**Title:** *The Great Gatsby  
Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Date of Publication: 1925  
Genre: Fiction – Jazz Age/Modernist Novel  
Students: Alanna Leung, Glenn Liu, Walid Rahman

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<th>Historical Information:</th>
<th>Biographical Information about the Author:</th>
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<td>Fitzgerald was known as one the ‘Lost Generation’ of writers, whose works mocked the hollowness of the 1920’s. He mainly addresses the differentiation between “old” and “new money,” high and low class, and the loosening moral values of the decade. This is a reflection of the Jazz Age, also known as the Roaring Twenties. During this time, the Harlem Renaissance was beginning: African American culture was being accepted in the forms of jazz music and literature. Women were expressing more social freedom by dressing in knee-high dresses and acting in a ‘loose’ manner. These two characteristics would dub the women of the era “flappers.” The youths of the time abandoned the traditional “courting” system and began dating and increasing the frequency of premarital sex. Ironically, alcoholism increased as a result of Prohibition, as well as illegal trafficking of beverages.</td>
<td>F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896 to an unsuccessful salesman and a mother whose inheritance made his upper middle class life possible. He was raised in both the Midwest as well as the East. He abandoned his Princeton University education for a tenuous career of writer and soldier in World War I, but was never actually sent abroad; he was stationed in Alabama, where he met Zelda Sayre, who broke off an engagement with him because of his unsuccessful career, but quickly married him after he gained celebrity status. In Europe, they lived extravagant lifestyle Fitzgerald would later condemn. This was characteristic of the ‘Lost Generation’ or expatriates: writers residing in other countries but mocking the cultures they had once lived in. He wrote several plays and novels, often using his wife as inspiration for the female characters. As their marriage deteriorated, these characters became more convoluted and objectified.</td>
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| Characteristics of the Genre: |  
Modernist novels are more pessimistic than their Romantic counterparts. A rebellion against the cherishing of beauty of nature, they often deal with the human state: industrialization, psychoanalysis, and introspection. The language of Modernist novels is less flowery and more direct, with the same vividness. |
Plot Summary:
The story’s narrator, Nick Carraway, begins the story by explaining that he has recently returned from New York, the East, to the Midwest. During his stay in the East, he lived in a less fashionable area, known as West Egg, adjacent to a mansion owned by Jay Gatsby. This mansion was open for parties each Saturday to await an uninvited guest. Nick is invited to a party, where he meets the mysterious Gatsby for the first time. Later, his acquaintance, Jordan Baker, informs him that the purpose of the parties was to lure Nick’s married cousin Daisy Fay Buchanan, whom Gatsby has loved for five years, but lost contact with. Nick is juxtaposed with Gatsby and his illusory desires when he considers the solidly real Jordan Baker. Later, at a small gathering, which contrasts Gatsby’s giant and glittering parties, Nick finds that Tom Buchanan has a mistress and Daisy is unhappy with her marriage. Nick brings Daisy and Gatsby together, and leads them to Gatsby’s house, where Daisy is enchanted with its grandeur. She frequents his house, while Gatsby begins to change his lifestyle to suit her tastes. Nick meets Tom’s mistress and her husband on a trip to Manhattan with Tom. Later, Daisy attends one of Gatsby’s parties and is unhappy with the raw, emotional atmosphere of the West Egg locals. Gatsby continues to trim his lifestyle to her tastes by doing away with the parties. Daisy invites Nick and Gatsby to her house for a party. When Tom briefly leaves the room, Daisy kisses Gatsby, and then introduces him to her daughter, the living embodiment of Tom and Daisy’s marriage and a symbol of the unalterable past. Daisy’s behavior toward Gatsby leads Tom to realize the existence of the affair, who insists that they leave for Manhattan, and takes Nick and Jordan in his car. On the way, they stop for gas at the station of his mistress’s husband to find that George Wilson has made a parallel discovery about his own wife, and wants to move West. Tom speeds on after Daisy and away from the Wilsons. The two cars converge at a hotel, where Gatsby and Tom argue, revealing the truth behind Gatsby’s ill-gotten wealth, and alienating Daisy. Her desire to leave Tom is effectively quashed. On the drive back, Daisy hits Tom’s mistress with Gatsby’s car, but drives on. Tom and Daisy are united in their effort to keep Daisy’s part in the death secret, while Gatsby keeps a vigil to ensure Daisy’s safety. Tom informs Wilson that it was Gatsby’s car that murdered Myrtle, after which Wilson kills Gatsby and himself.

Describe the Author’s Style:
Fitzgerald’s style is a conglomeration of the impressionistic and realistic. He utilizes specific, precise details of both real and fabricated locations to project each scene in its entirety. His style also lapses into moments of poetic impressionism; chock full of symbols and phantasmagoric images. His usage of biased narrator Nick Carraway encapsulates this shifting style as Nick draws upon other’s accounts, his own memory and speculation to stitch together the narrative.

Provide an example that demonstrates the style:
- Fitzgerald’s impressionistic style can be seen in the Gatsby’s passing “that ashen fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees” (Fitzgerald 169).
- Fitzgerald’s realistic style lies in incorporation of historic events, such as the fixing of the World Series in 1919 (78) and locations such as the “valley of ashes” which hold particular connotations for the historically literate reader.
- The two styles merge, particularly in the description of Gatsby’s parties, fusing dreamlike description with mention of historical figures such as Gilda Gray.

Memorable Quotes
1. “Reserving judgements is a matter of infinite hope” (6)
2. “His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one” (98)
3. “There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams – not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion.” (101)
4. “The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself.” (104)
5. “Her voice is full of money…the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it….High in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl…. ” (127)
6. “Standing behind him Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg which had just emerged pale and enormous from the dissolving night. “God sees everything,” repeated Wilson.” (167)

Significance of each Quote:
1. Nick’s futile attempts to “reserve judgement” as he pledges in the first chapter reveals his incapability to produce this “infinite hope” that foreshadows Gatsby’s incessant love for Daisy.
2. This quote demonstrates the beginning of the collapse of Gatsby’s dream and fabricated identity as each carefully held ideal is revalued and broken in the face of Daisy and reality.
3. Gatsby’s aforementioned infinite hope has produced a figure so perfect and ideal that reality cannot compete. He has become engulfed within his own cannibalistic, destructive dream, and doesn’t realize the imminent collapse.
4. Gatsby’s real identity is James Gatz, and his “Platonic conception” was one that was doomed to fail. The physical manifestations of all ideas are subject to this inevitable fate, and Gatsby’s façade and dream are no exception.
5. This quote is important as Gatsby reveals Daisy’s charm. She is a symbol of material splendor and fulfillment. The numerous instruments and the dynamic of the music hint at her beauty and her inaccessibility in the fortress of the old money “high in the white palace” only accentuates her charm and inflates her value.
6. Doctor T.J. Eckleburg essentially is the physical manifestation of “god” in this story. Wilson’s line reveals the characters attitudes toward this “god”, an omniscient entity that cannot judge for the multifaceted nature of justice. Its impartiality commands apathy and an inability to intervene with the affairs of the characters.

Major Characters

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Role in Story</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>James Gatsby</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Nick Caraway</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Daisy Buchanan</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Tom Buchanan</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Jordan Baker</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Myrtle Wilson</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>George Wilson</td>
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1. Subject of the title, main protagonist, representation of the American Dream.

2. The narrator of the story and Gatsby’s next door neighbor.

3. Wife of Tom Buchanan and the beloved of Gatsby.


5. Acts as the female counterpart in a sense to Nick. She also passes judgment and serves as a companion. She is in many ways, the modern woman.

6. Wife of George Wilson, but lover of Tom Buchanan. She is also a counterpart to Gatsby in the shallowness and hope of the lower classes. Her fate better demonstrates the ultimate defeat of the masses by the wealthy.


1. Gatsby is the physical manifestation of the American Dream but suffers heartbreak from his beloved Daisy. He is very rich but his dealings are very shady and illegal.

2. Through the eyes of Nick, we are able to understand the symbolism behind each other character. Nick also serves as the link between Daisy and Gatsby and helps initiate their romance. He also passes judgment that makes other characters into archetypes of the corrupted 1920s.

3. Daisy is the “standard” to which Gatsby prices his objects. She restarts her broken romantic relationship with Gatsby despite being married to Tom.

4. Tom represents the old money of the age and contrasts heavily with Gatsby. He is also an infidel, but gets Daisy to stay with him.

5. Jordan is a representation of the independent new woman of the day. She does pass judgment as well, but is somewhat reserved. She comments on various scenes and moments.

6. Being the lover of Tom, she is treated more like an object than a human. Her existence sets a sort of parallelism in the story. Both Daisy and Tom become infidels by falling in love with Gatsby and Myrtle, respectively.

7. George idealizes Myrtle and becomes distraught when he realizes that his wife had been unfaithful. His dreamer like quality fails to accomplish anything significant and bring him no gain in life.

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<th>Setting</th>
<th>Significance of Opening Scene</th>
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<td>Rich, loving, monetary, magnanimous, idealistic.</td>
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<td>Honest, realistic, and judgmental.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sassy, infidel, ambivalent, charming.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egotistical, protective, infidel, arrogant, temperamental.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive, cynical, dishonest.</td>
<td>5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfaithful, desperate.</td>
<td>6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dreamer, failure, idealistic.</td>
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Long Island, New York. The city is divided into two parts: East Egg and West Egg. Many affluent well known people live in West Egg and many people of the rising class live in East egg. Gatsby and Nick live in East Egg. Tom and Daisy live in West Egg. However, there is an intermediate setting known as the valley of ashes. This is the location of the working, yet unsuccessful, middle class. It is the abode of hopeless desires and extinguished dreams. The fact that Myrtle was killed in this location may signify the expiring of a “flame” that existed between Gatsby and Daisy. Once Myrtle was killed, Tom reconciled Daisy and thus extinguished said fire. And all that was left was ash.

The opening scene establishes Nick’s guarantee of not passing judgment on the characters he encounters in this book. However, this sets up an ironic incidence. Nick continually judges the characters in this book, and it is through his judgment that we get a picture of who Gatsby is. This emphasizes the human need to judge others in order to understand them.

Significance of Ending or closing scene
The closing scene underscores the futility of Gatsby’s dream. For the same reason, the ideal American dream is truly futile in an age of corruption and dubious decisions.

Symbols

- **The Green Light**: for Gatsby, this light is a combination of his hopes and desires. In the end of the book, Nick relates the green light to the ideal state for which settlers of America came here for.
- **Valley of Ashes**: This is a place of decay, the result of moral depravity as the consequence of unrestrained desire for money.
- **The Eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburgh**: His eyes represent the eyes of God watching down the moral corruption of America.
- **The Baby of Tom and Daisy**: the baby is the unbreakable link between Tom and Daisy and underscores the futility of Gatsby’s actions. No matter how much he wants Daisy to be his, she will never be his. Her link to Tom is manifested in the child.

Old AP Questions

**Possible Themes**

- The decline of American culture and society in the 1920s
- The decrease in need of familial respect and fidelity
- The destruction of aspirations due to immoral enterprises
- The disdain for decadence by God as displayed by the imminent failure of those who are greedy