

THEMES IN THE NOVEL—Be prepared to discuss and write about these themes.

Questions About Society and Class

- What distinguishes which class a character belongs to? Is it wealth alone?
- Is society what stands in the way of Gatsby having Daisy, or is it something else?
- What are the differences between West Egg and East Egg and how does this relate to Gatsby and Daisy?
- Is Gatsby in the same class as Wilson? If not, is he closer to Wilson's class, or to Tom's? Where does Meyer Wolfsheim stand in all of this?

Questions About Love

- Is there a difference between love and romance in *The Great Gatsby*?
- Is Gatsby's love for Daisy genuine? Does he love her, or his conception of her? What about Tom – does he really love Daisy? And whom does Daisy really love, after all? Is it possible, as she said, that she loved both Tom and Gatsby at once?

Questions About Visions of America

- Does Gatsby achieve the American Dream? If yes, when exactly can he say that he reaches it? If not, what prevents him from truly achieving it?
- How would the novel be different through Tom or Daisy's eyes? How do you think their views of America would differ from Nick's?
- Nick leaves the East coast, jaded by his experiences with Gatsby, the Buchanans, Jordan Baker, etc. What is it that Nick rejects? How does he feel about each of these others?

Questions About Wealth

- In *The Great Gatsby*, what role does wealth play in people's life expectations? Could Gatsby have achieved his life-altering childhood goals without wealth? That is, did he really want wealth, or did he want what he thought wealth could get him?
- Does money bring happiness in *The Great Gatsby*, destroy happiness, or have no effect?
- What does Gatsby mean when he says that Daisy's voice is "full of money?" Does he mean this negatively? Why does Nick agree with him? Does this comment say more about Daisy or Gatsby?

Questions About Memory and The Past

- Nick Carraway suggests that the future is always receding in front of us, and that we are forever beaten back towards the past. Is the future attainable in *The Great Gatsby*?
- Is the past remembered realistically? Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan alike think nostalgically about the past, but are they ever able to confront reality?
- Is Gatsby driven by his memory of the past or his dream for the future? Is there a difference?

Questions About Dissatisfaction

- How does Jordan's "carelessness" indicate dissatisfaction or what else? Why is wealthy society so careless?
- Which characters are dissatisfied, and what would actually make them happy? Do they even know what they want?
- Nick reveals that James Gatz created Jay Gatsby "from the Platonic conception of himself." What does that mean?
- What was it that dissatisfied James such that he had to create a new persona?
- Are people governed by choice or by fate in *The Great Gatsby*?

Questions About Marriage

- In *The Great Gatsby*, how common is infidelity? How common is fidelity? Why is there so much infidelity?
- Do people marry the ones they love in *The Great Gatsby*? Can people marry whomever they love? Why or why not? How does this apply to the relationships in the novel?
- Why did Daisy marry Tom? Does she love him? Does she love Gatsby?

Questions About Gender

- How do men treat women in *The Great Gatsby*? How does Tom treat his wife Daisy and his mistress Myrtle? How does Nick treat Jordan? How does Gatsby treat Daisy? How does George Wilson treat his wife Myrtle? How does the way that a man treats a woman comment on his character in this text?
- What are the expectations for female behavior and how do they vary by class?
- Does Daisy present the "ideal woman" of the upper class? Why or why not?

Questions About Lies and Deceit

- At one point, Jordan claims that Nick deceived her. Is this true? Or was Jordan deceiving Nick? What kind of dishonesty is she talking about, anyway?
- Jordan Baker and Nick discuss the fact that a "bad" driver is all-right until he meets another one. This forms a significant moment later in the novel when Jordan recognizes that Nick is not who she thought he was. How does this relate to the transformation Daisy undergoes as she realizes Gatsby is not who she thought he was?
- In the showdown scene at the Plaza, Daisy Buchanan is ultimately honest with her husband and Gatsby despite what she might lose. What is she honest about and why?

Questions About Judging

- What gets forgiven and what does not get forgiven in this novel? Why?
- Nick claims in the first page of the novel that he was told to never criticize. Is he compassionate towards Gatsby, or does he judge the man? Does this evolve over the course of the novel?
- Near the end of the novel, Nick shouts to Gatsby, "They're a rotten crowd. . . You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." And yet, Nick's narration says "I disapproved of him from beginning to end." How can these both be true? Is Nick lying? What does he mean?