

Chapter 6

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.

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence below based on how that word is used in the sentence. You may need to use a dictionary.

1. He had changed [his name] at the age of seventeen . . . when he saw Dan Cody’s yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior.
2. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself.
3. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them . . .
4. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor.

ineffable:

gaudiness:

5. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace.

6. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination . . .
7. The none too savory ramifications by which Ella Kaye, the newspaper woman, played Madame de Maintenon to his weakness . . .

savory:

ramifications:

8. . . . for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about and he provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more trust in Gatsby.

lavish: contingencies: reposing:

9. I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a grey, florid man with a hard empty face—the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon.

florid:

debauchee:

10. [Gatsby] was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of man.

contour: substantiality:

Questions:

1. Summarize the story of James Gatz.
2. Who was Dan Cody?
3. What does Gatsby want Daisy to do? What would this accomplish? How realistic, or fair, do you think it is for Gatsby to require this?

4. How does Gatsby respond when Nick tells him “You can’t repeat the past”?

Analysis:

5. Read the passage and answer the questions.

His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. 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.

What does Nick mean by Gatsby’s “Platonic conception” of himself, and by calling Gatsby “a son of God”? What does the last sentence imply about Gatsby’s maturity as an adult?

6. Does learning the truth about Gatsby’s childhood change your impression of him? Explain your answer.

7. What is ironic about Gatsby inheriting his “education” from Cody?

8. What is significant about the placement of Gatsby’s true story in Chapter 6, directly following his attaining Daisy in Chapter 5? Why do you think Fitzgerald waited to tell readers this story until after Gatsby reunited with Daisy?

9. What is ironic about Tom’s statement that “women run around too much these days.” What does this statement reveal about Tom’s character?

10. Nick tells us that, five years earlier, Gatsby knew if he kissed Daisy, “and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the

mind of God.” Why do you think Fitzgerald used this particular imagery? What does the idea of “never romping again like the mind of God” remind you of?

Chapter 7

But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undesperingly, toward that lost voice across the room.

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence below based on how that word is used in the sentence. You may need to use a dictionary.

1. “I wanted somebody who wouldn’t gossip. Daisy comes over quite often—in the afternoons.”
So the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes.
2. He was calling up at Daisy’s request—would I come to lunch at her house tomorrow? . . . And yet I couldn’t believe that they would choose this occasion for a scene—especially for the rather harrowing scene that Gatsby had outlined in the garden.
3. Jordan and Tom and I got into the front seat of Gatsby’s car, Tom pushed the unfamiliar gears tentatively and we shot off into the oppressive heat leaving them out of sight behind.
4. He paused. The immediate contingency overtook him, pulled him back from the edge of the theoretical abyss.

5. Angry as I was, as we all were, I was tempted to laugh whenever he opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to prig was so complete.

libertine:

prig:

6. “She does [love me], though. The trouble is that sometimes she gets foolish ideas in her head and doesn’t know what she’s doing.” He nodded sagely.
7. I was thirty. Before me stretched the portentous menacing road of a new decade.
8. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan face fell lazily against my coat’s shoulder and the formidable stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her hand.

wan:

formidable:

9. The circle closed up again with a running murmur of expostulation; it was a minute before I could see anything at all.
10. Only the Negro and I were near enough to hear what [Tom] said but the policeman caught something in the tone and looked over with truculent eyes.

Questions:

1. Who is Pammy? How does Gatsby react when he sees her? How does her existence complicate Gatsby’s dream?
2. How does Tom suddenly come to realize that Daisy loves Gatsby? How does he react?
3. What important discovery does Wilson make in this chapter? How does he react?

4. What things has Tom discovered about Gatsby's business dealings?
5. Why was Myrtle running towards Gatsby's car? Who was driving the car that hit Myrtle Wilson? Who does Tom think was driving?
6. How does the accident seem to affect Jordan?

Analysis:

7. What has changed about Gatsby's house? What might this change symbolize or foreshadow?
8. What does the author mean when he writes that Tom looked at Daisy "as if he had just recognized her as someone he knew a long time ago."
9. Why do you think Fitzgerald refers to Daisy as "the golden girl"? What does Gatsby say Daisy's voice is "full of"? What does this comparison suggest about what really attracts men to her?
10. How has Gatsby's dream died in this chapter? How has everyone else suffered loss in this chapter?
11. After the confrontational scene in the hotel room, why do you think Fitzgerald has Nick report that he has turned thirty that day? What is ironic about Nick turning thirty in this particular chapter?
12. In this chapter, Gatsby's car is described as the "death car." If his car symbolizes materialism, how does this add meaning to that symbolism? Identify other "deaths" found in Chapter 7.

13. Why is Nick disgusted with Jordan in the end of the chapter? What has she done or said that irritates him?
14. Chapter 7 parallels Chapter 1 in many ways. One example is the initial setting at the Buchanans'; a second example is the heat. Identify at least three other similarities. What might be Fitzgerald's purpose for this parallelism?
15. How are Tom Buchanan and George Wilson alike? What might Fitzgerald be suggesting through these similarities?
16. How does Fitzgerald draw comparisons between Tom and Gatsby? What might he be suggesting through these similarities?
17. Compare and contrast the following two images. Identify where each occurs in the story and discuss the meaning behind the similarities and differences.

He put his hands in his coat pockets and turned back eagerly to his scrutiny of the house, as though my presence marred the sacredness of the vigil. So I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight—watching over nothing.

But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward— and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock.