

## AP English: Major Works Data Sheet

<p><b>Title:</b> <u>The Great Gatsby</u></p> <p><b>Author:</b> F. Scott Fitzgerald</p> <p><b>Date of Publication:</b> 1925</p> <p><b>Genre:</b> Modernist novel, Jazz Age novel, novel of manners</p>	<p><b>Biographical information about the author:</b></p> <p>F. Scott Fitzgerald was a Jazz Age novelist and short story writer. He was born on September 24, 1896 in Saint Paul, Minnesota to an upper middle class family. He enrolled in Princeton University but dropped out to join the army. He fell in love with Zelda Sayre but she broke off the engagement as a result of his unsteady income. Later on, when Fitzgerald became a famous and wealthy author, Zelda Sayre agreed to marry him. They enjoyed fame and fortune, and Fitzgerald's novels reflected their lavish lifestyles. Towards the end of his life, F. Scott Fitzgerald struggled with alcoholism and Zelda's mental illness.</p>
<p><b>Historical information about period of publication:</b></p> <p>The novel was published in the 1920s, an era that was also known as the "Roaring Twenties." It was a time of economic prosperity and America became a consumer society. In addition, there were many social and cultural reforms such as the increasing popularity of Jazz music and flapper women, who went against society's acceptable behavior. The new, younger generation was open to reform and urbanization. However, many Americans from the older generation disliked this new urban mass culture.</p>	<p><b>Characteristics of the genre:</b></p> <p>Novels of manners re-create a social world and notes its customs and values. Modernist literature often involved adapting to a new world or type of society. These novels often have open unresolved endings.</p>
<p><b>Plot summary:</b></p> <p>Nick Carraway is young man hat has moved from the Midwest to New York to study bonds. In New York, Nick rents a home in the West Egg district which is inhabited by those with New Money; those that have not had their fortune long enough to be associated with the prestige that comes with having wealth for many generations. Nick unknowingly moves in beside Jay Gatsby, a charismatic man who throws extravagant parties every Saturday night. While in New York, Nick connects with his cousin, Daisy who lives in a large estate in East Egg, the Old Money district, with her husband Tom. Nick also meets their friend, Jordan Baker, with whom he establishes a romantic relationship. Nick soon finds out that Daisy and Gatsby had a past relationship that Gatsby is intent on continuing, and he gets sucked into the midst of the drama. Gatsby uses Nick to reestablish the connection between him and Daisy when he asks Nick to invite Daisy to tea, without her husband being present. After an awkward evening, Daisy and Gatsby reestablish their relationship. Tom becomes very suspicious of Gatsby and is appalled that his wife is having an affair with him even though he has been carrying on an open affair with a woman named Myrtle Wilson. Myrtle lives with her husband in The Valley of ashes, a poor area between West Egg and New York City. When the relationship between Gatsby and Daisy escalate and Daisy decides to leave Tom, Tom demands that the group (Tom, Daisy, Nick, Gatsby, Jordan) travel to Manhattan where he exposes Gatsby for the fraud that he is. Daisy loses all intention to run off with Gatsby. On the way back to East Egg, Daisy is driving Gatsby's car and in a panic, accidentally runs over and kills Myrtle Wilson. The distraught Mr. Wilson then seeks vengeance on his wife's murderer and is told by Tom that it was Gatsby that was driving the car. Mr. Wilson finds Gatsby at his pool and shoots him to death and then shoots himself. Nick has a funeral for Gatsby for which no one shows up but Gatsby's father and one of the guests that had come to a party Gatsby had hosted. Nick leaves West Egg and severs all connection with the people he had met while in New York. He is disgusted by the way Gatsby was treated and by the truths that he had learned about the people of the Old Money world that eventually lead to his return to the Midwest.</p>	

**Describe the author's style:**

The author, Scott Fitzgerald has a descriptive style in his book, *The Great Gatsby*. He allows the narrator of the story to pay attention to seemingly insignificant details.

This description of the woman shows that she is a thick woman but she is not so chubby that she becomes unattractive. She also seems very intimidating and confident from the description of her filling up the doorway.

Near the end of the book, on the day that Gatsby is exposed as a criminal, it is very hot. Nick describes the heat using Daisy. This showed how depressing and stifling the heat actually was and gives the reader a sense of weariness and frustration.

**Examples that demonstrate style:**

Nick will frequently spend multiple sentences to describe the way someone walks, or he will use events to emphasize descriptions of how people look and act. His diction is laced with words such as "sauntered" as opposed to "walk," this word connotes something sexual and slow.

"Then I heard footsteps on a stairs and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can" (*Gatsby* 29).

"Her voice struggled on through the heat, beating against it, molding its senselessness into forms" (*Gatsby* 125).

**Memorable quotations:**

1. "I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."
2. "He had one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced, or seemed to face, the whole external world for an instant and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself."
3. "The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end."
4. "That's my Middle West . . . the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark. . . . I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly inadaptable to Eastern life."
5. "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 then one fine morning—  
So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

**1. Significance of quotations:**

1. Daisy says these words to Nick and Jordan as she describes her hopes for her child. Daisy hopes that her daughter will grow up to be simple and beautiful because that is the only way that she will be able to completely enjoy life. This quote reveals more about Daisy because it basically describes what she wishes to become.
2. This is Nick's first close observation of Jay Gatsby. This description captures Gatsby's charisma as well as demonstrates how Gatsby is viewed by everyone else. His smile also is an example of the persona that Gatsby created when he was seventeen years old and it is part of the man that he wished to become.
3. Nick finally gives the readers an insight into Gatsby's past and he uses this comparison between Gatsby and Jesus to highlight the fact that Gatsby created another identity for himself. Gatsby transforms himself into the ideal person (the "Platonic conception of himself") when he was a teenager and he has not strayed away from this persona even though many obstacles have been thrown in his way to prevent him from fulfilling his dream.
4. Throughout this book, locations in the United States have been associated with themes and ideas. The East is affiliated with decadence, parties, pursuit of wealth, a fast-paced lifestyle while the western side is associated with more traditional and moral values. This quote exemplifies the fact that the characters are not meant for a lifestyle like the one that is associated with New York.
5. Nick comments here on the struggle of humans to achieve their goals by constantly regressing to the past and trying to re-create it, therefore we are unable to look to the future and move on from the past. Gatsby's actions epitomize this idea as he struggles to re-create his love with Daisy Buchanan and strive to have a future with the woman he supposedly loves.

<b>Characters</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Role in story</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>
Nick Carraway	Narrator	He narrates the story in his perspective, often adding his own comments and personal judgments about the people around him. He is also an outsider who is new to the wealth and certain behaviors which he associates with the East Coast.	Honest, Judgmental
Jay Gatsby	Protagonist	Jay Gatsby represents the “nouveau riche.” Although he gains wealth very quickly, he doesn’t receive the respect that comes with being born into an affluent family. Gatsby also encompasses the “American Dream”, in which even the poor have the chance to become rich.	Ambitious, Naïve, Pretentious
Daisy Buchanan	Jay Gatsby’s romantic interest, Tom Buchanan’s wife	Daisy Buchanan represents the typical woman who comes from an old money background. She runs over Myrtle Wilson but isn’t held responsible This shows the idea that rich people can get away with anything.	Beautiful, Materialistic, Graceful, enchanting
Tom Buchanan	Daisy’s Husband, Gatsby’s rival	Tom Buchanan represents the old money society. His characteristics help to emphasize the sharp contrast between him and Gatsby. He impedes Gatsby’s attempts to gain acceptance into the wealthy old money society. He also has an affair with Myrtle and once again, this illustrates the idea that the wealthy can get away with anything.	Close-minded, racist, haughty, disdainful, immoral
Jordan Baker	Daisy’s friend and professional golfer. She has a brief romantic relationship with Nick Carraway.	Jordan Baker represents the change in how women behave. She is free-spirited and doesn’t care about society’s views. She cheats and gets away with it. She also leads a fairly luxurious life in which she does nothing but lay around, yet she still complains, and of all things, about being bored.	Free-spirited, deceitful, superficial

Myrtle Wilson	Wife of George Wilson Tom Buchanan's mistress	Myrtle Wilson is similar to Gatsby in many ways. She desperately wants to be a part of the old money society. Her desire for wealth leads to her secret affair with Tom Buchanan. She doesn't appreciate her own husband because he lacks the financial support that she wants. She believes that she deserves better.	Desperate, superficial, ungrateful
George Wilson	Husband of Myrtle Wilson	George Wilson represents the poor. The other characters, especially Tom and Myrtle, treat him with disrespect. He works for his money honestly and is loyal to his wife. Despite his good intentions, he is still seen as inferior to the people of the wealthy class.	Hardworking, Diligent, Loyal, Obedient
Meyer Wolfsheim	Fixed the World Series, Business partners with Gatsby	Meyer Wolfsheim represents those who are willing to do anything in order to succeed. It relates to the image of the "high-bouncing lover."	Sly, deceptive
Mr. Gatz	Father of Jay Gatsby	Mr. Gatz is extremely proud of his son when he sees that Gatsby has acquired all this wealth. He equates success with monetary gain, much like how society often views success.	Poor, understanding

<p><b>Setting:</b> The 4 major places the book takes place are Manhattan, Valley of Ashes (working class neighborhood), West Egg (new money), and East Egg (old money). Nick narrates the story during his summer in 1922.</p>	<p><b>Significance of opening scene:</b> The opening scene introduces the narrator. It allows the reader to get a sense of who Nick is and whether or not they can trust his judgment. The validity of the rest of the story is determined through what Nick tells about himself. He claims that he is a very objective person; however he explains that he just avoids expressing his judgments. Therefore, his account of the story is clearly going to be somewhat biased. The way people are portrayed will also be biased because Nick is skeptical about everyone and thinks their problems are overwhelming.</p>
<p><b>Symbols</b> Green light: Money. Daisy. The life that Gatsby wants but can't have. He wants to be a part of the Old Money world and live with his dream girl but he is not able to.</p> <p>Yellow Car: Gatsby's lack of class and inability to identify with the Old Money World.</p> <p>Clock falling: shows that Gatsby wants to preserve the past. He wants to rekindle this relationship that he's had with Daisy that is essentially broken but he is unwilling to admit.</p> <p>East Egg: The Old Money World. These people have had their riches for generations and have no desire to neither flaunt their wealth nor openly associate with those who are not of their community.</p> <p>West Egg: This represents the New Money World. These people desperately try to get into the world of the Old Money but fail at their attempts. They always flaunt their riches so that they may gain the attention of others.</p>	<p><b>Significance of closing scene:</b> The closing scene sums up Gatsby's purpose in life and what he represented in the book. Throughout the book, Gatsby tries to hold on to the past while everyone else is moving on. He is described as having "the mind of God" and is able to romp and dream. Nick explains in the closing scene that Gatsby has taught the world how to dream and to want things that are seemingly unattainable. These things, in essence, can make time cease to exist and this way, people can be forever connected with their past.</p> <p><b>Old AP questions:</b> <b>2012.</b> "And, after all, our surroundings influence our lives and characters as much as fate, destiny or any supernatural agency." Pauline Hopkins, <i>Contending Forces</i> Choose a novel or play in which cultural, physical, or geographical surroundings shape psychological or moral traits in a character. Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how surroundings affect this character and illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.</p> <p><b>2010.</b> Palestinian American literary theorist and cultural critic Edward Said has written that "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted." Yet Said has also said that exile can become "a potent, even enriching" experience. Select a</p>

**Symbols Continued:**

Valley of Ashes: represents the working class people. These people are oppressed by the Old Money world and serve at the whim of the Old Money. They don't have many rights nor privileges and are dependent on others to make a living.

Eyes of Dr. T.J Eckleberg: represent a stagnant higher power. This force is all seeing and all knowing but does nothing to help the people below. The power needs help itself. This can be a representation of the corrupted government at the time that saw the imbalanced distribution of wealth and the oppression that went along with it, but did nothing to stop what was happening.

novel, play, or epic in which a character experiences such a rift and becomes cut off from "home," whether that home is the character's birthplace, family, homeland, or other special place. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the character's experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

**2007.** In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present activities, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character's relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

**Possible themes / Topics of discussion:**

- Quest for Wealth
  - Eastern Lifestyle vs. Western Lifestyle
  - Social Values
  - The American Dream
  - Can the past be repeated?

## Bibliography

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Old AP Questions:

<http://mseffie.com/AP/APOpenQuestions.html>