

THE GREAT GATSBY

Chapter 1

The reader is introduced to Nick Carraway, the narrator of the book. Nick talks about his midwestern beginnings and how he came to the New York area to work in bonds. He moves to a small house in West Egg, which is very near to Tom and Daisy Buchanan, who live on East Egg. Daisy is Nick's cousin and Tom is an acquaintance from Nick's days in college.

He goes to their home for dinner one evening soon after moving. There he meets Jordan Baker, a professional athlete who is friends with Daisy. While everyone is enjoying their evening Tom gets a private phone call. Jordan tells Nick that the person on the phone is Tom's other woman. Daisy is also aware that Tom is cheating on her, and Jordan tells Nick that almost everyone knows about Tom's affair. She also asks Nick if he has met his neighbour Gatsby. He has not and but decides that he would like to.

Later in the evening Tom and Daisy ask Nick about his engagement. He tells them he is not engaged, and that it is all a gossipy misunderstanding.

When Nick arrives home after the party he sees Gatsby, or who he feels is Gatsby, standing out on the grass. He intends to go introduce himself but decides against it thinking that Gatsby would prefer to be alone. So he just watches him for a minute or two but the minute he takes his eyes off of him, Gatsby vanishes.

Chapter 2

Tom invites Nick out for an afternoon. On their way to the city they pick up Myrtle, Tom's mistress. She is the wife of Wilson, a man who owns a garage along the highway. Nick mentions how shameless Tom is in taking Myrtle out in public no matter who may see them. While in the city the group calls upon Catherine, Myrtle's sister. They go to Catherine's apartment for a small party and Myrtle calls her friends the McKee's to come over as well. Nick becomes drunk, although he says that this is only the second time he has ever been drunk, and says that his memories of that day are a little hazy. The party is mostly uneventful for Nick, but he is told some gossip about the state of Tom and Daisy's marriage. Catherine says that neither Tom nor Myrtle can stand the person they are married to and that Tom would divorce Daisy except for the fact that she is Catholic. Nick notes that Daisy is not Catholic.

Towards the end of the evening Tom and Myrtle get in a fight about Daisy and he strikes her and breaks her nose. After that Nick becomes incoherent due to the alcohol and the next thing he clearly remembers is waiting for a train in Pennsylvania Station.

Chapter 3

One summer evening Nick goes to Gatsby's house for the first time. He is invited by Gatsby's chauffeur and it ends up being a very large and crowded event. He knows no one at first, but sees Jordan and stays with her for the most of the evening. While he is there many guests talk about Gatsby. He is a very mysterious man to them and everyone has their speculations as to how he obtained his money. Some say he was a bootlegger, some say a spy during the war, and others think that he has the look of someone who's killed a man.

While moving through the party Nick finally meets Gatsby, although he wasn't aware of it at first. They make small talk and find out that they had seen one another during the war. But their talk is short lived because Gatsby has business to attend to. Jordan says that Gatsby is an Oxford man and Nick watches him curiously for the rest of the evening. He notes that Gatsby seems detached and distant from almost everyone.

Later in the evening Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan. When she is finished Nick is there and she tells him that Gatsby has told her something amazing that she can't talk about right now. But she asks Nick to look her up sometime.

Nick does end up calling on Jordan. They start to spend time with one another and he likes her company. But he says that he has to end his "tangle back home", the engagement misunderstanding, before he can start a relationship.

Chapter 4

Nick goes back to Gatsby's for another party. Nick gives a detailed list of all of those in attendance and just what kind of people he thought they were.

One morning Gatsby's car pulled up in Nick's driveway. Gatsby tells Nick that they are going to be going to lunch together and Nick agrees. As they are driving Gatsby tells Nick that he would like to dispel any myths that Nick may have heard about him. Gatsby says that he came from a wealthy family from the midwest, San Francisco to be exact. He said that his parents died and left him a lot of money. After that he went to war and lived in all of the great cities and later attended Oxford College. Although Nick is sceptical of this story Gatsby shows him a medal he earned from the war and a picture of himself at Oxford. Gatsby also tells Nick that he has a "big request" to make of him but that Jordan Baker will talk to him of it later. Nick is confused, but Gatsby will speak no more of it.

When they reach the city, Nick is introduced to Gatsby's friend Meyer Wolfsheim, who they dine with. After Meyer leaves Gatsby tells Nick that he is a gambler and the man who fixed the 1919 World Series. As they are talking about Meyer, Nick sees that Tom has also come to the restaurant. Nick thinks that he will introduce the two men but when he turns around, Gatsby has disappeared.

After this, Nick goes to meet Jordan for tea. She tells him the story of how she got to know Daisy when they were both younger back in Louisville. Daisy spent quite a bit of time with a young soldier in those days, and now Jordan realized that that soldier was Jay Gatsby. But he had to go to war and they lost contact and Daisy ended up getting engaged to Tom. Jordan was in the wedding and the day before they were to be married Daisy received a mysterious letter. After reading it she told Jordan that she wasn't going to get married, but went through with it anyway. Soon after the honeymoon she and Tom were expecting a baby.

But Daisy had forgotten all about Gatsby until she heard Jordan and Nick talking about him not long ago. Daisy asks about him and Jordan pieces together that he was the soldier Daisy had spent so much time with. Nick points out what a coincidence it is for them to be living near one another now but Jordan says that it is anything but. Gatsby bought the house to be close to Daisy. This is where Nick fits in. Gatsby would like for Nick to help him see Daisy again.

Chapter 5

When Nick returns from the city that evening he finds Gatsby admiring his house. he tells him that he plans to invite Daisy over for tea. Gatsby tries to act casual but it is obvious he is

excited. During their exchange Gatsby tries to offer Nick some kind of job, but Nick sees it only as a polite gesture and turns it down.

The next day Nick invites Daisy to tea and tells her not to bring Tom. Gatsby comes over to inspect everything to make sure that the tea goes perfectly. Daisy finally arrives and Nick goes out to meet her. When they return inside Gatsby is nowhere to be found. A moment later there is a knocking at the door and Gatsby walks in. He and Daisy look at one another in awkward surprise. Nick tries to make the afternoon go smoothly but realizes that the two would like to be alone. He goes out to his porch to let them catch up. When he returns the two seem relaxed but entranced with one another. Gatsby invited them over to see his house. While walking over Nick asks Gatsby about how he made his money but is answered with a curt "that's my business". The group walks through and Gatsby tries to impress Daisy with all of the possessions he has filled his house with. Nick, again realizing that his presence is not needed, leaves the two alone.

Chapter 6

A reporter comes to Gatsby's home one day trying to learn about him since Gatsby has become a sort of celebrity. He asks questions about many of the myths surrounding Gatsby, but Nick gives us the truest account of Gatsby's life.

He was born James Gatz in North Dakota. His parents were poor farm people and to escape the blandness of his existence, Gatsby created a fantasy world. Part of this fantasy included the name Jay Gatsby. As a young man he worked along the shore of Lake Superior doing odd jobs. He tried a small college for a couple of weeks but quickly grew restless and went back to the shore. While walking the shoreline he spots a yacht owned by the wealthy Dan Cody. He warns Cody that he might have sailing troubles. Cody takes Gatsby under his wing. When Cody died Gatsby was supposed to get a large portion of his fortune but was tricked out of it. But Gatsby had created a persona and found something that he wanted to achieve at all costs.

After an absence of several weeks due to work Nick goes over to see Gatsby one Sunday afternoon. While there Tom Buchanan and two others arrive on horseback. Gatsby tries his hardest to be hospitable to the trio. They make an attempt to invite Gatsby with them somewhere, but when he goes to get ready they leave without him.

At the next party Gatsby throws Tom and Daisy arrive. Tom immediately dislikes the party and begins to question how Gatsby came into so much money. Daisy also seems to be unhappy at the party which frightens Gatsby. He tells Nick that he will make things right with her and they will be able to go back to how they once were.

After hearing this Nick tells the reader of an evening Gatsby and Daisy spent together in their youth. The moment was so perfect and beautiful to Gatsby that he has spent all of his time trying to recreate that moment. It is this recreation that he believes will make him happy.

Chapter 7

Nick goes to the Buchanans for an afternoon with Tom, Daisy, Gatsby, and Jordan. While they are there the group, including Gatsby, sees Daisy's child for the first time. As the group is talking Daisy says she loves Gatsby in front of Tom but he thinks nothing of it. Being a hot and uncomfortable day they all decide to go into the city to find something to do. Tom asks to take Gatsby's car. It seems odd to Gatsby but he lets him and Tom, Jordan and Nick drive off together with Daisy and Gatsby in Tom's blue sports car.

Tom stops at Wilson's garage to fill up the gas tank and speaks to Wilson. Wilson alludes to the idea that he thinks his wife is having an affair and that he wants to get some money to move out west. While this talk is going on Nick thinks he sees Myrtle watching them from the window.

The groups meet up in the city and decide to get a hotel suite and make a few cold drinks. While there, Gatsby and Daisy begin to act more obvious about their affections in front of everyone. Tom begins to get angry and starts shouting at them. As the fight goes on Gatsby tells Tom that Daisy has never loved Tom and has always been in love with him. Daisy quietly agrees. Tom, enraged, says that he has investigated Gatsby and found out that he earned his money through being a bootlegger. The argument dies down and Gatsby and Daisy decide to leave in his car. The rest of the group quietly exits with Tom.

Meanwhile Michaelis, a neighbor of Wilson's stops by to see him and finds him very ill in his office. Wilson tells him that he locked his wife up and that they will be leaving tomorrow. Wilson never tells Michaelis why they are leaving or why Myrtle is locked up. He leaves Wilson alone.

Later, he comes out of his restaurant and hears Wilson and Myrtle fighting. During the fight she runs into the road just as two cars are approaching in either direction. She is hit and killed but the car does not stop. It is later found out that the car was Gatsby's and Daisy was driving it.

Tom pulls up a little later when he sees all of the commotion around Wilson's. Wilson believes that it was Tom who hit his wife since Tom was driving that car earlier in the day, but Tom assured him it wasn't. When the group arrives back at Tom's Nick decides to wait outside for a cab. While waiting Gatsby appears from behind a bush. He admits that Daisy was driving the car. Nick asks Gatsby to come back with him but Gatsby wants to wait outside the house to make sure that nothing happens to Daisy.

Chapter 8

Early the next morning Nick goes over to check up on Gatsby. He has been at Daisy's all night just watching to see if she was safe. He and Nick stay up talking about Gatsby's past. Gatsby is being very honest with Nick and tells him that Daisy was the first nice girl he had ever really met. He was in love with her and planned on marrying her but the War split them apart. When it was over he intended to go back and marry her but ended up at Oxford instead. When he finally makes it back to America and goes to Louisville, he cannot find Daisy. She is on her honeymoon with Tom Buchanan. Nick has to leave Gatsby to get to work. He is concerned about him, but Gatsby insists that he will be fine. After Nick leaves Gatsby decides to go use his pool and relax.

Nick now tells the reader about what happened at Wilson's to start the chain of events that would occur. Michaelis has stayed with Wilson to make sure that he is all right. Wilson tells Michaelis that someone killed Myrtle on purpose, whoever was having the affair with her. Michaelis thinks it is all nonsense and tries to talk reasonably to Wilson. He ends up staying there until late. A man Michaelis recognized from the day of the accident offers to stay with Wilson. When Michaelis returns, both Wilson and the man are gone. Wilson was looking for Gatsby. Someone had told him that Gatsby was involved. When Wilson finally finds Gatsby's home he shoots Gatsby in his pool and kills himself as well.

Chapter 9

Nick calls Daisy's house to speak to her but she and Tom have left without any way to be reached. He also tries to get in contact with Meyer Wolfsheim but cannot. Wolfsheim sends a

letter later saying that he cannot come to Gatsby's side. Shortly after Gatsby dies. A few days later Henry Gatz, Gatsby's father, comes to the house. He had heard about Gatsby's death in the paper and came at once.

The day of the funeral Nick goes into the city to see Wolfsheimer. Nick has to force himself into Wolfsheimer's office, but Meyer refuses to come to the funeral saying that he can't get mixed up in another man's death.

When Nick returns to the house, he and Mr. Gatz talk about what Gatsby was like when he was younger. Gatz shows Nick a schedule that Gatsby wrote out when he was younger that shows a very driven, determined young Gatsby.

The minister arrives at the house and seems ready to start the funeral but Nick asks him to wait for more people to show up, but no one does. When the small group goes to the cemetery another man ends up showing up for the service. He was a man who came to Gatsby's party that summer and thought he should be there out of respect.

A few days later Nick goes to see Jordan and formally end things between them. She tells him that she is engaged to another man and although not surprised, Nick pretends to be. Another afternoon Nick sees Tom on the street in the city. Nick is obviously disgusted with Tom and asks him what he said to Wilson. Nick has figured out that Tom was the one who told Wilson that it was Gatsby that was having an affair with his wife and who ran her down. Tom denies it but Nick is certain.

Nick goes back to his home one last time and decides that he doesn't want to live in the East anymore. He believes that he, and all of the others, were not fit to live out in the East and that is why they failed there.

Nick

Nick is the hardest character to understand in the book because he is the narrator and will therefore only give us an impression of himself that he would like to give. He tells the reader that "I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known", but we see him lie on several occasions. So it is all but impossible to get an accurate picture of Nick. By the end of the book he is very jaded, though. When he and Jordan break up he says "I'm thirty. I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor". So the experience with Gatsby and the others takes its toll on him. But in the end, the reader cannot be certain of who the real Nick is.

Gatsby

To understand Gatsby one has to look at not only his true life, but the life that he tried to create for himself. The truth is that he came from poor beginnings and created a fantasy world where he was rich and powerful. Even in his youth Gatsby was not content with what he had. He wanted money, so he managed to get it. He wanted Daisy, and she slipped through his fingers. So even when his wealth and stature are at their greatest, he will not be content. He must have Daisy. Yes, there is love. But more than that there is a drive to possess her because that is what he wanted for all of those years. She was part of his image for the future and he had to have her. And although Gatsby seems very kind, he is not afraid to be unscrupulous to get what he wants. When he wanted money, he was more than willing to become a bootlegger. His drive is what makes him who he is, good and bad. And it is this drive that ends up ruining his life.

Daisy

Daisy is a trapped woman. She's trapped in a marriage that she is unhappy in and trapped in a world where she has no chance to be free or independent. She is at the mercy of her husband, a man who takes her for granted. Daisy is also terribly clever, delivering some of the funnier lines of the book. When a reader looks at the foolishness and shallowness of Daisy they must realize that Daisy may be doing out of necessity. As she said when she delivered her daughter, "- that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool!". Daisy is smart enough to understand the limits imposed on her and has become jaded and indulgent because of them.

The word careless also describes Daisy well. Many of the things that Daisy does, the accident with Myrtle in particular, show a woman who is just careless. She has become very much wrapped up in herself. Part of this is due to the fact that she had been spoiled all her life. She was born into money and had an endless assortment of men who would continue to spoil her. So she has learned to think only of herself without regard for the people that it may hurt.

Tom

Being born into a family that is wealthy has made Tom a spoiled man. He hasn't really worked his entire life and instead spends his days in indulgence and ease. This is what motivates Tom; gratification. He has a shameless affair with Myrtle because it satisfies his needs. He flaunts their relationship in public because he does not concern himself with the consequences of his actions, he's never had to. This is also why he and Daisy escape in the end of the book. There was a situation they would have to face and they didn't want to. So they ran to their money and fled the situation, leaving it to be dealt with by others. Tom will spend his whole life doing things like that because that is who he is: A careless man who won't be bothered by the suffering he causes.

Jordan

Jordan faces the same problems that Tom and Daisy do. She has been born with money and has lived in a culture full of money and has been spoiled by it. She is surrounded by people like the Buchanans who perpetuate her indulgent behavior. This can be observed in the scene where she and Nick are driving in the city and calls her a careless driver. She says she doesn't worry because the other people on the road aren't as careless as her and that she makes sure she surrounds herself with people who won't "crash" into her. It can be seen that Jordan has no concept of accountability and that has been furthered by the people who allow her to go unaccountable.

Theme Discussion

The word that can sum up many of the themes in the book is position. The word encompasses themes like class, wealth, social standing, and others. Gatsby's whole life is spent trying to attain money and status so that he can reach a certain position in life. That is what motivated him to move to West Egg, make money by any means necessary, and strive to win Daisy back. There is a position in life that he yearns for and will do all that it takes to achieve it.

Daisy and Tom on the other hand show how people can use their position to look down on others and live their life carelessly. As Nick says about Daisy, "in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged". It is this superior mind set that allows Tom to cheat on his wife and allows he and Daisy to run away from the death of Myrtle. They need not worry about such things because they are too good for it. Nick sees it as a kind of carelessness. "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up

things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness...". They can use their wealth and position to escape whatever they choose.

The word careless also sums up one of the most important ideas in the book. Nick refers to Jordan, Tom, and Daisy as careless in one form or another. Their actions are careless and they are careless people. This is due to the ease of their life. These people live the decadent life of the roaring twenties that many of the writers of this era were criticizing. The mindless, indulgent, irresponsible life style where consequence is just an afterthought. Fitzgerald uses these characters to expose this life with their selfish actions. This carelessness can be seen when Tom and Daisy run away after Myrtle is killed or when Jordan is driving Nick through the city. These people do not worry about paying for their actions so they do as they please. Tom is not worried about hurting Daisy so he flaunts his relationship with Myrtle, his mistress. Daisy, in turn, goes off with Gatsby without a thought to her marriage. Consequence is a unheard of concept to these people so they live their lives without thinking about it.

The Green Light

The green light is a multi-faceted piece of symbolism in the book. It's most obvious interpretation is that the light is symbolic of Gatsby's longing for Daisy, but that is too simplistic. Daisy is part of it, but the green light means much more. Gatsby has spent his whole life longing for something better. Money, success, acceptance, and Daisy. And no matter how much he has he never feels complete. Even when he has his large house full of interesting people and all of their attention, he still longs for Daisy. He created in his dreams for the future a place for her, and he will not be content to have that gaping hole. So the green light stands for all of Gatsby's longings and wants. And when Nick talks about the green light at the end of the book he says "It eluded us then, but that's no matter- tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms out farther...." . He connects the green light to all people. Everyone has something that they long and search for that is just off in the distance. That is the green light.

The eyes of T.J. Eckleburg

Fitzgerald uses the word careless a lot in describing most of the people and events in this book. There seems to be no fear of consequence, of judgment. So who is doing the judgment? That is, in part, what the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg are there for. These eyes are from a billboard that looks over Wilson's garage. The eyes are always mentioned whenever Nick is there. They look over the situation, objectively, but offer a kind of judgment on the characters and their actions. They are placed near Wilson's because that is where some of the most selfish acts take place: Myrtle's death, Tom's affair. All of these crimes go unpunished. So they eyes look on and remind the characters of the guilt that they forget to have for what they have done.

East and West Egg

One of the most important themes in the novel is class and social standing. It is a barrier for almost every character. East and West Egg acts as a symbol of this in it's physical makeup. Tom and Daisy live on the East which is far more refined and well bred. Nick and Gatsby are on the West which is for people who don't have any real standing, even if they have money. The green light shines from the East Egg enticing Gatsby towards what he has always wanted. And Daisy, the woman that Gatsby has always wanted but never gets, lives on East Egg. The barrier that the water creates between these worlds in symbolic of the barrier that keeps these people apart from one another and from much of what they want.

