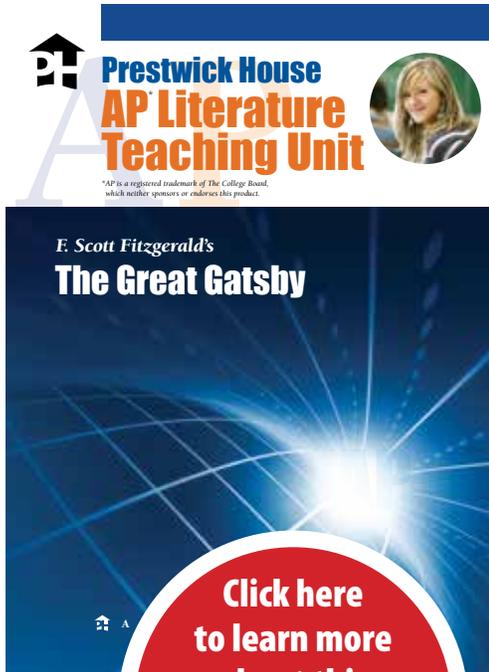




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Teaching Unit

The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Written by Kay Hampson



Prestwick House

Item No. 301714

The Great Gatsby

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify the nuances that contribute to a character's development;
2. trace the development of the character of Nick, noting that he is the only dynamic character;
3. examine Jay Gatsby as a Byronic/Romantic hero;
4. examine Jay Gatsby as a twentieth-century tragic hero;
5. examine the irony of the title, *The Great Gatsby*;
6. examine the techniques used to establish Nick as a credible narrator;
7. discuss the structural development of the novel;
8. construct interpretations of motifs and symbols (e.g. Doctor T. J. Eckleburg's eyes, the green light, the defunct clock);
9. discuss Fitzgerald's use of weather to reflect human emotions and conditions;
10. identify, discuss, and support from the text the major themes:
 - the death of the American dream;
 - the upper class's lack of integrity;
 - the stratification of the social classes;
11. explain the concept of a foil and show how Tom is a foil for Jay Gatsby;
12. identify either Gatsby and/or Nick as the protagonist and defend the choice;
13. analyze the extent to which *The Great Gatsby* reflects Fitzgerald's life;
14. identify the social issues and discuss the techniques that Fitzgerald uses to address and expose them:
 - domestic violence
 - changing moral standards
 - racism

Background Lecture

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY FITZGERALD (1896–1940)

- Born in St. Paul, Minnesota on September 24, 1896.
- His father, Edward Fitzgerald, had charm and elegance but little money. His mother, Mollie McQuillen Fitzgerald, was an Irish immigrant. Her family was financially secure, but she did not prefer society life. The Fitzgeralds lived on the outskirts of a wealthy neighborhood, and although Scott played with the rich children, he was never totally accepted by them.
- The family moved to New York in search of work. When Scott was about 12 years old, they moved back to St. Paul.
- In 1908, Scott entered St. Paul Academy where he excelled in debate and athletics. During this time, he published some articles and three stories. Over the next ten years, Fitzgerald experienced several literary achievements, but also experienced academic decline.
- He joined the Navy and was stationed at Camp Sheridan.
- In 1918, Fitzgerald met and fell in love with eighteen-year-old Zelda Sayre. Zelda refused to marry Scott because he did not have the means to finance the kind of lifestyle she was used to. She waited for a short time, but eventually broke off their engagement.
- In 1919, Fitzgerald returned home to Minnesota. He wrote and published *This Side of Paradise*, in 1920.
- One week after the novel's release, Fitzgerald and Zelda were married in New York. One year later, Zelda gave birth to their only daughter. The family lived an extravagant lifestyle that included much drinking and many parties. Their domestic life was turbulent, largely due to the couple's heavy alcohol consumption, bordering on alcoholism. They spent their time in America and Europe.
- The monies from the sale of *This Side of Paradise* began to run out so Scott wrote and sold short stories. In 1925, Fitzgerald published *The Great Gatsby*, his most famous work.
- *The Great Gatsby*, a story that takes on the intensity of a poem, is the American equivalent of *The Waste Land*, a postwar vision of England by T. S. Eliot.
- Major works of Fitzgerald include:
 - *This Side of Paradise*, published in 1920, was based largely on Fitzgerald's experiences and observations at Princeton.

Practice Free Response Questions

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION #1

Read the passage in Chapter V of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, beginning with "Under the bare lilac trees..." and ending with "It's stopped raining." Write a well-organized essay in which you explain how this episode can serve as a climax or turning point of the novel. Do not merely summarize the passage or offer a definition of climax.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION #2

Read the passage in Chapter IV of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, beginning with "Roaring noon," and ending about three pages later with, "I won't impose myself on you any longer." Write a well-organized essay analyzing the methods that Fitzgerald uses to develop the character of Wolfsheim. Be certain not to summarize the plot or offer a mere character description.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION #3

Reread the three passages in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: the paragraph at the beginning of Chapter II beginning with "But above the gray land...;" the passage about midway through Chapter VII, beginning: "We were all irritable..." and ending several pages later at the break; and the passage toward the end of Chapter VIII beginning: "I spoke to her..." ending at the break a few paragraphs later. Write a well-organized essay in which you examine how the significance of the billboard of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg evolves and what it ultimately contributes to the overall meaning of the work.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION #4

Read the passage toward the end of Chapter IV beginning with "When Jordan Baker..." and ending with "He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor." In a well-organized essay, analyze Fitzgerald's use of figurative language in this passage and explain how the final metaphor contributes to the overall meaning of the novel.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter I

1. What purpose do the first four paragraphs serve?

2. What advice does Nick’s father give him? Why does Fitzgerald have Nick share his father’s advice with the reader?

3. What other method does Fitzgerald use to persuade the reader that Nick is credible?

4. What does the statement “When I came back from the East last autumn...” tell you about the story to follow?

5. What importance is there in Nick’s statement that “My family have been prominent, well-to-do people...for three generations”?

Chapter III

1. What is the setting for Chapter III?

2. In what ways is Chapter II like Chapter III?

3. Why is it that Fitzgerald waits until Chapter III to introduce Gatsby?

4. There are at least two examples of a polysyndeton in Chapter III. Identify one of them, and explain what it contributes to the impact of the chapter.

5. What does Nick's twice insisting that he had "actually been invited" suggest?

6. Nick comments that the people at the party conduct "themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park." Analyze what is being conveyed by the comparison.

5. What effect is created by the greenhouse hyperbole?

6. How does Daisy's agreeing to come to Nick's house without Tom contribute to the theme of changing moral values?

7. Explain how the ambiguous metaphor about Daisy's voice is appropriate.

8. How does Fitzgerald show the changes in Gatsby?

5. What is the meaning of the statement “...they [reveries] were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy’s wing”?

6. Analyze the meaning of the name Dan Cody.

7. How long was Gatsby employed by Cody?

8. Why does Gatsby not drink?

9. Describe Tom’s first visit to Gatsby’s home.

6. In what ways can the letter from Daisy be considered Gatsby's salvation?

7. After all that has taken place, how does Nick say he feels about Gatsby? What does he mean? Is he sincere?

8. What does Jordan do the morning following the accident?

9. What clues give Wilson the idea there is another man?

10. What conclusion does Wilson come to regarding his wife's death?
