

Chapter 8

No telephone message arrived I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream.

Questions:

1. Summarize Gatsby's story about his early romance with Daisy. What other story did Gatsby tell Nick during this night?
2. By the end of the chapter, what has happened to both Gatsby and Wilson?

Analysis:

3. Gothic imagery creates a picture of darkness, gloomy castles, mazes, mystery, nightmares and death. Identify the Gothic imagery found in the first few paragraphs of Chapter 8. Why do you think Fitzgerald uses Gothic imagery to describe Gatsby's mansion?

4. The author writes that Gatsby had committed himself to "the following of a grail." What is the author suggesting about Gatsby's quest through the use of this image?

5. The last thing Nick said to Gatsby was, "They're a rotten crowd. You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." Why do you think he said this when he admits that he disapproved of Gatsby "from beginning to end"?

6. Read the following passage:

Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small grey clouds took on fantastic shape and scurried here and there in the faint dawn wind.

“I spoke to her,” he muttered, after a long silence. “I told her she might fool me but she couldn’t fool God. I took her to the window—” With an effort he got up and walked to the rear window and leaned with his face pressed against it, “—and I said ‘God knows what you’ve been doing, everything you’ve been doing. You may fool me but you can’t fool God!’”

Standing behind him Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous from the dissolving night.

“God sees everything,” repeated Wilson.

“That’s an advertisement,” Michaelis assured him.

What do you think Fitzgerald is saying about God in this passage?

7. At the end of the chapter, Nick says Gatsby “must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream.” What was this price? What do you think Fitzgerald is saying about holding on to a single dream?

8. Do you think Gatsby believed in his dream to the end? Give examples from the chapter to support your answer.

9. The last line of Chapter 8 says “the holocaust was complete.” Define the word *holocaust*. Why do you think the author uses the term “holocaust” at this point? (Remember that this novel was written prior to World War II.) How does the use of the term “holocaust” relate to the earlier idea that Gatsby was “a son of God”?

Chapter 9

. . . as I sat there brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Questions:

1. What is concluded about Wilson's motive for killing Gatsby?
2. What happened in the "missing hours" of George Wilson's journey to Gatsby's house?
3. Why wasn't Nick able to contact the Buchanans about Gatsby's death?
4. According to Nick, how were he, Tom, Daisy, Jordan, and Gatsby all alike?

Analysis:

5. While searching for people to come to the funeral, Nick addresses Gatsby: "I'll get somebody for you, Gatsby. Don't worry. Just trust me and I'll get somebody for you—" Later, Nick imagines Gatsby pleading with him, "Look here, old sport, you've got to get somebody for me. You've got to try hard. I can't go through this alone." What do these passages indicate about Gatsby's character, and the character of Gatsby's associates.

6. Why do you think Henry Gatz took such great pride in his son?

7. Nick comments that the worn photo of Gatsby's house "seemed more real to [Mr. Gatz] now than the house itself." Compare this statement with Nick's comment about "the colossal vitality of [Gatsby's] illusion" near the end of Chapter 5 and the passage about Gatsby's "Platonic conception" of himself at the beginning of Chapter 6. What do these things tell us about the extent to which Gatsby and his father are able to dream and how they view reality?

8. Mr. Gatz produces a list of Gatsby's resolves from his boyhood. "It just shows you, don't it?" Gatz tells Nick. What does this list "show" about Gatsby?

9. What does the idea that Wolfshiem, a Jew, working in an office labeled "The Swastika Holding Company," and whistling "the Rosary" suggest about his character? (Keep in mind that this novel was written and published prior to World War II and the Jewish Holocaust. However, by the novel's publication in 1925, the German Nazi Party was gaining influence with its ideas of racial superiority, anti-Semitism, and German strength.)

10. Why might it be significant that "Owl-eyes" was the only person from all of Gatsby's many parties to attend the funeral?

11. What might be symbolized by Nick's fantastic dream:
... a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque,

crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lustreless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house—the wrong house. But no one knows the woman’s name, and no one cares.

12. Jordan tells Nick:

“You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn’t I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.”

How, according to Jordan, was Nick a “bad driver,” and, in essence, dishonest? Consider their conversation outside the Buchanans’ house after Myrtle’s death (near the end of Chapter 7) and their telephone conversation the next day (middle of Chapter 8). What does Jordan seem to be asking of Nick in these two scenes that might reveal Nick to be dishonest in some way?

13. What does Nick mean when he says that Tom and Daisy were “careless”?

14. Look at the last four paragraphs of the novel. What dream do you think Nick is talking about? What is Nick saying about the ability to achieve one’s dreams?