

The Great Gatsby Study Questions

Chapter 1

1. Explain what Fitzgerald achieved by using Nick's point of view to tell Gatsby's story?
2. What do we learn about Nick Carraway in the introductory section of the novel?
3. In discussing East Egg and West Egg, Nick states: "To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size." Indicate what the "dissimilarities" might be.
4. Compare the homes of Nick, Gatsby, and the Buchanans. How does each home reflect the personality of its owner?
5. Fitzgerald's description of Tom, Daisy, and Jordan creates not only an impression of physical appearance, but also contains added information. What do you learn about their history and interests, and from their gestures and mannerisms?
6. When Nick leaves the Buchanan's house, he is "confused and a little disgusted." Why? What does this suggest about his values?
7. Though we do not meet Gatsby until Chapter 3, we hear references to him in the conversations of others. Note each reference. What impressions do you get?

Chapter 2

8. In what way is the description in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 2 appropriate to the total atmosphere of this chapter? What is symbolic about the "valley of ashes," and "the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg"?
9. Evaluate Myrtle's talk of her unhappy marriage. What does she seem to be trying to justify?
10. How does Myrtle's speech reveal her character?
11. What does the scene in this New York apartment reveal about Tom? About Myrtle?
12. Does Nick enjoy the afternoon at the apartment in New York? Why or why not?

Chapter 3

1. Chapter 3 describes Gatsby's "little party." Enumerate details about the party itself, about the guests and about their conversation and behavior.
2. Describe the meeting between Nick and Gatsby. Comment on Fitzgerald's skill in preparing for Gatsby's entrance into the story.
3. In what way are Nick and Gatsby similar at this point? Why are they paradoxical?
4. What is the reason for Nick's breaking the story at this point? Read the section beginning with "Reading over what I have written so far..."
5. At the end of Chapter 3, Nick meets Jordan again. The author includes several episodes that emphasize her carelessness and basic dishonesty. Discuss these instances. What do they reveal about Jordan? About Nick?
6. Notice the last paragraph in Chapter 3. Is Nick being overly proud here? Discuss.

Chapter 4

7. The introductory section of Chapter 4 gives a long roster of those who attended Gatsby's parties. How do they behave toward their host? Why, then, do they accept his hospitality?
8. Describe Gatsby's car.
9. Discuss the details that Gatsby shares with Nick about his past.
10. Does Nick believe Gatsby's story? Why or why not?
11. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim? What seems to be his connection with Gatsby?
12. Jordan Baker tells Nick about Daisy, Gatsby, and Tom. Summarize the story.
13. Explain the epigraph on the title page of the novel ("it's the quote"). What does it reveal about Gatsby and his love for Daisy?
14. Do we know why Gatsby has so many parties? Why did he buy the house? Explain.
15. What new meaning do you see in the last two paragraphs of Chapter 1? What does Nick mean when he says, "Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on the June night"?
16. When Gatsby spoke to Jordan in his library in Chapter 3, he had devised a plan involving Nick. What was it? Why did he not ask Nick directly?

Chapter 5

1. Gatsby's actions in preparing for Daisy's arrival seem both flamboyant and absurd. What does he do? Why?
2. Discuss Gatsby's actions once Daisy arrives. How do we know he is nervous? How does he try to impress her?
3. Toward the end of the chapter, Nick attempts to explain "the expression of bewilderment that had come back into Gatsby's face." What explanation does Nick give? Why, in his opinion, is Daisy not at fault?
4. Describe Daisy's reactions during the course of her meeting with Gatsby.
5. Has Nick been affected by the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy? In what way?

Chapter 6

6. What was Gatsby's real name? Why and when had he changed it?
7. In what way was Dan Cody involved in Gatsby's destiny?

8. Why does Tom attend Gatsby's party? How does this scene reveal the contrast between Gatsby and Tom?
9. What is deeply ironic in Tom's statement, "...I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me"?
10. Note the reactions of Tom and Daisy at different times during Gatsby's part. Did they enjoy themselves? Explain.
11. What suspicions does Tom have about Gatsby? What does he vow to do?
12. What do Nick and Gatsby talk about after the party?
13. What is Gatsby expecting of Daisy that prompts Nick to warn him, "I wouldn't ask too much of her... You can't repeat the past"?

Chapter 7

1. Note the use Fitzgerald makes of the weather as a background for significant events. Point out examples in this chapter and in previous chapters.
2. Gatsby has made some changes in his lifestyle that so concerned Nick that he went to check on him. What changes do you note? Why did he make them?
3. Analyze Daisy's attitude toward her child as evidenced in this chapter and in chapter 1. Is she a good mother? Explain why Gatsby looked "at the child with surprise."
4. With whom does Tom talk on the telephone early in the chapter? About what?
5. What startling discovery does Tom make shortly after lunch?
6. What does Gatsby mean when he says that Daisy's voice is "full of money"? Why does Fitzgerald put those words in Gatsby's mouth and not Nick's?
7. What arrangements are made regarding the passengers of each car on the trip to the city? Why?
8. Eyes play a significant role in this chapter. Explain.
9. Explain Nick's statement paralleling Tom and Wilson, "...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." Refer to the text and explain what prompted Nick to say this.
10. What does Gatsby do that makes Nick want "to get up and slap him on the back"? Why does Nick feel this way?
11. Does Daisy know what love is? Whom does she really love?
12. In what way is each of the major characters involved in the tragedy that occurs at the end of the chapter?
13. Is there any significance in the fact that the day is Nick's birthday?
14. Why is it necessary for the author to introduce a new character, Michaelis, at this point in the novel?
15. Explain what Nick means when he says, "...suddenly I guessed at the truth"?
16. At the end of Chapter 7 Nick observes Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy after the accident. What conclusions does he reach?
17. Explain the last paragraph of Chapter 7.

Chapter 8

18. At the beginning of the chapter, the story is interrupted at its most dramatic point. What is the author's purpose in breaking the story here?
19. What had prompted Gatsby to talk freely to Nick now, when he was unwilling to do so in the past?
20. What further information do we learn about Gatsby?
21. As Nick leaves Gatsby the morning after the accident, he remarks, "They're a rotten crowd." Enumerate the people "they" refers to. Why are they "rotten"?
22. What is the compliment that Nick pays to Gatsby? Why does Nick feel compelled to commend Gatsby?
23. Explain Nick's meaning when he balances Gatsby's supposed "corruption" against his "incorruptible dream."
24. How does Wilson view the "eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg"? Does Wilson's statement have a symbolic level for the novel as a whole? Explain.
25. Trace the movements of Gatsby and Wilson at the end of Chapter 8. What is Nick's meaning when he says, "...the holocaust was complete"?

Chapter 9

1. What makes Nick assume responsibility for the funeral arrangements? Specify the things he did.
2. What version of the tragedy appeared in the newspapers? How would you account for the fact that this version went unchallenged and uncorrected?
3. How had Gatsby's father learned of the tragedy? To what extent does the father know his son?
4. Discuss the significance of Gatsby's boyhood program for self-improvement.
5. What is the irony of Gatsby's funeral?
6. What is the significance of the scene including Jordan Baker?
7. What moral judgment does Nick make about Tom and Daisy? Discuss.
8. Explain the significance of the last page of the novel in relation to Gatsby's dream and to the American Dream.