

The Great Gatsby

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- Fitzgerald seemed to despise the Jazz Age and its way of life. Though he himself was essentially a part of it. *The Great Gatsby* is an open attack on the Jazz Age yet it is done very slyly and with careful planning.
- In some respects the Jazz Age itself was like Jazz Music, (improvised Jazz in particular) in the way that it's rhythm is random and complex and the modes and scales used are often odd sounding and even chromatic at times.
- Fitzgerald creates his seemingly complex characters; spawn of the Jazz Age and then shows them up to be extraordinarily simple. This is the paradox of the Jazz Age. A time of such dramatic change where things seem so complex, yet are in reality notoriously simple.

The American dream

- In many ways *The Great Gatsby* criticises the American Dream. In the Valley of Ashes, the American Dream is very much dead.
- It brings our attention to the question "Is the American Dream just a dream?" It seems that *The Great Gatsby* and other pieces of American literature such as *Death of a Salesman* criticise the American Dream as something that is purely materialistic which all people strive for. Wealth.
- Those who have it want more and keep those who don't at bay so that they can consume all they can. The Jazz Age shows us that even with money and material objects people still have to act like hedonists in order to continue to gain satisfaction from their shallow lives.
- Gatsby is an example of a man who believes in something deeper than material wealth and is only a victim of his own innocence.
- The Jazz Age was a time without values. A Lawless time, where people acted as they pleased. It scares one to think that this is the same sort of society we are living in today. It is easy to criticise the way of life people enjoyed in the Jazz Age yet we are living in something similar today.
- Although wealth is a necessity to ensure our future, it is not a means to an end. Money is not everything and we are shown this by the way the richest people in Fitzgerald's novel -Tom and Daisy- still act the way they want without any kind of real morals.

Summary Chapter 1

The narrator of *The Great Gatsby* is a young man from Minnesota named Nick Carraway. He not only narrates the story but casts himself as the book's author. He begins by commenting on himself, stating that he learned from his father to reserve judgment about other people, because if he holds them up to his own moral standards, he will misunderstand them. He characterizes himself as both highly moral and highly tolerant. He briefly mentions the hero of his story, Gatsby, saying that Gatsby represented everything he scorns, but that he exempts Gatsby completely from his usual judgments. Gatsby's personality was nothing short of "gorgeous."

In the summer of 1922, Nick writes, he had just arrived in New York, where he moved to work in the bond business, and rented a house on a part of Long Island called West Egg. Unlike the conservative, aristocratic East Egg, West Egg is home to the "new rich," those who, having made their fortunes recently, have neither the social connections nor the refinement to move among the East Egg set. West Egg is characterized by lavish displays of wealth and garish poor taste. Nick's comparatively modest West Egg house is next door to Gatsby's mansion, a sprawling Gothic monstrosity.

As well as shedding light on Gatsby's past, Chapter 4 illuminates a matter of great personal meaning for Gatsby: the object of his hope, the green light toward which he reaches. Gatsby's love for Daisy is the source of his romantic hopefulness and the meaning of his yearning for the green light in Chapter 1. That light, so mysterious in the first chapter, becomes the symbol of Gatsby's dream, his love for Daisy, and his attempt to make that love real. The green light is one of the most important symbols in *The Great Gatsby*. Like the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, the green light can be interpreted in many ways, and Fitzgerald leaves the precise meaning of the symbol to the reader's interpretation. Many critics have suggested that, in addition to representing Gatsby's love for Daisy, the green light represents the American dream itself. Gatsby's irresistible longing to achieve his dream, the connection of his dream to the pursuit of money and material success, the boundless optimism with which he goes about achieving his dream, and the sense of his having created a new identity in a new place all reflect the coarse combination of pioneer individualism and uninhibited materialism that Fitzgerald perceived as dominating 1920s American life.

Summary Chapter 5

That night, Nick comes home from the city after a date with Jordan. He is surprised to see Gatsby's mansion lit up brightly, but it seems to be unoccupied, as the house is totally silent. As Nick walks home, Gatsby startles him by approaching him from across the lawn. Gatsby seems agitated and almost desperate to make Nick happy—he invites him to Coney Island, then for a swim in his pool. Nick realizes that Gatsby is nervous because he wants Nick to agree to his plan of inviting Daisy over for tea. Nick tells Gatsby that he will help him with the plan. Overjoyed, Gatsby immediately offers to have someone cut Nick's grass. He also offers him the chance to make some money by joining him in some business he does on the side—business that does not involve Meyer Wolfsheim. Nick is slightly offended that Gatsby wants to pay him for arranging the meeting with Daisy and refuses Gatsby's offers, but he still agrees to call Daisy and invite her to his house.

It rains on the day of the meeting, and Gatsby becomes terribly nervous. Despite the rain, Gatsby sends a gardener over to cut Nick's grass and sends another man over with flowers. Gatsby worries that even if Daisy accepts his advances, things between them will not be the same as they were in Louisville. Daisy arrives, but when Nick brings her into the house, he finds that Gatsby has suddenly disappeared. There is a knock at the door. Gatsby reappears, having returned from a walk around the house in the rain.

At first, Gatsby's reunion with Daisy is terribly awkward. Gatsby knocks Nick's clock over and tells Nick sorrowfully that the meeting was a mistake. After he leaves them two alone for half an hour, however, Nick returns to find them radiantly happy—Daisy shedding tears of joy and Gatsby glowing. Outside, the rain has stopped, and Gatsby invites Nick and Daisy over to his house, where he shows them his possessions. Daisy is overwhelmed by his luxurious lifestyle, and when he shows her his extensive collection of English shirts, she begins to cry. Gatsby tells Daisy about his long nights spent outside, staring at the green light at the end of her dock, dreaming about their future happiness.

Nick wonders whether Daisy can possibly live up to Gatsby's vision of her. Gatsby seems to have idealized Daisy in his mind to the extent that the real Daisy, charming as she is, will almost certainly fail to live up to his expectations. For the moment, however, their romance seems fully rekindled. Gatsby calls in Klipspringer, a strange character who seems to live at Gatsby's mansion, and has him play the piano. Klipspringer plays a popular song called "Ain't We Got Fun?" Nick quickly realizes that Gatsby and Daisy have forgotten that he is there. Quietly, Nick gets up and leaves Gatsby and Daisy alone together.

Analysis

Chapter 5 is the pivotal chapter of *The Great Gatsby*, as Gatsby's reunion with Daisy is the hinge on which the novel swings. Before this event, the story of their relationship exists only in prospect, as Gatsby moves toward a dream that no one else can discern. Afterward, the plot shifts its focus to the romance between Gatsby and Daisy, and the tensions in their relationship actualize themselves. After Gatsby's history with Daisy is revealed, a meeting between the two becomes inevitable, and it is highly appropriate that the theme of the past's significance to the future is evoked in this chapter. As the novel explores ideas of love, excess, and the American dream, it becomes clearer and clearer to the reader that Gatsby's emotional frame is out of sync with the passage of time. His nervousness about the present and about how Daisy's attitude toward him may have changed causes him to knock over Nick's clock, symbolizing the clumsiness of his attempt to stop time and retrieve the past.

Gatsby's character throughout his meeting with Daisy is at its purest and most revealing. The theatrical quality that he often projects