



# *The Great Gatsby*

## **Study Guide**

## **Student Copy**

### **Chapter I**

#### **Vocabulary**

abortive – fruitless; cut short  
abruptly – suddenly  
acute – sharp; keen  
audible – able to be heard  
banns – public announcement of a proposed marriage  
ceased – stopped  
coherence – clarity  
compelled – drove; forced  
complacency – self-satisfaction  
conferred – bestowed  
contemptuous – disdainful  
contour – shape  
conviction – certain belief  
corroborated – confirmed  
deft – skillful  
divan – couch  
elations – joys  
epigram – short, witty poem or saying  
erect – upright  
extemporizing – improvising  
fervent – intensely glowing  
fractiousness – quarrelsomeness  
hardy – tough  
imperatively – commandingly  
incredulously – skeptically  
infinitesimal – incalculably small  
intimation – hint  
irrelevant – wholly unimportant  
languidly – sluggishly  
levity – lightness; frivolousness  
parcelled – given; measured  
paternal – fatherly  
peremptorily – urgently; commandingly  
pessimist – negative thinker  
preceded – went before

prominent – at the forefront; well-known  
proximity – nearness  
pungent – strong-smelling  
reciprocal – returned  
riotous – exuberant  
rotogravure – old method of developing photographs  
sedative – calming  
submerged – put under  
supercilious – coolly haughty  
superficial – shallow; surface-level  
tangible – solid; touchable  
turbulent – disturbed; in commotion  
unaffected – natural  
uninflected – toneless; unaccented  
unobtrusively – without getting in the way  
vigil – watch  
wan – pale; sickly

1. In Chapter One we meet the narrator, Nick Carraway. These first four paragraphs serve as a prologue that introduces the rest of the story. What information does Nick give us about himself in this prologue?
2. What does Nick say is “gorgeous” about Gatsby? (Find the quotation in the fourth paragraph.)
3. In the same paragraph, Nick tells us of his disillusionment with mankind. In your opinion, is it Gatsby or something else that causes this disillusionment? (Be prepared to defend and/or explain your answer.)
4. What is Nick’s socio-economic background?

5. When Nick returns from the war, why does he decide to go East?
6. The action in this story takes place over the course of one summer. What occurs that makes Nick feel that his life is beginning over again?
7. How is West Egg different from East Egg?
8. Before meeting him, what do we learn of Tom Buchanan?
9. Find the words used to describe Daisy's most noticeable feature.
10. At this point, what is your opinion of Daisy?
11. Daisy says, "Tom's getting very profound." What do you think her tone might have been? Present support for your answer.
12. At this point, why does Nick observe, "There was something pathetic in his [Tom's] concentration..."?

13. We find out that Tom has a woman in New York. What unflattering feature of Jordan Baker's personality is revealed?
14. When the telephone rings a second time, why does Nick say, "No one was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind"?
15. Why is Nick's instinct "to telephone immediately for the police"?
16. What three sentences indicate that Nick thinks Daisy's cynical outburst is fake?
17. What is the reader left to think about Daisy's emotional state and her relationship with Tom?
18. Who is Jordan Baker, and what has Nick heard about her?
19. Daisy says, "I think the home influence will be good for her [Jordan]." What do you think her tone may be? Offer support for your answer.
20. As Nick drives away from their house, he experiences a number of conflicting emotions. Why does he feel touched? Why does he feel confused and disgusted?

21. At the end of this chapter, Nick sees Gatsby on the lawn and is about to call to him but does not. What stops him? What does Gatsby's "trembling" suggest?
22. The green light that Gatsby is staring at is mentioned several more times, and it assumes a symbolic significance. Where do you think the green light might be?
23. The differences between the East (the East Coast, particularly New York) and the Midwest (Minneapolis, Louisville, and Chicago) are mentioned frequently. What does Nick say about each?

The MIDWEST

The EAST

## Chapter II

### Vocabulary

ambiguously – capable of being understood in more than one way  
anemic – lacking vitality  
commenced – began  
contiguous – next to; adjacent  
countenance – appearance  
deferred – postponed  
discreetly – unnoticeably  
hauteur – arrogance; haughtiness  
incessant – constant and uninterrupted  
indeterminate – vague; indefinable  
initiative – enterprise  
jovially – merrily  
mincing – affectedly dainty  
obscure – vague  
oculist – optometrist  
pastoral – peaceful; rural  
proprietary – possessive  
strident – harsh and insistent  
transcendent – overcoming; rising (above)  
vicinity – surrounding area  
wag – joker

1. The description of the “valley of ashes” opens Chapter Two. On a literal level, what is the valley of ashes? What might it represent on a symbolic level?

2. Compare and/or contrast

**George Wilson**

And

**Tom**

**Myrtle Wilson**

And

**Daisy**

3. In what way does Fitzgerald indicate that Myrtle Wilson is not an intellectual?

4. At the party in the apartment, what social classes are represented and by whom?
5. In what social class does Nick belong?
6. In what way is the party in the apartment different from the dinner at the Buchanans' in Chapter One? In what way is it similar?
7. The McKees appear only in Chapter Two. Why does Fitzgerald bring them into the story?
8. Notice how often and in what context Doctor Eckleburg's eyes are mentioned. What may be the significance of these eyes?
9. Do you think Tom will leave Daisy for Myrtle? Support your answer.



## Chapter III

### Vocabulary

apparition – vision; ghost  
ascertain – determine  
asunder – apart  
cataracts – waterfalls  
caterwauling – noisily crying  
convivial – festive  
cordial – warm; heartfelt  
corpulent – stout  
credibility – believability  
credulity – a willingness to believe on slight evidence  
crescendo – rise in volume  
deplorably – lamentably  
discordant – clashing; out of harmony  
dissension – disagreement  
divergence – departure  
echolalia – condition in which one repeats what others have said  
eluded – escaped  
erroneous – mistaking  
florid – ruddy  
fortnight – two weeks  
fraternal – friendly; brotherly  
harlequin – multicolored  
homogeneity – sameness; similarity  
impetuously – impulsively and forcefully  
ineptly – foolishly  
innuendo – reference  
insolent – overbearing  
loitered – lingered  
malevolence – ill will  
notorious – well-known  
obligingly – in an accommodating way  
permeate – spread through  
poignant – moving; affecting  
prodigality – lavishness  
provincial – unsophisticated  
rent – torn  
retracted – took back

speculation – wondering  
subterfuges – deceptions  
tortuously – in a winding, circuitous manner  
tumultuous – confused and disorderly  
vacuous – empty of content  
vehemently – powerfully; passionately  
vinous – wine-induced

1. Find support for this statement: “Gatsby’s parties were expensive, elaborate, raucous affairs; but they were not gatherings of his friends who brought warmth and happiness with them.”
2. What is Nick’s opinion of the people at the parties when he says “that once there, the guests “conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks”?
3. Explain Nick’s comment, “It was testimony to the romantic speculation he [Gatsby] inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.”
4. Why do Jordan and Nick leave the group from East Egg?
5. What is the great quality in Gatsby’s smile?  
“
6. What do Gatsby and Nick have in common?

7. What does Fitzgerald subtly wish to convey about Gatsby when he has Nick say, "...I was looking at an elegant young roughneck,...whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care"?
8. Why do you suppose that Jordan does not believe Gatsby when he says that he had attended Oxford College in England?
9. In what way is Gatsby's behavior at his party quite unlike the behavior of most of his guests?
10. What do you think Fitzgerald wishes to convey about Gatsby's parties through the incident with the drunks and the car and the husbands and wives arguing?
11. What is the purpose of the last section of this chapter that begins, "Reading over what I have written so far..."?

## Chapter IV

### Vocabulary

bootlegger – maker of illegal whiskey (especially during Prohibition)

denizen – regular; frequent visitor

monopolizing – having sole access to

disconcerting – embarrassing; jarring

dispensed – gave out

fluctuate – rise and fall

gilt – golden

inevitably – unavoidably

knickerbockers – loose, short pants gathered at the knee

penitentiary – prison

punctilious – careful; exacting

roved – wandered

sauterne – white wine

sporadic – infrequent

succulent – juicy

unfathomable – immeasurable

1. Since most of his guests ignore him, why do they come to Gatsby's house?
2. In the list of guests, what further indication is there that the old money is in East Egg and the new money in West Egg?
3. Why is Nick a little disappointed with Gatsby?
4. Why does Nick have to restrain his laughter when Gatsby says he is "...trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me a long time ago"?
5. What does this conversation reveal about Gatsby?

6. Why does Nick say that listening to him “was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines”?
7. What changes Nick’s mind about the veracity of Gatsby’s stories?
8. Who is Meyer Wolfsheim, and what do we know of him?
9. With the line, “One October day...” Jordan recalls the time in 1917 when she saw Gatsby and Daisy together. What indication is there that Daisy really likes Gatsby?
10. How does Daisy behave the night before her wedding? Why?
11. From whom do you suppose the letter in her hand comes, and what do you think the letter may have said?
12. To what is Nick referring when he says, “Then it had not been merely the stars to which he [Gatsby] had aspired on that June night”?
13. What is happening in the relationship between Nick and Jordan?

## Chapter V

### Vocabulary

corrugated – wrinkled; having alternating ridges and grooves

demoniac – fiendish

gaudily – flashily

harrowed – tormented

innumerable – countless

nebulous – indistinct

obstinate – not easily subdued

postern – back gate; private entrance

remotely – distantly

reproach – disappointment; blame

rout – disorganized retreat

scanty – less than sufficient

scrutinized – carefully inspected

swathed – draped

vestige – trace

1. What does Nick mean when he says, “I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there”?
2. In this chapter, what stages does Gatsby go through as he waits for and then meets with Daisy?
3. How does Daisy react to the meeting? Try to point out several specifics throughout the chapter.
4. When Nick asks Gatsby what business he is in, Gatsby responds, “That’s my affair,” before he realizes that it is not an appropriate reply. Why does Gatsby give that answer, and why *is not* it an appropriate reply?

5. Why does Gatsby throw all his shirts on the table?
6. Obviously, Daisy, with all her money, is not going to cry over some shirts; why does she cry?
7. As the three of them look across the bay toward Daisy's house, the narrator states, "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one."  
What does Fitzgerald mean by:
  - A. "Compared to the great distance" between Gatsby and Daisy?
  - B. "Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one?"
8. In the third to last paragraph of this chapter what does Nick mean when he says, "even that afternoon Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault..."?

## Chapter VI

### Vocabulary

antecedents – predecessors

conceits – fanciful ideas

contingencies – possible outcomes

debauchee – person – person corrupted by indulgence

dilatory – tardy

euphemisms – inoffensive expressions that stand in for potentially offensive ones

foliage – leaves; brush

ineffable – indescribable

ingratiate – to gain favor by flattery

insidious – treacherous

laudable – commendable; praiseworthy

lethargic – sluggish

meretricious – pretentious

notoriety – fame

oblivious – forgetful

perturbed – bothered

profusion – abundance

ramifications – consequences

reposing – placing

robust – healthy; thriving

septic – toxic

transpired – developed; become apparent

turgid – excessively embellished

1. In the first five pages of Chapter Six, we learn of Gatsby's background and more about his romantic disposition.
  - A. Who are Gatsby's parents and what is he leaving when he leaves home at 16?
  - B. When and why does James Gatz change his name to Jay Gatsby?



2. Nick says, "So he [Gatsby] invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end." For James Gatz, what will the ideal Jay Gatsby be, do, and have? Specifically, at night, what sets James' heart "in a constant, turbulent riot" (seventh paragraph)?
3. To young Gatz, what does Dan Cody's yacht represent?
4. Why does Gatsby not get the \$25,000 left him in Cody's will?
5. Referring to the aftermath of Dan Cody's death, at the end of the first part of Chapter Six, Nick says, "He [Gatsby] was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man." In your own words, explain Nick's two points.
6. Knowing Tom as we do, how can we account for his comment about being "old-fashioned" and "women run[ning] around too much these days to suit [him]"?
7. What is Daisy's opinion of Gatsby's party?

8. While the reader can have easily predicted Daisy and Tom's reactions to his party, Gatsby cannot. Why not?
9. When Gatsby says that he cannot make Daisy understand, what is it that he wants her to understand?
10. What is Nick's view of repeating the past, and what is Gatsby's opinion? Why is Gatsby's opinion unrealistic?

## Chapter VII

### Vocabulary

boisterously – rowdily

caravansary – hotel

irreverent – lacking proper respect

libertine – a person unrestrained by conventions or morality

morbid – gloomy; gruesome

portentous – overwrought; pompous

precipitately – suddenly

prig – obnoxiously proper person

stagnant – stale

1. How is the behavior of the characters linked to the hottest day of the summer?
2. What does Tom discover that unnerves him, and how does he discover it?
3. What does Gatsby understand about Daisy's voice that Nick does not?
4. In what cars do the five of them travel into the city?
5. Why do you suppose that Tom decides to let Wilson finally have the car he has been promising him?
6. What indication is there at this point that Tom means quite a bit to Myrtle?

7. Besides Myrtle's, what other eyes "kept their vigil"?
8. As always, there is a grain of truth in what Gatsby says. In what sense is he an Oxford man?
9. What does Nick mean and why does he say, "Angry as I was..., I was tempted to laugh whenever [Tom] opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to prig was so complete"?
10. Why does Daisy say that Tom is "revolting"?
11. Why does Daisy have a tough time saying, as Gatsby wishes, that she never loved Tom?
12. Why is it important to Gatsby that Daisy say she never loved Tom, only him?
13. How has Gatsby gotten some of his money, and what does Tom say that startles Gatsby?
14. What is Daisy's reaction to this news?

15. How does Fitzgerald prepare the reader for what is about to happen? What words are used? What figure of speech is employed?
16. Why does Tom make the point to Wilson that he just drove the coupe from New York and the yellow car is not his?
17. What indication is there that Tom really is fond of Myrtle?
18. Why does Nick not wait for the taxi inside the Buchanans' house?
19. What does the reader learn Tom does not know?
20. What is the scene that Nick observes taking place between Tom and Daisy in the kitchen?
21. Why does this scene suggest ill for Gatsby?

## Chapter VIII

### Vocabulary

amorphous – shapeless  
benediction – blessing  
cahoots – partnership; league  
commensurate – proportionate  
divot – loose piece of turf  
fortuitously – happening by chance  
grail – the object of an extended, difficult search  
holocaust – great destruction of life  
humidor – case in which cigars are kept fresh  
orgastic – climactic; intensely exciting  
pandered – gratified  
pneumatic – inflated  
protégés – persons trained, influenced, and helped along by others  
redolent – aromatic  
strata – level (of society)  
transitory – brief; temporary  
unscrupulously – in an unprincipled manner  
vestibule – lobby

1. Why does Nick say... “[Gatsby] couldn’t possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn’t bear to shake him free”?
2. At this point, why does Gatsby tell everything to Nick?
3. In what way is Gatsby’s uniform an “invisible cloak”?
4. Why is the young Gatsby drawn to Daisy?

5. As he is leaving, why does Nick say to Gatsby, "They're a rotten crowd....You're worth the whole damn bunch put together"?
6. What is the cause of the problem between Jordan and Nick?
7. In what context do Dr. Eckleburg's eyes appear in this chapter?
8. When Wilson disappears for three hours, where do you guess he might have gone?
9. What does Nick mean when he says, "If that was true [that Gatsby might have realized that Daisy was not going to call] he must have felt that he had lost the old, warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream"?
10. How can Wilson's actions at the end of this chapter be explained?

## Chapter IX

### Vocabulary

addenda – addition

adventitious – happening by chance; accidental

bulbous – bulb-like

circumstantial – detailed; inferred from direct evidence

pasquinade – lampoon; satire

raspingly – abrasively; irritatingly

resolves – resolutions

reverent – awed and respectful

superfluous – excessive; unnecessary

surmise – conjecture; idea based on little evidence

ulster – a long, loose overcoat

1. Why does Nick feel responsible for getting people to the funeral? Why do you suppose Wolfsheim reacts the way he does?
2. What does young Jimmy Gatz's daily schedule say about him?
3. Is Nick surprised that Daisy has not sent a message or flowers? Are you?
4. Throughout the story, Nick has criticized the West. At this point, what is it about the middle-west that he appreciates?
5. Nick's fantastic dream involves El Greco figures. What is the dream, and what might this dream represent in regard to Nick's present feelings about the East?



6. What is Nick's final feeling about Tom and Daisy?
7. In the last three paragraphs, Nick makes the symbol of the green light very concrete. What does the green light symbolize?
8. Keeping the last three paragraphs in mind, what does the last sentence in the story mean?

