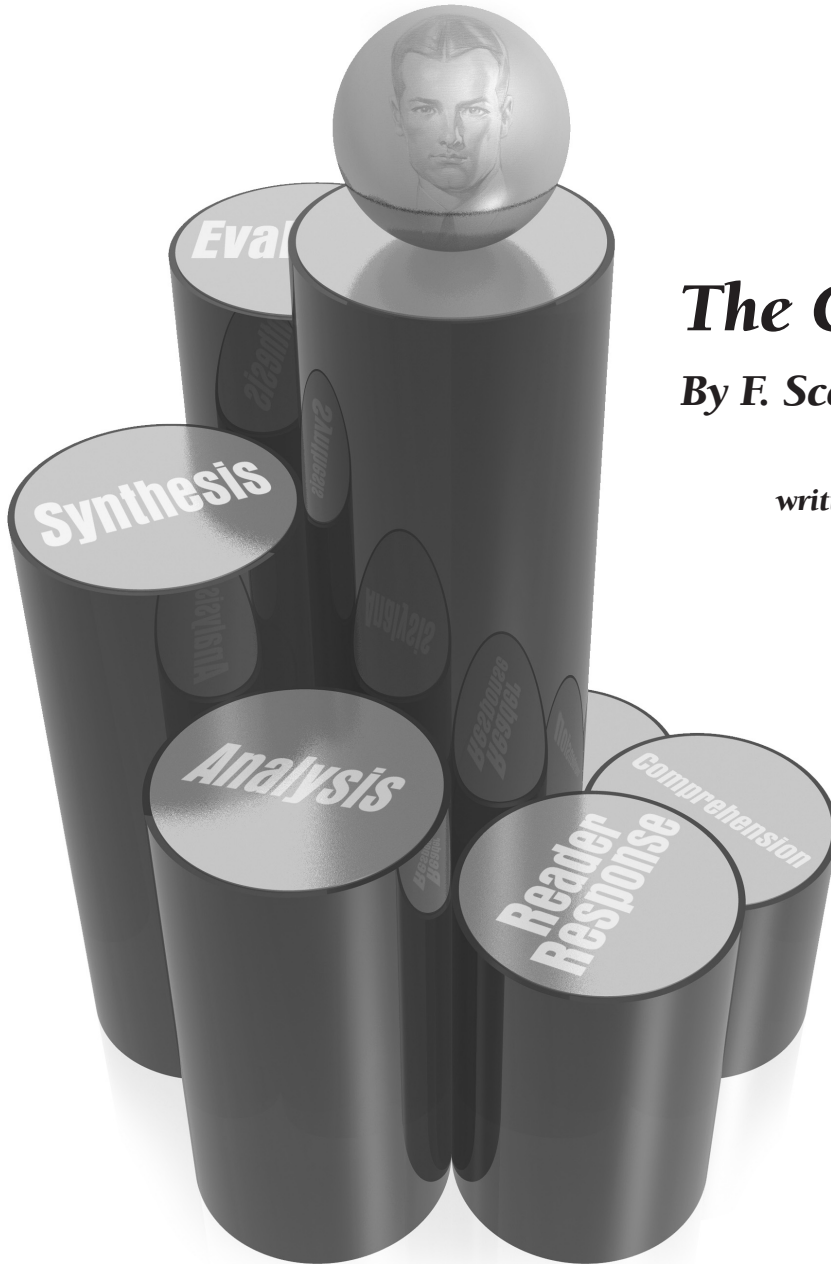


Using
Bloom's Taxonomy to
Explore Literature

Levels of Understanding



The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

written by Frank Hering



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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 978-1-935467-43-4 • Item No. 308193

Introduction to Levels of Understanding

FOR MANY STUDENTS, studying literature is like being lost in an alien universe, filled with hidden symbols, structures, and meanings that only a scholar can uncover. Without a teacher's direction, students lack the skills and confidence to evaluate a work of literature on their own, and instead, will frequently turn to resources such as the Internet for guidance. As a result, they assume another writer's views instead of developing their own.

Levels of Understanding breaks down complex questions students will encounter into smaller parts, showing the steps a critical reader should take in order to develop a sound evaluation of a text. Each section of the guide contains five types of questions representative of Bloom's learning domains—starting with the most basic and foundational skill, knowledge and comprehension, and gradually building to the highest skill, evaluation. All the way, reluctant students are provided with the scaffolding they need to advance from one level of understanding to the next.

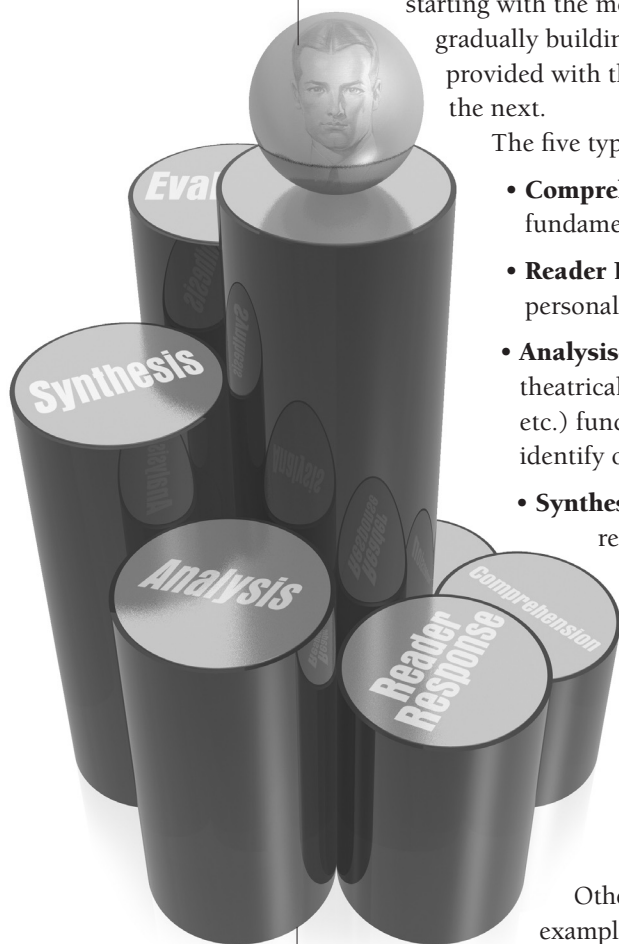
The five types of questions, again, representative of Bloom's domains, are as follows:

- **Comprehension**—will ask the most basic questions to ascertain the students' fundamental understanding of the text: plot facts, character identification, etc.
- **Reader Response**—will ask the students to “respond” to the text by relating it to personal experience or by presenting an opinion on a character or event.
- **Analysis**—will require students to study how various techniques and literary or theatrical devices (diction, symbolism, imagery, metaphors, asides, soliloquies etc.) function in the text. Analysis questions do not ask the student to merely identify or define a literary, theatrical, or rhetorical device.
- **Synthesis**—will bridge the gap between the analysis and evaluation questions, requiring students to look at other scenes in the text and draw conclusions about themes, motifs, or a writer's style. Often, a synthesis question will require the student to draw on prior knowledge—what has been learned in class or through research—and/or information from sources other than the literary title being studied in order to arrive at a satisfactory answer.
- **Evaluation**—will ask the student to make a qualitative judgment on the text and determine whether a particular aspect of it is effective or ineffective.

Other books may list Bloom's taxonomy, define the terms, and offer a general example or two. *Levels of Understanding*, however, provides the teacher with the title-specific questions to allow you to effectively bring Bloom into your classroom.

In addition, unlike other available products that claim to address Bloom's “higher order thinking skills,” *Levels of Understanding* does not teach students how to answer questions about a particular text, but instead, helps them develop skills to evaluate literature critically and without guidance. These are skills that will not only help students prepare for standardized tests like the Advanced Placement Language and Literature exams, the SATs, and the ACTs, but will also give students the self-assurance to develop and articulate a personal view—a skill that will be highly advantageous to them in college.

This product, however, is not geared toward upper-level students only, but is a versatile guide that can be used for students of all ability levels—remedial through honors. The teacher may customize the product to fit the class's objectives and goals, determining which questions the students will answer. Additionally, the guide is entirely reproducible, and each major division begins on a new page, so you may use *Levels of Understanding* for the whole work of literature or only a specific section. ♡



How to Use this Unit

EACH *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* unit is intended to be a deep and rich component of your literature program, whether your goal is to prepare your students for a large-scale assessment like the AP Literature exam or to challenge your students to read carefully and to think deeply about what they have read.

The questions in this guide are designed to be flexible and meet your needs. They can be used as

- homework questions when students read the text independently.
- in-class reading check questions and “bell-ringer” journal entries.
- class discussion questions and prompts.
- focus questions for pre-writing and essay planning.
- review and study questions for assessment.

While the Teacher's Guide contains an answer key, you will find that the higher-order questions (especially synthesis and evaluation) have model answers that represent more than one possible response. It would be inappropriate to penalize a student whose well-reasoned and supportable answer did not match the “correct” answer in the guide.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that you view the questions in this guide as learning activities and not as assessment activities.

Many of your students are likely to find the higher domains new and perhaps intimidating. Others might be alarmed at having to support their reader-response reactions and their evaluations with an accurate comprehension of the text. The questions in this guide should act as both scaffolding and safety net, guiding your students through a new reading and thinking process and allowing them to practice without fear of “failure.”

The writing prompts, however, provide rich assessment and evaluation opportunities. Every prompt is designed to invite your students to operate in one of the higher order domains, thus giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability, and giving you the opportunity to evaluate their progress.

Whether you use *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* as the core of your literature curriculum or as a supplement, the guide and writing prompts are designed to help your students attain a deep understanding of the works they read. Ideally, they will gain the type of understanding demanded by Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and most state standards, including the Common Core State Standards of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. 🍷



Introduction to *The Great Gatsby*

About the Author

TRANSFERRED TO CAMP SHERIDAN in Montgomery, Alabama, in the summer of 1918, the 22-year-old F. Scott Fitzgerald was in officer training when he attended a country club dance. There he met Zelda Sayre, the belle of Montgomery and a member of an established but not terribly wealthy family. Fitzgerald fell deeply in love, and soon the couple was engaged. Zelda was beautiful, brilliant, artistic, and reckless. “I was in love with a whirlwind,” Fitzgerald wrote later, “and I must spin a net big enough to catch it out of my head, a head full of trickling nickels and sliding dimes, the incessant music box of the poor.”

Born September 24, 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald became class-conscious at a very early age. His family lived in what he called “a house below the average of a street above the average.” His father, Edward, came from a distinguished Maryland family and had the manners, but not the money, of a perfect Southern gentleman. The elder Fitzgerald married a rich woman, Mary (Mollie) McQuillan, whose Irish-immigrant father had become a very successful wholesale grocer. Growing up with these parents, Fitzgerald quickly learned about the tensions between old breeding and new money.

Early on, Fitzgerald learned that his means to popularity would be his writing rather than athleticism or academics. In elementary school, he was constantly filling the blank pages of his textbooks during class time. He wrote two plays that were later performed as successful fundraisers. Because his grades were so low, however, his parents sent him to a boarding school in New Jersey. Despite mediocre performance there, Fitzgerald enrolled in Princeton University. There, Fitzgerald was cut from the football team, but gained fame on campus for writing musical comedies and stories for Princeton’s literary magazines. His best friend at Princeton was Edmund Wilson, who later became a famous literary critic and would figure prominently in gaining Fitzgerald’s work the respect it is accorded today.

During Christmas vacation of his sophomore year, Fitzgerald met and fell in love with Ginevra King, a beautiful, popular, and ultimately unattainable debutante who became the model for many of his heroines.

Zelda Sayre would have been unattainable as well if Fitzgerald’s first novel had not been a huge success. After meeting Zelda in Alabama, Fitzgerald moved to New York to make a fortune quickly. After six months at an advertising firm, however, he was still poor. Zelda told him she did not want to wait for him to become rich and famous, so she broke off their engagement. In 1919, he returned to his parents’ house to finish the novel that Scribner’s had initially rejected. One of the

editors, Maxwell Perkins, though, liked the manuscript well enough that he had asked the author to revise and resubmit it. Perkins would continue to be Fitzgerald’s influential editor for the rest of the author’s life. A week after the revised novel, now titled *This Side of Paradise*, came out, it was an immediate bestseller, and Fitzgerald and Zelda were married in New York. Reflecting on the realization of his dreams, Fitzgerald later wrote, “the fulfilled future and the wistful past were mingled in a single gorgeous moment.”

In New York, the young couple embodied the spirit of the “Jazz Age,” the name Fitzgerald gave to the 1920s era in which young people were anxious to enjoy themselves in the present, forget the past, and ignore the future. The Fitzgeralds enjoyed themselves with such outrageous stunts as diving fully clothed into the fountain at the Plaza Hotel and riding down Fifth Avenue on the hoods of taxicabs. Their exploits were recounted in newspapers and magazines, which started printing photographs of the handsome pair. *This Side of Paradise* continued to sell well, but Fitzgerald had to write short stories for *The Saturday Evening Post* to satisfy his and Zelda’s lavish tastes. His second novel, *The Beautiful and the Damned*, did not do as well as the first. In 1921, the Fitzgeralds had a daughter, Frances Scott (known as Scottie), and moved to Great Neck on Long Island, which would be the model for West Egg in *The Great Gatsby*. The Fitzgeralds did not let parenthood slow down their lavish and profligate lifestyle. Scott wrote his play, *The Vegetable*, amid a series of wild weekend parties.

It flopped.

In 1923, Fitzgerald began work on the novel that would become *The Great Gatsby*. Many events from Fitzgerald’s early life appear in this novel. Like Fitzgerald, Nick Carraway is a Minnesota native educated at an East Coast boarding school and an Ivy League college, who after the war moves to New York to make his fortune. Also similar to Fitzgerald is Jay Gatsby, a young man obsessed with wealth and luxury who falls in love with a beautiful debutante while stationed at a military base in the South; like Fitzgerald himself, Gatsby seeks to make a fortune in order to win the hand of a rich girl. The Buchanans, like the Fitzgeralds, have a history of being wild and restless, doing whatever they wanted to in the spirit of the Jazz Age. *The Great Gatsby* appeared in 1925 to some of the best reviews of Fitzgerald’s career.

While writing *Gatsby*, the Fitzgeralds moved to France, where they could “live on practically nothing a year.” Scott and Zelda met Pablo Picasso, Cole Porter, John Dos Passos, and other luminaries of the Twenties. Picasso and the Fitzgeralds had mutual friends in Gerald and Sara

Levels of Understanding:

Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains
to explore F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

Writing Prompts

Chapters I and II: Analysis, Synthesis

Nick opens his narration by stating that he used to “reserve all judgments,” but after the war, only “wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart.” How do Nick's reactions to the stories that various characters share with him help to characterize him as a narrator? Be sure to support all of your assertions with quotations from the novel and analyses of those quoted passages. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Chapter III: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

Explain the extent to which Fitzgerald both portrays and critiques the Jazz Age by analyzing Nick's attitude toward what he witnesses at Gatsby's parties. Be sure to support all of your assertions with quotations from the novel and analyses of those quoted passages. Do not merely summarize the plot.

[Note to Teacher: Depending on your goals and intents for the class, this prompt could motivate a “mini-research” project in which students themselves seek information on the cultural, societal, and economic changes America went through in the first half of the 1920s. Otherwise, students can use notes from your presentations or photocopies from your instructional materials. The point is simply for the student to synthesize information from more than one source in order to support his or her thesis.]

Chapter IV: Comprehension, Analysis

Analyze how Fitzgerald communicates Nick's attitude toward people of different “races” (Jewish, Mediterranean, African-American) and classes (those with new wealth, the poor who live in the Valley of Ashes). Be sure to support all of your assertions with quotations from the novel and analyses of those quoted passages. Do not merely summarize the plot or describe Nick's apparent attitude.

Chapter V: Analysis, Synthesis

Quite often the narrator of a work—whether omniscient or limited, first or third-person—will interrupt the narrative in order to pause and reflect on the significance of what is currently happening in the plot, to provide pertinent exposition, or to predict future developments. Fitzgerald frequently allows Nick to evaluate what he

is reporting. Reflecting on Gatsby and Daisy's long-anticipated reunion, Nick says that the “colossal significance” of the green light at the end of Daisy's dock had “vanished forever.” Write a thoughtful and well-supported essay in which you consider what Nick might mean by this, and speculate how this observation might cause Nick to qualify the idealization of Gatsby that he stated in Chapter I.

Chapter VI: Analysis, Synthesis

Much of *The Great Gatsby* is clearly a commentary on the mass culture—the consumerism and shifting morals—of what Fitzgerald called “the Jazz Age.” Write a well-reasoned and supported essay in which you analyze the ways Gatsby might be viewed as a personification of that mass culture. How might Fitzgerald's feelings about that culture be mirrored in Nick's feelings about Gatsby?

Chapter VI: Analysis, Synthesis

The pacing of a novel's plot and character exposition is an important element in the novel's impact on the reader: suspense, humor, pathos, and so on. Write a well-reasoned and supported essay in which you argue why Nick reveals the backstory of James Gatz's young adulthood at this point in the novel, even though says he learned the facts much later.

Chapter VII: Analysis, Synthesis

Involved in the climax of a novel are not only key plot events but often the full consummation of a dynamic character's growth or the final revelation of a static character's personality. This chapter's climactic confrontation involving Tom, Gatsby, and Daisy is this type of scene. Write a well-reasoned and well-supported essay in which you argue whether Daisy is a dynamic or static character. Does her behavior in this chapter reflect a change in her character or merely further reveal what the reader has already suspected?

Chapter VIII: Analysis, Synthesis

The pacing of a novel's plot and character exposition is an important element in the novel's impact on the reader: suspense, humor, pathos, and so on. Write a well-reasoned and –supported essay in which you argue why Fitzgerald has chosen this juncture for the reader to learn the history of Gatsby and Daisy.



Levels of Understanding:
Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains
to explore F. Scott Fitzgerald's

The Great Gatsby

CHAPTER I

Comprehension

1. What does Nick mean when he says about his father's advice, "as my father snobbishly suggested and I snobbishly repeat"?

2. According to Nick, why has he been "privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men"?

3. What does Nick mean when he says that "the intimate revelations of young men or at least the terms in which they express them are usually plagiaristic"?

4. What does Nick see as the defining characteristic of Gatsby?

5. How has Nick been affected by his service in the war?

6. Describe the class status of Nick's family and compare it to what we learn about Tom's class status and attitude.

The Great Gatsby

CHAPTER II

Comprehension

1. What does Nick mean when he says, “This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air”?

2. In actuality, what are the eyes of Doctor Eckleburg?

3. What seems to be Nick’s opinion of Myrtle Wilson?

4. What does Mrs. McKee mean when she confesses, “I almost married a little kike who’d been after me for years. I knew he was below me”? What does Myrtle mean when she replies, “At least you didn’t marry him ... Well I married him ... And that’s the difference between your case and mine”?

5. Does Mr. McKee produce high art (addressed to connoisseurs) or low art (addressed to the masses)? How do you know?

6. What happens from the time Nick leaves Myrtle’s apartment to the time he wakes up in Penn Station?

The Great Gatsby

CHAPTER III

Comprehension

1. How often does Gatsby have his parties during the summer? How do you know? How much work goes into throwing the parties? Give examples.

2. How does Jordan's group differ from the other guests? Under what circumstances and for what reasons does it disband?

3. What does Nick mean when he says that the guests at the party "conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks"? In comparison, how does Nick himself behave?

4. Besides the rumors, in what ways is Gatsby an enigma?

5. In describing the behavior of Jordan's date, the undergraduate, Nick uses the euphemism "obstetrical conversation." What does that phrase mean?

6. Nick says that he went to Gatsby's parties only "three nights several weeks apart." List the various things Nick does most nights.

The Great Gatsby

CHAPTER IV

Comprehension

1. According to Gatsby, where in the Midwest was he born? What does this claim suggest about him?

2. Why does Nick find it so hard not to laugh at Gatsby's claim about how he lived immediately after the War?

3. What is Nick's reaction to seeing a limousine driven by a white chauffeur that contains three African-Americans who look at Gatsby's car in "haughty rivalry"?

4. Characterize Mr. Wolfshiem. What is his ethnicity? Occupation? Connection to Gatsby?

5. In this chapter, what do we learn from Jordan about Daisy and Gatsby's past? Daisy and Tom's?

Reader Response

1. After Gatsby produces the war medal and the Oxford photograph, Nick concludes that "it was all true." Do you agree?

The Great Gatsby

CHAPTER V

Comprehension

1. Why does Gatsby suggest to Nick that they go to Coney Island or take a swim in his pool?

2. When Gatsby offers to let Nick in on a side business, Nick thinks, “because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there.” What does Nick mean by “a service to be rendered”? How does he feel about Gatsby’s offer?

3. When Nick, after letting in Daisy, opens the door to answer Gatsby’s knock, he describes his guest as “standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes. ... With his hands in his pockets he stalked by me into the hall...” Why was Gatsby outside? Why is he upset with Nick?

4. What is Nick’s attitude toward “the colossal vitality of [Gatsby’s] illusion”?

5. What does Nick mean in the chapter’s last paragraph when he says, “they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by an intense life?”

Reader Response

1. What is your reaction to Gatsby’s changed and changing demeanor in this chapter?
