

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 neighbor 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.

Explanation:

The reader needs to be aware that Nick is the narrator, as well as one of the most important characters. Since the story is told through his eyes about people close to him, we cannot be sure that the impressions he gets are necessarily accurate. And anything he says about himself cannot be taken as gospel in particular. So whatever conclusions the text gives of a character, remember the person that they are being filtered through. Nick importantly brings up that he is from the midwest. Toward the end of the book he says that all of the characters were not from the east and therefore not fit to live there. Their past lives hindered their ability to live in their current ones. He also says that he is from the middle class. Class is one of them most important themes in the novel and affects the relationships of the characters. Much of the way people are treated can be linked to their class and social position. Take Daisy, for example. While Nick and Jordan are there for dinner she talks about having her little girl. She was very upset after the birth because Tom was nowhere to be found. When the nurse tells her she is a girl Daisy said " I'm glad it's a girl, And I hope she'll be a fool- that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool". The social position of women is criticized here. Daisy is a witty and clever woman, far more so than her brute husband. Yet she is the one treated as inferior because she is a woman. This is also why Tom can flaunt his affair. He does not have to worry about the consequences. Later, when Nick sees Gatsby on the lawn, he watches him intently. He notices that Gatsby is looking out at the water but the only thing that is visible is a green light. That green light is the most important piece of symbolism in the book. It is a light on the end of Daisy's dock. It's meaning and references in the text are discussed in the symbolism section of this site.

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.

Explanation:

Near the garage where Wilson and Myrtle lives is an abandoned advertisement that is another important piece of symbolism. It is an ad for T.J. Eckleburg, an eye doctor. The ad consists of the gigantic eyes of the doctor staring out at people. The meaning of this symbol is that of

judgment, and accountability, further discussed in the symbolism section. The eyes are located at the place where Tom goes to meet his mistress without guilt. The garage also ends up being an important location in later chapters and the eyes will take on a greater meaning in light of those events. When Myrtle goes out with Tom and Nick she spends on many silly things, including a new puppy. She takes full advantage of Tom's money. It is ironic that since she has his money to spend, she becomes very arrogant towards the less well-off, even though she and her husband have very little money. She is in the novel as yet another commentary on wealth and class. Her attitude exemplifies what money can do to a person. Also, Tom's senseless attack on Myrtle goes back to the issue of consequence. Tom need not worry about any reaction to what he does, so he has no fear.

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.

Explanation:

Everyone's gossip about Gatsby shows that no one at the party has any real understanding of who he is. During a song played by the orchestra, everyone in the crowd becomes very romantic and sentimental yet, as Nick points out, "but no one swooned backward on Gatsby and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link". His detachment from the group of people he is entertaining seems odd. Why would he have them at his home if he was not close to them? There are several reasons. Possibly Gatsby threw those parties in the hopes that Daisy would come to one of them and he could see her again. Another possibility is that throwing parties was what Gatsby always thought wealthy people did. He is always working on his image and this may be part of the image he is trying to accomplish. Since, as we find out later in the novel, Gatsby started out poor, those opulent parties may be a way for him to tell himself that he has arrived and to make sure everyone is aware that he is a man of great wealth, just like he always wanted to be. When Nick calls on Jordan, she drives him through the city. It is during this drive that one of the most important words in the book is first used: carelessness. Nick describes Jordan as a "careless" driver. She seems unconcerned that she drives so poorly. Nick asks, "suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself?" and she replies "I hope I never will". Fitzgerald uses the word carelessness to describe many of the characters because this attitude is so closely tied to the theme of consequence and responsibility. At the end of the chapter Nick says of himself, "I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known". Although this may seem important to understand the character, the quote must be looked at carefully. Nick is saying this of himself but it may not necessarily be true. Nick seems to lie several times in the book. So here again the untrustworthy nature of the first person narrator is exemplified.

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 skeptical 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.

Explanation:

The story that Gatsby gives Nick about his life is almost entirely false. Although Gatsby did go to Oxford and was a decorated soldier, his wealthy family life is all a fabrication. The true nature of Gatsby's beginnings are found in chapter 6. But Gatsby is compelled to lie because his whole life is a fabrication. Gatsby has cultivated an image for himself that he would like to uphold no matter what. But he does expose himself. He tells Nick that he is from the midwest but when Nick asks what part of the midwest he replies San Francisco. Gatsby has been caught off guard by the question and offers a hasty answer. The character Meyer Wolfsheim helps shed a little light on Gatsby. Gatsby makes no attempt to hide the fact that Meyer is a criminal, yet the two are very good friends. If Gatsby keeps such close company with a man like this, one has to question the nature of how Gatsby earned his money and position. In the beginning of the chapter Nick says that he kept a ledger of all of the people who came to Gatsby's party. Although it seems oddly placed and has nothing to do with the plot, this list offers insight into the worlds of East and West Egg. The kind of people who come from East Egg and of a more refined breed, old money. Those from West Egg are people who earn money through things like the entertainment industry. Not only does the list offer an explanation of the makeup of the two Eggs it is also a description of the excessive nature of these parties. Fitzgerald wants this book to be critical of the materialism of America during this time period. The list talks of people who were wealthy and acted excessively in all that they did.

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.

Explanation:

The reason Gatsby wants Daisy to come to Nick's house is because he wants her to see his house. After all the money he has spent on it, he wants her to see it. Her opinion is really the only one that matters. This is why he also wants to get Nick's lawn mowed and has flowers delivered to Nick's house for the tea. Gatsby has created an image in his mind about how he would like the afternoon to go, and he does all in his power to achieve it. We learn more about Gatsby's nature to fantasize in the next chapter. Again we are posed with the problem that the narrator presents. Because the story is told through Nick's eyes we have no idea what is said between Gatsby and Daisy during the half hour that he leaves them alone. The only impression we get is the one that Nick gives us, and that is not necessarily reliable. When the trio are going through Gatsby's house, he points out to Daisy that you can see her house across the bay. "You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock". The green light is symbolic of Gatsby's longing for Daisy, and for his longing in general. Gatsby, although wanting Daisy, wants her as part of his whole world. A world of wealth and success. The green light represents to Gatsby all that is off in the distance that he wants to possess. Daisy is only part of that.

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.

Explanation:

Nick's insights into Gatsby's past help the reader get a complete understanding of the character. Gatsby was an unhappy youth who yearned for something better. He wanted it so bad he created a type of imaginary world in which to inhabit. When Nick talks about Gatsby's false name he says "I suppose he's had that name for a long time, even then". Gatsby has spent much of his life with the image of something better planted firmly in his mind. And when Dan Cody takes him under his wing he gets a glimpse into that world and believes that he can one day attain it, that he can one day be a part of it. That is what makes the scene with Tom

and the horseback riders so hard for Gatsby. He tries to fit in, be gracious, but in the end they leave without him. The funeral towards the end of the book also highlights this point. For all the effort that Gatsby put into being a member of "the club" he never fits in. He's a novelty to others, not an equal. But Gatsby did fit in that moment between he and Daisy that Nick talks about. He was being accepted by one of the wealthy and elite. It was one of the most complete moments of Gatsby's life and he believes that if he gets Daisy back, he can return to moments like those. As Nick says, "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".

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.

Explanation:

Despite all that takes place in this chapter, the most important moment as far as gaining insight into the characters in when the group finally meets Daisy and Tom's baby. It brings an interesting consequence to the relationship of Gatsby and Daisy. When Gatsby first sees the baby Nick says "I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before". Gatsby and Daisy have been so wrapped up in their own relationship and their own happiness they have not even taken the child into consideration. Yet Daisy is so possessive of her little girl. She eagerly tells the group that "She doesn't look like her father. She looks like me. She's got my hair and shape of the face". Not only does Daisy want to keep Tom's involvement in the child to a minimum, but the child is something that is totally hers. Given her life, Daisy has very little to control or hold on to. Her own husband comes and goes as he pleases and she has no job or means of independence. So her child is something she can hold up to the world and say is hers. It is shortly after this that Gatsby says that "Her voice is full of money", referring to Daisy. This simple line clearly shows how tied the idea of wealth is to Daisy in Gatsby's mind. If there is any true love between the two, it has been preserved by Gatsby's lust for wealth and possessions and Daisy becomes another object to him at times. Like the green light, Daisy herself is symbolic to Gatsby of all that he can have. There is a single-mindedness to Gatsby once he sets his sights on something. After the accident Gatsby seems oblivious to the fact that a woman was killed by he and Daisy. His only concern is for Daisy. As Nick explains what

happened he says of that "He (Gatsby) spoke as if Daisy's reaction was the only thing that mattered". Despite all that has happened Gatsby is still fixated on 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.

Explanation:

When Gatsby opens up to Nick about his past, we see why he acts the way he does. He has a romantic view on what happened between he and Daisy and it is because of this that he tries so hard to get back to it. Whether it is real or not, we cannot be sure, but it is very real to Gatsby and that is all that matters to him. This story also shows the profound impact Daisy had on Gatsby's thoughts of wealth. All of his memories of her are tied to the glamour and richness of her life. The large, beautiful house and the fine clothing. It is more than Daisy that he has fallen for, it is the mystique of wealth that she has. He wants it as well, and believes that by having Daisy he can obtain it. As Wilson talks to Michaelis about his wife's affair, an allusion is made to the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg. Wilson says "God sees everything" and Michaelis replies, "That's an advertisement." Here we gain a better understanding of what those eyes mean. They remind the characters of the judgment they deserve, even if they never receive it. The eyes make them and the reader conscious of the guilt these people should be feeling.

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 Wolfsheim. Nick has to force himself into Wolfsheim'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.

Explanation:

The poor attendance at Gatsby's funeral exemplifies the ultimate failure of Gatsby to ever achieve what he wanted. The woman he loved was not present, she was off with her husband. None of the people who frequented the parties over the summer showed up and Wolfsheim, one of the few people who could be called a close friend to Gatsby, refused to attend. This can all be tied into the final quote about trying to grasp for that green light. The more Gatsby tried to obtain, the less he ended up with. Like the green light, it receded before him no matter how badly he wanted all of it. And Tom and Daisy's sudden disappearance shows the truly careless nature of these two. As Nick says, "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then receded back into their money...". The privileged life the two had led made them incapable of accepting responsibility for their actions. They simply were not able to accept their judgments. This is why Daisy is willing to leave Gatsby in order to escape punishment. No matter how true her words of love to him were, she was willing to sacrifice them to run away from responsibility. Another look at the importance of the word careless is when Nick goes to see Jordan. She brings up the time he called her a careless driver. She says that Nick was careless also and that it was careless of her to trust him, that he was false and a liar. This is also interesting because of how honest Nick claims to be. Because we have no objective perception of the situation it is one character's word against the other's.

Character Analysis

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.

Symbolism

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 is symbolic of the barrier that keeps these people apart from one another and from much of what they want.

Important Quotes

The following quotes are not explained here, though most of their meanings are fairly evident. The speaker of the quote is also identified here. All quotes deal with theme or symbolism.

Quote	Speaker
"I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool- that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."	Daisy
"I waited, and sure enough, 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."	Nick
"- but no one swooned backward on Gatsby and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link."	Nick
Nick: "Suppose you meet someone just as careless as yourself?"	<i>Dialog</i>
Jordan: "I hope I never will."	
"You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock."	Gatsby to Daisy
"So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end."	Nick
" 'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!' "	Gatsby
"His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once again return to a certain place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was..."	Nick
"Her voice is full of money"	Gatsby about Daisy
"It excited him too that many men had already loved Daisy- it increased her value in his eyes."	Nick
"... and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor."	Nick
" 'They're a rotten crowd' I shouted, across the lawn. 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together' "	Nick
Jordan: "You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward, person. I thought it was your secret pride."	<i>Dialog</i>
Nick: " 'I'm thirty' I said. 'I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor.' "	
"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
"Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes	Nick

before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter- tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther..... And one fine morning- "

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.