

The Great Gatsby: Discussion Questions

Answer the following questions with a partner.

1. Is there a hero in the novel?
2. What is the significance of the novel's title? To what extent is Fitzgerald referring to his protagonist as "great" justified?
3. How does Fitzgerald relate Gatsby's dream to the American Dream? What seems to be his message about the American Dream as expressed in the last 2 paragraphs of the novel?
4. How does Fitzgerald present the history of Gatsby's life? What does Fitzgerald mean when he writes that "Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from the platonic conception of himself"? What is Gatsby's dream?
5. Who or what *really* killed Gatsby?
6. What does the novel say about materialism? What connections can we make between this, and our own era? How is the novel an indictment of the importance of money in American culture?
7. How is marriage depicted in the novel? How is the theme of love related to the theme of money?
8. How does Fitzgerald use color in the novel? What are the connections between his color imagery and ideas and themes of the novel?
9. How does Nick develop (particularly his moral development)?
10. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Nick as a first-person narrator, and using that particular narrative structure?
11. How does Fitzgerald use the East and West symbolically?
12. Compare the homes of Gatsby, the Buchanans, Nick and the Wilsons. How does each reflect the character of its inhabitants?
13. Compare the female characters: Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle. How does each act toward men? What seem to be their motivations and goals?
14. Examine the theme of carelessness as it applies to this quotation and to the novel as a whole. "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy--they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money of their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made."- Ch. 9
15. How are the weather, and time used symbolically in the novel?