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American Studies English

***The Great Gatsby* Guided Reading Questions**

**Chapter One**

1. The narrator of *The Great Gatsby,* Nick Carraway*,* relates that his father once told him, “Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone…just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages you’ve had” (1). What does this advice mean? How would you categorize the tone of these words?
2. How does Nick say he felt when he came back from the East last autumn?
3. Who is the only person Nick claims is exempt from his reaction? Why?
4. Where is Nick originally from and what is his family background like?
5. What does Nick say he did directly after college?
6. Why does Nick say he decided to move East?
7. Where does Nick live? Describe the setting of his house.
8. What is the difference between East Egg and West Egg?
9. Why does Nick drive to East Egg?
10. How is Tom Buchanan described? What does he look like? What sport did he play in college?
11. When Nick meets Daisy she is sitting with another woman on an enormous couch “buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon” (12). He also describes her “absurd, charming little laugh (13) and her comment, “I’m p-paralyzed with happiness” (13). How would you describe Daisy, based on this passage?
12. Who is the other woman with Daisy? Who does she suggest that Nick must know? How does Daisy respond to this?
13. What subject is Tom obsessed with reading about? What does this suggest about his character?
14. Why do you think Daisy says Nick reminds her of “an absolute rose”(19)?
15. While Tom takes a phone call and Daisy excuses herself, what information does Jordan Baker reveal to Nick?
16. Daisy tells Nick that Tom was nowhere to be found when her daughter was born. Why do you think she might say that she hopes her daughter will be “a beautiful little fool”(21)?
17. How does Nick feel when he leaves the Buchanan home?
18. What does Nick see when he returns home?

Draw the setting of *The Great Gatsby.*  Include East Egg, West Egg, Nick’s house, Gatsby’s house, and Tom and Daisy’s house.

**Chapter Two**

1. The “Valley of Ashes” is a trash-burning site on the way from New York City to Long Island. Fitzgerald writes that it is, “a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air” (27). What does the figurative language in this passage suggest about the lifestyle of the people who live in this area?
2. What is being referred to in the description of “Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg”? What might this symbolize?
3. Why does Tom insist on getting off of the train in the Valley of Ashes?
4. Who is George Wilson? How is he described?
5. How is George’s wife, Myrtle Wilson, described? How does she treat George?
6. What does Tom tell Myrtle to do?
7. What does Myrtle ask Tom to buy her while they are in the city? Do you think she and Tom will take good care of it?
8. What happens to Nick while he is at the party?
9. Who is Catherine?
10. Who are the McKees?
11. How does Myrtle act while she is hosting the party? Why do you think she behaves this way?
12. What rumor does Catherine tell Nick about Gatsby?
13. Myrtle says about George, “I married him because I thought he was a gentleman…I thought he knew something about breeding but he wasn’t fit to lick my shoe” (38) and then judges him for borrowing a suit on their wedding day. Why does Myrtle reject George? What does this suggest about her character?
14. What has happened to the dog over the course of the party?
15. What violent act does Tom commit? Why?

**Chapter Three**

1. How would you describe the parties at Nick’s neighbor’s (Gatsby’s) house?
2. What judgments does Nick make about Gatsby’s parties? How does this contradict an earlier statement in the book?
3. Nick comments that on the first time he went to one of Gatsby’s parties he was probably one of the only guests that Gatsby had invited and that some “came and went without having met Gatsby at all” (45). What does this suggest about Gatsby’s motive in throwing his parties? What does this suggest about the motives on behalf of the guests to attend the parties?
4. Who does Nick encounter at the party?
5. When a girl tells a story about Gatsby replacing an evening gown that was torn on a chair at his party, it prompts some guests to gossip about Gatsby. What are some rumors that are told about him?
6. When Jordan and Nick search for Gatsby and wander into the library, they encounter a middle-aged man with owl-eyed spectacles. What is he so impressed by?
7. In the 1920s, the pages of books needed to be cut by the reader to separate them. Has Gatsby cut the pages in his books? What can you infer about why Gatsby has such a vast library?
8. Who is the man who talks to Nick about the war and invites him out on his hydroplane?

1. Why does Gatsby excuse himself from the conversation?
2. Where does Nick notice Gatsby is standing while the orchestra is playing a special selection? What is ironic about this?
3. What message does Gatsby’s butler relate to Jordan? How does Jordan react when she leaves the library?
4. What is the “tumultuous scene” (58) that Nick observes?
5. Who is the passenger of the car? What is condition is the driver in?
6. What might this scene suggest about the excessive lifestyle of the people who frequent Gatsby’s parties?
7. During the midsummer, who does Nick start seeing? How does he describe his feelings towards her?
8. What is Jordan Baker’s major character flaw?
9. Nick says, “I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known” (64). What do you think the purpose of this comment is? Do you believe him?

**Chapter Four**

1. What are some additional rumors that are circulating about Gatsby?
2. What is do the descriptions Nick provides of Gatsby’s guests have in common?
3. When Gatsby takes Nick to lunch in his garish car, what does he tell him is “God’s truth” (69) about his background? What does Gatsby say that might suggest this is not necessarily true?
4. Where does Gatsby claim he received the war medal that he shows Nick?
5. What picture does Gatsby show Nick? How does Nick react to this?
6. What vague reason does Gatsby give as to why he has mediated an afternoon tea later between Nick and Jordan?
7. How is Gatsby able to get out of a speeding ticket?
8. When Gatsby takes Nick to lunch, who does he introduce Nick to? Why does this man think Gatsby has brought Nick to lunch? What does this reveal about Gatsby?
9. What does Wolfshiem say about Gatsby when he is alone with Nick?
10. What does Gatsby reveal is Wolfshiem’s business and “claim to fame”?
11. When the two men encounter Tom Buchanan, what does Gatsby do after he is introduced to Tom?
12. Chapter Four is interrupted with Jordan’s narration about the past (remember, she and Nick have tea in the afternoon). What does Jordan say Daisy was like when she was eighteen and living in Louisville?
13. Who was the lieutenant that Jordan saw having a romantic conversation with Daisy in her car?
14. What happened that caused Daisy and her family to not be on speaking terms?
15. What happened to Daisy on the night of her elaborate wedding to Tom? What item would she not let go of?
16. What happened to the item?
17. Consider that Daisy married Tom despite the clear grievances she had about the marriage. What insight does this give us into her character?
18. Why did Tom make the papers? Why do you think Daisy didn’t leave him?
19. Why did Gatsby buy his house? What can you conclude about his feelings for Daisy?
20. What does Gatsby want Nick to do? Why?

**Chapter Five**

1. Why does Gatsby deliver so many goods and services to Nick’s house?
2. What is the weather like on the day that Daisy is supposed to come for tea?
3. How does Gatsby act while he is waiting for Daisy?
4. When Nick leads Daisy to the living room, he notices that Gatsby is gone. When he knocks on the door and enters Nick’s house, he has an awkward reunion with Daisy and almost knocks over a broken clock. What might this clock be a symbol of?
5. Why do you think Gatsby wants to take Daisy to his house?
6. Who is Mr. Klipspringer?
7. How does Daisy react to Gatsby’s home? What does this suggest about her character?
8. Gatsby makes an observation about the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. What significance does this light hold for Gatsby?
9. What is the name of the man in the large photograph that Nick asks Gatsby about? What else does Gatsby say about him?
10. How would you describe Gatsby’s attitude towards Daisy? Explain.

**Chapter Six**

1. Chapter 6 provides the reader with ample background information concerning Gatsby’s past. What is Gatsby’s real name? When did he change his name?
2. What does the comment, “I suppose he’d had the name ready for a long time…”(104) suggest about James Gatz?
3. What were James Gatz’s parents like?
4. Why did Jamez Gatz drop out of St. Olaf’s college in southern Minnesota? How long was he there for?
5. How old was Dan Cody when his yacht anchored on Lake Superior? How did he become wealthy?
6. What type of work did Gatsby do for Dan Cody?
7. Even though Gatsby did not receive the inheritance that was left to him by Dan Cody because of Ella Kaye, what *did* Gatsby receive from Dan Cody?
8. After staying away from Gatsby’s for several weeks, who does Nick encounter while at Gatsby’s with Jordan?
9. What does Gatsby reveal to Tom?
10. Why does Tom think it is inappropriate for Gatsby to accept the dinner invitation from Tom and Sloane’s female companion? What does this suggest about Gatsby?
11. Why does Tom take Daisy to Gatsby’s party?
12. What is Daisy’s overall attitude about the party? Tom’s?
13. Why is Gatsby so upset at the end of the party?
14. According to Nick, what does Gatsby want Daisy to do?
15. Nick tells Gatsby, “You can’t repeat the past” (116), to which Gatsby replies, “Why of course you can” (116). How does his desire to “repeat the past” function as Gatsby’s flaw?

**Chapter Seven**

1. Why do Gatsby’s parties stop? Why has he fired all of his servants?
2. What is the weather like on the day that Gatsby and Nick go to lunch at Daisy and Tom’s house?
3. Who is Tom talking on the phone to?
4. Why does Jordan call Daisy a “low, vulgar girl” (123)?
5. Who is Pammy? How does Daisy treat her?
6. What causes Tom to realize Gatsby and Daisy are having an affair?
7. After Tom suggests switching cars with Gatsby for the drive into the city, who ends else ends up in Gatsby’s car (that Tom is driving)? Who is in the other car?
8. When Tom stops to get gas at George Wilson’s, why is Tom startled when George says that Myrtle wants to go west?
9. Why else does Wilson say he wants to get away?
10. What assumptions does Myrtle Wilson make about Tom when she peeks out the window?
11. Once the group arrives at the Park Plaza, Gatsby and Tom share some tense words. Jordan and Daisy reminisce about a man named Biloxi who crashed Tom and Daisy’s wedding. Why does this conversation isolate Gatsby?
12. Why did Daisy marry Tom, according to Gatsby? What does Gatsby insist on? Do you think he is being realistic?
13. What does Daisy say that upsets Gatsby?
14. What does Tom reveal (in front of Daisy) about Gatsby’s line of work?
15. What car does Tom send Gatsby and Daisy home in?
16. What does Nick remember? Why is this significant?
17. What does the coffee joint owner, Michaelis, learn that George Wilson has done when he tries to comfort him?
18. Who is in the car that hits Myrtle? Who is driving when the accident happens?
19. Why does Myrtle run out into the street “waving her hands and shouting” (144) after her fight with George? Consider what she saw at the gas station when Tom, Nick, and Jordan were driving into New York.
20. How does Tom react to Myrtle’s death? Who does he think was driving the car?
21. Why does Nick refuse to go into the Buchanan’s house?
22. Who does Nick find on the outskirts of the Buchanan’s property? Why is he waiting there?
23. When Gatsby explains the accident to Nick, he says, “Well first Daisy turned away from the woman towards the other car. Then she lost her nerve and turned back” (151). Why is this significant?
24. What is the significance of the fact that at the end of the night, Daisy goes into the kitchen and talks to Tom?

**Chapter Eight**

1. Why does Gatsby refuse to go away when Nick suggests traveling to Atlantic City or Montreal?
2. Why was Gatsby so attracted to Daisy when he first met her?
3. Why did Daisy marry Tom Buchanan?
4. Why did Gatsby go to Louisville when he came back from France?
5. Why does Gatsby’s gardener want to drain the pool? Why does Gatsby tell him not to?
6. What does Nick mean when he tells Gatsby, “They’re a rotten crowd…you’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.” (162)?
7. What does Jordan say to Nick on the telephone that suggests she is selfish?
8. What did George Wilson announce about the yellow car while Michaelis tried to comfort him?
9. What did George Wilson find that led him to believe Myrtle was being unfaithful? What does Wilson believe is the connection between this and Myrtle’s death?
10. How does T.J. Eckleberg affect Mr. Wilson?
11. What happens to Gatsby while he is floating in the pool? What happens to Wilson?

**Chapter Nine**

1. In the aftermath of the death, who is the only person who seems to care about Gatsby?
2. In the aftermath of Gatsby’s death, Nick learns that Daisy and Tom have left town, and Meyer Wolfshiem is conveniently unavailable as well. However, Henry C. Gatz, Gatsby’s father, does arrive for the funeral. How is Mr. Gatz described? How does he react to Gatsby’s house?
3. How was James Gatz’s childhood schedule consistent with the adult Gatsby’s behavior?
4. Who are the only people that show up at Gatsby’s funeral? Considering Gatsby’s parties, why is this ironic?
5. What social commentary might Fitzgerald be making through Gatsby’s isolation and loneliness?
6. How has Gatsby’s death changed Nick’s attitude towards the East?
7. Why does Nick call Tom and Daisy “careless people” (187)?
8. What insight does the last line of the novel, “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (189) provide into the book’s themes?