

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

- In a letter to a friend, Fitzgerald said the theme of *The Great Gatsby* was “the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world that you don’t care whether things are true or false so long as they partake of the magical glory.” Where do you see disillusionment in *The Great Gatsby*? Are some illusions retained by any of the characters?
- The car accident in *The Great Gatsby* is elaborately choreographed with five characters changing places on two cars during the trip to and from New York City. Why is it significant that Daisy drives Gatsby’s car from New York whereas Tom drove it to the city?
- 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.” List Nick’s advantages. Does he reserve judgment in the novel?
- Describe Nick. What facts do you know about him, and what do you infer about him? What kind of a narrator do you think he will be?
- Describe the “valley of ashes.” What does it look like and what does it represent?
- Describe Gatsby the first time Nick sees him.
- What rumors have been told about Gatsby? Why does Fitzgerald reveal rumors rather than fact?
- Describe the violent act Tom committed against Myrtle. What does this reveal about him?
- Why does Nick choose to share his thoughts and feelings with Jordan?
- Nick thinks he’s one of the few honest people he knows. Why? Do you think he is honest?
- What role does Meyer Wolfsheim play in the novel?
- What does Jordan’s story of Daisy’s marriage reveal about Daisy?
- Why did Gatsby want Daisy to see his house?
- 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?
- Explain the significance of the green light.
- 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?
- 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”?
- How are seasons used in constructing this novel?
- Who is Dan Cody and what is his significance in Gatsby’s life?
- How does Nick’s statement “You’re worth the whole bunch put together” show a change in Nick from the beginning of the novel?
- What is the American dream?



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