The Great Gatsby is a 1925 novel by American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald. Set in the Jazz Age on Long Island, near New York City, the novel depicts first-person narrator Nick Carraway's interactions with Jay Gatsby, a mysterious millionaire obsessed with reuniting with his former lover, Daisy Buchanan. Chapter One Analysis As The Great Gatsby opens, Nick Carraway, the story's narrator, remembers his education and the lessons his family taught him. Readers learn of his past, his education, and his sense of moral justice, as he begins to unfold the story of Jay Gatsby. The narration takes place more than a year after the incidents described, so Nick is working through the filter of memory in relaying the story's events. The story proper begins when Nick moves from the Midwest to West Egg, Long Island, seeking to become a "well-rounded man" and to recapture some of the enthusiasm and adventure he experienced as a soldier in WWI. As he tries to make his way as a bond salesman, he rents a small house next door to a mansion which, it turns out, belongs to Gatsby. Fitzgerald opens his novel by introducing Nick Carraway, the story's narrator. As a means of establishing faith in the narrator, Fitzgerald carefully develops Nick and positions him both within and without the dramatic situation, creating a dynamic and powerful effect. From the very beginning, even before learning about Gatsby, "the man who gives his name to this book," Fitzgerald gives details about Nick. In his "younger and more vulnerable years" (suggesting he is older and wiser now), his father gave him advice that he has carried with him ever since: "Whenever you feel like criticizing any one . . . just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." The implications are strong: Nick comes from at least a middle class family that values a sense of moral justice. In this way, the reader is encouraged to trust Nick and to believe in his impartiality and good judgment; a biased narrator will make the narrative reactionary, not honest, so stressing his good judgment is crucial. To ensure that readers don't think Nick is superhuman in his goodness, however, Fitzgerald gives him a mortal side. As the chapter continues, more of Nick's background is discussed: the way in which he was raised and his moral character. Nick continues to sell himself, informing the

reader that he is an educated man, having graduated from New Haven, home of Yale University. He comes from "prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations." This seemingly simple detail is crucial. It qualifies Nick to be part of the action which he will explained — a tale of socialites, money, and privilege — while also keeping him carefully apart. Nick has moved East, and disgusted, returns to the Midwest. Fitzgerald introduces one of the novel's key themes, wealth, upon Nick's arrival in the East. Nick settles in West Egg, rather than East Egg, living in a small rental house adjacent to Gatsby's mansion, paying $80 per month, rather than the $3000 to $4000 per month for which the houses around him rent. This detail immediately encourages readers to see the difference between the "haves" and the "have not." Although both Eggs have beautiful mansions, East Egg is home to "old money," people whose families have had great wealth for generations. West Egg, also home to the rich, was home to "new money," people whose wealth was recently earned, as well as to working class people such as Nick. On another level, the description between the Eggs can also be a symbolic representation of people from the Eastern and Western parts of the United States. The story's first adventure, and the one that comprises a large portion of Chapter 1, is Nick's visit with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom, at their mansion in East Egg. The visit not only introduces the other characters crucial to the story, but it also presents a number of themes that will be developed in various ways throughout the novel. Daisy and Tom appear in contrast to the image of Nick: Whereas he is relatively productive (after all, he came East by himself to make his fortune rather than staying home and doing what is expected of him), the Buchanans live in the lap of luxury. Arriving at the mansion, Nick is greeted by Tom, dressed in riding clothes. Clearly, Tom is not a gentle and sensitive man. Fitzgerald sets the women, Daisy and her friend Jordan Baker, in a dreamlike setting, emphasizing their inability to deal with reality. Both young women, dressed entirely in white are surrounded by the size of the room in which they are sitting. As the scene explains and they begin conversation, the superficial nature of these socialites becomes even more pronounced. The conversation at the dinner provides a few key details: This collection of East Eggers focuses on matters of

little practical or significant importance and when they do speak of what they notice to be important and worthy matters, the parts of themselves they reveal are not satisfying.

Chapter Two Analysis

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor-road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes--a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (2.1)

Every time anyone goes from Long Island to Manhattan or back, they go through this depressing industrial area in the middle of Queens. The factories located here pollute the air and land around them—their detritus is what makes the "ash" dust that covers everything and everyone. This is the **place where those who cannot succeed in the rat race end up, hopeless and lacking any way to escape**.

The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic--their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness or forgot them and moved away.

There is no God in the novel. None of the characters seems to be religious, no one wonders about the moral or ethical implications of any actions, and in the end, there are no punishments doled out to the bad or rewards given to the good. This lack of religious feeling is partly what makes Tom's lie to Myrtle about Daisy being a Catholic particularly egregious. This lack of even a basic moral framework is underscored by the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, a giant billboard that is as close as this world gets to having a watchful authoritative presence.

Mrs. Wilson had changed her costume some time before and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream colored chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur

Here, we see the main points of Myrtle's personality—or at least the way that she comes across to Nick. First, it's interesting to note that aside from Tom, whose hulkish physique Nick really pays a lot of attention to, **Myrtle is the only character whose physicality is dwelt on at length. We hear a lot about her body** and the way she moves in space—here, we not only get her "sweeping" across the room, "expanding," and "revolving," but also the sense that her "gestures" are somehow "violent." It makes sense that for Nick, who is into the cool and detached Jordan, Myrtle's overenthusiastic affect is a little off-putting

Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing in impassioned voices whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name.
"Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!" shouted Mrs. Wilson. "I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai----"
Making a short deft movement Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand. (2.124-126)

This bit of violence succinctly encapsulates Tom's brutality, how little he thinks of Myrtle, and it also speaks volumes about their vastly unequal and disturbing relationship. More likely is the

fact that **Tom does actually hold Daisy in much higher regard than Myrtle, and he refuses to let the lower class woman "degrade" his high-class wife** by talking about her freely. This is yet again an example of his extreme snobbery. **Tom is a person who uses his body to get what he wants.** Sometimes this is within socially acceptable boundaries—for example, on the football field at Yale—and sometimes it is to browbeat everyone around him into compliance

Themes and Symbols

Love, Desire, and Relationships. At the party, the guests discuss love and marriage. Two separate threads in this conversation stand out:

1: In Catherine's eyes, the situation between Myrtle and Tom couldn't be clearer: both don't like their spouses, both are into each other, so the obvious solution would be for the two of them to run off together. Of course, we see that **Tom would never leave Daisy for Myrtle**—she is just someone he can feel free to abuse, since he can always buy her compliance with more cheap gifts.

2: Myrtle describes her decision to marry Wilson as a case of mistaken identity. She thought he was a gentleman, but his appearance of class—exemplified by the fact that he "He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in and never even told me" (2.116)—was almost immediately dispelled after the wedding. This is very important of both what happens to Daisy, as Tom cheats on her during their honeymoon and what almost happens to Daisy and Gatsby, who is yet another man who seems like a gentleman but is actually living in a borrowed "suit" and a borrowed identity.

Society and Class. After seeing the heights of the upper classes on East Egg and the lows of the factory workers in the valley of ashes, **this chapter shows us what life is like for a segment of the middle class**. Myrtle is desperate to get as far away from her depressing life with Wilson at the gas station as she can, surrounding herself with the material trappings that Tom can provide: an apartment, clothes, and an accessory dog.

The American Dream. In a novel that is all about the American drive to get ahead, **Myrtle is one of the strivers, willing to put up with terrible treatment in exchange for a chance to climb higher**. So are the people hanging on her coattails, like the McKees and Catherine. Seeing her with this shows us just how striated (separated into layers) society is, as Myrtle grabs every tiny opportunity to demonstrate her slightly higher status to her entourage.

The Eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. This world is defined by its lawless amorality, and there is no voice of moral authority to pass judgment on the bad behavior of the characters. All we get is an **inanimate object that hints at the possibility of a divine watcher**. But, even though these disembodied eyes do make wrong-doers feel uncomfortable under their gaze, they can't actually prevent anything. For example, Tom is entirely comfortable lying. He maintains a mistress, lying to Daisy about his phone calls. And it turns out that he is lying to Myrtle as well, telling her that the reason he can't divorce his wife is that Daisy is a Catholic.

The Valley of Ashes. There are those who live in palaces in West and East Egg. There are those who party in apartments in Manhattan. But this chapter shows us what happens to the people who get left behind, and who can't muster up the luck and energy needed to "win." They end up in the gray wasteland of industrial Queens, enabling the rich to get richer through their depressing, polluted, and monotonous labor.

Chapter Three Analysis

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission. (3.7)

Gatsby's parties are the anonymous, meaningless excess, so much so that people treat his house as a kind of public, or at least commercial, space rather than a private home. This is connected to the roughness of new money. **The random and meaningless understanding of his parties further highlights Gatsby's isolation from true friends**. As Jordan says later, large parties are great because they provide privacy, so Gatsby stands alone in a sea of strangers having their own warm moments.

A stout, middle-aged man with enormous owl-eyed spectacles was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. ...He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.
"About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They're real…."Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you."
Taking our skepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the "Stoddard Lectures."
"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a bona fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?" (3.41-50)

Belasco was a famous dramatic producer, so comparing Gatsby to him here is a way of describing the library as a stage set for a play—in other words, as a wonderful and undoubted fake. This sea of unread books is either yet more wonderful waste of resources, or a kind of miniature example of the fact that a person's core identity remains the same no matter how many layers of disguise are placed on top. **Gatsby has the money to buy these books, but he lacks the interest, depth, time, or ambition to read and understand them**, which is similar to how he regards his quest to get Daisy.

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. . (3.76)

Lots of **Gatsby's appeal lies in his ability to rapidly connect with the person he is speaking to**, to make that person feel important and valued. This is probably what makes him a great front man for Wolfsheim's bootlegging enterprise, and connects him with Daisy, who also has a weirdly appealing quality—her voice.

Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply—I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. (3.161)

The **misogyny of this remark that Nick makes about Jordan** is telling in a novel where women are generally treated as objects at worst or lesser beings at best. Even our narrator, supposedly a tolerant and nonjudgmental observer, here reveals a core of patriarchal assumptions that run deep.

Themes and Symbols

Money and Materialism: In Nick's description, it's an explosion of decorations, food, alcohol, music, and anonymous guests who don't even know the host. This, combined with the over-the-top level of entertainment he provides is shaking even for the wealthy West Egg gathering, and speaks to the materialism and noticeable display of consumption the novel criticizes. It's interesting that Gatsby arranges but doesn't participate in his parties—even the guests become display pieces of his wealth as he stands above them and watches.

Society and Class. At the same time, we get a sense of the West Egg/East Egg divide as Jordan Baker's East Egg friends stick together and do not mix with the rest of the guests, regarding them as bad-mannered and below them.

Mutability of Identity. The beautifully decorated library filled with books that have never been read speaks to **Gatsby's dramatic approach to creating his new identity**. He can create the appearance of an Oxford man, but doesn't have the background resources to actually be one. At the same time, the mystery around Gatsby deepens. We get new theories about his background—he killed a man, he was a German spy during the war, he went to Oxford. And we also see him doing all sorts of mysterious things—taking business phone calls from Chicago and Philadelphia, telling Jordan something secret and fascinating, not actually partying at his own party

Chapter 4 Analysis

The lunch with Wolfsheim gives Nick his first unpleasant impression that Gatsby's fortune may not have been obtained honestly. Nick notices that if Gatsby has connections with such shady characters as Wolfsheim, he might be involved in organized crime or bootlegging. It is important to remember the setting of *The Great Gatsby*, in terms of both the symbolic role of the novel's physical locations and the book's larger attempt to capture the essence of America in the mid-1920s. The pervasiveness of bootlegging and organized crime, combined with the increasing stock market and vast increase in the wealth of the general public during this era, contributed largely to the careless, excessive pleasure-seeking and sense of abandon that permeate *The Great Gatsby*. For Gatsby, who throws the most luxurious parties of all and who seems richer than anyone else, to have ties to the world of bootleg alcohol would only make him a more perfect symbol of the strange combination of moral decadence and vibrant optimism that Fitzgerald portrays as the spirit of 1920s America.

As well as shedding light on Gatsby's past, Chapter 4 lights 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 exact 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 wanted desire to achieve his dream, the connection of his dream to the pursuit of money and material success, the unlimited 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 rough combination of pioneer individualism and uninhibited materialism that Fitzgerald perceived as dominating 1920s American life

"I'm going to make a big request of you today," he said, pocketing his souvenirs with satisfaction, "so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn't want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me." (4.43)

The more Gatsby seems to reveal about himself, the more he deepens the mystery. It's interesting that **Gatsby uses his origin story as a business deal** – he's not sharing his past with Nick to form a connection, but as advance payment for a favor. At the same time, there's a lot of humor in this scene. Imagine any time you told anyone something about yourself, you then had to whip out some physical object to prove it was true!

"Meyer Wolfshiem? No, he's a gambler." Gatsby hesitated, then added coolly: "He's the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919."

"Fixed the World's Series?" I repeated.

The idea staggered me. I remembered of course that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919 but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely happened, the end of some inevitable chain. 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 a safe.

"How did he happen to do that?" I asked after a minute.

"He just saw the opportunity."

"Why isn't he in jail?"

"They can't get him, old sport. He's a smart man."(4.113-119)

Nick's amazement at the idea of one man being behind an huge event like the fixed World Series is telling. It connects Gatsby to the world of crime, cheating, and the dishonest methods necessary to effect enormous change. In a smaller, less criminal way, watching Wolfshiem maneuver has clearly rubbed off on Gatsby and his large-scale scheme to get Daisy's attention by buying an enormous mansion nearby.

Society and Class

The people who until very recently were newcomer immigrants to America are now becoming rich enough to populate West Egg – and it is because of this seeming violation that the old money society is turning its wagons ever more. It is interesting that Gatsby's mansion is a kind of demilitarized zone where these two groups of people encounter each other.

Morality and Ethics.

The introduction of Meyer Wolfshiem focuses on the criminal initiative saturating the Roaring 20s during the Prohibition. Meyer's active and powerful effect on the world around him – his ability to single-handedly fix the 1919 World Series – contrasts with the two other wealthy men we have met so far. Gatsby clearly at least somewhat admires Meyer's abilities and also pursues his desire with a big and bold play.

Love, Desire, and Relationships.

The marriage of Tom and Daisy gets more complicated when we see that Daisy had some kind of romantic connection with Gatsby beforehand, that she had extreme cold feet before going through with the wedding, and that Tom started having affairs as soon as their honeymoon ended. This gives context to some of Daisy's earlier despair and of course paints Tom in an even worse light.

Chapter Five Analysis

"You're selling bonds, aren't you, old sport?"..."Well, this would interest you. It wouldn't take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing." I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But, because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there. (5.22-25)

Nick recognizes that what he quickly dismissed in the moment could easily have been the moral dilemma that changed his whole future. It seems that Nick thinks this was his chance to enter the world of crime – if we assume that what Gatsby was proposing is some kind of insider trading or similarly illegal speculative activity – and be thus trapped on the East Coast rather than retreating to the Midwest. It's striking that **Nick recognizes that his ultimate weakness – the thing that can actually attract him – is** money. In this way, he is different from Gatsby, whose temptation is love, and Tom, whose temptation is sex – and of course, he is also different because he resists the temptation rather than going all-in. Although Nick's refusal could be turned as a sign of his honesty.

He had passed visibly through two states and was entering upon a third. After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock. (5.114)

On the one hand, **the depth of Gatsby's feelings for Daisy is romantic**. He's living the overstatement of every love sonnet and torch song ever written. After all, this is the first time we see Gatsby lose control of himself and his extremely careful self-presentation. But on the other hand, **does he actually know anything about Daisy as a human being?** Notice that it's "the idea" that he's consumed with, not so much the reality. The word "wonder" makes it sound like he's having a religious experience in Daisy's presence. The base that he has put her on is so incredibly high there's nothing for her to do but prove disappointing.

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (5.121)

Almost immediately when he's finally got her, **Daisy starts to fade from an ideal object of desire into a real life human being.** It doesn't even matter how potentially wonderful a person she may be – she could never live up to the idea of an "enchanted object" since she is neither magical nor a thing.

Themes

Love, Desire, and Relationships.

After an earlier chapter of Tom and Myrtle together, we get a chapter of Daisy and Gatsby together. At first glance, the pairs are diametric opposites. **Tom and Myrtle are ridiculous and vulgar/bad mannered** , always chattering about nothing, driven by materialism and physical desire, without a drop of love or romance between them. On the other hand, **Gatsby and Daisy are modest and embarrassed, almost speechless, overwhelmed by feelings**, and have a physical comfort with each other that Tom doesn't inspire either in Daisy or in Myrtle. Gatsby's love for Daisy has an otherworldly quality that is several times described in either mythic or religious terms.

Morality and Ethics. Nick is tempted by what he later comes to realize is the moral dilemma of his life. Twice, Gatsby offers to do some kind of business with him. There are two ethical challenges in this offer.

- First, **Gatsby is suggesting that Nick needs to be paid for services rendered** – that asking Daisy to tea and letting Gatsby see her at Nick's house is a transaction that needs to be repaid somehow.
- Second, since it comes on the heels of their encounter with Mr. Wolfshiem, **Gatsby's business proposition is most likely illegal** (Insider trading? Speculation? Printing fake bonds? There are several possibilities.). It connects Nick to the lawless criminality that in this novel is associated with the new "Wild East."

Symbolism:

Gatsby's Shirts. Gatsby showers Daisy with his array of exquisite shirts in a display that is **at the same time self-satisfaction** . These shirts are a visual representation of how far Gatsby has come – he can literally cover Daisy with his riches.

Clock Symbol

The clock stopped at a specific point in time, trapped there forever, just as Gatsby's life, in many regards, stopped when he was hit with the realization that while he was poor, he could never have Daisy. Gatsby is, in essence, trapped by his dreams of ideal love with Daisy, just as the clock is trapped in that exact moment when it stopped working. Gatsby's blunder with the clock is symbolic. He knocks over time just as he tries to recreate his past with Daisy.

Weather

The raining weather facilitates Daisy and Gatsby's afternoon together. The rain allows for moments of physical comedy. For example, Gatsby's plan to "accidentally" drop by Nick's house during tea with Daisy falls apart when he makes his appearance soaking wet.The rain also creates physical and emotional boundaries, allowing Daisy and Gatsby to stay in their private world. Literally, this happens when they can't tour the mansion's grounds and have to stay in his house. But more importantly, this happens when the rain creates a fog that hides Daisy's house across the bay from view. She doesn't have to think about her marriage or her daughter – she can exist with Gatsby surrounded by magical-sounding.

Chapter Six Analysis

The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God--a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that--and he must be about His Father's Business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty.

Here is the clearest connection of Gatsby and the ideal of the independent, individualistic, self-made man – the ultimate symbol of the American Dream. It's telling that in describing Gatsby this way, Nick also links him to other ideas of perfection.

- He references Plato's philosophical construct of the ideal form – a completely inaccessible perfect object that exists outside of our real existence.

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy's running around alone, for on the following Saturday night he came with her to Gatsby's party. Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar quality of oppressiveness--it stands out in my memory from Gatsby's other parties that summer. There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-colored, many-keyed commotion, but I felt an unpleasantness in the air, a pervading harshness that hadn't been there before. Or perhaps I had merely grown used to it, grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures, second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so, and now I was looking at it again, through Daisy's eyes.

The excitement, celebrity, and luxury parties has been changed into a depressing vision. It's interesting that partly this is because Daisy and Tom are in some sense invade their presence disturbs the enclosed world of West Egg because it reminds Nick of West Egg's lower social standing. It's also key to see that having Tom and Daisy there makes Nick self-aware of the psychic work he has had to do to "adjust" to the vulgarity and different "standards" of behavior he's been around.

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: "I never loved you."

Gatsby expects Daisy to reject her entire relationship with Tom in order to show that she has always been obsessed with him as he has been with her. The problem is that this robs her of her humanity and personhood, she is not exactly like him, and it's unhealthy that he demands for her to be an identical reflection of his mindset.

"I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past."
"Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"
He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.
"I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."
He talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was. . .

Gatsby's blind faith in his ability to recreate some quasi-fictional past that he's been dwelling on for five years is both a praise to his romantic and idealistic nature (the thing that Nick eventually decides makes him "great") and a clear indication that he just might be a completely delusional fantasist. So far in his life, everything that he's fantasized about when he first imagined himself as Jay Gatsby has come true. But in that transformation, Gatsby now feels like he has lost a fundamental piece of himself – the thing he "wanted to recover."

Themes

The American Dream.

Everyone in the world of the novel is out to climb higher, to get more, to reach further.

- A reporter on the make follows a feeling that Gatsby might turn out to be a story.
- Nick spends weeks courting the aunt that controls Jordan's life and money.
- And in the deep background of the party, a movie star's producer tries to take their relationship from a professional to a personal level.

Alcohol. Despite his idolizing of Dan Cody, Gatsby learns from his mentor's alcoholism to stay away from drinking – this is why, to this day, he doesn't participate in his own parties. For him, alcohol is a tool for making money and displaying his wealth and standing.

Society and Class. A very difficult encounter between a couple of West Egg, Tom, and Gatsby highlights the difference between West Egg money and East Egg money. To Nick, the East Eggers are fundamentally different and mostly terrible:

- For fun, they ride horses, while Gatsby's main vehicle is a car.
- They issue invitations that they hope will get declined, while Gatsby not only welcomes them into his home, but allows people to crash his parties and stay in his house indefinitely.
- They accept hospitality without so much as a thank you, while Gatsby feels such a sense of gratitude that his thanks are overwhelming.

Chapter Seven Analysis

Then she remembered the heat and sat down guiltily on the couch just as a freshly laundered nurse leading a little girl came into the room. "Bles-sed pre-cious," she crooned, holding out her arms. "Come to your own mother that loves you." The child, relinquished by the nurse, rushed across the room and rooted shyly into her mother's dress. "The Bles-sed pre-cious! Did mother get powder on your old yellowy hair? Stand up now, and say How-de-do." Gatsby and I in turn leaned down and took the small reluctant hand. Afterward he kept looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before.

This is first time to see Daisy performing motherhood. And "performing" is the right word, since everything about Daisy's actions here rings a little false and her precious sing song a little bit like an act. The presence of the nurse makes it clear that, like many upper-class women of the time, Daisy does not actually do any child education**.** At the same time, **this is the exact moment when Gatsby is delusional dreams start breaking down**. The shock and surprise that he experiences when he realizes that Daisy really does have a daughter with Tom show how little he has thought about the fact the Daisy has had a life of her own outside of him for the last five years. The existence of the child is proof of Daisy's separate life, and Gatsby simply cannot handle then she is not exactly as he has pictured her to be.

"What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon," cried Daisy, "and the day after that, and the next thirty years?" "Don't be morbid," Jordan said. "Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall."(7.74-75)
Comparing and contrasting Daisy and Jordan)

Daisy's attempt at a joke reveals her fundamental boredom and restlessness. Despite the fact that she has social standing, wealth, and whatever material possessions she could want, she is not happy in her endlessly boring and repetitive life. This existential boredom goes a long way to helping explain why she seizes on Gatsby as an escape from routine.

On the other hand, Jordan is a pragmatic and realistic person, who takes opportunities and who sees possibilities and even repetitive cyclical moments of change. For example here, although fall and winter are most often linked to sleep and death, whereas it is spring that is usually seen as the season of rebirth, for Jordan any change brings with it the chance for reinvention and new beginnings.

"She's got an indiscreet voice," I remarked. "It's full of ___" I hesitated. "Her voice is full of money," he said suddenly. That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it. . . . High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl. . . .

Nick notes that the way Daisy speaks to Gatsby is enough to reveal their relationship to Tom. Once again we see the powerful attraction of Daisy's voice. For Nick, this voice is full of "carelessness," an interesting word that at the same time brings to mind the revelation of secrets and the revelation of dishonest sexual activity. But for Gatsby, Daisy's voice does not hold this sexy attraction, as much as it does the promise of wealth, which has been his overriding ambition and goal for most of his life. To him, her voice marks her as a prize to be collected.

"You think I'm pretty dumb, don't you?" he suggested. "Perhaps I am, but I have a—almost a second sight, sometimes, that tells me what to do. Maybe you don't believe that, but science——"

Nick never sees Tom as anything other than a villain; however, it is interesting that only Tom immediately sees Gatsby for the fraud that he turns out to be. Almost from the beginning, Tom calls it that Gatsby's money comes from bootlegging or some other criminal activity

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The relentless beating heat was beginning to confuse me and I had a bad moment there before I realized that so far his suspicions hadn't alighted on Tom. He had discovered that Myrtle had some sort of life apart from him in another world and the shock had made him physically sick. I stared at him and then at Tom, who had made a parallel discovery less than an hour before—and it occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well. Wilson was so sick that he looked guilty, unforgivably guilty—as if he had just got some poor girl with child.

This passage, which **explicitly contrasts these two men's reactions to finding out their wives are having affairs**.

- Tom's response to Daisy and Gatsby's relationship is to immediately do everything to display his power. He forces a trip to Manhattan, demands that Gatsby explain himself, systematically dismantles the careful image and mythology that Gatsby has created, and finally makes Gatsby drive Daisy home to demonstrate how little he has to fear from them being alone together.

- Wilson also tries to display power. But he is so new to use it that his best effort is to lock Myrtle up and then to listen to her weakening insults a. Moreover, rather than relaxing under this power trip, Wilson becomes physically ill, feeling guilty both about his part in driving his wife away and about pushing her into submission.

"Self control!" repeated Tom incredulously. "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out. . . . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white."
Flushed with his impassioned gibberish he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization.

Nick is happy whenever he gets to demonstrate how undereducated and dumb Tom actually is. Here, Tom's anger at Daisy and Gatsby is somehow transformed into a miserable and unreal righteous rant about miscegenation, loose morals, and the decay of stalwart institutions. Jordan points out that race isn't really at issue at the moment, and Nick laughs at the hypocrisy of a womanizer like Tom suddenly lamenting his wife's lack of moralistic politeness.

"She never loved you, do you hear?" he cried. "She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved any one except me!"

Gatsby throws caution to the wind and reveals the story that he has been telling himself about Daisy all this time. Gatsby has been driven for the last five years by the idea that he has access to what is in Daisy's heart. However, we can see that a dream built on this kind of shifting sand is at best wishful thinking and at worst willful self-delusion.

"Daisy, that's all over now," he said earnestly. "It doesn't matter any more. Just tell him the truth—that you never loved him—and it's all wiped out forever." ... She hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and me with a sort of appeal, as though she realized at last what she was doing—and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all. But it was done now. It was too late…. "Oh, you want too much!" she cried to Gatsby. "I love you now—isn't that enough? I can't help what's past." She began to sob helplessly. "I did love him once—but I loved you too." Gatsby's eyes opened and closed. "You loved me too?" he repeated.

Gatsby wants nothing less than that Daisy remove the last five years of her life. He is unwilling to accept the idea that Daisy has had feelings for someone other than him, that she has had a history that does not involve him, and that she has not spent every single second of every day wondering when he would come back into her life. For all Daisy's evident weaknesses, it is a testament to her psychological strength that she is simply unwilling to recreate herself, her memories, and her emotions in Gatsby's image. Unlike Gatsby, who against all evidence to the contrary believes that you can repeat the past, Daisy wants to know that there is a future.

It passed, and he began to talk excitedly to Daisy, denying everything, defending his name against accusations that had not been made. But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly, toward that lost voice across the room. (7.292)

The appearance of Daisy's daughter and Daisy's declaration that at some point in her life she loved Tom have both helped to crush Gatsby's obsession with his dream. In just the same way, Tom's explanations about who Gatsby really is and what is behind his facade have broken Daisy's passion.

Themes

Morality and Ethics. suspicion of crime is everywhere:

- Gatsby's new butler has a criminal face
- a woman worries that Nick is out to steal her purse on the train
- Gatsby lurks around outside the Buchanans' mansion like "he was going to rob the house in a moment.

Daisy and Tom sit and conspire together at the kitchen table

This air of the illegal heightens the actual crimes that take place or are revealed in the chapter:

- Gatsby is a bootlegger (or worse)
- Daisy kills Myrtle
- Gatsby hides the car with its evidence of the accident
- Daisy and Tom decide to get away with murder

Weather

The overwhelming heat of the day plays a vital role in creating **an atmosphere of stifled, sweaty, uncomfortable breathlessness**. Each scene's overwhelming tension and awkwardness are further heightened by the physical discomfort that everyone is experiencing. The hot humidity ratchets up anger and resentment, and also seems to raise the recklessness with which people are willing to expose and pursue their sexual desires.

Mistaken Identity is Clear in The Novel.

- First, on the hot day, Daisy is fascinated by Gatsby's projecting an image of looking "so cool" and resembling "the advertisement of the man" . Gatsby's shiny appearance is perfect but also clearly shallow and fake, like an ad.

- Later, Myrtle feels jealous when she sees Tom driving next to Jordan, and assumes that Jordan is Daisy. This case of mistaken identity contributes to her death, as she assumes that Tom would be driving the same car back from the city that he took there.

- Third, Wilson briefly assumes that Michaelis is Myrtle's lover. His failure to understand who it is that is a really having an affair with his wife leads to the novel's second murder.

The Treatment of Women. Also key this chapter are women characters.

First, there is the pairing of Daisy and Jordan, whose outlooks on life are confirmed to be completely opposed.

- **Daisy is rich, overindulged, and endlessly bored with her monotonously luxurious life**. She grabs on to the romance with Gatsby is a possible escape, but is soon confronted with the reality of the perfect, idealized being that he would like her to be. Daisy realizes that she prefers the safe boredom and casual betrayal of Tom to the unrealistic expectations—and thus inevitable disappointment—of being with Gatsby. Her fundamental cowardice is a better fit for Tom, as we find out after the car accident when she kills Myrtle. It's Tom who offers her complicity, understanding, and a return to stability.

- On the other hand, **Jordan is a pragmatist who sees opportunity and possibility everywhere**. This makes her attractive to Nick, who likes that she is self-contained, calm, cynical, and unlikely to be overly emotional. However, this approach to life means that Jordan is basically amoral, as revealed in this chapter by her almost complete lack of reaction to Myrtle's death, and her assumption that life at the Buchanan house will go on as normal. For Nick, who clings to his sense of himself as a deeply decent human being, this is a deal breaker.

Chapter Eight Analysis

She was the first "nice" girl he had ever known. In various unrevealed capacities he had come in contact with such people but always with indiscernible barbed wire between. He found her excitingly desirable. He went to her house, at first with other officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed him--he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there--it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. (8.10)

The reason the word "nice" is in quotation marks is that Gatsby does not mean that Daisy is the first pleasant or good-natured girl that he has met. Instead, the word "nice" here means superior, having elegant taste. In other words, from the very beginning what Gatsby most values about Daisy is that she belongs to that set of society that he is desperately trying to get into: the wealthy, upper class. Just like when he noted the Daisy's voice has money in it, here Gatsby almost cannot separate Daisy herself from the beautiful house that he falls in love with.

For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the "Beale Street Blues" while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the grey tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor.

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately - and the decision must be made by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality - that was close at hand. (8.18-19)

This description of Daisy's life apart from Gatsby clarifies why she picks Tom in the end and goes back to her hopeless boredom : this is what she has grown up doing and is used to. Daisy's life seems fancy. After all, there are orchids and orchestras and golden shoes. But already, even for the young people of high society**,** death and decay appear large. In this passage for example, not only is the orchestra's rhythm full of sadness, but the orchids are dying, and the people themselves look like flowers past their prime.

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. But it was all going by too fast now for his blurred eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.

Once again Gatsby is trying to reach something that is just out of grasp, a gestural motif that returns frequently in this novel. Here already, even as a young man, he is trying to grab hold of an short-term memory.

No telephone message arrived but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock--until long after there was any one to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true 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 and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about . . . like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

Nick tries to imagine what it might be like to be Gatsby, but a Gatsby without the activating dream that has encouraged him throughout his life**.** For Nick, this would be the loss of the aesthetic sense - an inability to perceive beauty in roses or sunlight. The idea of fall as a new, but horrifying, world of ghosts and unreal material contrasts nicely with Jordan's earlier idea that fall brings with it rebirth.

Themes and Symbols

Unreliable Narrator.

Nick has been back grounding himself as a narrative force in the novel, in this chapter, we suddenly start to feel the heavy hand of his narration**.** Rather than the completely objective, nonjudgmental reporter that he has set out to be, Nick begins to edit and editorialize. First, he introduces a Gatsby's death with bad dreams and threatening fear sense of foreboding, foreshadowing. Then, he talks about his decision to reveal Gatsby's background not in the sequential order when he learned it, but before we heard about the argument in the hotel room.

Symbols: The Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg.

The absence of a church or religious figure in Wilson's life, and his delusion that the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are a higher power, underscores how little moral clarity or prescription there is in the novel's world**.** Characters are driven by emotional or material greed, by selfishness, and by a complete lack of concern about others. The people who thrive - from Wolfshiem to Jordan - do so because they are moral relativists. The people who fail - like Nick, or Gatsby, or Wilson - fail because they can't put aside an absolutist ideal that drives their actions.

Society and Class. By the end of this chapter, the rich and the poor are definitely separated - forever, by death**.** Every main character who isn't from the upper class - Myrtle, Gatsby, and Wilson - is violently killed. On the other hand, those from the social class - Jordan, Daisy, and Tom - can continue their lives totally unchanged. Jordan encounters these deaths off completely. Tom gets to hang on to his functionally dysfunctional marriage. And Daisy literally gets away with murder. Only Nick seems to be genuinely affected by what he has witnessed. He survives, but his retreat to his Midwest home marks a kind of death - the death of his romantic idea of achievement and success.

Chapter 9

Just as *The Great Gatsby* began with Nick's father reminding him about his upbringing, so it ends with Gatsby's father reminding us about the childhood of James Gatz (Gatsby's real birth name).

"After a little while Mr. Gatz opened the door and came out, his mouth ajar, his face flushed slightly, his eyes leaking isolated and unpunctual tears. He had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise, and when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride."

Gatsby's father is the only person who has the kind of response to this mansion that Gatsby could have hoped for. Everyone else has found it either gaudy, vulgar, or fake. Perhaps this shows that for all his attempts to cultivate himself, Gatsby could never escape the tastes and ambitions of a Midwestern farm boy.

"When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different--if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to the end. You may think that's sentimental but I mean it--to the bitter end….Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead," he suggested. "After that my own rule is to let everything alone."

Wolfshiem's refusal to come to Gatsby's funeral is extremely self-serving. He is using this philosophical excuse in order to protect himself from being anywhere near a crime scene. However, in a novel which is at least partly concerned with how morality can be generated in a place empty of religion, Wolfshiem's explanation of his behavior confirms that the end of this kind of thinking is treating people as disposable.

It also plays into the novel's dominant idea **that the American Dream is based on a willful desire to forget and ignore the past**, instead straining for a potentially more exciting or more profitable future. Part of forgetting the past is forgetting the people that are no longer here, so for Wolfshiem, even a close relationship like the one he had with Gatsby has to immediately be pushed to the side once Gatsby is no longer alive.

"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy--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. .."

Nick's summary judgment of Tom and Daisy seems harsh but fair. They are people who do not have to answer for their actions and are free to ignore the consequences of what they do. They both understand that they just don't need to worry about anything that happens in the same way that everyone else does. It is interesting to consider how this cycle will continue itself with Pammy, their daughter.

Themes and Symbols

The American Dream**.** Gatsby's dreams might be over, and Nick might be so disillusioned that he goes back home, but the American Dream continues unabated. On the one hand, the boys who cluster around Gatsby's mansion are a new generation who are starting to buy into the cult of celebrity and the greedy ambition that drives many of the novel's characters. On the other hand, Jordan's ability to wave off the past without a second thought seems to be spreading - Wolfshiem and even Nick himself talk about quickly forgetting Gatsby.

Mutability of Identity.

The failure to escape the past also plays a part in the novel. Most importantly, the last line of the novel says that despite the fact that we struggle to move upstream, the current of our past is always working against our forward progress.

Understanding the Ending of *The Great Gatsby*

Why does the novel end the way it does? The novel's unexpected and downbeat ending mostly poses more questions than it gives answers. Why do Gatsby, Myrtle, and George Wilson die? Why does Daisy go back to Tom? Why does no one come to Gatsby's funeral? It all feels kind of empty and pointless, especially after all the effort that Gatsby put into crafting his life, right?

F. Scott Fitzgerald was not particularly optimistic about the capitalist flourishing of the 1920s. He saw that instead of actually being committed to equality, the country was still split into classes. So, in the world of the novel, Gatsby, for all his wealth and greatness, can buy himself a place in West Egg, but can never join the old money world of East Egg.

The novel is a harsh accusation of the idea of the American Dream. The actually "successful" people—successful in that at least they survive—(the Buchanans, Nick, and Jordan) are all old money; while those who fail (Gatsby, Myrtle, and George) are the seekers.

The language of the novel's ending paragraphs and the last paragraph of the first chapter **links Gatsby's outstretched arms with the hopes of the Dutch sailors** (the people of the past). Just as Gatsby is obsessed with the green light on Daisy's dock, so the sailors coming to this continent for the first time longed for the "green breast of the new world." For both, these green things are "the last and greatest of all human dreams": for Gatsby, it's his memory of perfect love, while for the sailors, it's the alarm song of conquest.

The novel's last paragraphs also touch on most of the novel's overarching themes, symbols, and motifs:

- The transformation of America from the idyllic, original boundary to the polluted metropolis
- The quest to win over a lost love, or the imperfection of real love versus an ideal love
- The past always influences, hangs over, and directs the present
- The ultimate disappointment of the American Dream, and specifically the sense that it is fading away—just as New York has been completely transformed from "green breast of land" to corrupt city, all of America is escaping the pure dreams of its people.