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The Great Gatsby
BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD



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Table of Contents

Pre-Reading	
Historical Context	4
Pre-Reading – Chapter I	
Geographic Locations.....	24
Chapter I	
Inference and Characterization	28
Narration	40
Chapter I – End	
Point of View and Theme	44
Chapter I	
Reading for Details	52
Chapter II	
Style and Imagery	56
Characterization	62
Similarities and Differences	66
Character Motivation	70
Chapters II and III	
Relating Literature to Life.....	82
Chapter III	
Figurative Language	84
Imagery and Writing.....	88
Relating Literature to Life.....	90
Imagery.....	94
Chapter IV	
Inference.....	96
Writing	98
Characterization and Point of View	100
Interpretations	104
Point of View	106

Chapter V	
Point of View	108
Imagery	110
Characterization	112
Relating Literature to Life.....	114
Poem.....	118
Visual Details.....	120
Chapter VI	
Writing	122
Chapters I and VII	
Relating a Novel to Real Life	124
Chapter VII	
Writing	128
Character's Reactions to Stress	130
Chapters VIII and IX	
Setting.....	134
Real-Life Situations.....	136
Chapters 7 – 9	
Plot, Characterization, and Theme.....	140
Wrap-Up	
Thematic Symbol.....	144
Visual Images.....	150
Thematic Ideas	154
Appendices	
Terms and Definitions	160
Newspaper	162
Writing Poems	164
Small Group Learning	166
Procedures for Small Group Work	168
Small Group Evaluation Sheet.....	169
Student Roles in Group Discussions	170

All references come from the Scribner Paperback Fiction edition of *The Great Gatsby*, copyright 1953.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Historical Context

Objective: Familiarizing students with the historical context in which to view the plot and theme of this novel

Activity I

1. Read the article that follows, “The 1920s: The Real Deal”; in small groups, construct a one-page outline of the material.
2. Consider these five aspects of the period for purpose of an oral presentation:
 - The causes and effects of post World War I disillusionment
 - Economic growth and stock market activity
 - Legal and moral concerns of the day
 - The rising effect of the automobile
 - Entertainment and culture of the time

With each person in the group researching one of the aspects more deeply, prepare a talk show with one group member as moderator and the remaining group members as expert guests. Be prepared for questions from the audience. See appendices for information on Small Group work.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading – Chapter I

Geographic Locations

Objective: Reading for detail and for an appreciation of the relationship of geographic locations to plot

Activity

1. Nick gives us descriptions of Gatsby's mansion, saying:

“...[it] was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden.”

Later in the chapter, the Buchanan mansion is described with the following:

“Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials and brick walks and burning gardens...”

Nick tells us it is one of the “white palaces” that “glittered” along the water.

Look up pictures of mansions. What comes to your mind about the people who live in them and about what living in them would be like? Make a list in the following chart of advantages and disadvantages of living in a large, fancy mansion.

Write a paragraph about the ideas suggested about Gatsby and the Buchanans. Remember, Nick, in contrast, lives in what he says is “a weather beaten cardboard bungalow,” an “eyesore.”

2. Re-read Nick's explanation of his house in relation to Gatsby's mansion and Gatsby's house in relation to the Buchanans'.

“I lived at West Egg, the—well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them.”

Write a paragraph explanation of the ideas suggested by the positions of the houses in relation to each other. Why do you think Gatsby and Nick are in West Egg and the Buchanans in East Egg??

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter I

Reading for Details

Objective: Reading for details in order to locate specific geographic settings in the novel

Activity

On the map, mark where you think each of the following is and indicate the importance of each place and its location. Continue to mark the map and complete the notes as you read the novel.

Gatsby's House: _____

Daisy and Tom's House: _____

Nick's House: _____

The Ash Heap: _____

Myrtle and the Hotel: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter II

Characterization

Objective: Understanding character motivation

Activity

In Chapter II, each character seems to have an agenda of his or her own; each seems to be desiring something personal and searching for it. The problem is that the characters seem unaware of the effect their desires has on others.

Complete the following Motivations Chart by indicating what each character wants, what he or she is doing to accomplish this goal, and what happens to others as a result. The first one has been done for you as an example.

At the bottom of the chart, write a short explanation of the idea you think Fitzgerald is suggesting by the motivations, actions, and influence on others of these characters.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter III

Imagery

Objective: Visualizing characters from narrative description

Activity

Read the following section of text and draw a caricature or cartoon that represents the man described.

...we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles, was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

“What do you think?” he demanded impetuously.

“About what?”

He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

“About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They're real.”

“The books?”

He nodded.

“Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you.”

Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the “Stoddard Lectures.”

“See!” he cried triumphantly. “It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?”

He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf, muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse.

“Who brought you?” he demanded. “Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought.”

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully, without answering.

“I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt,” he continued. “Mrs. Claud Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I've been drunk for about a week now, and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library.”

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter V

Poem

Objective: Relating literature to life

Activity

Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road Not Taken," reveals the turning points or choices of life. The poem points out that we can never go back to those crossroads in our lives, that "way leads on to way"; each decision has a determining effect in our lives, and our decisions "make all the difference."

In this chapter, Gatsby offers Nick an opportunity to earn "a nice bit of money" with a "rather confidential sort of thing." Nick comments, "I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life."

1. Write a short paragraph explaining the significance of Gatsby's offer and Nick's refusal. Do you agree with Nick's decision?
2. Write a narrative paragraph about a time that you had to make a difficult or critical decision. Explain the circumstances of this event.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Thematic Symbol

Objective: Recognizing how the author uses colors and images to develop a thematic symbol

Activity

1. Select one image or color from *The Great Gatsby* as a representative symbol.
2. Use one of the attached charts to list some of the quotations, chapter by chapter, that relate to that image or color.
3. As you review all these repeated ideas, formulate and state the meaning that is suggested to you and what the image or color symbolizes.
4. Write a three paragraph essay that discusses how this image or color creates symbolic meaning in the novel. Your first short paragraph should state the meaning suggested by the repeated image or color. The next three – four paragraphs should support this statement by giving specific examples (with quotes) of how this image or color is used throughout the novel. Conclude your essay by stating what this repeated item symbolizes.