and selfish female.

Gatsby's funeral is a pathetic affair, an appropriate end to a wasted life and tragic existence. The weather is appropriately gloomy and drizzling rain. The Lutheran minister who is to perform the funeral knows nothing about Gatsby. No one comes to the house for the service, even though they postpone its beginning by thirty minutes to allow for any late-comers. Only Owl-Eyes joins them at the cemetery. This man succinctly summarizes Gatsby's life and existence by saying "the poor son-of-a-bitch.

Nick again shows his maturity when he has a desire to leave things in order before he departs from New York. When he earlier left the Midwest, he did leave some things out of order, not dealing with the issue of his old girlfriend; that oversight has haunted his stay on the East Coast. Now he is determined to make things right. He arranges to see Jordan and tell her the truth about his feelings for her. Like Daisy, she is unworthy of such consideration. When Nick finishes his explanation, she casually says it does not matter, for she is engaged to another man to be married. Since she is an inveterate liar, Nick does not believe her story, even though he acknowledges she could probably choose a husband from several suitors. At the end of the meeting with Jordan, Nick acknowledges that he is thirty, too old to lie to himself anymore.

Nick shows his maturity again when he evaluates Tom and Daisy. He finally judges them to be careless people who smashed up things and left their mess for others to clean up. It is a clear reflection of an earlier description of one of Gatsby's parties, where the hired help was left to clean up the remains of the festivities. It is also a reflection of the ashheaps in the Valley of Ashes. In essence, then, the dream of wealth, which is the American Dream, is really a meaningless dream that will end in a wasteland. In a like manner, Gatsby's dream, a symbol of the American Dream, ends in the Valley of Ashes, from where Wilson emerges to kill both the Great Gatsby and the dream.

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTERS

Nick Carraway - Nick Carraway is the narrator of the entire novel, the protagonist of his own plot, and the moral judge of the events that surround him. He is a practical and conservative young man who turns thirty during the course of the story. Raised in a small town in the Midwest, he believes his hometown to be stifling and decides to move to the East Coast to learn the bond business. He hopes to find a sense of identity and freedom in New York. He rents a small bungalow out from the city on a fashionable island known as West Egg. His next door neighbor is Jay Gatsby, and his distant cousin, Daisy Buchanan, lives across the bay with her husband, Tom, on the more fashionable and wealthy island of East Egg. Nick plays an important role in the main plot of the novel, for he is responsible for reuniting Gatsby and Daisy.

During the course of the novel, the naïve and innocent Nick becomes totally disillusioned with the lifestyle of the wealthy on the East Coast. For most of the book, he is disgusted by Gatsby, with his wild parties, ostentatious dress and manners, and his shady business dealings. He is horrified when he meets Meyer Wolfsheim, a racketeer and business associates of Gatsby, who wears human molars as cuff links and who fixed the World Series. He feels shame for Jordan Baker for her incurable lying and cheating, both on and off the golf course. He is shocked that Tom has a mistress to whom he wants to introduce Nick and horrified that he hits her in the face, breaking her nose. His greatest disillusionment, however, comes with Daisy. He sees her shallowness and carelessness and knows that she is trifling with Gatsby. More shocking is the fact that she hits and kills Myrtle while driving Gatsby's car and does not even bother to stop; she then willingly lets Gatsby take the blame for the accident. When Gatsby is killed, he is appalled that Daisy does not even bother to telephone or send flowers to the funeral. It is not surprising that in the end he judges Gatsby to be worth more than the whole bunch of the Buchanans and their wealthy friends.

Nick Carraway does indeed find his identity on the East Coast. At first he is hesitant to take a stand or to judge those with whom he comes into contact; however, as the novel progresses, he begins to find everything about New York disgusting. He realizes that he has no desire to marry the likes of Jordan Baker, or live the careless, purposeless lifestyle of the Buchanan's, or be associated with immoral characters like Meyer Wolfsheim. As a result, on his thirtieth birthday, Nick realizes that his place in the world is in the Midwest, a symbol of morality and conservatism. In an orderly fashion, he fulfills his personal responsibilities in the East, including an explanation to Jordan of his feelings for her. He then returns to live in his small hometown and marry his old girlfriend, who has faithfully waited for him. As a result, Nick's plot ends as a comedy, for he has found himself and his place in life; he has also matured enough to make wise, moral judgements.

Jay Gatsby (born as James Gatz) - Jay Gatsby is one of the most interesting and memorable males in fictional literature, even though he is not a dynamic and changing character during the novel. In fact, Jay Gatsby has changed little since he was a teenager. Born as James Gatz to poor farmers in North Dakota, he decided at an early age that he wanted more out of life than North Dakota could offer. He leaves home to find excitement and wealth. While lounging on the beach one day, he sees a yacht docked off the coast. He borrows a boat and rows out to introduce himself to the owner of the yacht. Dan Cody is an extremely wealthy and wildly extravagant man. He takes a liking to young James Gatz and offers him a job. When the boy boards the boat to

become Cody's assistant and protector, he leaves behind the identity of James Gatz forever; the rest of his life he will be known as Jay Gatsby, an incurable and idealistic romantic who fills his life with dreams.

After Cody dies, Gatsby joins the army and is stationed in Louisville, Kentucky, where he meets and falls in love with Daisy Fay, the most popular and wealthy young lady in town. She is also attracted to him and even thinks about marrying him and running away, but her parents stop her plans. When Gatsby is sent to Europe to fight the war, Daisy is faithful to him for a short while. She soon, however, tires of waiting for Gatsby and marries Tom Buchanan. When Gatsby receives her final letter, explaining her plans, he is crushed; he vows he will dedicate the rest of his life to winning Daisy back for himself. He is sure that if he amasses a large enough fortune, he will be able to manipulate time, erasing Daisy's marriage and fixing her future with him.

Gatsby comes to the East Coast and makes a fortune in bootlegging and other questionable business activities due to the help of characters such as Meyer Wolfsheim. He buys an ostentatious mansion on West Egg, in order to be directly across the bay from Daisy Buchanan. He gives his wild, extravagant parties and drives his flashy automobiles in hopes of attracting Daisy's attention. She has become his reason for being – his holy grail. Gatsby never loses sight of his dream and often reaches out to the green light at the end of Daisy's dock.

When the story begins, Nick Carraway has moved in next door to him. Gatsby befriends the young man and then learns that he is a distant cousin of Daisy Buchanan. He persuades Nick to have both Daisy and him for tea. Their reunion at Nick's house leads to an affair. Although the level of their involvement is not indicated in the book, Gatsby does say she often comes to his house, and she kisses him on the mouth when her husband walks out of the room. Obviously to the reader and subconsciously to Nick, Daisy is simply playing with Gatsby's heart, using him as a relief from her boredom and as a retaliation against her cruel, unfaithful husband. Gatsby, however, has put her on such a pedestal that he cannot see any of Daisy's faults. He also naively believes that he will lure Daisy away from Tom and erase her past life with her husband.

When Tom realizes that his wife has a relationship with Gatsby, he confronts "the enemy." He calls Gatsby a Mr. Nobody from Nowhere and accuses him of not going to Oxford and making his money illegally. Daisy half-heartedly comes to his aid, encouraging Gatsby into a foolish confrontation. He tells her husband that Daisy has always loved him and never loved Tom; he even forces Daisy to repeat the words to her husband, which she says with no sincerity. When Tom questions her about whether she can really forget all of their memories, she admits she cannot. She turns to Gatsby and says that she loves him now and that should be enough. It is not enough, however, for Gatsby, for it destroys his dream. Tom knows that he has won the battle; Daisy will always be his wife. As a result, he confidently lets Daisy ride home with Gatsby in his "circus wagon" car.

Daisy insists to Gatsby that she drive in order to calm her nerves. As they approach the Valley of Ashes, Myrtle, Tom's mistress, runs out towards the car, believing Tom to be inside. Daisy hits the woman, killing her immediately. The shallow, careless, immoral Daisy does not even stop. At this point in the novel, Gatsby begins to show his true worth. He tells Daisy to stop and return to the accident, but she refuses. He then pulls up the emergency brake and takes the driver's seat himself. He has already made the decision that he will pretend he was driving all along and take the blame for the accident. He is still blinded by his dream and unable to see that Daisy is not worthy of any sacrifice. She fully proves this when she returns home and casually eats fried chicken and drinks ale, while conspiring with her husband how to stay out of the limelight. The next day Daisy vanishes from sight.

The naïve Gatsby, still unwilling to give up his dream, tells Nick that he is sure Daisy will soon call him. But she never calls. Even after Gatsby is needlessly shot by Wilson, who believes Gatsby to be Myrtle's lover and murderer, Daisy does not telephone. She has casually and selfishly washed her hands of the whole matter. As a

result, Gatsby, by the end of the book, is judged as a much better and more noble character than Daisy, Tom, or Jordan. In spite of his eccentricities and the corruption of his dream with money, Gatsby is seen as a tragic character who had a true purpose in life, a stark contrast to the meaningless lifestyle of the wealthy. Although his story is a tragedy, for both his dream and his life are literally shattered, Gatsby will always remain one of the most memorable fictional characters in American literature.

Daisy Fay Buchanan - Daisy is an attractive, wealthy, and shallow young lady who always dresses in flimsy white dresses, a symbol of her levity and lack of character. Both Nick and Gatsby notice her luscious voice, which seems to jingle with a sound of wealth. Indeed, Daisy is wealthy, coming from a prominent family in Louisville. Additionally, she has married the very wealthy Tom Buchanan. In spite of the wealth, Daisy is a bored and careless woman. She is incapable of entertaining herself and wonders what she will do with her life for the next thirty years. Although she is the mother of a young daughter, she is incapable of any depth of maternal feelings. She treats Pammy as if she were a toy or a plaything.

Daisy had a fling with Gatsby when he was stationed in the army in Louisville, her hometown, and fancied that she loved him. When Gatsby was sent to Europe to fight in the war, she waited for him to return for a short while. Soon bored and impatient, she began to date other men of her same social class. She met and fell in love with the wealthy Tom Buchanan, whom she married. The night before her wedding she tells Jordan Baker, her good friend, that she is not certain she is doing the right thing in marrying Tom; the crying woman holds a crumpled letter from Gatsby in her hand.

The wedding takes place as scheduled. For their honeymoon, Tom and Daisy drift through Europe for a period of time. Then the young couple moved to East Egg, where they led a meaningless and shallow existence. When Daisy meets Gatsby again at Nick's house, she has an affair with him; it is a relief from her boredom. However, Daisy will never leave Tom for Gatsby; she enjoys the wealth and social prominence that her marriage brings. Throughout the novel, Daisy is the object of Gatsby's dream; even in the end, he does not realize that she is not worthy of his adoration.

Tom Buchanan - Tom is Daisy's wealthy husband whom Nick has known casually at Yale. He is a cruel, hard man and the living personification of the shallowness and carelessness of the very rich. He plays with cars and race horses, has sordid affairs, and treats Daisy shabbily. During the book, Tom's mistress is Myrtle Wilson. He keeps an apartment for her in the city and often meets her there. Their encounters are not always pleasant. On the night of the party that Nick attends, Tom grows angry with Myrtle for saying Daisy's name; as a result, he hits Myrtle, breaking her nose. In addition to his low standards, Tom can obviously be a very violent person. The violence almost emerges again when he confronts Gatsby about Daisy in the suite at the Plaza Hotel. The men argue, and even though Gatsby forces Daisy to say she has never loved Tom, she soon recants. She does love Tom for his wealth and will always remain with him, for he offers her security and the life style to which she is accustomed.

Myrtle Wilson - Myrtle is the gaudy and vulgar mistress of Tom Buchanan and the wife of George Wilson. Throughout the book, she is characterized as having a great sense of vitality. It is this trait that attracted Tom to the ostentatious and unattractive woman. Tom keeps an apartment for her in the city, which is the scene of a rather wild party during the book. When George realizes she is having an affair, he locks her in her room and plans to move her out West. She, however, is killed in a car accident by a hit-and-run driver, who is Daisy Buchanan.

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The Great Gatsby, considered by many critics to be one of the most well written and tightly structured novels in American literature, is an extremely complex story about a totally interesting character, an absolute dreamer

named Jay Gatsby. The novel is really a story within a story, for Nick Carraway, the frame narrator of Gatsby's plot, is really a protagonist himself. Additionally, there is another subplot revolving around the triangle of Myrtle, Wilson, and Tom. Much of the story is also told as flashbacks, so the chronological order of the plot is constantly interrupted. Fitzgerald, however, masterfully intertwines all the plots and all the flashbacks into a wonderfully unified whole.

Nick's plot is a simple one. A moral and conservative young man raised in the Midwest, he feels limited by the mentality and lifestyle of his small hometown; he is not even sure about the young lady he is supposed to marry. As a result, he seeks to find freedom and himself on the East coast. He takes a job in New York City to learn the bond business and rents a small bungalow on the fashionable island of West Egg. The rising action for him begins when his distant cousin, Daisy Buchanan, invites him to have lunch at her house with her husband Tom, her friend Jordan Baker, and herself. From that point forward, Nick is pulled into the tangled web of the careless lifestyle of the extremely wealthy from East Egg. He soon begins to date Jordan, whom he finds to be a shallow and selfish female and an incurable liar. He is taken by Tom to meet Myrtle, his mistress, and is drawn into a wild party at her apartment, that ends with Tom breaking her nose.

He is taken to lunch by his neighbor, Jay Gatsby, and meets his business associate, Meyer Wolfsheim, a racketeer who fixed the World Series. He is innocently ensnared in the affair between Gatsby and Daisy and is in the hotel room when Tom confronts Gatsby about the affair. Ironically, the day of the Gatsby/Tom argument happens to be Nick's thirtieth birthday, a mark of the passing of youth. It is also the day that marks the climax of Nick's plot, for he realizes that the lifestyle in the East is too shallow and careless for him. He does not want to be associated with people as uncaring and immoral as the Buchanan's; it is on this climatic day that Daisy kills Myrtle in a hit-and-run accident and acts like nothing has happened. Nick makes the decision, unconsciously at first, to return to the Midwest and marry his hometown sweetheart. When Gatsby is needlessly shot by Wilson and no one shows up at his funeral, Nick knows he has made the correct decision. His story ends in comedy, for he has found his true self, which definitely belongs to the moral Midwest.

Gatsby's plot is much more complex, for it unfolds through a series of flashbacks and really begins long before the chronology of the actual story told in the novel. As a poor, young soldier stationed in Louisville, he meets and falls in love with Daisy Fay, the most popular and wealthy girl in town. Attracted to Gatsby herself, Daisy plans to run away and marry him, but her parents step in to prevent it. After Gatsby is sent to fight the war in Europe, Daisy remains faithful to him for a while; but she soon grows restless and impatient for Gatsby to return. When he does not come home, she meets, falls in love with, and marries Tom Buchanan, a very wealthy young man from Chicago. Gatsby is crushed at the news and determines he will devote his life to winning Daisy back for himself. It is an impossible dream, but one to which he is totally committed. When the plot actually begins in the book, Gatsby has amassed a fortune through bootlegging and other illegal means. He buys an ostentatious mansion, directly across the bay from Daisy Buchanan. He gives extravagant parties on a regular basis to which everyone is invited, in hopes that Daisy may some day show up at one of them.

When Nick Carraway moves into the bungalow next door, Gatsby befriends him. He soon finds out that Nick is a distant cousin to Daisy, and he thinks his dream is a step closer to reality. He has Nick invite Daisy over for a tea, to which Gatsby is also invited. The affair between Gatsby and Daisy develops from that point forward. Gatsby feels like he has found his holy grail; unfortunately, the affair for Daisy is just a relief to her boredom in life. She has no intention of leaving the security of her lifestyle with Tom to be with Gatsby. What she would really like is to have both men in her life. Tom, however, will not allow that. When he realizes that Daisy is involved with Gatsby, he confronts her lover. Gatsby naively tells Tom that Daisy does not love him and has never loved him. Tom forces Daisy into a decision, and she cannot say that she has never loved Tom. As a result, Tom is the victor, for he has Daisy for a wife and Gatsby has a shattered dream, meaning a shattered life. Even though the scene in the room at the Plaza Hotel is the moment of climax for Gatsby, he refuses to give up. Even after Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle and refuses to stop at the scene of the accident, Gatsby stands by her,

willing to take the blame in her place. He goes to the Buchanan house and keeps a vigil outside her window, to make sure she is safe. Daisy is truly unworthy of such devotion, but Gatsby never realizes that. His dream, his ideal, is too important; it has been the motivating factor of his entire adult life.

Although Gatsby is a defeated man, he does not acknowledge that to Nick. He tells his neighbor that he is sure Daisy will call. Of course, she does not. In fact, after Gatsby is needlessly and brutally shot by Wilson, Daisy does not even telephone or send flowers to the funeral, fully proving the shallowness of her character and the unworthiness of Gatsby's love. At the time of his death, however, he has proven to Nick that he is a much more valuable character than the whole lot of the Buchanans and their friends put together. Still, Gatsby's is a tragic life, ended by a tragic death.

There are many things that help to hold the plots and subplots of the novel together. Fitzgerald carefully weaves repetition throughout the book. The introduction to Gatsby is the image of his standing in his back yard reaching out to the green light (symbolic of his dream) that is located at the end of Daisy's dock across the bay. Throughout the book, Gatsby is reaching out to try and capture Daisy, but she always seems just out of reach, like that green light. At the end of the novel, before his death, Gatsby again looks across the bay and sees the green light of Daisy's dock; this time, however he does not reach out for it, instinctively knowing the dream is lost forever. There is also a repetition of party scenes, both large and small. Several of Gatsby's parties are described, including the debris that is left behind to be cleaned up each time. Additionally, there is the small party at Myrtle's apartment that ends in the shattering of Myrtle's nose and the small party in the suite at the Plaza Hotel that ends in the shattering of Gatsby's dream and Nick's belief in the East. A third repetition is the Valley of Ashes, the symbol of the moral decay. Each time one of the characters from East or West Egg goes into the city, he/she must pass by the ashheaps guarded by the knowing eyes of T.J. Eckelberg. Nick notices the advertisement during his first visit to Wilson's garage, when he meets Myrtle; Michaelis notices it when he is trying to comfort Wilson after Myrtle's death. There are also many other repeated images. Daisy is always dressed in white, her voice always sounds like money, and she is referred to as the golden girl. Any image of Gatsby is in terms of vulgarity and ostentation, whether it is his clothing, his mansion, his parties, or his cars.

Additionally, Fitzgerald masterfully weaves the three plots together. Nick conveniently lives next door to Gatsby and becomes friendly with him. Nick is also a distant cousin to Daisy Buchanan, the object of Gatsby's dream. As a result, Nick really becomes the facilitator to the Daisy/Gatsby affair. Tom befriends Nick because they have gone to college together. As a result, Nick is drawn into the Myrtle, Tom, Wilson triangle. Wilson, who is naïve about his wife's affair through most of the book, believes that Tom comes into his garage only because he is interested in selling his coupe to Wilson; this gives Wilson a reason to call the Buchanan household, a number that his wife calls frequently. Gatsby is pulled into the triangle because of his yellow automobile, which Tom calls the circus wagon but insists upon driving into New York. He stops for gas at Wilson's garage, and Myrtle sees the car. When she sees it later in the evening, she assumes that Tom is driving it rather than Daisy. Wilson goes to Tom to find out who really owns the yellow car; when he is told that it belongs to Gatsby, Wilson shoots and kills Gatsby, officially ending the dream. He then turns the gun on himself to further destroy the Wilson, Tom, Myrtle triangle. It is only the careless, despicable Daisy and Tom that emerge unaffected by the relationships between the plots. Even Nick, though not directly touched, becomes so disillusioned with life in the East that he makes the decision to move back home to the Midwest. All loose ends of all the plots are masterfully tied up and ended.

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

There are many themes in this complex novel. The central theme, however, is a comparison of the corrupting influence of wealth to the purity of a dream. Tom and Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, Dan Cody, and Meyer Wolfsheimer are examples of people who have been corrupted by their money. Daisy, born and married to wealth, has no values and no purpose in life. She finds her existence to be boring as she floats from one social

scene to the next; usually she is dressed in white with accents of gold and silver (the colors of money); even her voices sounds like money. In spite of the wealth, she verbally wonders what she will do with the next day, the next thirty days, and the next thirty years; unfortunately, she does not have a clue. Even her daughter, Pammy, does not give any meaning to Daisy's life, for she views the child only as a toy or a plaything. Because of her boredom, she has an affair with Gatsby when she is eighteen, for she is attracted by his good looks and his army uniform. After her marriage to Tom, she has another affair with Gatsby to relieve her boredom; it is a trifling entertainment to her. She does not value the feelings of others or even human life. When she hits and kills Myrtle Wilson, she does not even stop. When Gatsby is shot, she does not even telephone or send flowers. Daisy is only worried about protecting and entertaining herself.

Tom is probably more purposeless than Daisy. With no real career, he plays with polo ponies and race cars. He also has one sordid affair after another. During the course of the novel, his mistress is Myrtle Wilson. He has rented her an apartment in New York and commands her to go there for his entertainment whenever he desires. When he does not like her behavior, he strikes out at her, as evidenced by the fact he hits her and breaks her nose. For him, Myrtle is simply a toy to be used. Tom also toys with her husband, George Wilson, teasing him about selling him his automobile; it is his cover for hiding the fact that he is having an affair with his wife. When Tom realizes that Daisy is involved with Gatsby, in true hypocritical fashion, he is enraged and confronts his wife's lover, exposing that he is a bootlegger and a nobody. Even though he admits to having various affairs, he says he always loves his wife and comes back to her. Daisy calls him disgusting, but refuses to leave him because of his wealth. After Daisy accidentally kills Myrtle, the two of them flee together, refusing to own up to any responsibility.

Several of the minor characters are also corrupted in their chase of the almighty dollar. Dan Cody makes a fortune in his copper mining business, but his life is a mess; he drinks and parties excessively, has one mistress after another, and is often involved in violence. Jordan Baker, Daisy's wealthy friend, is a champion golfer; still, she has no morals or values. She is an inveterate liar and cheat, even moving the golf ball during her matches. Like Daisy, she seems to drift from one place to another with no roots; in fact, she does not even have a home to call her own. Meyer Wolfsheim, a shady racketeer associated with Gatsby and the underworld, is a bootlegger and a gambler; in order to make a buck, he even toyed with the faith of the entire American populace, fixing the World Series in 1919.

It is only Gatsby who is not corrupted by his money. Although he has a large, ostentatious mansion, drives flashy cars, gives extravagant parties filled with excess and waste, and has far too many gaudy clothes, he has not amassed his wealth or its accoutrements for himself. Everything he has done in life has been done to fulfill his dream – to prove to Daisy that he is worthy of her. He believes that his possessions will convince his golden girl to forget the past five years of her life and marry him. When he takes Daisy into his house and shows her his belongings, he values each item according to the worth that she places on it. When she shatters his dream by accepting Tom over him, Gatsby has no need for any of his possessions. No longer searching for his holy grail, the house, the clothes, and the cars mean nothing. Nick, who has thought Gatsby to be vulgar throughout the novel, finally realizes that his neighbor has more worth than all of the East Egggers put together.

All of the wealthy characters, including Gatsby, use people and things and then discard them as trash, destined for the Valley of Ashes. Tom uses Myrtle, and she dies amongst the ashheap chasing after him. He also uses George Wilson, and he is so much a part of the wasteland that his eyes have become ashen. Gatsby uses the butlers and the cooks to provide for his parties. They are left to clean up the ravages of Saturday night on Sunday morning. Fitzgerald is clearly saying that the American Dream has gone awry. People are so into chasing the almighty dollar that they have forgotten real human values. Like Tom and Daisy, their lives wind up in the Valley of Ashes, devoid of meaning or purpose. The all-knowing eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, a symbol of

God, looks sadly down on the wasteland that has been created by the extravagant and careless lifestyles of the wealthy.

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE NOVEL

Fitzgerald clearly intends for Gatsby's dream to be symbolic of the American Dream for wealth and youth. Gatsby genuinely believes that if a person makes enough money and amasses a great enough fortune, he can buy anything. He thinks his wealth can erase the last five years of his and Daisy's life and reunite them at the point at which he left her before he went away to the war. In a similar fashion, all Americans have a tendency to believe that if they have enough money, they can manipulate time, staying perpetually young, and buy their happiness through materialistic spending. Throughout the novel, there are many parties, a hallmark of the rich. But each festivity ends in waste (the trash left behind by the guests) or violence (Myrtle's broken nose and subsequent accidental death.) Between the wealth of New York City and the fashionable Egg Islands lies the Valley of Ashes, the symbol of the waste and corruption that characterizes the wealthy.

When Gatsby's dream is crushed by Daisy's refusal to forget the past or deny that she has ever loved Tom, Fitzgerald is stating that the American Dream of wealth and beauty is just as fragile. History has proven that view correct. The sense of wonder of the first settlers in America quickly turned into an excessive greed for more wealth. The ostentatious, wild lifestyle of the wealthy during the 1920s was followed by the reality of the stock market crash and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Where there is great wealth, sadness and waste always seems to follow. The end product is always a valley of ashes.

Watching over the Valley of Ashes, that lies between the wealthy of the Egg Islands and the wealthy of New York City, are the all-knowing eyes of T.J. Eckelberg, a symbol of the omniscience of God; but his image is fading, as if he is totally tired of sadly looking down at the wasteland below. He seems ashamed of mankind's extravagance that cause the ashheaps. His is a powerful image that is repeatedly referenced to hold the novel together and to emphasize Fitzgerald's key theme: wealth corrupts.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain Nick Carraway's conflict and how it is resolved.
2. Give examples of Nick's morality and conservatism in the book
3. Describe Daisy Fay Buchanan. How did Gatsby meet her and why is he so attracted to her?
4. When, how, and why does Jimmy Gatz get the name of Jay Gatsby?
5. Explain Jay Gatsby's conflict and how it is resolved.
6. Compare and contrast East Egg and West Egg.
7. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim?
8. There are many parties in the book. Describe each of them and explain how each of them ends.
9. What is the Valley of Ashes and how is symbolic? Contrast the description of it to the description of New York City.
10. Who is T.J. Eckelberg? What is his significance to the novel?
11. Describe Myrtle Wilson and what happens to her.
12. What is the significance of automobiles to the story?
13. Compare and contrast Tom Buchanan and George Wilson.
14. Why is Gatsby never really corrupted by his money?
15. How does Nick judge Gatsby at the end of the book and why is it significant?
16. Describe Jordan Baker. How does Nick set things right with her before he leaves New York. Why is this important to him?

17. What is ironic about the fact that it is Wilson that murders Gatsby?
18. Describe Gatsby's funeral. Why does it help to convince Nick he has made the correct decision about returning to the Midwest?
19. What does Fitzgerald say about the American Dream in the novel?
20. Are there any parallels in the book between any of the characters and Fitzgerald and/or Zelda?
21. What things are learned through flashback in the novel?
22. How is the plot unified in spite of the many plots/subplots and various flashbacks?

COMMENT ON THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

The study of literature is not like the study of math or science, or even history. While those disciplines are based largely upon fact, the study of literature is based upon interpretation and analysis. There are no clear-cut answers in literature, outside of the factual information about an author's life and the basic information about setting and characterization in a piece of literature. The rest is a highly subjective reading of what an author has written; each person brings a different set of values and a different background to the reading. As a result, no two people see the piece of literature in exactly the same light, and few critics agree on everything about a book or an author.

In this study guide, we have tried to give an objective literary analysis based upon the information actually found in the novel, book, or play. In the end, however, it is an individual interpretation, but one that we feel can be readily supported by the information that is presented in the guide. In your course of literature study, you or your professor/teacher may come up with a different interpretation of the mood or the theme or the conflict. Your interpretation, if it can be logically supported with information contained within the piece of literature, is just as correct as ours; so is the interpretation of your teacher or professor.

Literature is simply not a black or white situation; instead, there are many gray areas that are open to varying analyses. Your task is to come up with your own analysis that you can logically defend. Hopefully, these booknotes will help you to accomplish that goal.

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