


# The Great Gatsby: Investigating the novel

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## novel

### Investigating Chapter 1

- ❖ Who might we want to criticise in this novel?
- ❖ Of whom might Nick be critical?
  - Do they fit the criteria of not having 'the advantages that you've had'?
- ❖ Do you assume that the 'advantages' are monetary?
  - What other kinds of advantage might there be?
- ❖ 'he meant a great deal more than that.' What more do you think Nick's father meant?
  - Could the idea of criticism be extended to include literary criticism or interpretation?
- ❖ Look more closely at the characters of Daisy and Tom. At the end of the novel, Nick comments that they are 'careless people'. Can you find any evidence showing them to be careless or corrupt?
  - Does this comment extend to Jordan or Nick himself?
- ❖ Consider the structure of this chapter – how does Nick order his recollections and his thoughts here?
  - What narrative devices does he use?

### Investigating Chapter 2

- ❖ List the different aspects of Chapter 2 which are concerned with religion.
- ❖ What are the differences between the party at Tom's flat and the other parties in the novel?
- ❖ Nick observes several betrayals in this chapter – which do you find the most shocking and why?
- ❖ 'I knew he was below me....But if I hadn't met Chester, he'd of got me sure.' How does Mrs McKee's comment reflect on the marriage of Daisy and Tom?
- ❖ Fitzgerald is here depicting the poorer members of American society – why do you think he chooses to give Wilson the occupation of repairing cars?
- ❖ List all the occupations of characters in the novel and consider their significance.
  - What ideas about American society are conveyed by these details?


### Investigating Chapter 3

- ❖ What are the connotations of moths (used at the start of the chapter)?
- ❖ How many colours are included in the description of the party?
  - What are their connotations?
- ❖ How are the female party guests referred to in Chapter 3?
- ❖ Nick notes 'the sea-change of faces and voices and colour under the constantly changing light.' Can you find other examples of water imagery to describe groups of people?
- ❖ Movement and change are strongly emphasised in the description of the party. What are the implications of this for the rest of the novel?
- ❖ Examine the car crash description.
  - How is sound used in this passage?
  - What techniques are used to convey the confusion which has caused this accident?

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- How does Nick respond to this confusion and what does this remind you of?
- ❖ How is Jordan important as a character in this novel?
  - Consider her role in narrating the story, as well as the salient features of her personality.

#### Investigating Chapter 4

- ❖ How might the image of the city be compared with Gatsby's idea of Daisy?
- ❖ What else, apart from social mobility, might Nick mean when he says that, 'Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.'
- ❖ Using the details of Jordan's story as a starting point, try to create a timeline of the events in the novel.
  - How does the narrative structure compare with a chronological order of events?
- ❖ How is Daisy presented in Chapter 4?
  - What colour is associated with her?
  - What does Jordan mean when she says, 'there's something in that voice of hers...'?
- ❖ The events of Chapter 4 take place over the course of a single day (although the stories told relate to earlier events). Note down the references to light throughout the chapter
  - How do they alter to reflect the passage of time?


#### Investigating Chapter 5

- ❖ Compare the description of Daisy as she approaches Nick's house with the description of Gatsby.
- ❖ How many words from the semantic field of fear can you find in this chapter?
- ❖ Explore the use of light imagery in this chapter.
- ❖ How is the weather used to comment on the events in the chapter?
- ❖ Klipspringer plays two popular songs to his listeners. What associations might Fitzgerald want his readers to make?
- 🔗 (See *MORE* on Fitzgerald's use of song in Chapter 5.)
- ❖ How far do you feel the reader gains an understanding of Gatsby's inner life?
- ❖ Nick comments at the end of Chapter 5 that it was 'the hour of a profound human change', referring to the homecoming of commuters from New York. What else might this phrase apply to?

#### Investigating Chapter 6

- ❖ What parallels can you draw between Gatsby and Cody?
- ❖ Using the details in this chapter, add to the timeline created from Chapter 4
- ❖ How are colour and light imagery used to describe the events of the 'autumn night'?
- ❖ How do you interpret the idea of something that has been lost?
  - What do you think it is?
  - How can it be recovered?

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### Investigating Chapter 7

- ❖ Look carefully at the language used to convey heat at the beginning of this chapter.
  - How is this developed in the rest of the chapter?
  - How does the heat distort Nick's perception?
- ❖ How is language from the semantic field of metal used in this chapter?
  - What is the role of money at this point in the novel?
- ❖ Explore the use of light in this chapter, and compare it with the ways in which light is used elsewhere, for example in Chapter 2.
  - What effects are achieved by means of this technique?
- ❖ What does Fitzgerald achieve by using Myrtle in particular as the victim of Daisy's poor driving and lack of care?

### Investigating Chapter 8

- ❖ What meanings and ideas are suggested by the subtle water references in the opening paragraph of Chapter 8?
  - Can you find other references to water in this chapter?
  - What does the phrase 'leg of transit' mean and how does this develop ideas in the novel?
- ❖ How much of Gatsby's narrative of the relationship with Daisy can be said to be Gatsby's and how much of it is Nick's?
  - For example, consider the description of Tom's 'bulkiness' and Daisy's 'relief'.
- ❖ How are narrative perspectives used to recount the final few hours of Gatsby's life?
  - How many different 'voices' can you detect behind Nick's overview?
- ❖ How is time handled in this chapter, particularly in recounting the events leading to Gatsby's death?
- ❖ What are the implications of the phrase 'a new world, material without being real'?

### Investigating Chapter 9

- ❖ What narrative devices are employed in this chapter to tell the story?
  - You could consider the use of letters and other types of communication.
- ❖ Fitzgerald selected Owl-eyes as one of the few mourners to attend Gatsby's funeral, so what is the significance of his presence?
- ❖ How much imagery is related to eyes, seeing and perception in this chapter?
  - What might this suggest?
- ❖ How far do you agree that this is, as Nick claims, 'a story of the West'?
- ❖ Nick claims that he 'wanted to leave things in order and not just trust that obliging and indifferent sea to sweep my refuse away.' How far do you think the final chapter of the novel achieves this?
- ❖ How does the writer use colour imagery in this chapter?
- ❖ Where is water imagery found in this chapter?