Heralded as one of American literature's foremost masterpieces, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* tells in precise and beautiful language a story of self-creation, of achieving the American Dream, and of tragic love, a story that, though set in the 1920s, still captivates readers of all ages today. It is a novel so eloquent in language and rich in imagery and thematic resonance that it may leave the student writer feeling a bit overwhelmed. It is helpful to remember that you do not need to address every important aspect of *Gatsby*, that such a task is very nearly impossible. A promising way to hone in on a topic that is both meaningful and manageable is to begin by identifying a passage that seems key to the novel or relevant to a certain element of the novel that interests you. It is not necessary to know precisely what makes it important or how exactly it functions in the novel when you choose it. This will reveal itself in your analysis.

For example, one of the key questions in the novel for many readers is why Gatsby remains so obsessed with Daisy. After all, he successfully creates a new identity for himself and makes himself enormously wealthy. Why then, one wonders, can he not get over Daisy and find another woman with whom to share his success. The following passage seems to speak most directly to this question as it discusses the connection between Daisy and Gatsby's self-creation:

> His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed her unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete. (117)

This passage is so interesting because it begins to reveal why Daisy is so important to Gatsby. Before he kisses her, his mind can romp "like the mind of God." He can be anything or anyone he wants to be. All of his options are open; his possibilities are limitless. As a living, breathing member of the world Gatsby wishes to join, it is Daisy who will help determine which possibilities will be closed off and which will come to life—Gatsby's "visions" will be wed to her "perishable breath." Thus, Daisy both validates and, through her expectations and her faith, creates the identity of Jay Gatsby. The final sentence of the passage states that "the incarnation was complete," and, at first glance, this seems to mean Daisy's incarnation into Gatsby's flower. The incarnation could also, however, be Gatsby's. This is the moment when Jay Gatsby comes to life and all the other versions of James Gatz fall away.

In an essay, you might explore further the idea that Gatsby is in a real way created by Daisy. What else, if anything, in the novel suggests this? What are the ramifications? On a related note, you might write an essay that traces the creation and destruction of "Jay Gatsby," examining all the steps and ingredients that go into his creation and how the persona is ultimately broken apart.

The passage above emphasizes the sacrifice that Gatsby makes when he creates himself anew as Jay Gatsby. It is a time of creation, of "incarnation," but with this comes mortality. Gatsby's heart begins to beat "faster and faster"; he is wed to Daisy's "perishable breath"; his mind can no longer romp like the mind of God. He becomes not only real, but finite, mortal. Why does Gatsby hesitate before he kisses Daisy, and why does he wait even a second to realize what he has been dreaming of? Is his quickly beating heart a sign not of excitement, but of fear? These questions might inspire you to write an essay on sacrifice and loss in the novel, in particular, how they are connected to achieving success, or the American Dream.

The passage might also inspire you think about the way Daisy, and female sexuality in general, is treated in the novel. Daisy's white face might represent innocence and purity. Fitzgerald writes that "she blossomed for [Gatsby] like a flower" (117). Why might Daisy's sexual response be likened to a blossoming flower, a flower that blossoms for Gatsby? You might examine the novel for other references to female sexuality and try to determine whether women are portrayed as desiring subjects or presented solely as the objects of male desire.

Choosing a passage that seems to be significant in some way can yield several promising lines of inquiry for an essay. It is important to pore over the passage, reading it multiple times, taking the time to focus on each word and phrase and consider its...
possible significance. In a work like *The Great Gatsby*, it would be difficult to choose a passage that would not yield some valuable insight under a close reading, so do not worry about picking the "right" passage to begin with. If one seems interesting to you, work with it for a while, and it will probably reward you with multiple insights and ideas. If it does not, you can always move on to another passage. One strategy is to choose several passages that have something in common to work with. Try doing a close reading of several passages that feature Daisy and Gatsby to get a better sense of their relationship, for example. Or you might analyze some passages that describe Nick and some that describe Tom in order to compare their characters. In any case, close and careful attention to language will help you develop and support a claim about some aspect of the novel.

**Topics and Strategies**

The suggested essay topics provided for you in this chapter are designed to help you to select an aspect of the novel to focus on and to help you work toward a claim you want to make about that subject. The sample topics offer questions to spur your thinking and point you to passages and scenes that may help you further develop your ideas. It is not necessary to answer all of the questions included in a sample topic or to examine each of the relevant passages mentioned. In fact, you may find that one question or a certain scene gets you thinking in a different direction entirely, and you may arrive at your own topic from there. Since the topics are designed to help you analyze an aspect of the novel and generate ideas about it, you probably do not want to organize your essay according to the questions, answering them one by one. Instead, use them to guide your thinking and prewriting process and then organize your essay in a way that best supports the claim you have decided to make.

**Themes**

When you begin to think about writing an essay on a novel such as *The Great Gatsby*, it is helpful to think first of the novel's major concerns. What subjects or issues does it deal with most intensely? In the case of *Gatsby*, the theme of the American Dream immediately springs to mind, as Gatsby's is certainly a "rags to riches" kind of tale. The novel asks us to look closely at our perception of the American Dream and to consider what and who must be sacrificed in its pursuit. Another theme that the novel is obviously concerned with is identity and self-creation. Again, the novel makes us question whether we really can invent or reinvent ourselves and what we must give up if we choose to do so. Certainly, another of the novel's themes is money and its role in American society. Fitzgerald makes us examine what it signifies. Finally, a common thread that weaves itself through the novel's examination of the American Dream is self-creation, money, and loss. We are forced to question what these things we tend to hold up as ideals—the American Dream, self-creation, and money—actually cost us and what happens to us when we either cannot achieve them or, worse, when we achieve them and find them unfulfilling.

**Sample Topics:**

1. **The American Dream:** What kind of commentary is Fitzgerald making about the American Dream?

   According to critic David Trask, the novel is a critique of the American Dream, which "consisted of the belief (sometimes thought of as a promise) that people of talent in this land of opportunity and plenty could reasonably aspire to material success if they adhered to a fairly well-defined set of behavioral rules…. In addition, Americans easily assumed that spiritual satisfaction would accompany material success" (qtd. in Telgen 82). In your analysis, does the novel support the reality of the American Dream? Does it suggest that talented people can achieve success through hard work? What about the idea that spiritual satisfaction naturally accompanies material success? Does the novel support this idea or suggest that it is a mistaken notion? Does Gatsby achieve the American Dream? Is what he achieves worth the sacrifices he must make? Ultimately, do you agree with Trask that *The Great Gatsby* is a critique of the American Dream, or would you call it instead a celebration of the American Dream and its possibilities?

2. **Self-creation:** What is the novel saying about a person's ability to create his or her own identity?

   Look closely at chapter 6 and examine the story of Gatsby's self-creation. How does Jay Gatsby come into being? Who was he originally? What is necessary for his transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby? What is sacrificed? Does Gatsby gain what he wishes through this transformation? Nick says that Gatsby finally reveals the truth of his story because, once Tom tells Daisy how Gatsby earned his fortune, "Jay Gatsby' had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice and the long secret extravaganzas was played out" (155). Examine this passage and what it says about the permanence of a created identity. According to the novel, is a self-created identity "authentic" or "real"? How would Nick answer this question?
3. Money: The Great Gatsby is set in a period in which many people became quite wealthy. How does money function in the novel? What can it buy? What can it not buy? Does it mean different things to different characters?

To write an essay on this topic, you might want to look at what Gatsby and Nick say about Daisy: "Her voice is full of money," [Gatsby] said suddenly. That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal’s song of it…. High in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl" (127). Examine the associations established here, and trace these associations throughout the novel.

4. Loss: In a novel that depicts a world of lavish extravagance, there is also a great deal of loss. Who suffers the greatest losses in the novel? What are they? Are they deserved?

Begin by making a list of the characters and recording what each character desires, what he gains, and what he loses. Include not only material things but sentiments such as love, hope, and idealism. Are there patterns to be found? What message is Fitzgerald trying to convey about loss in a world of plenty?

Character

Another way to get at the central ideas and meanings of a work is through a study of its characters. You can examine single characters, major or minor, and the roles they play in the novel, or you can study groups of characters, such as male or female characters. To study characters, analyze the descriptions given of them in the text and their actions, and consider whether the narration seems to align itself with the character or against him or her. It is often most useful to consider whether the characters evolve through the course of the story. Then attempt to figure out what caused the characters to change the way they did, and determine whether those changes were for better or worse. This strategy allows you to get at some of the messages embedded in the work by revealing what qualities and characteristics the author admires and which he condemns.

Sample Topics:

1. Gatsby: What kind of character is Gatsby? Does he function as a Christ figure in the novel? What parallels can be drawn between Gatsby's story and the story of Christ? If such a parallel can be established, what might Fitzgerald be conveying with this imagery?

Examine closely what you know of Gatsby—his birth, his early life, and his transformation into Jay Gatsby. What does he stand for, and what is he sacrificed for? Finally, examine the effects he has on other people, particularly on Nick, who tells Gatsby's story.

2. Nick Carraway/Tom Buchanan/Daisy Buchanan/Jordan Baker: Analyze and evaluate one of the other major characters of the novel. Who is this character? What does he or she represent? How does he or she develop over the novel?

All of the major characters of the novel can be analyzed in the same way that Gatsby himself can. To write on one of the major characters, begin by noting everything that you know about that character: descriptions, actions, reactions. Pay particularly close attention to the role the character plays in the overall plot. How does he or she influence other characters? One interesting approach, when possible, is to supplement your knowledge of the character with Fitzgerald's own estimation of that character. This information can often be found in a thorough biography, such as Matthew Bruccoli's Some Sort of Epic Grandeur. For instance, Bruccoli notes that in a letter to his publisher, Fitzgerald says that "the book contains no important woman character" (220). What does this mean in regard to Daisy? Why would Fitzgerald not consider her an "important woman character"? Do you? Likewise, Fitzgerald once considered that he ought to "have Tom Buchanan dominate the book" because, as he claims, "I suppose he's the best character I've ever done" (Some Sort 215–16). Why would Fitzgerald think of Tom as the "best character" he ever created?

3. McKee as artist: Judging by the character McKee, what does the novel have to say about art and artists?

Examine the description of McKee's character in chapter 2 of the novel and the examples of his art that appear in the text. There is a "dim enlargement of Mrs. Wilson's mother which hovered like ectoplasm on the wall" (34). McKee tells Nick that he has two studies of Long Island framed in his apartment called "Montauk Point—the Gulls" and "Montauk Point—the Sea" (36). He also has photographed his wife 127 times since they married. At the end of chapter 2, McKee is "sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hand." He rattles off titles of his pieces for Nick:
"Beauty and the Beast ... Loneliness ... Old Grocery House ... Brook'n Bridge" (42). Think about what characterizes McKee's art. How does he choose his subjects? What does it mean that he has taken so many pictures of his wife? What do the titles of his photographs reveal? Why do you think McKee is described as a "pale feminine man," and why does he tell Nick not that he is an artist but that he is in the "artistic game" (34)? What is Fitzgerald saying about art through the creation of McKee's character?

4. **Male characters:** Examine the male characters in the novel, including Tom, Gatsby, Nick, and Wilson. What models of masculinity are presented here? Which, if any, does the novel champion?

To begin an essay on this topic, you might make a list of the male characters in the text and describe each of them in order to determine what qualities each of them represents. Are they creative or destructive? Passive or aggressive? Receptive or stubborn? Can two or more of the characters be grouped together under one model of masculinity? Once you have categorized the male characters, the next step would be to analyze what Fitzgerald is saying about the models of masculinity that have been identified. Can you determine the way of "being a man" for which Fitzgerald had the most respect?

5. **Female characters:** Critics have argued that Daisy is merely the object of male desire or a symbol of wealth and privilege. Is she a character with her own desires and sense of self-worth, or is this critical description of her more accurate? What is Fitzgerald saying about women's roles in society through the character Daisy? Examine other female characters in the book, including Jordan and Myrtle, as well. Do they all function as objects and symbols? If so, what does each of them symbolize?

Analyze Daisy's reaction to the birth of her baby girl. She tells Nick, "I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I 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'" (21). Why would Daisy say something like this, and why would she repeat it to Nick? Is this a sentiment she truly believes, and if so, what has caused her to think this way? What does the novel as a whole seem to think of this idea?

**History and Context**

*The Great Gatsby* is set in 1920s America during the prosperous years that followed World War I. An understanding of this period and contemporary thought can shed some light on the novel's meanings. Knowing that women received voting rights in America in 1920, for example, might help you better understand the tension that seems to surround the role of women in *Gatsby*. Additionally, reading other seminal texts written during this time, such as T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" or works by James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner, can put Fitzgerald's vision of his era into a broader perspective and help you determine whether Fitzgerald's portrayal of the 1920s is excessively hopeful or tragic.

**Sample Topics:**


   Eliot's seminal poem, published in 1922, presents a vision of the post–World War I era as spiritually dead and morally corrupt. Does Fitzgerald also present a world bereft of spirituality, a world filled with corruption, as Eliot does? Or do the signs of hope and fulfillment in *The Great Gatsby* overcome the bleak sentiments? An examination of Fitzgerald's valley of ashes in the context of Eliot's poem might help in this line of inquiry.

2. **Roaring Twenties:** Evaluate Fitzgerald's portrayal of this period in American history.

   *The Great Gatsby* has been called the "defining novel of the Twenties which have become trivialized and vulgarized by people who weren't there" (Bruccoli, preface ix). Does the novel trivialize and vulgarize the period in which it is set, or does it provide a more complicated, textured picture of the period? Read a history of the 1920s United States, such as Ralph K. Andrist's *The American Heritage History of the 20's and 30's* or Lynn Dumenil's *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. How accurately does Fitzgerald portray the era? Which of its elements does he emphasize? Which does he downplay?

3. **Prohibition:** When America passed laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol, a great underworld of bootlegging developed and flourished. This created a United States that claimed to be concerned with order, morality, and self-restraint but supported a chaotic underworld. What does *The Great Gatsby* say about this paradoxical society?
How do various characters react to the idea that Gatsby is a bootlegger? What does the novel seem to be saying about the ways that Gatsby made his money? Since Nick serves as the moral center of the novel, pay particular attention to his perception of Gatsby's activities.

4. **Racism/prejudice:** What is the novel's attitude toward racism and other kinds of prejudice?

According to Tom, everyone ought to read *The Rise of the Coloured Empires.* The idea, he says, is that "if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved" (17). What are the likely ramifications of such ideas? Why do you think Fitzgerald puts these words and ideas into Tom's mouth? What do scientists say now about the biological or genetic basis of race? How do the other characters in the novel agree with these ideas? Do they subscribe to different prejudices based on factors other than skin color?

**Philosophy and Ideas**

There are many major ideas at play in *The Great Gatsby,* including notions of class and class conflict and the conception of the progression of time. It can be difficult to create a single claim about ideas that figure so largely in a work. In the case of *Gatsby,* it can be helpful to determine what Nick, as the narrator and moral center, comes to feel about a particular topic in order to discern what message the novel may be trying to convey about that topic. You might also find it helpful to select and analyze several relevant passages in order to develop a claim about a particular topic as well as evidence to support that claim.

**Sample Topics:**

1. **Class:** What sort of commentary is Fitzgerald making in this novel about class in America?

   To begin thinking about this topic, you might first figure out which characters are associated with which class and then look at their fates. Who survives? Who is sacrificed? Does the novel give the idea that some people are expendable? You might consider whether class eventually trumps everything in the novel. Does it turn out to be more important than even love? How does Nick fit into all of this? To which class does he belong? What does he make of Tom and Daisy and their "rather distinguished secret society" (22)?

2. **Time:** Does the novel ultimately support a linear view of time or a more malleable, circular conception?

   An essay on this topic will need to analyze the following famous exchange: "I wouldn't ask too much of her,' [Nick] ventured. 'You can't repeat the past.' 'Can't repeat the past?' [Gatsby] cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" (116). Does Gatsby continue to believe this until he dies, or does his belief begin to falter at some point? Also pay particular attention to the novel's final passage: "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes 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—So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (189). What does the passage tell us about what Nick has learned about time and the human psyche from Gatsby?

3. **Conspicuous consumption:** What kind of commentary is the novel making about the habit of buying things and spending money so that others can appreciate the wealth of the spender?

   Examine Gatsby's party scenes. Why does Gatsby throw such elaborate, lavish parties? What do they give him? Where does all the material needed for his guests' enjoyment come from? Where does the waste go when the party is over? You may wish to examine the scene in chapter 5 in which Gatsby shows Nick and Daisy all of his shirts:

   He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them one by one before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple green and lavender and faint orange with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly with a strained sound Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. (98)

   Why does Gatsby feel compelled to show off his wardrobe this way? What do you make of Daisy's emotional reaction?

**Form and Genre**
Sometimes it is helpful to study the way a work of literature is put together to get at its meanings. You can look at the way it is constructed, whether it is built like other novels, and what these similarities or differences might mean. Look at how the story is told, in what tense, and through what point of view. Look at who tells the story and whether that narrator is reliable and objective. In short, looking at the novel as a novel, studying the author's craft, can bring to the forefront interesting concerns.

Sample Topics:

1. **Nick as narrator:** What is the overall effect of Fitzgerald's use of Nick as narrator of Gatsby's story?

   To begin thinking about this essay topic, spend a few moments imagining what Gatsby's story would be like if it were told by someone else, by Tom Buchanan perhaps, or Myrtle. What kind of person is Nick? What do we know about him and his values? Examine chapter 1 and the information that Nick gives us about himself and his family. Trace his development throughout the novel. How and why does Nick change? In chapter 8, Nick reveals that he is glad that he praised Gatsby, telling him "You're worth the whole damn bunch of them put together" (162). But he seems to be conflicted about his true feelings for Gatsby. Nick says that he has learned to reserve judgment about people. After getting to know Gatsby and being privy to all his secrets, what does Nick ultimately think of him? What does he, and readers by extension, take away from Gatsby's story?

2. **The Great Gatsby as masterpiece:** Why is this novel considered one of Western literature's best?

   Shortly after the publication of The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald reacted to the novel's slow sales and mixed critical reviews in a dejected letter to his publisher: "Now I shall write some cheap ones [stories] until I've accumulated enough for my next novel…. If it will support me with no more intervals of trash I'll go on as a novelist. If not, I'm going to quit, come home, go to Hollywood and learn the movie business" (Some Sort 220). Clearly, The Great Gatsby's initial reception was poor enough to rattle Fitzgerald's confidence in himself as a novelist. Why might Fitzgerald's novel have been so poorly received initially? Why is it currently considered one of the greatest 20th-century novels? Does it deserve this status?

3. **Chronology:** Why does Fitzgerald have Nick relate the events of the story in the order he does? Why does he reveal the true story of Gatsby's life at the moment he does? What effect does Fitzgerald achieve with these choices? How do they affect the readers' interpretation of events and characters?

   Look closely at chapter 6, in which Nick explains his reasons for telling the story out of order: "He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumors about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true. Moreover he told it to me at a time of confusion, when I had reached the point of believing everything and nothing about him" (107). An analysis of the beginning of chapter 8 will also be helpful. Here, readers discover when Gatsby actually reveals the story of his origins to Nick: "It was this night he told me the strange story of his youth with Dan Cody—told it to me because 'Jay Gatsby' had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice and the long secret extravaganza was played out" (155).

**Symbols, Imagery, and Language**

Another richly rewarding way to approach the construction of an argument and supporting essay on The Great Gatsby is to analyze its symbols and imagery. Meaningful symbols and powerful imagery can be found throughout the novel. Look for elements that seem to carry more meaning than their face value. Often, you can spot important symbols and images because they recur throughout the novel or because the narrative seems at first glance to devote too much attention to such a simple aspect of the characters' surroundings. Once you have found a promising symbol or image, the next step is to determine what it stands for and how it is used to further develop the novel's themes.

Sample Topics:

1. **Uncut pages of books in Gatsby's library:** What does the condition of these books symbolize in terms of the novel?

   Look closely at the description of Gatsby's library. What do the details tell you about him? What can you glean from the fact that all the books in Gatsby's library are real volumes, yet the pages remain uncut? What gives these books their value? What sort of value do they hold? How are these books different from those you might expect to find in the Buchanans' or the Wilsons' homes?
2. **The schedule for self-improvement in the back of Gatsby's childhood copy of *Hopalong Cassidy***: How is this schedule significant to the book's larger themes?

You might wish to read the original *Hopalong Cassidy* by Clarence E. Mulford in order to determine what effect this book might have had on young James Gatz. Is it significant that Gatsby writes his schedule in another book instead of in a notebook of his own? What is the significance of the schedule and each of its elements? What information can you glean about Gatsby's character and ambitions? What does Gatsby's father make of the schedule? What does his reaction tell us about Gatsby's character and early life?

3. **Eyes of T. J. Eckleburg**: What do the eyes on the billboard symbolize?

Examine closely the beginning of chapter 3, which describes the valley of ashes and the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which are "blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out onto no face, but instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose" (27). What are these eyes seeing? Who is being watched? How does sight function in the novel? Are there other images of watchful eyes in *Gatsby*? Is it significant that the eyes are an advertisement on a billboard? Also consider the fact that near the end of chapter 8, George Wilson refers to these eyes as the eyes of God.

4. **Green light at the end of Daisy's dock**: What does this image signify in the novel?

The first time Nick sees Gatsby, he says that "Gatsby stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and far as I was from him I could have sworn that he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of the dock" (26). What do you make of Gatsby's stretched out arms and the fact that he is trembling? What does the green light symbolize for him? Nick comments again on the green light in chapter 5. After Gatsby has been reunited with Daisy, Nick tells us that "it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (98). Do you agree with Nick's assessment? What do you make of the reference to the green light in the final passages of the novel?

**Compare and Contrast Essays**

Comparing and contrasting various elements of the novel can throw important distinguishing features into relief as well as emphasize common threads. Setting East Egg against West Egg, for instance, illuminates what makes each distinct and also what sets them both apart from other places, such as, for example, the valley of ashes. It is often rewarding to examine which element of the comparison is favored by the narration and for what reasons. For instance, you could set Tom's and Gatsby's parties side by side, list the qualities and characteristics of each, and use this analysis to determine how the novel intends to portray Tom and Gatsby. Although Tom comes from old money and Gatsby's money is quite new, a look at these scenes might reveal that it is Gatsby who displays the most "class."

**Sample Topics:**

1. **East Egg versus West Egg / new money versus old money**: What is Fitzgerald saying about the relationship between those from moneyed families and the newly rich? What are the essential differences between these two groups? Can they overlap at all?

Review the descriptions of East and West Egg given in chapter 1 and compare them. What does Nick mean when he refers to the "bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them" (9)? In addition, examine the scene in chapter 6 in which Nick first sees West Egg through Daisy's eyes. He had "grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures, second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so, and now [he] was looking at it again, through Daisy's eyes" (110). What do Daisy and Tom think of West Egg? More important, what changes for Nick after this?

2. **East versus West**: Examine the dichotomy between the eastern and western United States that the novel sets up. What commentary on American society is Fitzgerald making here?

First ascertain what qualities and characteristics are associated in the novel with the East and West. A close look at chapter 9 will be helpful. What does Nick mean when he says, "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made
us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life” (184). What might this "deficiency" be? In what ways were all of these people "unadaptable to Eastern life"?

3. **Tom and Myrtle's dinner party versus Gatsby's parties:** What do these two parties demonstrate about the characters of Tom and Gatsby?

Look closely at these party scenes, Tom and Myrtle's in chapter 2 and Gatsby's in chapter 3. What is similar about them and what is different? Who attends the parties? How do the hosts behave? What do they expect to get out of these parties? Is Jordan Baker correct when she states that large parties like Gatsby's are actually more intimate than small gatherings? What exactly does she mean?

**Further Information**


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