

Study Questions – *The Great Gatsby*

Chapter I

1. What quality does Nick possess that he thinks makes him different?
2. Describe the peculiar land formations resulting in East and West Egg. What is the significance of these two halves?
3. Do you trust Nick and his interpretation of events?
4. Why does Daisy compare Nick to a rose, and what is the significance of this statement?
5. What does Nick learn from his first encounter with these people?
6. Why does Daisy say she wishes her daughter to be a beautiful “fool”?
7. Nick feels uncivilized. Why?
8. Compare and contrast East and West Egg.
9. Describe Nick’s first glimpse of Gatsby.
10. What could the green light symbolize?
11. After reading this chapter, explain the difference between Daisy, Jordan, Tom, and Nick.

Chapter II

1. Describe the valley of the ashes.
2. What do the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s defunct practice represent?
3. What three shops occupy the ashen strip mall?
4. Describe Myrtle Wilson.
5. Why is George Wilson covered in ash?
6. What does Tom buy for Myrtle?
7. What do we learn about Tom’s character from this jaunt into the city?
8. Why does Myrtle tell us she married George?
9. Why is Tom involved with Myrtle?
10. Why is the evening in Tom’s New York apartment hazy and dim? Contrast this with the evening setting at Tom and Daisy’s mansion.
11. How is the theme of sight and blindness shown in

Chapter III

1. The chapter begins with an elaborate description of Gatsby’s parties and their aftermath. Describe what happens both before and after the parties.
2. What insulting remark is made to Jordan, and how does she respond?
3. Why do you think Gatsby throws such lavish parties, peopled by strangers?
4. Who is Owl Eyes, and what does he represent?
5. What do we learn about Gatsby’s background here? Why is this important?
6. What do we learn about Jordan Baker in this chapter?

7. What does Gatsby continually call Nick? What do you think is the significance of this?
8. What is the significance of the car accident? What does it reveal about these people’s character?
9. Nick interrupts the plot/narrative flow in order to provide commentary. How do you interpret his observations? Is this a necessary interruption? Why or why not?
10. What does Nick see as one of his “cardinal virtues”? Do you agree? Why is this important?

Chapter IV

1. Name the two offenses of which Gatsby is accused.
2. What odd habit of Gatsby’s does Nick notice? What does this inform the reader about Gatsby?
3. What trait of Gatsby’s fades once Nick gets to know him more?
4. Gatsby tells Nick a sketchy half-truth about his past and his life. What does he tell him? Why does Gatsby invent and reinvent himself?
5. What two items does Gatsby show Nick to “prove” to him that his statements about his past are true?
6. Who is Mr. Wolfshiem?
7. Nick and Gatsby meet Tom Buchanan, and then Gatsby disappears. Why?
8. Explain the significance of “the letter” and Daisy’s response.
9. Does Daisy have the capability for love?
10. Why does Gatsby want Daisy to see his house?

Chapter V

1. Upon returning home, what does Nick notice about Gatsby’s house?
2. Why does Gatsby want to take Nick to Coney Island? What is he hoping to find out?
3. What does Gatsby wear to lunch? What is the significance of his attire?
4. Explain the significance of the broken mantelpiece clock. What can you conclude about the nature of time, especially as it relates to Gatsby?
5. What mistake does Gatsby make when telling Daisy about how he acquired his wealth? Why is this an error?
6. What makes Daisy cry in Gatsby’s house? Why?
7. Explain Daisy’s statement about wanting to push Gatsby around on clouds.
8. Gatsby tells Daisy about the green light at the end of her dock. Why has he overromanticized her, and how has this dictated his life?

Chapter VI

1. How do the rumors about Gatsby tie into the theme of illusion and reality?
2. Who is James Gatz? Where is he from?
3. How/why does James Gatz become Jay Gatsby?
4. Characterize young Gatsby.
5. What does Dan Cody's yacht represent to Gatsby, and how does it start his initiation into the world of the wealthy?
6. Why does Tom want to come to Gatsby's party?
7. Nick views the events of the party through Daisy's eyes. Explain.
8. Why does Tom not want to be seen?
9. The dream begins to disintegrate, to Nick, at this party. How does his perception change and why?
10. What is Gatsby's concern about Daisy and the party? Is it valid?
11. Gatsby is trapped in the past, and Daisy is entrenched in her present. Why is this problematic?
12. "'Can't repeat the past?' [Gatsby] cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" Why is this statement poignant, yet sad?
13. The chapter ends with the following sentence: "But they made no sound and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever." Explain.

Chapter VII

1. Why does Gatsby fire all of his old servants?
2. Explain the significance of the heat.
3. The people at Gatsby's decide to go to New York. Explain the driving/car arrangements.
4. Why do they stop in the valley of ashes?
5. Who peers from the window?
6. Of whom is Myrtle jealous and why?
7. Why is Tom in a panic in this chapter?
8. The chapter climaxes with a confrontation between Tom and Gatsby. What happens?
9. Why does Tom refer to the liaison between Daisy and Gatsby in terms of intermarriage?
10. What is the significance of Nick's thirtieth birthday?
11. Why does Tom insist that Daisy and Gatsby drive home together?
12. Who dies in this chapter and how?
13. Why are Tom and Daisy reconciled?
14. Why does Daisy not call Gatsby?
15. Why is Gatsby left standing outside the mansion "watching over" nothing?

Chapter VIII

1. What does Nick hear through the night? What does it symbolize?
2. Explain the poignancy of Gatsby's inability to let go of the dream.
3. Why has Daisy's value increased in Gatsby's eyes?
4. When we learn of Gatsby's past and his first encounters with Daisy, what do we find out about why Gatsby "takes" Daisy?
5. Why does Gatsby choose to confess his past now?
6. Why is Gatsby's love for Daisy described in religious terms?
7. Gatsby is breathless for Daisy. Why?
8. Gatsby returns to Louisville after Daisy breaks up with him. Why? What is the significance of that passage?
9. Why have the ash heaps become famous?
10. George Wilson goes on his own quest in this chapter. What is it?
11. What is disturbing and sad about Wilson's belief in T. J. Eckleburg?
12. What is Gatsby doing when Wilson kills him? Why is this significant?
13. What happens to Wilson?

Chapter IX

1. Why does Myrtle run out in the street?
2. Where are Daisy and Tom after Gatsby dies, and why is this significant?
3. Why is Nick responsible for Gatsby after his death?
4. What is the significance of Wolfsheimer and Klipspringer not coming to the funeral?
5. Mr. Gatz produces a photograph of Gatsby's house and something else. What is the other item, and what is its significance?
6. What is the significance of young Gatsby's regimented schedule designated in the book?
7. Is Mr. Gatz proud of his son?
8. Who attends the funeral?
9. Why does Nick return home?
10. As Nick prepares to leave, he observes how the New World must have looked to the Dutch sailors. Read this passage, and explain what they see, according to Nick, what they thought, and how this important passage fits into the novel thematically.
11. What does Nick mean when he says that Gatsby believed in the "green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us"?
12. Explain how "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" is both hopeful and hopeless and makes sense as a final line for the novel.