



Discussion Questions & Essay Prompts

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Purpose: This sheet helps students explore themes, characters, symbolism, and societal critique in *The Great Gatsby*. Use it for class discussions, study groups, or essay planning.

A. Character and Motivation

- How does Jay Gatsby's obsession with Daisy shape his decisions and ultimate fate?
- Compare and contrast Nick Carraway's morality with the other characters. What makes him reliable or unreliable?
- How do Daisy and Tom Buchanan represent the dangers of privilege and carelessness?
- Analyze Jordan Baker's role in the novel. How does she reflect modern women of the 1920s?
- Discuss Myrtle Wilson's ambitions and how they contrast with George Wilson's values.

B. Themes and Ideas

- How is the American Dream presented in the novel, and how does Gatsby embody its successes and failures?
- In what ways does the novel critique social class divisions?
- Explore the theme of illusion vs. reality. Which characters live in illusions, and how does this affect them?
- How does Fitzgerald use the past to influence the present in the story? Can anyone truly escape their past?

- Discuss the moral and ethical decay depicted in the novel. How does wealth influence behavior?

C. Symbols and Motifs

- What does the green light symbolize for Gatsby and for the larger American Dream?
- Analyze the significance of the Valley of Ashes. How does it reflect the social and moral landscape of the 1920s?
- How do Gatsby's parties serve as a symbol of excess, illusion, and emptiness?
- Discuss the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. What might Fitzgerald be saying about judgment, morality, or God?

D. Style and Structure

- How does Nick Carraway's first-person narration shape our understanding of events and characters?
- How does Fitzgerald use imagery, symbolism, and motifs to reinforce major themes?
- How does the novel's structure (chronological order, flashbacks, and revelations) influence the story's suspense and meaning?

E. Essay Prompts

- Write an essay analyzing the role of wealth in shaping identity and relationships in *The Great Gatsby*.
- Discuss how Fitzgerald critiques the American Dream through the characters of Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom.
- Examine how the novel portrays gender roles and expectations in the 1920s.
- Argue whether Gatsby is a tragic hero. Support your answer with textual evidence.
- Analyze the significance of setting (East Egg, West Egg, and the Valley of Ashes) in shaping the novel's themes.