

Areas for Focus: The Great Gatsby Chapters 2-4

Chapter 2

- The first two paragraphs describe the “valley of ashes,” an area just between West Egg and New York City. The imagery of the first paragraph depicts a stark contrast from the opulence of the Buchanan home described in Chapter 1. Pay careful attention to the images, colors presented, and focused spots (cough cough, T.J. Eckleburg cough cough) in this location.
- Also note the two characters who live here: George and Myrtle Wilson. If living on the East Egg tells us Tom and Daisy are old money, and living on the West Egg tells us Gatsby is new money, what does living in the “valley of ashes” suggest about the Wilsons?
- We meet Tom’s mistress in this chapter. Pay attention to what we learn about her - what she buys on their way into the city, how she looks, what she knows about Tom’s wife, and how she behaves at the party in the New York apartment.
- Make note of the rumors spread about Gatsby in this chapter.
- The chapter ends with a shocking action by one of our male characters. It’s worth noting carefully regardless of whether he is your assigned character.
- For what it’s worth: Nick, our narrator, is intoxicated at the end of the chapter. If you find the text random and indecipherable at that point, this is why.

Chapter 3

- Third chapter, third party: Chapter 3 will look at the first party we’ll see at Gatsby’s house.
- The opening six paragraphs describe the great lengths to which Gatsby goes to throw his events. Note them!
- Nick and Jordan are the only characters we have already met who attend this party. Nick notes that “people were not invited [to these parties] - they went there.” I’d suggest you pay attention to and draw your own conclusions about how Fitzgerald portrays these attendees. How intimately acquainted are they with Gatsby? What virtues or vices do they display?
- As always, Gatsby is a mystery to his guests (and even the strangers at the party in the previous chapter). Continue to make note of how he is described/what rumors surround him.

- But good news for us: we finally DO meet Gatsby in this chapter! He's the titular character, so even if he is not your assigned character, you should make note of him - his actions, his physical descriptions, and his preoccupations.
- In the final 13 paragraphs of the chapter (yes, I counted ☺), we learn something important about Jordan. What does this suggest about her morality?

Chapter 4

- In the first ten paragraphs of the chapter, Nick lists the many guests at Gatsby's party that summer. You need not remember all of these (insert massive sigh of relief ☺), but do note the immensity of the list.
- Gatsby picks Nick up and they go for a drive into the city. Pay careful attention to...
 - What Gatsby tells Nick about his background - his family, his early life, his military experience, where all he has lived, etc.
 - Whether Nick believes Gatsby's tales or not - or if he doesn't, what seems to change his mind? (hint hint)
- Once they arrive in the city, Gatsby and Nick meet Gatsby's friend Mr. Wolfsheim. What kind of guy do you think he is? Here's a hint: Gatsby tells Nick that Wolfsheim "is the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919." Visit this site for more information:
http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/postseason/mlb_ws_recaps.jsp?feature=1919
- Following the gentlemen's lunch, we have a flashback to "one October day in nineteen-seventeen." Jordan Baker tells Nick a long tale about Daisy before and shortly after she married Tom. Noteworthy points include...
 - Who is "the officer [who] looked at Daisy... in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at"?
 - How does Daisy feel about marrying Tom? (Side note: the book tells us Tom gave Daisy a string of pearls worth \$350,000. That value today, taking into account inflation, is \$5.8 million. Forgive the less-than-academic tone, but YOWZA.)
 - How did Tom treat Daisy from the onset of their marriage?
- What plan does Gatsby orchestrate, through Jordan, involving him, Nick, and Daisy?