

The Great Gatsby: Discussion Questions

- 1.** What is the American Dream? How does Gatsby represent this dream? Does the novel praise or condemn Gatsby's dream? Has the American dream changed since Gatsby's time?
- 2.** Think about the two worlds, the Midwest and the East, as Fitzgerald describes them, and what they represent for Nick and for Gatsby.
- 3.** Compare and contrast Gatsby's social class with that of Tom and Daisy Buchanan. How does geography contribute to the definition of social class in The Great Gatsby?
- 4.** What is Nick Carraway's role in the novel? Consider Nick's father's advice in chapter one: "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." Does telling the story from Nick's point of view make it more believable?
- 5.** What part of his past is Gatsby trying to recapture? Is he successful? According to the novel, what is it about the past that draws us both forward and leaves us stuck where we are? How are we to be set free from this constant revision of the past, which clouds the future?
- 6.** What is the meaning of the title? Is Gatsby great, or not? (think both of perceived greatness vs. actual greatness and how this relates to theme)?
- 7.** What is the role of women in the text? Is love relevant? Are relationships meaningful? Explain.
- 8.** Discuss Fitzgerald's use of symbols, such as the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, the green light on Daisy's dock, and the valley of ashes.
- 9.** What is the effect of us getting the information out of order? We don't know the truth about Gatsby until Chapter Six, and we don't know the rest of the truth until Chapter Eight. We get even more information when Jay's father shows up; what's the deal?
- 10.** How well does the novel represent the Jazz Age (society and literature at the time it was published)?
- 11.** This novel likely wouldn't work if it were set at a different time and in a different place. To what extent is Gatsby a victim of the changes of his time?
- 12.** Is the novel still relevant? How does The Great Gatsby relate to current society?