

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

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The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1

1. Nick, the narrator of the novel, characterizes himself as open minded, “inclined to reserve all judgements” about people. As a result, he explains, people tend to trust him and share their secrets with him. This is how he got to know Gatsby, “the man who gives his name to this book.”

Tell about a time a person has opened up to you and shared secrets of his or her life.

2. Nick describes Gatsby on the second page of the book. He is only mentioned in connection with his “colossal” mansion and then by Jordan Baker. At the end of the chapter, Gatsby is standing alone in the darkness. Re-read these sections and share your impression of Gatsby.
3. Nick tells the reader that he was restless when he returned to the Middle West after serving in World War I. He explains that he decided “to go east and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man.” What is your opinion of Nick’s decision?

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4. The novel is told in retrospect. Nick is looking back on his experience in the East. He tells the reader at the start of Chapter One that he arrived in the East in the spring, but by autumn he had returned home. Considering Nick's comments and tone toward the people he met in the East, including Gatsby, Tom, Daisy, and Jordan, what do you imagine he experienced? Remember his statement, "I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart."
5. How do you feel about Tom? Re-read Nick's description and draw a cartoon or caricature of Tom. A caricature is an exaggerated imitation (such as a drawing) of a person for satirical effect.
6. Does Daisy remind you of any friends, family members, or classmates? Describe the person Daisy is similar to.
7. What is your opinion of Tom and Daisy's marriage?
8. Think of a person you know who has a distinctive characteristic (a laugh, a smile, etc.), one that never fails to get your attention. Use Fitzgerald's description of Daisy as a model to write a presentation of this person, giving an image which suggests the distinctive characteristic.

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9. What does Daisy say that seems to define her attitude toward life?
10. At the end of the chapter, Nick admits to the reader that he had been seeing a girl in the West. What do you think he told this girl about his evening with the Buchanans? Write the letter Nick might have written.

Chapter 2

11. In your opinion, what does Myrtle say that best reveals her character?
12. Which character do you find most sympathetic? Why?
13. If you could give advice to one character, who would it be? Write the lecture you would give this person.

Response Journal

14. Critics of American society often claim Americans are too materialistic. In our society, people are often judged by their clothing. In this novel, for instance, Myrtle thought George was a gentleman until she found out he had borrowed the suit that he got married in. Then, she decided “ ‘he wasn’t fit to lick my shoe.’ ” What first impresses her about Tom is “ ‘had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn’t keep my eyes off him.’ ” Write a short commentary on your viewpoint about American materialism and concern for the way a person dresses. Do clothes make the man?
15. From the description of Myrtle’s apartment to the scene of bloody towels after Tom breaks Myrtle’s nose, the reader is presented with a series of shocking images and conversations. Which one is more striking to you? How can you account for its impact on you? Specifically, what does it remind you of, make you think about, or feel?
16. What in this chapter seems *least* believable to you?

Chapter 3

17. This chapter opens with the following statement about Gatsby's party:

"In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars."

List the ways Gatsby's guests are similar to moths. If you were directing a movie production of this novel, how would you stage and film this chapter?

18. What do you find comical in this chapter?
19. Imagine you are a reporter doing an article on Gatsby's party for the socialite page. Write the article.
20. Have you ever attended a large party or social event where you only knew one or two people? Nick says he felt embarrassed and "welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to someone" Describe your own experience and reaction to the situation.
21. Would you attend a party at Gatsby's? What would motivate you to attend or not attend?