




# The Great Gatsby: (d) Fitzgerald's use of symbols


 refers to links on [www.crossref-it.info](http://www.crossref-it.info)


## The Great Gatsby: (d) Fitzgerald's use of symbols


- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore Fitzgerald's use of symbols in the novel.
  - (Note: though symbols are used throughout the novel, in order to provide a focus, this worksheet is based on Chapter 5.)
- ❖ **Opening exercise:**
  - Read the first three paragraphs of Chapter 2.
  - Give students a few minutes to note down two or three critical observations.
  - Discuss their findings.
    - You should soon be talking about symbolism and the poetic quality of Fitzgerald's prose which allows symbols to work.


 (*The Great Gatsby*: Synopses and commentary > Chapter 2)
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Read Draw, spread around the board, the following items:
  - A lawn-mower
  - Cakes
  - A clock
  - Towels
  - Flowers
  - A hairbrush
  - Shirts
  - (Note: if you can't draw, students will be entertained by your efforts, but an alternative is to fasten pictures taken from magazines or the internet onto the board instead.)
  - Students are given a supply of large post-its. They search Chapter 5, and when they find a mention of one of the objects, they write the relevant quotation onto a post-it, together with a comment or question about what the object might suggest or represent.
    - The note is then stuck onto the board by the appropriate picture.
  - Continue until everything seems to have been found.

 (*The Great Gatsby*: Synopses and commentary > Chapter 5)
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** Talk about what has been found. Some of the objects have an obvious symbolic significance, but others are less clear-cut.
  - Discuss what Fitzgerald is achieving here and how this fits into his style and approach generally (eg. part of the shifting, lyrical quality of Fitzgerald's language style).
    - The post-its can be transferred onto paper and photocopied for the students, if required.
  - A homework exercise could be to find other objects with symbolic meaning from other parts of the novel.

 (*The Great Gatsby*: Imagery and symbolism)
- ❖ **Recreative task:**
  - Write a couple of paragraphs which describe a meeting between Nick & Gatsby which is not in the novel.
  - Include at least two objects used in a symbolic way.
  - The student should add a short commentary, explaining their use of symbols. (This is good practice for the AQA recreative coursework option.)

 (*The Great Gatsby*: Narrative devices)
- ❖ **Critical task:** Examine Fitzgerald's use of the automobile in the novel.
  - What symbolic use does he make of the automobile, and what makes it an appropriate symbol for the era and society he is describing?

 (*The Great Gatsby*: Imagery and symbolism > Cars)
- ❖ **Extension task:**
  - Fitzgerald's connection with the cinema makes him a very visual writer.
  - Look at the two film versions of *The Great Gatsby* and examine how the symbolism in the novel has been transferred onto the screen.

 (Literary context of *The Great Gatsby* > Artistic expression in the modern world)