**THE GREAT GATSBY** Chapter Questions

**Pre-Reading**

1. Why are we still reading a book written in the 1920s? What gives a book its longevity?  
 2. How was the 1920’s a reaction to WWI?  
 3. Some people think that having money leads to happiness. Do you agree? Why or why not? What   
 are the advantages and disadvantages of being wealthy?  
 4. What is the “American Dream”? Where did it originate, and how has it changed over the centuries?  
 5. Have you ever wanted to relive a moment from your past, to redo it? Describe the situation. How   
 and why would you change the past?  
 6. Define what it is to be “The Great American Novel.” Why is F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel considered   
 such?

**Chapter 1**

1. How does Nick describe himself at the beginning of the book?

2. Why has Nick come to the East?

3. How does Nick describe Tom Buchanan? (Consider the literature that Tom reads, what Daisy infers

about their marriage, and the mysterious dinner-time phone call.) What does Tom’s behavior reveal

about his character?   
 4. Who is Jordan Baker? What does Nick find appealing about her? What image does the author use to  
 describe Jordan Baker? What does it mean?

5. Pay attention to time. What is the day and year during the first scene at Daisy's house?

6. Notice how many times Fitzgerald uses the words hope, or dream. Why does he do this?

7. What is Gatsby doing when Nick first sees him?

8. Nick starts the novel by relaying his father's advice "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just

remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." Does Nick

reserve judgment in the novel?

**Chapter 2**

1. How does Nick meet Tom’s mistress?

2. How does Myrtle react to Tom’s arrival?

3. Describe George Wilson. How does he react to Tom’s arrival?

4. How does Myrtle behave as the party progresses?

5. Why, according to Catherine, has Tom not left Daisy to marry Myrtle?

6. Why did Tom break Myrtle’s nose? How is this consistent with the author’s description of him in   
 Chapter I? Judging by his treatment of Myrtle and his wife Daisy, what seems to be Tom’s attitude  
 toward women?

7. Describe the "valley of ashes." What does it look like and what does it represent?

8. How do Mr. Wilson and Myrtle seem to fit into the setting?

9. What more have you learned about Nick in this chapter? Is he similar or different than the people he  
 spends his time with?

10. How many lies have been told in this chapter? List the major ones.

**Chapter 3**

1. Why does Gatsby throw huge, expensive parties for people he does not even know?

2. Describe the two ways in which Nick differs from the other guests at the party?

3. What does the owl-eyed man find extraordinary about the books in Gatsby’s library?

4. Why does the owl-eyed man describe Gatsby as a real Belasco?

5. What is the significance of the owl eyed man?

6. What does Nick think of Gatsby after meeting him?

7. How is Gatsby different from his guests?

8. What rumors have been told about Gatsby? Why does Fitzgerald reveal rumors rather than fact?

9. What does the reaction of the drivers of the wrecked automobile suggest about the values of   
 Gatsby’s guests?

10. Why does Nick choose to share his thoughts and feelings with Jordan?

11. What does Nick learn about Jordan after he’s spent some time with her?

12. What is the significance of Jordan’s lies?

13. Nick thinks he's one of the few honest people he knows, why? Do you think he is honest?  
14. Pay attention to Nick's judgments. What do these judgments reveal about his character (especially  
 in relation to his opening comments)?

**Chapter 4**

1. Why does Fitzgerald list all of Gatsby's party guests?

2. List all of the rumors told about Gatsby.

3. What does Gatsby tell Nick about himself and why? Do you believe Gatsby? Does Nick?

4. Why does Gatsby want to have tea with Daisy in Nick’s house? Why doesn’t Gatsby ask Nick for   
 this favor himself? Why did Gatsby want Daisy to see his house?

5. What accomplishment of Meyer Wolfshein’s does Gatsby describe to Nick? How does Nick react?

6. What does Gatsby’s friendship with Meyer Wolfshein imply about his own background?

7. What role does Meyer Wolfsheim play in the novel? Why is there so much focus on his nose and   
 what does this tell you about Fitzgerald's politics?

8. According to Jordan, what did Daisy do on her wedding day? Why? What does this reveal about   
 Daisy?

9. What does Tom do when he and Daisy return from their honeymoon?

10. Nick says, "There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired." What does Nick

mean? How does each character in the novel fit into this schema?

**Chapter 5**

1. What does Gatsby offer Nick in return for Nick’s cooperation in inviting Daisy to his house? How

does Nick feel about Gatsby’s offer?

2. Why does Gatsby deliver so many goods and services to Nick's house?

3. What is the weather like in this chapter? How does it reflect the emotional climate of Gatsby and

Daisy?

4. What is the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy like initially?

5. How are Daisy and Gatsby different when Nick returns to the house after a half an hour?

6. What are Gatsby’s feelings by the end of the chapter?

7. Why do you think Daisy sobs when Gatsby shows her his shirts?

8. In this chapter, Gatsby’s dream seems to be fulfilled. What indications are there that reality cannot

satisfy his dream?

9. Explain the significance of the green light.

**Chapter 6**

1. How truthful was Gatsby when he relayed the story of his life to Nick? Why does Fitzgerald tell the

story of Jay Gatz now?

2. When does James Gatz change his name? Why?

3. Plato held that reality was an imperfect reflection of an ideal, permanent realm. With this in mind,   
 what would you say Nick means when he says, “Jay Gatsby sprang from his Platonic conception of   
 himself?”

4. What is ironic about Dan Cody?

5. What parallel is suggested by the fact that Gatsby never gets the inheritance bequeathed to him by   
 Cody?

6. Describe the meeting of Tom and Gatsby. What does this meeting reveal about them?

7. How did Gatsby measure the success of his party?

8. Why did Daisy and Tom find Gatsby's party loathsome?

9. What does Gatsby tell Nick he wants Daisy to do?

10. When Nick told Gatsby that "you can't repeat the past," Gatsby replied, "Why of course you can!"

Do you agree with Nick or Gatsby? Explain your answer.  
  
**Chapter 7**

1. Who is Trimalchio? Explain how this describes Gatsby.

2. Why does Gatsby stop giving parties?

3. When does Tom first realize that Daisy loves Tom?

4. Why does Gatsby view Daisy’s child with surprise?

5. Why is Myrtle Wilson upset when she sees Tom and Jordan?

6. Compare George Wilson and Tom. What did each man learn about his wife and how did they each   
 react?

7. Why does Fitzgerald insert a wedding into the scene in the hotel room?  
 8. Why is Nick pleased with Gatsby’s honesty about Oxford?

9. Describe the fight between Gatsby and Tom. What do these men think of each other? How are they  
 similar and how are they different?

10. Why does Tom’s defense of family life amuse Nick?

11. What is the significance of Nick’s thirtieth birthday?

12. Why does Tom insist that Daisy and Gatsby drive home together?

13. Why does Nick change his feelings toward Jordan?

14. Why are Tom and Daisy reconciled?

15. What do you think Tom and Daisy were saying to each other in the kitchen? Do you think that  
 Tom knew Daisy was driving the "death car"? Why, why not?

16. At this point, how would you end the novel?

**Chapter 8**

1. How does the reference to the season contribute to the melancholic mood at the beginning of this  
 chapter?

2. What has Nick learned from Gatsby?  
 3. Why does Gatsby feel “married” to Daisy?  
 4. What attracts Daisy to Tom Buchanan?  
 5. Who is Dan Cody and what is his significance in Gatsby's life?  
 6. What convinced Wilson that Myrtle was having an affair?  
 7. Explain the symbolism of Dr. Eckleberg’s eyes and its effect on Mr. Wilson.

8. Who sent Wilson to Gatsby?  
 9. What is Gatsby’s mood just before he is killed?

10. How does Nick's statement "You're worth the whole bunch put together" reflect how Nick has   
 changed since the beginning of the novel?

**Chapter 9**

1. What is the significance of Nick’s taking charge of Gatsby’s funeral arrangements?

2. Why do Tom and Daisy leave?  
 3. What does Klipspringer want? How does Nick react?

4. How does Nick react to the phone call revealing Gatsby’s criminal activities?  
 5. Why won’t Meyer Wolfsheim attend Gatsby’s funeral?

6. What two emotions are pulling Mr. Gatz?

7. How was Jay Gatz's childhood schedule consistent with the adult Gatsby's behavior?

8. Who attended Gatsby's funeral? How and why is this significant?

9. What is the purpose of Nick's last meeting with Jordan?  
10. What does Nick mean by his comment, “I’m thirty…I’m five years too old to lie to myself and call   
 it honor”?

11. Why does Nick call Tom and Daisy "careless people"?  
12. What is the significance of the last line of the novel: “so we beat on, boats against the current,   
 borne back ceaselessly into the past?”

**Post Reading**

1. Does this novel have villains and heroes? Why, why not? If yes, who fits into these categories and   
 why?  
 2. Nick is both part of the action, and acting as an objective commentator. Does this narration style   
 work? Why, why not?  
 3. How did Fitzgerald use weather to reflect the mood of the story?  
 4. What is the theme of this novel? (State it as a general observation about life.)  
 5. Gatsby’s tragedy is that he chose the wrong dream. Was he, or was society corrupted?