

## The Great Gatsby Study Guide

### Chapter One

1. Explain what Fitzgerald achieved by using Nick's point of view to tell Gatsby's story?  
**He's able to analyze and criticize.**
2. What do we learn about Nick Carraway in the introductory section of the novel?  
**From a good family, in bonds.**
3. In discussing East Egg and West Egg, Nick states: "To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size." Indicate what the "dissimilarities" might be.  
**Type of people that live there, type of homes they have.**
4. Compare the home of Nick, Gatsby, and the Buchanans. How does each home reflect the personality of its owner?  
**Nick's is inexpensive; Gatsby's is showy; the Buchanans' represents old money.**
5. Fitzgerald's description of Tom, Daisy, and Jordan creates not only an impression of physical appearance, but also contains added information. What do you learn about their history and interests from their gestures and mannerisms?  
**Tom's having an affair and is abusive; Daisy is superficial and delicate; Jordan is independent and athletic.**
6. When Nick leaves the Buchanans' house, he is "confused and a little disgusted." Why?  
**He doesn't understand why Daisy stays with Tom; he wants her to take the baby and leave.**
7. Though we do not meet Gatsby until Chapter 3, we hear references to him in the conversations of others. What impressions do you get?  
**Various: mostly he's a man of mystery, related to Kaiser Wilhelm.**

### Chapter Two

8. In what way is the description in the opening paragraphs of Chapter 2 appropriate to the total atmosphere of this chapter? What is symbolic about the "Valley of Ashes" and "the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg"?

Morality -- a lack of it, lifeless, moral grotesqueness. Eyes serve as a reminder.

9. Evaluate Myrtle's talk of her unhappy marriage. What does she seem to be trying to justify?  
She thinks she's better than her husband. She's trying to justify her affair.
10. How does Myrtle's speech reveal her character?  
She's simple and materialistic.
11. What does the scene in the New York apartment reveal about Tom? About Myrtle?  
Tom: violent, selfish. Myrtle: puts on airs, sexual, materialistic.
12. Does Nick enjoy the afternoon at the apartment in New York? Why or why not?  
No, he wants to get out and walk around the park. Yet he's intrigued by the group.

### Chapter Three

13. Chapter 3 describes Gatsby's "little party". Enumerate details about the party itself, about their conversation and behavior.  
Party: elaborate and weekends, guests: came and went, superficial intros, behavior (everyone wants something).
14. Describe the meeting between Nick and Gatsby. Comment on Fitzgerald's skill in preparing for Gatsby's entrance into the story.  
Gatsby is portrayed as polite, unassuming, ready to please.
15. In what way are Nick and Gatsby similar at this point? How are they paradoxical?  
They are both outsiders, uncomfortable in this world.
16. What is the reason for Nick's breaking the story at this point? Read the section beginning with "Reading over what I have written so far . . ." "  
He wants to assure the reader that this wasn't the only thing that occupied him.
17. At the end of Chapter 3, Nick meets Jordan again. The author includes several episodes that emphasize her carelessness and

basic dishonesty. Discuss these instances. What do they reveal about Jordan? About Nick?

Jordan: hypocrisy, likes honesty but doesn't possess it.

Nick: appears honest, tenderness for Jordan.

18. Notice the last paragraph in Chapter 3. Is Nick being overly proud here? Discuss.

Yes, he himself is dishonest. He hasn't broken off his engagement yet.

#### Chapter Four

19. The introductory section of Chapter 4 gives a long roster of those who attended Gatsby's parties. How do they behave toward their host? Why do they accept his hospitality?

They speculate about his past. They come for a good time.

20. Describe Gatsby's car.

Long, rich cream color, numerous windows, green upholstery.

21. Discuss the details that Gatsby shares with Nick about his past.

Son of wealthy people, war hero, educated at Oxford.

22. Does Nick believe Gatsby's story? Why or why not?

No, because Gatsby hurries and chokes over "educated at Oxford."

23. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim? What seems to be his connection with Gatsby?

A gambler who fixed the 1919 World Series, an associate of Gatsby's, known him for years, maybe a gangster.

24. Jordan Baker tells Nick's story about Daisy, Gatsby, and Tom. Summarize the story.

Gatsby and Daisy knew each other in Louisville, where he was a lieutenant. Soon he shipped overseas, and Daisy married Tom.

25. Explain the epigraph on the title page of the novel. What does it reveal about Gatsby and his love for Daisy?

Gatsby has acquired his possessions and money in order to earn Daisy's love, the one thing he cannot buy.

26. Do we know why Gatsby has so many parties? Why did he buy the house? Explain.  
House: across the bay from Daisy, has parties there so Daisy will attend.
27. What new meaning do you see in the last two paragraphs of Chapter 1? What does Nick mean when he says, "Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night"?  
He was thinking of Daisy.
28. When Gatsby spoke to Jordan in his library in Chapter 3, he'd already devised a plan involving Nick. What was it? Why did he not ask Nick directly?  
Gatsby would go to Nick's to meet Daisy. Nick would invite Daisy for tea. Perhaps Gatsby felt he had offended Nick earlier.

#### Chapter Five

29. Gatsby's actions in preparing for Daisy's arrival seem both flamboyant and absurd. What does he do? Why?  
Gets grass cut, numerous flowers and cakes.
30. Discuss Gatsby's actions once Daisy arrives. How do we know he is nervous? How does he try to impress her?  
Leaves her in the room, hands in pocket, pale as death.
31. Toward the end of the chapter, Nick attempts to explain "the expressions of bewilderment that had come back into Gatsby's face." What explanation does Nick give? Why, in his opinion, is Daisy not at fault?  
Idealization of Daisy -- moment realized.
32. Describe Daisy's reaction during the course of her meeting with Gatsby.  
Much crying.
33. Has Nick been affected by the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy? In what way?  
Sympathetic, recognizes Gatsby's dream, sees their love.

#### Chapter Six

34. What is Gatsby's real name? Why and when did he change it?  
James Gatz, to reinvent himself, to become the person he wants to be.
35. In what way was Dan Cody in Gatsby's destiny?  
Gatsby tasted the good life and went after it.
36. Why does Tom attend Gatsby's party? How does this scene reveal the contrast between Gatsby and Tom?  
He's keeping an eye on Daisy. Tom is accepted, while Gatsby is not.
37. What is deeply ironic in Tom's statement, ". . . I may be old-fashioned in my ideas but women run around too much these days to suit me"?  
It points out a double standard.
38. Note the reactions of Tom and Daisy at the different times during Gatsby's party? Did they enjoy themselves? Explain.  
No. Tom's uncomfortable (doesn't like being pointed out as a polo player, observes people in oblivion). Daisy doesn't like the guests.
39. What suspicions does Tom have about Gatsby? What does he vow to do?  
Gatsby got his money underhandedly. He vows to find out who he is and how he got his money.
40. What do Nick and Gatsby talk about after the party?  
Whether Daisy enjoyed herself; Gatsby's plans with Daisy.
41. What is Gatsby expecting of Daisy that prompts Nick to warn him, "I wouldn't ask too much of her . . . you can't repeat the past"?  
Tell Tom she never loved him, marry Gatsby at her house in Louisville.

## Chapter Seven

42. Note the use Fitzgerald makes of the weather as a background for significant events. Point out examples in this chapter and in previous chapters.  
Oppressive heat, sun a constant in modern wasteland.
43. Gatsby has made some changes in his lifestyle that so concern Nick that he goes to check on him. What changes do you note? Why did he make them?

No parties, fired servants -- no need to party because he has Daisy now, servants fired to prevent gossip.

44. Analyze Daisy's attitude toward her child in this chapter and in Chapter 1. Is she a good mother? Explain why Gatsby looked "at the child with surprise."

Not a doting mother -- not a priority. It's a realistic reminder of Daisy's obligations.

45. With whom does Tom talk on the telephone early in the chapter? About what?

Talking to George. About selling his car to him.

46. What startling discovery does Tom make shortly after lunch?

Tom realizes that she's been having an affair with Gatsby.

47. What does Gatsby mean when he says that Daisy's voice is "full of money"? why does Fitzgerald put these words in Gatsby's mouth and not Nick's?

Her voice rings and jingles like coins. Gatsby says it as a reminder that he recognizes that she needs money to be happy.

48. What arrangements are made regarding the passengers of each car on the trip to the city? Why?

Gatsby drives Tom's coupe with Daisy, while Tom arrives in Gatsby's car with Nick and Jordan.

49. Eyes play a significant role in this chapter. Explain.

Realization (Tom). Ever-watching (Dr. Eckleburg). Realization (George).

50. Explain Nick's statement paralleling Tom and Wilson: "It occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well." Refer to the text and explain what prompted Nick to say this.

Nick sees that Tom and George have made parallel discoveries about their wives.

51. What does Gatsby do that makes Nick want "to get up and slap him on the back"? Why does Nick feel this way?

Gatsby simply tells the truth. He gets the upper hand.

52. Does Daisy know what love is? Whom does she really love?

No -- to her love is a fleeting emotion. She does love Tom (what he can provide) -- and herself.

53. In what way is each of the major characters involved in the tragedy that occurs at the end of this chapter?  
The exchange of cars (and the re-exchange of them) represents layers of deceit.
54. Is there any significance in the fact that the day is Nick's birthday?  
A novel about Nick's education. This tragedy is part of his bildungsroman (coming of age).
55. Why is it necessary for the author to introduce a new character, Michaelis, at this point in the novel?  
Allows us to find out what happened to Myrtle and George prior to and during the accident.
56. Explain what Nick means when he says, ". . . suddenly I guessed at the truth"?  
Daisy was driving the yellow car.

## Chapter Eight

57. At the beginning of the chapter, the story is interrupted at its most dramatic point. What is the author's purpose in breaking the story here?  
Understanding now the "dream" developed.
58. What prompted Gatsby to talk freely to Nick, when he was unwilling to do so in the past?  
Perhaps it's an attempt to keep a dying dream alive.
59. What further information do we learn about Gatsby?  
The intensity of their love. Daisy couldn't wait; she wanted her life to take shape now.
60. As Nick leaves Gatsby the morning after the accident, he remarks, "They're a rotten crowd." Who are the people "they" refers to? Why are they "rotten"?  
Jordan, Daisy, Tom -- "they" -- they're "rotten" because they possess the snobbery of the aristocracy.
61. What is the compliment that Nick pays to Gatsby? Why does Nick feel compelled to compliment him?  
"You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." The sincerity of Gatsby's pursuit and his dream is far more genuine than the superficiality of Jordan, Tom, and Daisy.

62. Explain Nick's meaning when he balances Gatsby's supposed "corruption" against his "incorruptible dream."  
Although Gatsby has participated in underhanded and illegal activities, his dogged pursuit of his dream is his redeeming quality.
63. How does Wilson view the "eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg"? Does Wilson's statement have a symbolic meaning for the novel as a whole? Explain.  
God = eyes. Wilson is playing God at this point.
64. Trace the movements of Gatsby and Wilson at the end of Chapter 8. What is Nick's meaning when he says, ". . . the holocaust was complete"?  
Death = holocaust. Death of Gatsby = death of a dream.

### Chapter Nine

65. What makes Nick assume responsibility for the funeral arrangements? Specify the things he did.  
No one else would. Letter to Wolfsheim.
66. What version of the tragedy appeared in the newspapers? How would you account for the fact that this version went unchallenged and uncorrected?  
Wilson is struck by grief, Myrtle was not involved in an affair. That's what people want to believe.
67. How did Gatsby's father learn of the tragedy? To what extent does the father know his son?  
It was in the Chicago newspapers. The father doesn't know about Gatsby's dark side, is other life.
68. Discuss the significance of Gatsby's boyhood program for self-improvement.  
He believed if you worked hard enough, you could achieve the American Dream.
69. What is the irony of Gatsby's funeral?  
Many people used to go to his parties. No one goes to his funeral.
70. What is the significance of including the scene with Jordan Baker?  
Nick cuts the last ties with the East. Last item left to conclude.

71. What moral judgment does Nick make about Tom and Daisy?  
Discuss.

They were careless people. They retreated back into their money or vast carelessness and let other people clean up their messes.

72. Explain the significance of the last page of the novel in relation to Gatsby's dream and to the American dream.

The dream is always behind us.