The Great Gatsby: Study Pack

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Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald:

Francis Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896 in St Paul Minnesota in the Mid-West. He went to Princeton, which was, and still is, one of the three old and exclusive American universities, Harvard and Yale are the others and all three are in the East. In 1917 he joined the army but never got to France.

Many of his short stories were printed in various magazines and he became rich and famous early in his life. He published the novels “This side of Paradise” (1920), “The Beautiful and the Damned” (1922), “The Great Gatsby” (1925) and “Tender is the Night” (1934).

He and his beautiful wife Zelda spent money extravagantly, travelling and partying throughout America and Europe. As a result, he was constantly in debt, and, in later years, developed an alcohol problem. Zelda became the victim of serious mental illness and was eventually permanently hospitalised.

Fitzgerald ended up in Hollywood screenplays but here he suffered the humiliation of seeing them rejected or mutilated by less talented writers.

He died in 1940.

Background to the Novel

America in the twenties was thought by the masses of immigrants from Europe to be “The Land of Opportunity” – the land where they would be free of persecution and prejudice – a land where they would not be shackled by political and religious belief or economic situation, as had been the case in many of their native countries.

The reality was, in fact, very different: the America of the twenties was a very class-conscious hierarchical society riddled with prejudice.

Rich felt superior to poor; people who were born rich, inherited wealth from “old” families, felt superior to those who had recently made their fortunes. Third, fourth or fifth generation Americans felt superior to new or recent immigrants and people saw themselves as Anglo-Saxons (ancestors form Britain) felt superior to immigrants from other countries.

Educated people, especially if they went to certain universities – Yale, Harvard, Princeton or Oxford – felt superior.

People who made their money from legal business or commerce felt superior to those who made their money in other ways, especially from show business or, naturally enough, from crime. However, it must be said that the difference between legal businessman and criminals wasn’t clear-cut. Finally, there was a great deal of racist feeling.

East versus West

People who lived in “The West”, strictly speaking the mid-west (Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota), liked to think of themselves as the real Americans, people who saw themselves as down-to-earth, decent, hardworking and solid folk, people who didn’t get carried away by the foolish fashionable ideas of the East, especially New York City. They saw the New Yorker as more likely to be mixed up in shady dealings. This was how it was in the twenties and, to be honest, probably still is today.

The “Jazz Age” and Prohibition

The “Jazz Age” is the name that is sometimes given to the years 1919 – 1930, especially in the USA. It seems to have been a time when many people rejected the moral standards of the older generation and set out to
“have a good time”, without bothering too much about what others might think. It was also a time when many Americans were making colossal fortunes, and spending them on the kind of huge houses and wildly extravagant parties that are described in The Great Gatsby. Some of these fortunes were made out of bootlegging - the illegal distribution of alcohol. This was because between the years 1920-1933 the drinking of alcohol was made illegal in the USA. This didn’t stop people drinking – it merely forced them to buy their alcohol from criminals, who often hid their activities behind the façade of respectable businesses.

The Twenties

“Everything for which America has fought has been accomplished. It will now be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober friendly council and by material aid, in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world.”

Thus wrote President Wilson in November 1918 at the end of World War 1, the “war to end all wars”. It is generally felt that the Allies could not have won this war without the intervention of the Americans: they had poured arms and material across the Atlantic and, for the last eighteen months at least, 2 million of their soldiers had fought on the battlefields. They now saw themselves as something akin to the saviours of the Western world.

However, by early 1919 there was much to distract Wilson from global policy-making and force him to turn his attention to disturbing events at home. There was in the country a great fear that the recent great waves of immigrants were bringing revolution with them: there were riots involving “American citizens” and those who were “sympathizers” with the Russian Revolution. In the South and Mid West, Anglo Saxon groups, including groups like the Ku Klux Klan, dedicated themselves to the harassment, beating and occasional lynching of “foreigners” who could not claim an Anglo-Saxon Christian origin – that is to say the Jews, the Roman Catholics and the Negroes. It is hard to believe that in 1919 alone there were 70 recorded lynchings of Negroes. There were widespread strikes – even of the police- and there were race riots in many cities. In Chicago after one week of riots 38 were dead and 537 were wounded.

The “Twenties” was a time of mass idiocy and frivolity – a time of hectic fads followed by the rest of the world – a time of nightclubs and the Charleston, a time of bobbed hair, no corsets and scandalously short skirts and of women who smoked. All this at a time when liquor was illegal. Prohibition or the “Noble Experiment” inevitably made alcohol a precious commodity and much sought after and this, in turn, gave rise to a national underground industry based in Chicago, which transformed relatively small-time gangsters into powerful millionaires. Words such as “bootlegger” (a person who makes alcohol) and “speakeasy” (a place that sold illicit alcohol) became part of the language. Men like the infamous AL Capone rose to prominence.

It was in the late October of 1929, in the early days of the new President, Herbert Hoover, that the party balloon burst. The Wall Street stock market crashed and for millions of Americans the dream had ended. They became the unemployed, the bankrupt, the beggars of the great depression which was to have a lasting effect on the nation – even in 1938 there were still over 10 million unemployed – until another World War began and put America back to work.
CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter One - We are introduced to Nick Carraway the narrator. Nick is portrayed as a nice honest person who listens to everyone's problems. Tom and Daisy Buchanan are introduced. Nick does not like Tom too much. Jordan Baker the woman golfer is introduced. Hints are given about problems between Daisy and Tom. Tom is having an affair under Daisy's nose. Gatsby is seen for the first time.

Chapter Two - Myrtle Wilson is introduced; she is the woman having the affair with Tom. Tom and Myrtle fight, Tom breaks Myrtle's nose. We find out that Myrtle is in a different social class than Tom when Myrtle buys the tabloid at the news-stand instead of a classy magazine. Myrtle's husband is intimidated by Tom.

Chapter Three - Gatsby has a huge party. Gatsby does not socialise though. Rumours are going around about Gatsby. We see Jay and his Mansion for the first time.

Chapter Four - We find out about Gatsby's life, how he went to Oxford, inherited his fortune from his family etc. Gatsby introduces us to Mr. Wolfsheim who is involved in organised crime; this indicates that Gatsby could be involved too. We learn about Gatsby and Daisy for the first time through Jordan. Nick will set up a meeting between the two.

Chapter Five - Daisy and Gatsby are reunited through Nick. Gatsby shows Daisy that he now has more wealth than he used to. Everyone is materialistic, except Nick. Gatsby is a little disappointed because Daisy is not as perfect as he remembered.

Chapter Six - Gatsby has another party. Gatsby's life story is completely revealed. Gatsby's obsession with Daisy is also revealed more clearly. Tom and Jay have a confrontation.

Chapter Seven - Nick meets Daisy's daughter. Tom figures out what is going on between Gatsby and Daisy and becomes very upset. Gatsby tells Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him. Wilson discovers Myrtle's unfaithfulness. Wilson locks up myrtle but she escapes. However, she is hit by Gatsby's car while escaping and killed.

Chapter Eight - We find out that Daisy was the one in the driver's seat of Gatsby's car. Wilson goes nuts because he can't take what Myrtle did to him. Wilson kills Gatsby because it was his car that killed Myrtle. Wilson commits suicide.

Turning Point/Key Scene/Important Incident/Significant Moment/Moment where a character makes an important decision

The following are points to consider when writing an essay on one of the above topics. These notes are based on classwork and your essays – you would not necessarily have to include everything that is here.

Choose from a novel or short story an incident which is a turning point in the text. Briefly explain what happens in the incident and go on to discuss its importance to your understanding of the text as a whole.

Introduction:
- Title
- Author
- Genre
- Link to question
- Brief Summary

“The Great Gatsby” is a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald during the period dubbed “The Roaring Twenties”. It is set in East America where wealth, organised crime and corruption were in abundance.

Point One: Before the turning point - Gatsby’s Illusion/Dream
Fitzgerald uses the symbol of the green light to symbolise the American Dream, which parallels Gatsby’s own singular dream of Daisy.

‘He stretched his arms toward the dark water in a curious way . . . and distinguished nothing except a single green light.’
The green light symbolises hope to Gatsby. Prior to his reunion with Daisy it is all he has to cling on to and preserve. Gatsby places huge value and worth on objects that he associates with Daisy and/or his pursuit of her. The fact that he is physically reaching for this light, which we learn is at the end Daisy’s dock, emphasises his intense yearning for Daisy and her glamorous, old money life. This reveals, for the first time, the motivation behind the façade – the illusionary Jay Gatsby - which Gatsby has put all of his effort into creating and upholding. He is under the delusion that the American Dream is a reality and believes that once he regains the relationship that he and Daisy once had, his version of the American Dream can finally be obtained. Gatsby looks like he belongs to the elite but in reality his attempts are gauche and unconvincing to anyone but him. This social naivety is emphasised throughout the novel. The light becomes like a religious icon to him, a symbol of his hope of a new life with Daisy. To the reader, however, the green light comes to symbolise his naivety in thinking that the past can be repeated.

Point Two: Tom’s Accusation
The beginning of chapter 7 immediately establishes that there will be high tension and conflict. The hot weather symbolises the high tension. In the aftermath of Tom having recognised the affair between Gatsby and Daisy, he accuses Gatsby of not being an Oxford man in order to undermine him.

“Mr Gatsby, I understand you’re an Oxford man.”... “Then Tom’s voice incredulous and insulting: “you must have gone there about the time Biloxi went to New Haven.”

Tom is trying to reveal that Gatsby is not “old money” reveals theme of shallow nature of the elite. When the affair is admitted, Tom seems far more concerned about the fact that Gatsby is “Mr Nobody from Nowhere” Fitzgerald revealing theme of shallow nature of the upper classes.
Turning point for Gatsby the illusion that he has built up starts to come crashing down. Daisy realises that he is not ‘old money’

Point Three: Daisy’s Reaction
Gatsby expects Daisy to defend him or to take the opportunity to confess her love for him, but when she sits in silence Gatsby says,

“You’re wife doesn’t love you,’ said Gatsby. ‘She's never loved you. She loves me!”

Gatsby grasping at his ‘dream’, however, it is clear that with the realisation of Gatsby’s true status, it is beginning to slip away from him.
Gatsby pushes Daisy to say she doesn’t love Tom – but she does seem to have difficulty in saying it. “She hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and me with a sort of appeal, as though she realised at last what she was doing – and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all. But it was done now. It was too late.”

Tom reminds her of the good times that they had together and forces her to admit that she did love him at one point, but she doesn’t love him anymore: “I did love him once – but I loved you too.”

Turning point for Gatsby ruins his fantasy and shatters his illusion that he can ‘repeat the past’. He loses any power that he had as Tom gains confidence due to Daisy’s admission.

Tom realises that Daisy is not going to leave him and cements this by accusing Gatsby of being a bootlegger.

Gatsby panics when he sees the effect that this accusation has on Daisy and for a moment Nick sees a different side to him – “He looked…as if he had ‘killed a man’. For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way.”

Although he has not actually killed anyone, it is the illusion of ‘Jay Gatsby’ that has in this moment come crashing down.

Tom has broken his illusion – he has ‘shattered like glass against Tom’s hard malice’ link to theme (corruption of American Dream).

Point Four: After the turning point - Gatsby’s Illusion/Dream
Nothing Gatsby does will change Daisy’s mind – she had never intended to leave Tom link this to theme. It almost seems that she doesn’t really know why she is there.

“she was drawing further and further into herself…only the dead dream fought on”

Significant theme. She is Gatsby’s American Dream indicates that it is over for him. This is the turning point for the fate of Gatsby he has lost everything that he was living for. She asks to go home, signalling to the reader that Gatsby’s hopes are over – she has chosen Tom (status and money) link to theme.

This is truly highlighted when Tom insists that she drive in Gatsby’s car – he knows that the danger has passed and Daisy has made her choice:

“I think he realises that his presumptuous little flirtation is over.”

Final line of this section highlights what a turning point this scene has been: "So we drove on toward death through the cooling night" Death → Myrtle’s death? Gatsby’s death? The death of Gatsby’s dreams?

Theme → corrupt nature of the American Dream; the shallow nature of the elite.

Point Five: After – Gatsby’s Illusion/Dream
Gatsby sacrifices himself. The image of a pitiable Gatsby keeping watch outside her house while she and Tom sit comfortably within is an indelible image that both allows the reader to look past Gatsby’s criminality and functions as a moving metaphor for the love Gatsby feels toward Daisy. Nick’s parting from Gatsby at the end of Chapter 7 parallels his first sighting of Gatsby at the end of Chapter 1. In both cases, Gatsby stands alone in the moonlight pining for Daisy. In the earlier instance, he stretches his arms out toward the green light across the water, optimistic about the future. In this instance, he has made it past the green light, onto the lawn of Daisy’s house, but his dream is gone forever.

Instead of looking at the green light, arms wide open, with hope he is looking at an emptiness “watching over nothing” because his dream is over.

For Gatsby, losing Daisy is like losing his entire world. He has longed to re-create his past with her and is now forced to talk to Nick about it in a desperate attempt to keep it alive. Even after the confrontation with Tom, Gatsby is unable to accept that his dream is dead. Though Nick implicitly understands that Daisy is not going to leave Tom for Gatsby under any circumstance, Gatsby continues to insist that she will call him.

Both his downfall in Chapter 7 and his death in Chapter 8 result from his stark refusal to accept what he cannot control: the passage of time.

Point Six: Impact of turning point
As he achieves his dream (Daisy) he is inevitably one step closer to losing it. The symbol is safer than reality. Link to corruption of the US Dream - Gatsby’s dream (Daisy) is ruined by the unworthiness of its object, just as the American dream in the 1920s is ruined by the unworthiness of its object money and pleasure.

“what a grotesque thing a rose is.”

The rose has been a conventional symbol of beauty throughout centuries of poetry. Nick suggests that roses aren’t inherently beautiful, and that people only view them that way because they choose to do so. Daisy is “grotesque” in the
same way: Gatsby has invested her with beauty and meaning by making her the object of his dream. Had Gatsby not imbued her with such value, Daisy would be simply an idle, bored, rich young woman with no particular moral strength or loyalty. His whole world is built on the fragile basis of an unachievable dream. (LINK THIS IDEA BACK TO CHAPTER 7 AND DAISY’S REACTION) Daisy will never leave Tom because she is aware of reality – the reality is Tom and Daisy are part of the social elite and even with all Gatsby’s money he cannot buy education and a past. Gatsby is not in love with the ‘real’ Daisy, but the memory of Daisy from 5 years ago. His whole world is built on a dream.

“**They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together and let other people clean up the mess they had made.**”

Gatsby’s failure suggests that it may be impossible for one to disown one’s past so completely. There seems to be an impossible divide separating Gatsby and Daisy, which is certainly part of her allure for him. This divide clearly comes from their different backgrounds and social contexts.

**Conclusion**

Gatsby is a symbol for America in the 1920’s. The American Dream has, in the pursuit of happiness, degenerated into a quest for mere wealth. Gatsby’s powerful dream of happiness with Daisy has become the motivation for lavish excess and criminal activities. Nick, in his reflections on Gatsby’s life, suggests that Gatsby’s great mistake was in loving Daisy: he thus chose an inferior object upon which to focus his almost mystical capacity for dreaming. Just as the American Dream itself has degenerated into the crass pursuit of material wealth, Gatsby, too, strives only for wealth once he has fallen in love with Daisy, whose trivial, limited imagination can conceive of nothing greater. It is significant that Gatsby is not murdered for his criminal connections, but rather for his unswerving devotion to Daisy; it blinds him to all else, even to his own safety. As Nick writes, Gatsby thus “[pays] a high price for living too long with a single dream.”

“**Gatsby believed in the green light...**”

Nick pictures the green land of America as the green light shining from Daisy’s dock. He believes that Gatsby had failed to realise that his dreams had already ended. His goals had become hollow and empty.

“**...tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further ... And one fine morning – So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.**”

Symbolises that the return to paradise is an ideal not a reality.

“**...I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more.**”

It is like a sign of material success, but like its owner it is flawed.
Corruption/American Dream/Symbolism/Illusion/

The following are points to consider when writing an essay on one of the above topics. These notes are based on classwork and your essays – you would not necessarily have to include everything that is here.

Point One: West Egg vs. East Egg

The difference between the Eggs and Daisy’s reaction to West Egg indicate the corrupt nature of American society and the American Dream.

- “West Egg, the – well, the less fashionable of the two”
- “It was a factual imitation”
- “But the rest offended her...she was appalled by West Egg”

In the world of East Egg, alluring appearances serve to cover unattractive realities. The marriage of Tom and Daisy Buchanan seems menaced by a quiet desperation beneath its pleasant surface. Unlike Nick, Tom is arrogant and dishonest, advancing racist arguments at dinner and carrying on relatively public love affairs. Daisy, on the other hand, tries hard to be shallow, even going so far as to say she hopes her baby daughter will turn out to be a fool, because women live best as beautiful fools. Jordan Baker furthers the sense of sophisticated fatigue hanging over East Egg: her cynicism, boredom, and dishonesty are at sharp odds with her wealth and beauty. As with the Buchanans’ marriage, Jordan’s surface glamour covers up an inner emptiness.

Each setting in the novel corresponds to a particular thematic idea or character type. This first chapter introduces two of the most important locales, East Egg and West Egg. Though each is home to fabulous wealth, and though they are separated only by a small expanse of water, the two regions are nearly opposite in the values they endorse. East Egg represents breeding, taste, aristocracy, and leisure, while West Egg represents ostentation, garishness, and the flashy manners of the new rich. East Egg is associated with the Buchanans and the monotony of their inherited social position, while West Egg is associated with Gatsby’s gaudy mansion and the inner drive behind his self-made fortune. The unworkable intersection of the two Eggs in the romance between Gatsby and Daisy will serve as the fault line of catastrophe.

Point Two: Gatsby Illusion

The Owl-Eyed man reveals that Jay Gatsby is an illusion:

- “What realism! Knew when to stop too – didn’t cut the pages”
In the hotel scene, this illusion comes crashing down and the façade of Jay Gatsby is torn down.

- “he looked as if he had ‘killed a man’. For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way”
One of his guests, Owl Eyes, is surprised to find that his books are real and not just empty covers designed to create the appearance of a great library. The tone of Nick’s narration suggests that many of the inhabitants of East Egg and West Egg use an outward show of opulence to cover up their inner corruption and moral decay, but Gatsby seems to use his opulence to mask something entirely different and perhaps more profound.

Chapter 3 also focuses on the gap between perception and reality. At the party, as he looks through Gatsby’s books, Owl Eyes states that Gatsby has captured the effect of theater, a kind of mingling of honesty and dishonesty that characterizes Gatsby’s approach to this dimension of his life. The party itself is a kind of elaborate theatrical presentation, and Owl Eyes suggests that Gatsby’s whole life is merely a show, believing that even his books might not be real. The novel’s title itself—The Great Gatsby—is suggestive of the sort of vaudeville billing for a performer or magician like “The Great Houdini,” subtly emphasizing the theatrical and perhaps illusory quality of Gatsby’s life.
Point Three: Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s Eyes

- The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are a pair of fading, bespectacled eyes painted on an old advertising billboard over the valley of ashes. They may represent God staring down upon and judging American society as a moral wasteland, though the novel never makes this point explicitly
  - “brood on over the solemn dumping ground.”

The undefined significance of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s monstrous, bespectacled eyes gazing down from their billboard makes them troubling to the reader. In Chapter 2, Fitzgerald preserves their mystery, giving them no fixed symbolic value. Enigmatically, the eyes simply perhaps the most persuasive reading of the eyes at this point in the novel is that they represent the eyes of God, staring down at the moral decay of the 1920s. The faded paint of the eyes can be seen as symbolizing the extent to which humanity has lost its connection to God. This reading, however, is merely suggested by the arrangement of the novel’s symbols; Nick does not directly explain the symbol in this way, leaving the reader to interpret it.

Point Four: Valley of the Ashes

- A place devoid of hope and abandoned by the ‘American Dream’. Represents the moral and social decay of the US. Pursuit of wealth and pleasure – corruption of US Dream. Setting is used to mirror the corruption and disregard for those who suffer the consequences.
  - “A line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track…immediately the ash grey men swarm up…”
  - “There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere”

First introduced in Chapter 2, the valley of ashes between West Egg and New York City consists of a long stretch of desolate land created by the dumping of industrial ashes. It represents the moral and social decay that results from the uninhibited pursuit of wealth, as the rich indulge themselves with regard for nothing but their own pleasure. The valley of ashes also symbolizes the plight of the poor, like George Wilson, who live among the dirty ashes and lose their vitality as a result. These grey men are the by-products of the American dream, the victims of bosses who commute through the area on the way to Wall Street.

Wilson: "When anyone spoke to him he invariably laughed in an agreeable colorless way". Wilson's face is "ashen," and a "white ashen dust" covers his suit and his eyes are described as "pale" and "glazed."

We're not too surprised when she shows up with a gun at the end of the novel.

Point Five: Colour

- Colour – used to demonstrate the destructive pursuit of money. Gatsby’s parties (full of colour), Daisy and Jordan (wear white), Valley of Ashes (grey and lifeless)

Gold and Yellow

First off, we've got yellows and golds which represent the authentic, traditional, "old money" – not “new money". So you have Gatsby’s party, where the turkeys are "bewitched to dark gold," and Jordan's "slender golden arm[s]", and Daisy the "golden girl", and Gatsby wearing a gold tie to see Daisy at Nick's house.

But yellow is different. Yellow is fake gold; it's veneer and show rather than substance. We see that with the "yellow cocktail music" at Gatsby's party
(1) and the "two girls in twin yellow dresses" who aren't as alluring as the golden Jordan (3.15). Also yellow? Gatsby's car, symbol of his desire—and failure—to enter New York's high society. And if that weren't enough, T. J. Eckleburg's glasses, looking over the wasteland of America, are yellow.

**White**

Daisy's car (back before she was married) was white. So are her clothes, the rooms of her house, and about half the adjectives used to describe her (her "white neck," "white girlhood," the king's daughter "high in a white palace").

Everyone likes to say that white in The Great Gatsby means innocence but Daisy is hardly the picture of girlish innocence. At the end of the novel, she's described as selfish, careless, and destructive. Does this make the point that even the purest characters in Gatsby have been corrupted? Did Daisy start off all innocent and fall along the way, or was there no such purity to begin with? Or, in some way, does Daisy's decision to remain with Tom allow her to keep her innocence?

**Point Six: The green light**

The green light represents the American Dream. Green light — symbol of hope/ American Dream but it is ruined by the unworthiness of its object (money and pleasure). Gatsby was striving for it, but it is clear to the reader that it is false and unattainable. "he stretched his arms toward the dark water...distinguished nothing except a single green light"

> “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us”

Green seems the most striking colour employed: it carries religious overtones of cardinal sin (envy); sensations of potential fruitfulness or growth as the colour of spring; the obvious interpretation of jealousy; and, as the colour of the dollar, a sense of purely material richness.

Gatsby needs money in order for his quest for Daisy to have any hope of realistic achievement. It is therefore significant that she, the woman of his dreams, lives across the Sound beyond the ‘green light at the end of the dock’. Fitzgerald complements this at the end of the novel by using the colour green in association with America’s tragic desire to bind together its growth as a nation, its national destiny, with acquisitiveness. The Dutch settlers, like Gatsby with his green light, saw the ‘green breast’ and attempted to possess it.

Gatsby, then, is simply an incarnation of the American ‘dream made flesh’ by the Jazz Age and the pre-Wall Street crash optimism of the early 1920s. The fact that the green light ‘year by year recedes before us’ demonstrates that the American Dream as a force is at once continually fresh and inspiring yet unfulfilling. It remains ‘out there’ somewhere – and it leads us backwards morally because it is based essentially on economic lust.

**Conclusion**

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inspiring yet unfulfilling. It remains ‘out there’ somewhere – and it leads us backwards morally because it is based essentially on economic lust.

Gatsby symbolizes both the corrupted Dream and the original uncorrupted Dream. He sees wealth as the solution to his problems, pursues money via shady schemes, and reinvents himself so much that he becomes hollow, disconnected from his past. Yet Gatsby's corrupt dream of wealth is motivated by an incorruptible love for Daisy. Gatsby's failure does not prove the folly of the American Dream—rather it proves the folly of short-cutting that dream by allowing corruption and materialism to prevail over hard work, integrity, and real love. And the dream of love that remains at Gatsby's core condemns nearly every other character in the novel, all of whom are empty beyond just their lust for money.
Death of a character/Moment of revelation/Realisation/tragic fate of a character etc

2. Choose a novel in which the tragic death of a character plays an important part.
Explain why you think the character does/does not deserve such and fate and show how this event is important to your understanding of the novel as a whole.

Point One
- Gatsby is a victim of 1920s American society and the false hope given by the corrupt ideology of the American Dream
- American Dream – if you work hard, you will be successful (including transcending class barriers); Fitzgerald believed that this was a false and dangerous ideology.
- Gatsby creates a false life and lives and works for the illusion of achieving the American Dream (symbolised by Daisy).
- Fitzgerald makes it clear that his tragic downfall is as a result of trying to achieve this dream

“he paid a high price for living too long with a single dream”
- Fitzgerald makes it clear that he believes the false nature of this ideology to be dangerous
- Gatsby had become so obsessed with achieving his dream that the only possible outcome was his demise – he wouldn’t stop hoping until he had either achieved it (which is impossible) or through death.
- Nick makes this clear in the closing lines of the novel:

“his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it…Gatsby believed in the green light…”
- Fitzgerald makes it clear that the false hope offered by this ideology is what drove Gatsby and what ultimately killed him.
- His continual belief that Daisy (his American Dream) would eventually be won was the root cause of his death – significant? Effective?

Point Two
- Fitzgerald also makes clear that a contributing factor in the tragic fate of Gatsby is the carelessness and destructive nature of the upper classes.
- Due to Gatsby’s unwavering devotion to Daisy (caused by his belief in the American Dream) he takes the blame for the death of Myrtle Wilson

“Yes,’ he said after a moment. ‘But of course I’ll say I was.”
- Fitzgerald clearly portrays the careless and destructive nature of the elite in their ungrateful and selfish actions in the aftermath of Myrtle’s death and Gatsby’s self-sacrifice.
- Nick imagines that Gatsby had a moment of revelation before his death in which he realised the true careless and destructive nature of Daisy:

“…shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is…”
- Think about your own analysis of the text – if you feel sympathy for Gatsby, you may believe that he had this revelation and became aware of the corruption of the American Dream. Or you may think that this is an imagined revelation by Nick, in which case was there any other possible fate for Gatsby? If he could never accept the truth, was this end inevitable?
- Think about how this ties in to theme/gives you a deeper understanding of the text.
- After his death, Nick immediately tries to inform Daisy:

“I call up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her instinctively…But she and Tom had gone away…”
- Gatsby had stayed in West Egg hoping for communication from Daisy → it didn’t come and instead she abandons him to his fate in the name of self-preservation
- Fitzgerald makes clear his criticism of the elite class → think about how this is representative of the American Dream (the richer get richer through having no regard or concern for the lower classes)
- It is revealed that Tom sacrificed Gatsby in order to preserve his wife and himself in revealing Gatsby’s location to George Wilson:

“He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn’t told him who owned the car.”
- Think → how does this tie in to theme? Why does Gatsby not deserve this fate?

Point Three
- Fitzgerald provides an effective comment on the cause of Gatsby’s demise from the start of the novel
Provide context to the quotation:
“It is what preyed on Gatsby; what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams.”
- Think about what message Fitzgerald is conveying in terms of theme
- Think about what Nick is saying about Gatsby not deserving his fate and how this links in to the reader’s feelings

These are just some of the areas which you could discuss. Remember to include your own ideas and quotations.
“The Great Gatsby” is a novel written by F. Scott Fitzgerald during the period dubbed “The Roaring Twenties”. It is set in East America where wealth, organised crime and corruption were in abundance. Nick, the narrator, witnesses Jay Gatsby’s pursuit of Daisy Buchanan, the living embodiment of everything for which Gatsby strives – wealth and status. As the relationship between the two unfolds, it becomes clear that Daisy symbolises the American Dream and it is through this that the grotesque and corrupt nature of this ideology comes to light.

Gatsby’s desire for Daisy is driven by his lust for wealth, status and power, and this is demonstrated clearly in his introduction to the novel. Nick describes a curious encounter in which he witnesses Gatsby standing at the end of his dock:

“he stretched out his arms toward the dark water... a single green light”

The fact that he is physically reaching for this light, which we learn is at the end Daisy’s dock, emphasises his intense yearning for Daisy and her glamorous, old money life. This reveals, for the first time, the motivation behind the façade – the illusionary Jay Gatsby - which Gatsby has put all of his effort into creating and upholding. He is under the delusion that the American Dream is a reality and believes that once he regains the relationship that he and Daisy once had, his version of the American Dream can finally be obtained.

As Gatsby becomes more and more invested in his relationship with Daisy, her materialism and self-interest appears even more evident. Their sincerity towards the relationship is almost parallel: Daisy is the living embodiment of everything Gatsby strives for, while to her, their relationship is a mere flirtation – a distraction from her unrealistic, synthetic life. Despite appearing to be passionate about her and Gatsby’s reunion initially, the depth of Daisy’s love is questioned when Gatsby’s mansion is unveiled to her. Upon seeing his possessions, Daisy is completely overwhelmed:

“‘They’re such beautiful shirts,’ she sobbed.”

The genuine mourning of something so physical reveals how much Daisy’s life is centred on the significance of objects, and within that, the grotesque materialism that is symptomatic of the self-centred elite. This moment is also very significant as it reveals Daisy’s true feelings towards her relationship with Gatsby. As she cried, the reader realises that she is not yearning for the lost years she could have shared with her teenage love, but instead the wealth and fortune she could have shared with him. This reveals that she is unconcerned about her relationships with other people and their feelings as long as she has wealth, and the stability and comfort that it provides.

The final and most significant moment involving Daisy and Gatsby’s relationship is the moment when the façade of ‘Jay Gatsby’ shatters, and
alongside it, any feelings that Daisy has for him. Gatsby makes the foolish mistake of believing that Daisy’s feelings are genuine enough that she would risk her wealth and status to be with him. Once Tom reveals the illegal lengths that Gatsby went to in order to win Daisy back, she abandons him as quickly as she fell for him the day they were reunited. As Gatsby desperately tried to persuade Daisy it becomes evident that this is in vain as:

“With every word she was drawing further and further into herself.”

The false, shallow nature of Daisy’s feelings is completely revealed in that moment – the reader discovers that they were not built on the foundations of love but admiration towards Gatsby’s impressive mansion and possessions. Now that Daisy has realised that Jay Gatsby is a fragile façade, she is literally pulling away from him. This moment highlights the disregard Daisy has for anyone else – she is perfectly happy to do what she wants without worrying about the people that she hurts in her way. Now that Gatsby doesn’t fit her rigid, superficial standards, she has stopped stringing him along and she retreats to the comfort and security of old money life. The hypocrisy of this moment is overwhelming – Daisy tosses Gatsby aside once discovering his criminal activities and returns to the unfaithful Tom, who treats her with as little regard as she treats others. Daisy’s retreat to Tom emphasises the grotesque nature of the elite. Their destructive and selfish nature allows them to be as careless as they wish while leaving others to pick up the pieces.

→Gatsby’s moment of realisation about Daisy’s true nature – realises what a ‘grotesque thing a rose is’ – he placed too much on her; he imagined her to be something that she wasn’t (much like the American Dream) and this destroyed him in the end

→Daisy doesn’t attend Gatsby’s funeral – she caused his death but only cares about self-preservation. Reader learns that the American Dream is a corrupt and false ideology.

Points still to cover:

→Daisy and Tom ‘conspiring together’ whilst Gatsby remains utterly faithful and ‘watches over nothing’
**Mystery/intriguing character/unusual hero/etc.**

Choose a novel in which an element of *mystery* plays an important part.
Show how the *development* and *resolution* of the mystery contributed to your *enjoyment* of the text as a whole.

**Mystery** = portrayal of main character Gatsby

**Introduction**
- “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald is a novel which focuses on the mysterious central character, Jay Gatsby.
- From chapter one → Nick’s introduction → Gatsby is presented as a romantic character shrouded in mystery.
- The narrative unfolds in stages, so we gradually learn the details of Gatsby’s story, but the whole truth is not revealed until the end of the novel.
- Gatsby’s dream is equated with The American Dream itself.
- As Nick narrates Gatsby’s story he, and we, are kept in suspense until the mystery of Gatsby’s character is resolved.

**Point 1: Green Light**
- When we first ‘see’ Gatsby he is doing something mysterious, as he stands alone, stretching out to the green light. Fitzgerald portrays...
- Quotation
- Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

**Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.**

**Point 2: Rumours and Gatsby’s parties**
- Fitzgerald develops the mystery of Gatsby’s character at the party where wild rumours circulate about the host, whom few ‘guests’ have actually met. One rumour...
- Quotation
- Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

**Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.**

**Point 3: The Library**
- Gatsby is revealed to lack authenticity/has created a façade/illusion → revealed by Owl Eyes
- Quotation
- Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

**Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.**

**Point 4: Gatsby as a criminal**
- The means by which Gatsby has accumulated his wealth are shrouded in mystery. The mysterious phone calls...
- Quotation
- Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

**Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.**

**Point 5: Narrative Structure**
- The narrative structure which gradually reveals the ‘truth’ about Gatsby adds to the sense of mystery surrounding him. A number of characters give their versions of Gatsby’s story...
- Quotation
- Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

**Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.**

**Point 6: The idealism of Gatsby’s Dream**
• The romance and idealism surrounding Gatsby’s dream also make him something of a mystery.
• Quotation
• Analysis and Evaluation (how it creates mystery and how it adds to your understanding)

*Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.*

**Conclusion**

It is only at the end of the novel that all the pieces of the Gatsby mystery are put together. We, like the narrator Nick, are kept in suspense until the very end when both the extent of Gatsby’s isolation and the importance of his dream are revealed.

*Remember to include how the mystery adds to your enjoyment.*
Great Gatsby essay plan
2010 Q6: Choose a novel in which the novelist makes use of more than one location and show how this helps the novelist to develop the central concern(s) of the text.

Line of argument – The central concern of the unachievable nature of the American dream is effectively conveyed through the novel’s use of setting to show the social class divide.

1. West Egg new house trying to be like old houses-imitations. Gatsby’s parties – over-ambition. The books in Gatsby’s library are real; he does everything he can to be authentic but will never achieve this as not born into money.

- “The less fashionable of the two…this is a most superficial tag to express the…sinister contrast between them"
- Real contrast – West Egg is a failed imitation of East Egg – buildings attempt to be similar but not able to achieve the same status
- Illusion created (Fitzgerald’s message)
- Unachievable nature of the American Dream
- “In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths”
- West Egg – shallow parasites. Using Gatsby for money/have no interest in him
- Symbolism –blue – illusion/fantasy/escape from reality
- Theme – wealth not being achieved through hard work/people are frivolous consumers/corruption of the American Dream
- “It fooled me…What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too – didn’t cut the pages.”
- These fake books symbolise West Egg in general – represent the false façade of the place and the people
- Cannot achieve American Dream – it, like them, is just an illusion
- Fake – false nature of what America offers (Gatsby here is a symbol of America)

2. Over the course of the novel, Gatsby’s house decays. Dust imagery. Symbol of swimming pool.

- “There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere”
- Failure of American Dream is clear
- Illusion/façade is broken
- Symbolises Gatsby’s realisation that he cannot attain his dream and so the illusion he has created starts to crumble
- Dust symbolism → Valley of Ashes – no hope/no dream/corruption
- Link the two settings – neither can achieve the American Dream

3. East egg old houses showing wealth over many years. Contrast with G’s mansion. Green light – Gatsby’s dream. Emphasise separation between two Eggs and significance. Comparison of green light to green breast and original American Dream. G outside Buchanans’ mansion in chp 7 after Myrtle killed – symbolises his status as outsider

- White palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered across the water”
- More attractive, wealthier, West Egg looking out to it
- Symbolism of ‘white’ – façade behind which characters hide
- Tom: “I’ll stay in the East, don’t worry…I’d be a Gad damned fool to live anywhere else”
- Shallow nature of the elite
- This is the true America – elitism and snobbery
- A single green light, minute and far away…a fresh green breast of the new world”
- Initial potential – original the American Dream was an achievable ideology and America was full of promise for the Dutch sailors
- Gatsby’s America is corrupt – reduced to a green light which is small, artificial and out of reach
- American Dream now a false and artificial ideology

4. Valley of Ashes people are hurt because of upper class, contrast to East egg-inequality; no way to escape, no money. Dust imagery. Symbol of car: George doesn’t have as can’t escape. T J Eckleburg symbol: worshipping of money not God. Upper classes have corrupted original American Dream
by making it materialistic. Myrtle killed by car in Valley of Ashes – emphasises this.

- “…a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges.”
- Hard work achieving nothing of value
- Upper classes that benefit from the produce of this ‘farm’ – the poor, hardworking people are left living in the waste products and enjoy none of the benefits
- Sterile ground that produces nothing for the people to live off
- “…above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg….But his eyes, dimmed a little by many paintless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground.”
- Eckleburg – represents a God-like figure, watching over the people – highlights corruption.
  - Valley of Ashes rely on consumerism – this advertisement is their ‘God’ as it shows the only way for them to survive is by the consumerist ways of the rich.
  - Shows that East America lacks morals – ‘God’ has been replaced by an advertisement
  - Eckleburg’s glasses – he is able to ‘see’ this corruption of the American Dream – he sees the reality of this land as he looks over all of the activity
  - Colour symbolism – eyes are ‘blue’ representing false hope, eyes have ‘yellowed’ representing corruption and decay → capitalism and the American Dream offer these people false hope but this dream is corrupt and empty
  - It is profoundly disturbing when Wilson directly connects these eyes to the eyes of God as it shows the depths of his desperation caused by his inability to access this consumerist way of life.
- “He said it was a car that did it…it was a yellow car.”
- Yellow = corruption and decay, Car = wealth and status
  - The death of Myrtle symbolises everyone in the Valley of Ashes – they are being used up and kept down by wealth, status and the corrupt idea of the American Dream.

5. New York where two classes can meet up, they end up in heated scene and do not stay in this area for long as the two classes can never be together. Pathetic fallacy – discuss.

- “Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand”
- Destruction – Myrtle put in her place and establishes the power of the elite over those of lower status. Even though Tom is a violent, repugnant character, Myrtle’s only chance of escape would be through him. However, he quickly reminds her and the reader that she has no place among the elite.
- The turning point occurs in New York
- “The relentless beating heat was beginning to confuse me”
- Pathetic fallacy – tension and high emotion being revealed. This should be a place where the classes can exist equally, but this tension shows that this combining is unnatural and will not end well.
- “Mr Nobody from Nowhere”
- Shows snobbery/elite status
- The American Dream (Gatsby’s relationship with Daisy) dies at this point. Highlights that they cannot mix – the American Dream is impossible.
Character you admire/good qualities/hero/etc

Choose a novel in which your admiration for a particular character grows as the plot unfolds. Explain briefly why your admiration increases and, in more detail, discuss how the writer achieves this.

In your answer you must refer closely to the text and to at least two of: characterisation, theme, key incidents, structure, or any other appropriate feature.

Main Points to cover:

- The main character of Gatsby from the novel ‘The Great Gatsby’ is one who the reader increasingly admires as the plot unfolds. The reader, like the characters in the novel, only catch glimpses of him as a near-mythical status is built up around him.
- When we actually meet Gatsby we are a bit disappointed. He is not the character that we would expect to charm us.
- It seems that he is totally fake and contrived and there is the indication that his wealth has been derived through crime.
- However, as the plot goes on we see him as a remarkable character who has re-invented himself and better his life situation. He is complex and interesting yet has several tragic flaws.
- Even when he is let down by the woman he loves, who he has made so much effort for, he is still noble enough to protect her which becomes an act of self-sacrifice.

Point 1:

- Gatsby is introduced to us more by mystery and myth. At the parties he throws, he is talked of as a ‘German spy’ or a ‘murderer’ or a ‘cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm’s’. The narrator’s first sight of him, on the lawn looking across the water, is curious and suggests a peculiar man:
  - ‘He stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling...nothing except a single green light...’
- rumour mill and interesting behaviour makes the reader inquisitive. Nick is curious about him – we see him through Nick’s eyes and so also feel this curiosity.
- Analysis of “green light” – what does it represent? What does this indicate about Gatsby?
- Analysis of “dark water” and “trembling” – what does this show?

Point 2:

- Once Nick meets Gatsby some of the mystery of the character is lost. He is introduced unspectacularly and the reader feels that this is an anti-climax. Nick comments on this:
  - ‘I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say.’
- Nick is disappointed. So is the reader. We were expecting a full-blooded, dashing character; instead we have a character who calls everybody ‘sport’ and tries to prove to Nick that he is ‘not some nobody’ by bringing out his war medal. There is the beginning of a sense that the author has given us a Gatsby that is a dull, flat character.

Point 3:

- The reader’s ability to admire Gatsby is brought further under question when, with Nick, he meets a man who appears to be an old friend. Wolfsheim. A man who ‘fixed’ the World Series.
- “Meyer Wolfsheim? No, he’s a gambler.” Gatsby hesitated, then added, coolly: “He’s the man who fixed the World Series back in 1919”
- This key scene is used by Fitzgerald to give indications of Gatsby’s past and character. It is one of the few points in novel, before the key scene of revelation with Tom and Daisy, where there is a hint that Gatsby’s money might come from the criminal underworld. He does react very out of character when asked about his business by Nick: he reacts angrily, ‘That’s my business!’ After that short outburst his cool façade is restored. It is a key scene that calls into doubt our feelings for Gatsby. Fitzgerald has allowed the reader to hold Gatsby’s person in an increasingly lower esteem.
Point 4

- However, as the narrative continues we see more of Gatsby. And this allows the author to deepen the character as the plot continues. Knowledge of his background arouses our sympathy: he is born poor. He has invented himself with a mighty effort based on an idea of what he could be.
- 'The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself'
- Gatsby’s attempts at self-invention are admirable. He has put his whole life in to the service of his dream. He has done the very utmost to achieve the American Dream in reality. By his own imagination and self-sacrifice he has turned himself into Jay Gatsby. How could the reader not admire at least this aspect of the character? Fitzgerald has includes a timetable of activities he performed for self-improvement so the reader can see exactly how much thought and willpower has gone into Gatsby’s achievements. This detail does elicit the esteem of the reader for Gatsby.

Point 5

- The more attractive side of Gatsby’s nature is further shown by the author when we see him in the climatic key scene with Tom and Daisy: he has been loyal to her for five years: ‘five years of unwavering devotion’, the reader is told. However, Daisy smashes that dream by admitting that she loved Tom; and it becomes obvious she’s not leaving Tom for him.
- ‘she realized at last what she was doing – and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all.’
- And she lets Gatsby down, betrays him, by calling on Tom:
- ‘“Please, Tom! I can’t stand this anymore.” Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone.’
- The scene reveals that Daisy was only playing. Fitzgerald uses this scene to illustrate that Gatsby’s devotion, love and loyalty were sincere but his dream was hollow. Daisy is not the ideal that he had hoped for. She is weak and self-centred. Gatsby is not. He loved her, even when she fell short of his dreams. Fitzgerald has created an opportunity to show the true quality of Gatsby’s character - and he takes it. The contrast between Gatsby and Daisy is powerful. The more so because it occurs in a scene of high tension.

Point 6

- After the death of Myrtle Wilson, it is Gatsby, betrayed and humiliated who stands-up for her. He takes the blame. It is Nick who asks:
- ‘“Was Daisy driving?’
- ‘Yes,” he said after a moment, ‘but of course I’ll say I was’”
- It took nobility of soul and admirable character to protect the woman who had just treated him so disgracefully not so long before. He is even aware to the fact that Tom might, after almost losing Daisy to Tom, punish her when he returns home. He waits to make sure she is safe:
- ‘’I’m just going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon. She’s locked herself into her room, and if he tries any brutality she’s going to turn the light out and on again.’”
- Gatsby, by his actions, shows the true extent and quality of his love. He does not abandon Daisy at any stage. Even though it could hardly be held a fault if he did so. Daisy’s treatment of him was outrageous. Five years of his life he devoted to her, but she was only playing. It is this final scene that shows, along with his sympathetic tone to the victim of the crash, that Gatsby’s dream is not just a self-centred personal Dream. He has done it for someone else. For what other reason would he be prepared to lose everything? By giving us this Fitzgerald has elevated the character of Gatsby to a hero. Fitzgerald casts Gatsby in a heroic mould, and like most heroes, there is the spark of some quality that we, as readers, cannot but help admire.

Conclusion

- Sum up – through key scenes admiration for Gatsby grows.
- At first he is disappointing, but become noble and capable of self-sacrifice.
- Through character development and key scenes admiration grows.
THINGS WE ADMIRE ABOUT GATSBY

1. Nick obviously admires, likes and respects Gatsby, so we should admire him too.

Nick is the main narrator of the novel (remember, though, that Jordan’s narration intervenes for a short while in chapter 4). As the main narrator, he is the most influential voice of the novel. If Nick admires Gatsby, it is natural for us to admire him too.

From the very beginning of the novel, Nick establishes himself as being a trustworthy, intelligent and highly moral person, so we trust his judgment.

This is what he says about Gatsby at the beginning of the novel:

“...there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life...”

“[he had] an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person...”

He also says the following to Gatsby himself, just before he is killed:

“They’re a rotten crowd...you’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.”

2. He has the capacity for self-improvement.

We gain an insight into the early life of Gatsby at the end of the novel, when Mr Gatz shows Nick his son’s diary.

What do YOU think of Gatsby’s transformation from an unfashionable, working class Midwest farm-boy to a member of West Egg’s nouveau riche? You should certainly comment on the positivity of his ‘better vision of himself’, and the determination and tenacity he shows in pursuing this.

His schedule and ‘resolves’

His book-lined library (p. 41) The ‘owl-eyed man’ exclaims in wonder: “Absolutely real – have pages and everything, I thought they’d be a nice durable cardboard.” This highlights the idea of his wanting to transform himself from what he once was. The Egg crowd would not expect this kind of attention to detail in things such as books.

3. Gatsby is a noble character.

Think about how he protects Daisy in the aftermath of the accident. He is willing to take the blame for Myrtle’s death (a decision which leads directly to his own death). He then stands guard outside Daisy’s house all night to make sure that she isn’t bullied by Tom over the incident at the Plaza.

“ ‘I want to wait here till Daisy goes to bed. Good night, old sport.’

He put this hands in his coat pockets and turned back eagerly to the scrutiny of the house, as though my presence marred the sacredness of the vigil. So I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight – watching over nothing.”

Think about how some critics see Gatsby as a ‘Christ-figure’. He lays down his life for Daisy at the end of the novel. He shoulders a mattress as he walks towards the pool, where he is shot by George Wilson. This mirrors the image of Christ carrying his cross towards Calvary, the place of his crucifixion.

4. Gatsby is an idealist

- His greatest – and most famous – attribute.
- Connects to the American Dream itself – the quest for self-improvement, material stability, a better vision.
- But keep asking yourself: is there a fine line to be drawn between idealism and self-delusion?

Nick reflects on the landscape of the Long Island Sound at the end of the novel: “...I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world.

“I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock...

“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther...And one fine morning –

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

- The symbolism of the green light is equal to the symbolism of the American Dream.
- Gatsby’s pursuit of Daisy is equal to the general human pursuit of dreams and happiness.
- Like Gatsby, we are all “borne back ceaselessly into the past” whenever we dare to dream.
- The novel ends on a very positive note. Nick acknowledges that we make mistakes in our pursuit of dreams – they “elude” us – but that we fight on anyway, just like Gatsby.
- Gatsby is conveyed as being just like us – an Everyman, doomed to fail, but trying anyway. This is the part of the novel when our sympathy and admiration for him is at its height.
THINGS WE DISLIKE ABOUT GATSBY

1. **Nick thinks he is flawed.**
   We are told on the opening page that Gatsby ‘represented everything for which [he] had an unaffected scorn.’

2. **Gatsby is a crook.**
   Gossip about Gatsby alerts us to his nefarious business deals. Although a lot of this we can easily disregard – that he is a relation of Kaiser Wilhelm, for example – there is much truth in some of the more serious gossip. In the Plaza Hotel, even Nick observes that he looks ‘as if he had killed a man’. After his death, the extent of his crimes is revealed. You, as a reader, have to decide how important this aspect of his character is: does his dodgy business background affect how you see him as a person? Is his success tainted, or ‘dirty’?

3. **He is a duplicitous liar.**
   This is certainly true of Gatsby, but the trick is to work out how far we can criticise him for this. How important is truth anyway? Do we admire him for the quality of his stage-act, or criticise him for causing his own downfall? Think carefully about the lies that he told, and judge him separately. What, for example, might be the moral difference between his lie about where he was born and his lie to Daisy about his supposed wealth? Through his lies, he represents the façade of life – nothing about him is ‘real’ for some readers. How far do you agree with Nick, then, that there was ‘something about him’ that made this shallowness unimportant?

4. **He is a delusional fool for wasting his life on an empty dream.**
   Towards the end of the novel, the reader – and Nick himself – is left wondering why Gatsby pursues Daisy when it is patently clear that she sees no future in their relationship. We eventually feel hike giving him a good shake after the crash… but Gatsby simply keeps on believing in the future, until right before he dies.

   Does this make him a blind fool in your opinion? Is he someone who cannot open his eyes to the truth? Or do you see him, in some sense, as heroic for nobly pursuing what he believed in? Do you see his hero-quest as heroic or shambolic?

For many readers of Gatsby, there is a fine line between idealism and stupidity, but this requires very careful examination from you. Beware: simply saying that Gatsby is stupid would seriously undermine the quality of your answer. Not only would it fly in the face of Nick’s opinion, it would contradict Fitzgerald’s main aim in writing the novel – to examine the complexities of the Jazz Age, and the people who embodied its spirit. COMPLEX, AMBIGUOUS, EQUIVOCAL – these are appropriate ways to describe Gatsby and your feeling about the ‘worthiness’ of his dream.

5. **Gatsby is manufactured into a hero by Nick.**
   Look again at the passages in the novel that give Gatsby his tragic, poetic status. Passages drawn from the end of the novel – where he has his epiphany in the swimming pool, for example, and when Nick muses over how Gatsby must have felt when he saw Daisy’s green light for the first time. We have to remember that Nick IMAGINES HIM to have had his epiphany (“He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is…”). Nick also IMAGINES his wonder at the mystery of Daisy’s green light (“I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock…his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it…”). We do not know for certain that Gatsby realised how empty and shallow Daisy was before his death. We also cannot know for sure whether the green light had any real poetic significance for him. These passages from the novel invest Gatsby with a tragic insightfulness – but we cannot know if this insightfulness is for real, or whether it has been manufactured by a sympathetic narrator.
None of these essays are perfect models - they are examples of other student’s work and there is always room for improvement. They should be used as a study tool but remember that you will write a more convincing and better essay if you are exploring your own ideas, in your own words, in your exam. Never rely on the work of others – you must analyse these essays and decide whether or not you agree with what they are saying. You may well have your own interpretations that you would like to bring in or other areas of the novel that you would like to explore.
THINGS WE DISLIKE ABOUT GATSBY – Example Paragraphs

Introduction:
F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel, “The Great Gatsby”, uses the flaws and failings of the eponymous hero, Jay Gatsby, in order to explore the deeper and critical views of the author on the concept of the American Dream. The American Dream, an ideology which states that anything is achievable through hard work, was at the centre of 1920s American society. It proclaimed that class systems did not exist and offered hope of happiness and prosperity. However, Fitzgerald was extremely critical of this ideology and he uses the flaws of Jay Gatsby to outline and represent his belief that this Dream was, in fact, a false and corrupt ideology.

Point One and Two

From the opening page of the novel, the reader is made aware that Gatsby is a flawed character; the narrator introduces Gatsby with the caveat that he:

“Represented everything for which [he] had an unaffected scorn.”

Being that Nick is shown to despise the false nature of the elite and the materialistic and shallow nature of the wealthy, it is clear that Gatsby shares these attributes. However, Nick also praises Gatsby’s “romantic readiness” and his “extraordinary gift for hope” which sets him apart from the other characters. Although Nick is praising these qualities, it is also clear that they have not served him well in this society. Due to his “gift for hope”, Gatsby pursues the American Dream, represented in this novel by Daisy, without chance of success but with unfailing devotion. From the beginning, it is clear that, although praising this quality in Gatsby, Fitzgerald is emphasising that it has no place in 1920s American society. He is too easily preyed upon and taken advantage of him – this is his flaw. In fact, Nick states that a “foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams” which indicates that it was the promise of the Dream that ultimately destroyed Gatsby; he failed to give up hope and therefore did not recognise the true nature of American society.

Fitzgerald also presents Gatsby as having a major failing in terms of his morality; he is wealthy but this wealth has been gained through dishonest means. There are multiple rumours circulation about Gatsby, all of which suggest there is a dark and underhand side to his character. Even Nick, who admires Gatsby, notes that he looked “as if he killed a man.” This assertion, delivered by the narrator, creates an element of doubt around Gatsby’s character. The reader is left questioning the origins of his wealth, but also his moral integrity – is he really the noble and heroic character suggested in the title? At the end of the novel, this failing is made even clearer as the full extent of his criminal dealings is revealed. Nick ponders the breadth of Gatsby’s criminal partnerships:

“I wondered if this partnership had included the World’s Series transaction in 1919.”

Fitzgerald uses the criminal element of Gatsby’s character to present a clear comment on what he viewed as the corruption of the American Dream. Rather than achieving wealth through hard work, Gatsby gained riches through dishonest means. Fitzgerald felt that the pursuit of money and materialistic needs in 1920s American was leading to corruption of this nature – only wealth was important and the means for gaining it often corrupt.
THINGS WE ADMIRE ABOUT GATSBY: Example Essay

Choose a novel in which your admiration for a particular character grows as the plot unfolds. Explain briefly why your admiration increases and, in more, detail, discuss how the writer achieves this.
In your answer you must refer closely to the text and to at least two of: characterisation, theme, key incidents, structure, or any other appropriate feature.

The novel by F Scott Fitzgerald, 'The Great Gatsby', has a character who the reader admires as the story unfolds. It is Gatsby, the eponymous hero of the novel, who moves from a slightly disappointing character to one who appears noble from a certain point of view.

Every night at Gatsby's mansion there are parties, the narrator, Nick Carraway, observes. Nights are spent in pleasure; but Nick, who lives beside the house, never meets the owner. When he is invited to one party he brings his cousins Tom and Daisy Buchanan. This is fortunate, because it is Daisy who years before Gatsby knew, fell in love with, and still loves. He has become rich for her. Gatsby arranges a meeting at Nick's house – who he has now befriended. It appears that they are still in love and that Daisy will leave her womanising husband Tom. However, during a confrontation it appears that Daisy was not forced into this marriage. Gatsby is disillusioned; his dream of her fidelity to him is not true. But when a tragic accident occurs, Gatsby still protects Daisy; an act that leads to his death.

Gatsby is introduced to us more by mystery and myth. At the parties he throws, he is talked of as a 'German spy' or a 'murderer' or a 'cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's'. The narrator's first sight of him, on the lawn looking across the water, is curious and suggests a peculiar man:

‘he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling.’

The Gatsby that Fitzgerald has given us seems a bit odd. He is not, at the moment, a character that we would find admirable, but his actions here, along with the rumour-mongering of the other characters, does make us, the reader, feel inquisitive about him.

Once Nick meets Gatsby some of the mystery of the character is lost. He is introduced unspectacularly and he does nothing particularly interesting or exciting. Nick comments on this:

‘I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say.’

Nick is disappointed. So is the reader. We were expecting a full-blooded, dashing character; instead we have a character who calls everybody 'sport' and tries to prove to Nick that he is 'not some nobody' by bringing out his war medal. There is the beginning of a sense that the author has given us a Gatsby that is a dull, flat character.

Gatsby's admirability of character is brought further under question when, with Nick, he meets a man who appears to be an old friend. Wolfsheim. A man who 'fixed' the World Series.

‘Meyer Wolfsheim? No, he's a gambler.” Gatsby hesitated, then added, coolly: “He's the man who fixed the World Series back in 1919”

This key scene is used by Fitzgerald to give indications of Gatsby's past and character. It is one of the few points in novel, before the key scene of revelation with Tom and Daisy, where there is a hint that Gatsby's money might come from the criminal underworld. He does react very out of character when asked about his business by Nick: he reacts angrily, 'That's my business!' After that short outburst his cool façade is restored. But it is another key scene that calls into doubt our feelings for Gatsby. Fitzgerald has allowed the reader to hold Gatsby's person in an increasingly lower esteem.

However, as the narrative continues we see more of Gatsby. And this allows the author to deepen the character as the plot continues. Knowledge of his background arouses our sympathy: he is born poor. He has invented himself with a mighty effort based on an idea of what he might become:

‘The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself'

And his level of work impresses the reader:

‘Rise from bed……………………………….6.00 AM  
Dumbell exercise and wall-scaling…………..6.15-6.30  
Study electricity, etc…………………………7.15-8.15  
Work…………………………………………8.30-4.30  
Baseball and Sports…………………………..4.30 –5.00  
Practise elocution, poise and how to attain it…5.00-6.00  
Study needed inventions……………………7.00-9.00 ’
Gatsby’s attempts at self-invention are admirable. He has put his whole life in to the service of his dream. He has done the very utmost to achieve the American Dream in reality. By his own imagination and self-sacrifice he has turned himself into Jay Gatsby. How could the reader not admire at least this aspect of the character? Fitzgerald has included the timetable so the reader can see exactly how much thought and willpower has gone into Gatsby’s achievements. This detail does elicit the esteem of the reader for Gatsby.

The more attractive side of Gatsby’s nature is further shown by the author when we see him in the climatic key scene with Tom and Daisy: he has been loyal to her for five years: ‘five years of unwavering devotion’, the reader is told. However, Daisy smashes that dream by admitting that she loved Tom; and it becomes obvious she’s not leaving Tom for him.

‘she realized at last what she was doing – and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all.’ And she lets Gatsby down, betrays him, by calling on Tom:

‘’Please, Tom! I can’t stand this anymore.”
Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone.’

The scene reveals that Daisy was only playing. Fitzgerald uses this scene to illustrate that Gatsby’s devotion, love and loyalty were sincere but his dream was hollow. Daisy is not the ideal that he had hoped for. She is weak and self-centred. Gatsby is not. He loved her, even when she fell short of his dreams. Fitzgerald has created an opportunity to show the true quality of Gatsby’s character - and he takes it. The contrast between Gatsby and Daisy is powerful. The more so because it occurs in a scene of high tension.

After the death of Myrtle Wilson, it is Gatsby, betrayed and humiliated who stands up for her. He takes the blame. It is Nick who asks:

‘’Was Daisy driving?’
‘Yes,” he said after a moment, ‘but of course I’ll say I was’”

It took nobility of soul and admirable character to protect the woman who had just treated him so disgracefully not so long before. He is even aware to the fact that Tom might, after almost losing Daisy to Tom, punish her when he returns home. He waits to make sure she is safe:

‘’I’m just going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon. She’s locked herself into her room, and if he tries any brutality she’s going to turn the light out and on again.”’

Gatsby, by his actions, shows the true extent and quality of his love. He does not abandon Daisy at any stage. Even though it could hardly be held a fault if he did so. Daisy’s treatment of him was outrageous. Five years of his life he devoted to her, but she was only playing. It is this final scene that shows, along with his sympathetic tone to the victim of the crash, that Gatsby’s dream is not just a self-centred personal Dream. He has done it for someone else. For what other reason would he be prepared to lose everything? By giving us this Fitzgerald has elevated the character of Gatsby to a hero. Fitzgerald casts Gatsby in a heroic mould, and like most heroes, there is the spark of some quality that we, as readers, cannot but help admire.

By slowly revealing character and the use of key scenes, the author has allowed the reader’s admiration to grow. Albeit not at first where Gatsby is, as a character, disappointing after all the rumours, he then becomes a noble being capable of great sacrifice. He had, as Nick put it, ‘an extraordinary gift for hope.’ Fitzgerald has used the character and key scenes – along with much else – to move the reader from being cold towards Gatsby to genuine admiration. It is an artistic success.
Setting

Choose a novel in which the writer’s use of setting in time and/or place has a significant part to play in your appreciation of the text as a whole.

Give the relevant details of the setting and then discuss fully why it has such significance.

In many novels, the writer’s use of setting can allow the reader to appreciate key ideas. Setting is used to convey information about character as well as the society in which the novel takes place. Sometimes it can even be used to get across the psychological attitude of the character. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel “The Great Gatsby,” he uses setting of place and time to convey ideas and create powerful images that enhance the appreciation of the novel. This essay will give details of setting and then discuss why they play a significant part in appreciating the text as a whole.

Jay Gatsby is a fabulously wealthy man whose sources of wealth are dubious. He owns a large mansion. However, he has not gotten rich for its own sake. He is both running away from his dull mid-Western background, and running to the life he believes he can have with Daisy, a woman he loved when he was a young man. It is Gatsby’s love that has fueled his dream, a dream made possible by Gatsby’s refusal to recognize reality, and his continued attempts to make the world as he wants it. This leads, eventually, to tragedy.

Setting is used to enhance the appreciation of the novel as a whole. Nick Carraway, the narrator, has moved into a cottage beside an enormous mansion. As yet, Nick does not know the owner, but he is the central character of the novel. Gatsby. Nick describes the house:

“The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard — it was a formal imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spouting new under a thin band of rare sky, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby’s mansion.”

We are given an early insight into the character of Gatsby through the description of his house. He is a man who does not do things by halves, building a house that is described as “colossal.” He is not afraid to show off his great wealth, and he is not prepared to spare expense. The house represents one of France’s most famous antecuclavian estates. By having a marble pool Gatsby hints at elegance and suggests a man who is a great consumer of expensive things. We are given an insight into Gatsby that helps with our appreciation of the rest of the novel. However, the description of the mansion not only allows us an insight into Gatsby’s character, but also into American society. We see society that is as rich, if not more so, than any other society that has gone before. Although a democratic society, the rich have taken to imitating the aristocracy in their tastes. It suggests a tension between the ideals of the United States and a society that sees people grow so rich that it suggests the end of the law. The society that has gone before. Although a democratic society, the rich have taken to imitating the aristocracy in their tastes. It suggests a tension between the ideals of the United States and a society that sees people grow so rich that it suggests the end of the law. It is a society that pretends to be equal, yet it is a society that is almost certainly illegal and that any selling or transportation of alcohol was illegal. This gives us the view that the person who has organized this party, Gatsby, has broken the law; and that everyone who is attending the party is knowingly involved in that breaking of the law. We see a society that does not mind breaking the law. It is a society that would prefer to have fun than be faced with its own consequences. The author appears to hint that the same is happening in America. By his use of setting, Fitzgerald continues to use setting to sharpen the reader’s appreciation of the entire text. The author describes an area that is less attractive the valley of ash. This is the part of America that is less talked about - the areas of the poor.

“This is a valley of ashes - a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of horses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent

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The bar is in full swing, and dancing rounds of cocktails punctuate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women whom nobody ever knew each other’s names.”

The setting of one of Gatsby’s parties allows further insight into the novel as a whole. The party is free, and many have attended. We see a society that likes to enjoy itself with alcohol. Not completely surprising, however, when we consider that this novel took place during the era of Prohibition and that any selling or transportation of alcohol was illegal. This gives us the view that the person who has organized this party, Gatsby, has broken the law; and that everyone who is attending the party is knowingly involved in that breaking of the law. We see a society that does not mind breaking the law. It is a society that would prefer to have fun than be faced with its own consequences. The author appears to hint that the same is happening in America. By his use of setting, Fitzgerald continues to use setting to sharpen the reader’s appreciation of the entire text. The author describes an area that is less attractive the valley of ash. This is the part of America that is less talked about - the areas of the poor.

“and as the moon rose higher the benediction ceased to melt away into nothingness until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes - a fresh, green beauty of the new world. Its vanished trees, the fields that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had ever pandemic in whispers to the last and grizzled of all human dreams.”

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At the end of the novel, Nick describes the scene. This description of the setting helps with the appreciation of the novel as it illustrates important themes. The "inesorable" houses "melt away" because they are transitory. The land was there before the people, the large houses, the great wealth but they are not essential. Fitzgerald puts the society into context: it is here just now, but it will pass away. However, as Nick imagines the land without the present society he sees it once as it would have been to the new arrivals to America. It represented a massive opportunity: a whole world to be made anew. Yet, the trees that greeted the sailors and caused such wonder have been cut down for a large mansion. American society has exploited the land to create great wealth, and in doing so has cut down the great opportunity. It was the trees blowing in the wind that "whispered" the greatest of all human dreams: the dream of self-realisation in a democratic republic that was Just and Equal and better than the Old World. However, the trees like the dream have been cut down, and it is money that was the cause. Setting has been used in this instance to help the reader appreciate these ideas, as well as mixing it with a beautiful image of the New World.

This essay has shown how the writer has used setting in time and place plays a significant part in the reader's appreciation of the text as a whole. Through the use of settings such as Gatsby's mansion, the valley of ashes, Gatsby's parties and the landscape that Nick views at night where Gatsby's house stands, the writer has portrayed an ambitious and flamboyant man who lives in a society that can be superficial, mercenary, ostentatious and cruel. The dream of America has been explored through the setting: the America of the rich and the poor. Fitzgerald's novel is an attack on America as it is, and also a prophecy of what it will become and a lament for what it might have been.
Corruption/American Dream/Symbolism/Illusion/

“The Great Gatsby” is a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald set in the ‘Roaring Twenties’ in North America at a time when society was sunk in corruption and criminal activities. The novel explores many themes throughout, however, the main idea focused on by Fitzgerald is the corruption in society and the corruptive nature of the American Dream. The original ideology of the American Dream was the belief that anything is possible as long as you strive to succeed, but through his use of characterisation, setting and symbolism, Fitzgerald reveals that the American Dream has transformed from a pure ideal into a corrupt scheme for materialistic power.

The first way in which Fitzgerald reveals the corruption in society is through the differences between the two social classes, represented by West Egg and East Egg. Where East Egg is a class full of the ‘elite’ and high upper classes, West Egg is revealed to be a ‘factual imitation’ of that. The West Egg is described as the ‘less fashionable of the two’ and this is a vast understatement of the sinister differences that exist between the two. West Egg is portrayed as being a place which aspires to become elite and puts up a façade of wealth and status when in reality it is nothing but a neglected society that has been abandoned by the American Dream. The elite know this is the case and can clearly see through the illusion of wealth created by the West Eggers. Fitzgerald illustrates this through Daisy’s reaction to Gatsby’s parties in his West Egg mansion:

“…but the rest offended her, she was appalled by West Egg.”

Fitzgerald reveals through Daisy the extent of the divide between the two societies. The fact that Daisy, part of the elite, was actually ‘appalled’ and ‘offended’ by West Egg clearly reveals that the elite have no intention of letting those who reside there to ever transcend the class barrier. The reader gains full understanding from Daisy’s reaction that she can see straight through the façade to the desperation underneath and that she will never accept these people as her equals due to the fact they come from a different social background. The true corrupt nature of the American Dream is clearly revealed as Fitzgerald indicates that it can never be achieved due to the false foundations upon which it was built. Despite what the ideology promises, the author clearly portrays the stronghold of the hierarchy in American society thereby indicating the deep seated corruption in society.

The corrupt nature of the American Dream is further implied through the characterisation of Gatsby and the illusion with which he surrounds himself. In order to achieve his dream for money and status, represented by his love and pursuit of Daisy, he created a fake persona and background. These drastic measures illustrate his need and desperation to be able to make his dream become a reality. However, no matter how great his efforts, Fitzgerald portrays that his illusion is breaking as more people begin to see through it. Owl Eyes is one of these people. At one of Gatsby’s parties, Owl Eyes is found in the library admiring the lengths to which Gatsby went to create his façade:

“What realism! Knew when to stop too…didn’t cut the pages”

Fitzgerald shows that Owl Eyes can see right through Gatsby’s attempts, however, it is also shown that he also feels a degree of admiration. He compares Gatsby to ‘Belasco’, a theatrical director famed for the realism of his sets, and he seems to genuinely appreciate the lengths to which Gatsby has gone to create this image of himself. It is clear that Fitzgerald is using this minor character in order to make clear his views of the American Dream; like Gatsby, the American Dream is a theatrical and elaborate illusion and does not truly exist. When Owl Eyes is later involved in a car crash, the reader can once again see this as a symbol of the American Dream. Just as the car loses a wheel, so, over the course of the novel, will the ‘wheel come off’ this ideology and the entire illusion will come crashing down, causing tragedy for those who believe in it.

In chapter 7 of the novel, this illusion does indeed come crashing down when Gatsby ultimately loses Daisy. After being revealed as a criminal ‘bootlegger’ and a ‘Mr Nobody from Nowhere’ by Tom, Gatsby’s face is described by Nick:
“He looked as if he had ‘killed a man’. For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way.”

While Fitzgerald is indeed discussing a death here, it is not a literal one. Rather, it is the death of the illusion of Jay Gatsby which is being torn down, leaving behind the reality of James Gatz. Daisy was never going to choose Gatsby, and as she pulls “draws further and further” away from Gatsby, Fitzgerald is teaching the reader a harsh lesson – there is no American Dream and no happy ending for Gatsby. The reality is that the self-centred and destructive elite will always win, because the American Dream, along with American society, is completely corrupt as its main concern is material gain.

Once the illusion of the ‘Great Gatsby’ has been destroyed, Fitzgerald reveals the true reality of West Egg in comparing it to the Valley of Ashes. The Valley of Ashes is a setting where the poorest people live; it is constantly grey and suffocating under a thick dust cloud which represents the hopelessness of the place and of the people in it. However, underneath the glamour and wealth of West Egg, Fitzgerald reveals there to be no difference between these two settings and both are portrayed as being completely devoid of hope. After the events in chapter 7, Gatsby’s house in West Egg is described as having “an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere”. This immediately brings to mind the description of Valley of Ashes:

“Grey cars crawl along an invisible track...immediately grey men swarm up...”

The grey and the dust in Valley of Ashes signifies the lack of hope and the abandonment suffered in this setting; the elite benefit from the produce that these hardworking people make and they are then left to live amongst the waste products. It is a clear contradiction of the American Dream as these hardworking people are not rewarded and are simply left to prop up and depend upon the elite. The dust settling in West Egg immediately informs the reader that these people too are victims of the American Dream and if they continue to believe that it is possible to achieve, they will be used up and abandoned, much like those in Valley of the Ashes.

Finally, Fitzgerald uses symbolism to explore the ideal of the American Dream. The very first time the reader meets Gatsby he is described in a curious way:

“...he stretched his arms toward the dark water...distinguished nothing but a single green light.”

This ‘green light’ symbolises Gatsby’s desire for the American Dream – it is on the end of Daisy’s dock and whilst he yearns for it because it represents her, it is clear to the reader that what he truly desires is the wealth and status that she represents. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that this ‘green light’ and all that it represents is unattainable, much like the American Dream. At the end of the novel, Nick notes that:

“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future which year by year recedes before us.”

This acknowledges that the very reason for his demise was his continued belief in the attainability of the American Dream. Those unable to accept the corrupt and dangerous nature of this ideology are consumed by it; George, Myrtle and Gatsby are all killed and the “holocaust was complete”. The American Dream has destroyed them due to the corruption of its original intentions and the relentless and destructive pursuit of wealth that it has become.

Overall, Fitzgerald uses an extremely effective combination of characterisation, setting and symbolism in order to explore his main theme of corruption. In the closing chapter, as the Owl Eyed man laments the “poor sons of bitches” who believed in the American Dream, the true reality of American society is made clear. Fitzgerald was predicting the collapse of this consumerist and materialistic society and he viewed the corruption present in the capitalist and false America as the key reason for this. The novel makes clear throughout his condemnation of this corrupt ideal and the lack of hope that those abandoned by the American Dream and society experienced.
Some Notes and Interesting Reading from other sources, such as Teachit.

GATSBY'S PURSUIT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

The Great Gatsby, a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, is about the American Dream, and the downfall of those who attempt to reach its illusionary goals. The attempt to capture the American Dream is central to many novels. This dream is different for different people, but in The Great Gatsby, for Jay, the dream is that through wealth and power, one can acquire happiness. To get this happiness Jay must reach into the past and relive an old dream and in order to do this he must have wealth and power.

Jay Gatsby, the central figure of the story, is one character who longs for the past. Surprisingly he devotes most of his adult life trying to recapture it and, finally, dies in its pursuit. In the past, Jay had a love affair with the affluent Daisy. Knowing he could not marry her because of the difference in their social status, he leaves her to amass wealth to reach her economic standards. Once he acquires this wealth, he moves near to Daisy, "Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay (83)," and throws extravagant parties, hoping by chance she might show up at one of them. He, himself, does not attend his parties but watches them from a distance. When this dream doesn't happen, he asks around casually if anyone knows her. Soon he meets Nick Carraway, a cousin of Daisy, who agrees to set up a meeting, "He wants to know...if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over (83)." Gatsby's personal dream symbolises the larger American Dream where all have the opportunity to get what they want.

Later, as we see in the Plaza Hotel, Jay still believes that Daisy loves him. He is convinced of this as is shown when he takes the blame for Myrtle's death. "Was Daisy driving?" "Yes...but of course I'll say I was." (151) He also watches and protects Daisy as she returns home. "How long are you going to wait?" "All night if necessary." (152) Jay cannot accept that the past is gone and done with. Jay is sure that he can capture his dream with wealth and influence. He believes that he acted for a good beyond his personal interest and that should guarantee success.

Nick attempts to show Jay the folly of his dream, but Jay innocently replies to Nick's assertion that the past cannot be re-lived by saying, "Yes you can, old sport." This shows the confidence that Jay has in fulfilling his American Dream. For Jay, his American Dream is not material possessions, although it may seem that way. He only comes into riches so that he can fulfil his true American Dream, Daisy.

Gatsby doesn't rest until his American Dream is finally fulfilled. However, it never comes about and he ends up paying the ultimate price for it. The idea of the American Dream still holds true in today's time, be it wealth, love, or fame. But one thing never changes about the American Dream; everyone desires something in life, and everyone, somehow, strives to get it. Gatsby is a prime example of pursuing the American Dream.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

What is the Dream?

The belief that anything is possible as long as you strive to succeed. The foundation qualities of the American Dream depicted in The Great Gatsby are perseverance and hope. The most glorified of these characteristics is that of success against all odds. The ethic of hard work can be found in the life of young James Gatz, whose focus on becoming a great man is carefully documented in his "Hopalong Cassidy" journal. When Mr Gatz shows the tattered book to Nick, he declares, "'Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something. Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that.'" (pg 182) The journal portrays the continual struggle for self-improvement which has defined the image of America as a land of opportunity. The product of hard work is the wistful Jay Gatsby, who epitomizes
the purest characteristic of the American Dream: everlasting hope. His burning desire to win Daisy's love symbolizes the basis of the old dream: an ethereal goal and a never-ending search for the opportunity to reach that goal. Gatsby is first seen late at night, "standing with his hands in his pockets" and supposedly "out to determine what share [is] his of our local heavens" (pg 25). Nick watches Gatsby's movements and comments:

"-he [stretches] out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and as far as I [am] from him I [can swear] he [is] trembling. Involuntarily I [glance] seaward-and [distinguish] nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might [be] the end of the dock." (pg 25)

By analyzing high society during the 1920s through the eyes of narrator Nick Carraway, the author reveals that the American Dream has transformed from a pure ideal of security into a convoluted scheme of materialistic power. In support of this message, Fitzgerald highlights the original aspects as well as the new aspects of the American Dream in his tragic story to illustrate that a once impervious dream is now lost forever to the American people.

Gatsby's goal gives him a purpose in life and sets him apart from the rest of the upper class. He is constantly striving to reach Daisy, from the moment he is seen reaching towards her house in East Egg to the final days of his life, patiently waiting outside Daisy's house for hours when she has already decided to abandon her affair with him. Gatsby is distinguished as a man who retains some of the purest traits of the old dream, but loses them by attempting to reach his goals by wearing the dream's modern face.

Fitzgerald attributes the depravity of the modern dream to wealth, privilege, and the void of humanity that those aspects create. Money is clearly identified as the central proponent of the dream's destruction; it becomes easily entangled with hope and success, inevitably replacing their places in the American Dream with materialism. This replacement is evident in Gatsby's use of illegal practices and underground connections to attain his enormous fortune. His ostentatious parties, boundless mansion, and lavish clothing are all signs of his unknowing corruption. His ability to evade the law, demonstrated when his traffic violation is ignored by a police officer, reveals his use of status and privilege to get what he needs. Although Gatsby's rise to prominence is symbolic of the nature of the new dream, the most odious qualities of that dream are evident in Daisy and Tom Buchanan, who live their lives with no hopes and no regrets because the true foundation of their characters is their opulence. While Daisy is never heard from again after Gatsby's death, Nick confronts Tom one last time, at which point Gatsby's rival responds: "I told him the truth... What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him" (pg 187). Tom admits to the fact that he is responsible for Gatsby's murder and Wilson's suicide, but continues to claim innocence because he has never known guilt nor shame as a member of the established elite. Through Nick, Fitzgerald pinpoints the effect of the modern dream on the upper class, thus condemning an entire people and its revered society:

"It couldn't forgive him or like him but I saw what he had done was, to him, entirely justified... They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made... " (pg 187)

Nick realizes that Tom and Daisy represent a class of heartless citizens who have attained success at the cost of dehumanization. Their vast wealth blocks out all inspiration and all true emotion, resulting in a void of apathy buttressed by status and power.

At the end of the novel, Fitzgerald creates a sense of utter hopelessness to prove that the purity of the American Dream is dead with the examples Daisy's baby, Gatsby's death, and Wilson's suicide. The first hint of this tragic loss is the introduction of the Buchanans' daughter, whom Daisy refers to as "Blessed Precious." When the girl is brought into the Buchanan's salon, Nick observes an obvious disturbance in Gatsby's attitude, thinking, "Gatsby and I in turn [lean] down and [take] the small reluctant hand. Afterwards he [keeps] looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he [has] ever really believed in its existence before" (pg 123). Daisy then calls her child an "absolute little dream," crushing all hopes Gatsby has of truly recreating the past. Society's complete replacement of the American Dream with materialism is pointed out moments later, when Nick and Gatsby attempt to discern the charm in Daisy's voice. At the moment Gatsby blurts out, "Her voice is full of money," Nick stumbles across a revelation which changes his entire view of society:
“That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it. . . . High in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl. . . .” (pg 127)

At this point, all of Daisy’s charm and beauty is stripped away, leaving nothing but money to be admired underneath. The dream Gatsby has been so inexorably pursuing is ripped apart into dollar bills as he discovers that for years he has been pursuing not love, but cold, hard, money, hidden behind the disguise of a human face. Subsequently, when Gatsby dies, any chance the American Dream has of surviving in the dehumanized modern world dies with him. Nick later speculates on Gatsby’s last thoughts before death, conjecturing, "He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass" (pg 169). The hopes and dreams which have strengthened and uplifted Gatsby are shattered as he lies in the pool, dazed and confused in a world which he no longer understands. After shooting Gatsby, George Wilson, Fitzgerald’s symbolization of the common man struggling to achieve his own success within the realm of the modern dream, commits suicide. The deaths of a rich man and a poor man, both pushing themselves towards the same impossible goal, mirror the death of the original dream on which America was founded. At the end of the novel, Nick returns to the Midwest with this disconcerting knowledge, reflecting on Gatsby’s life as the struggle of the American people in a society losing its humanity: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (pg 189). The dream is now utterly lost and can never be resurrected.

Through the unfolding events of a doomed romance, Fitzgerald simultaneously unfolds the tragic fate of American values. Gatsby and the other characters of his story act as vessels for the author’s true message—the American Dream, once a pure and mighty ideal, has been buried and is pressed into the ground by the inhuman void of money. Nick Carraway conveys this message as an outsider, an honest man who is witnessing the entire ordeal as an observer. The Great Gatsby is not the eulogy of a man named Jay Gatsby; rather, it is the eulogy of an institution which once was, but is now gone and can never be.

NASTY NICK: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE UNJUDGEMENTAL NARRATOR...

Nick Carraway has a special place in this novel. He is not just one character among several, it is through his eyes and ears that we form our opinions of the other characters.

Often, readers of this novel confuse Nick’s stance towards those characters and the world he describes with those of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s because the fictional world he has created closely resembles the world he himself experienced. But not every narrator is the voice of the author. Before considering the gap between author and narrator, we should remember how, as readers, we respond to the narrator’s perspective, especially when that voice belongs to a character who, like Nick, is an active participant in the story.

When we read any work of fiction, no matter how realistic or fabulous, as readers, we undergo a suspension of disbelief. The fictional world creates a new set of boundaries, making possible or credible events and reactions that might not commonly occur in the real world, but which have logic or plausibility to them in that fictional world.

In order for this to be convincing, we trust the narrator. We take on his perspective, if not totally, then substantially. He becomes our eyes and ears in this world and we have to see him as reliable if we are to proceed with the story’s development.

In The Great Gatsby, Nick goes to some length to establish his credibility, indeed his moral integrity, in telling this story about this ‘great’ man called Gatsby. He begins with a reflection on his own upbringing, quoting his father’s words about Nick’s ‘advantages’, which we could assume were material but, he soon makes clear, were spiritual or moral advantages.
Nick wants his reader to know that his upbringing gave him the moral fibre with which to withstand and pass judgment on an amoral world, such as the one he had observed the previous summer. He says, rather pompously, that as a consequence of such an upbringing, he is ‘inclined to reserve all judgements’ about other people, but then goes on to say that such ‘tolerance . . . has a limit’.

This is the first sign that we can trust this narrator to give us an even-handed insight to the story that is about to unfold. But, as we later learn, he neither reserves all judgements nor does his tolerance reach its limit. Nick is very partial in his way of telling the story about several characters.

He admits early into the story that he makes an exception of judging Gatsby, for whom he is prepared to suspend both the moral code of his upbringing and the limit of intolerance, because Gatsby had an ‘extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness’. This inspired him to a level of friendship and loyalty that Nick seems unprepared to extend towards others in the novel.

Nick overlooks the moral implications of Gatsby’s bootlegging; his association with speakeasies, and with Meyer Wolfsheim, the man rumoured to have fixed the World Series in 1919. Yet, he is contemptuous of Jordan Baker for cheating in a mere golf game. And while he says that he is prepared to forgive this sort of behaviour in a woman: ‘It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame too deeply - I was casually sorry, and then I forgot,’ it seems that he cannot accept her for being ‘incurably dishonest’ and then reflects that his one ‘cardinal virtue’ is that he is ‘one of the few honest people’ he has ever known. When it comes to judging women - or perhaps only potential lovers - not only are they judged, they are judged by how well they stand up to his own virtues.

Nick leaves the mid-West after he returns from the war, understandably restless and at odds with the traditional, conservative values that, from his account, haven’t changed in spite of the tumult of the war. It is this insularity from a changed world no longer structured by the values that had sent young men to war, that decides him to go East, to New York, and learn about bonds.

But after one summer out East, a remarkable summer for this morally advantaged young man, he ‘decided to come back home’ to the security of what is familiar and traditional. He sought a return to the safety of a place where houses were referred to by the names of families that had inhabited them for generations; a security that Nick decides makes Westerners ‘subtly unadaptable to Eastern life’. By this stage, the East had become for him the ‘grotesque’ stuff of his nightmares.

What does this return home tell us about Nick? It is entirely reasonable that he would be adversely affected by the events of that summer: the death of a woman he met briefly and indirectly, who was having an affair with his cousin’s husband and whose death leads to the death of his next-door neighbour. His decision to return home to that place that he had so recently condemned for its insularity, makes one wonder what Nick was doing during the war? If the extent and the pointlessness of death and destruction during the war had left him feeling he’d outgrown the comfort and security of the West, why has the armoury he acquired from the war abandoned him after this one summer’s events?

Don’t we perhaps feel a little let down that Nick runs away from his experience in the East in much the same way that he has run away from that ‘tangle back home’ to whom he writes letters and signs ‘with love’, but clearly doesn’t genuinely offer? Is it unfair to want more from our narrator, to show some kind of
development in his emotional make-up? It is unfair to suggest that this return home is like a retreat from life and a kind of emotional regression?

The only genuine affection in the novel is shown by Nick towards Gatsby. He admires Gatsby's optimism, an attitude that is out of step with the sordidness of the times. Fitzgerald illustrates this sordidness not just in the Valley of Ashes, but right there beneath the thin veneer of the opulence represented by Daisy and Tom. Nick is 'in love' with Gatsby's capacity to dream and ability to live as if the dream were to come true, and it is this that clouds his judgement of Gatsby and therefore obscures our grasp on Gatsby.

When Gatsby takes Nick to one side and tells him of his origins, he starts to say that he was 'the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West - all dead now . . . '. The truth (of his origins) doesn't matter to Gatsby; what matters to him is being part of Daisy's world or Daisy being a part of his. Gatsby's sense of what is true and real is of an entirely other order to Nick's. If he were motivated by truth, Gatsby would still be poor Jay Gatz with a hopelessly futile dream.

Recall the passage where Nick says to Gatsby that you can't repeat the past, and Gatsby's incredulity at this. Nick begins to understand for the first time the level of Gatsby's desire for a Daisy who no longer exists. It astounds Nick: 'I gathered that he wanted to recover something . . . that had gone into loving Daisy . . . out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees . . . Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something - an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago . . . '}

These are Nick's words. Whose 'appalling sentimentality' is operating here? Has Nick reported any of Gatsby's words - which comprise so little of the novel - to suggest that he would even begin to put his love for Daisy in these 'sentimental' terms? Is not this excess of sentiment in fact Nick's sentiment for Gatsby or perhaps Nick's attempt at displaying those 'rather literary' days he had in college? Or both?

We should consider the distance that Fitzgerald has created between his presence in the story and Nick's and their implications. Fitzgerald has created a most interesting character in Nick because he is very much a fallible storyteller.

When an author unsettles an accepted convention in the art of storytelling by creating a narrator like Nick, it draws attention to the story as fiction, as artifice. Ironically, in doing this, he has created in Nick a figure who more closely resembles an average human being and thus has heightened the realism of the novel.