





Sister Carrie and The Great Gatsby







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American Naturalism: social background

- The spread of industrialization created extremes of wealth and poverty. Life became a struggle for **survival**.
 - Farmers were still going westward, but frontiers were about the close. People were doomed to have no more land.
 - The spread of Darwin's theory of evolution changed people's ideals totally—an indifferent, cold and Godless world. People's outlook toward life became **pessimistic**.
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American Naturalism



Naturalism was a new and harsher realism. It developed on the basis of realism but went a step further than it in portraying social reality.

Thematically, naturalistic writers

- wrote detailed descriptions of the lives of the downtrodden and of the abnormal
- had frank treatment of human passion and sexuality
- were concerned about how men and women were overwhelmed by the forces of environment and heredity

Technically, naturalistic writers

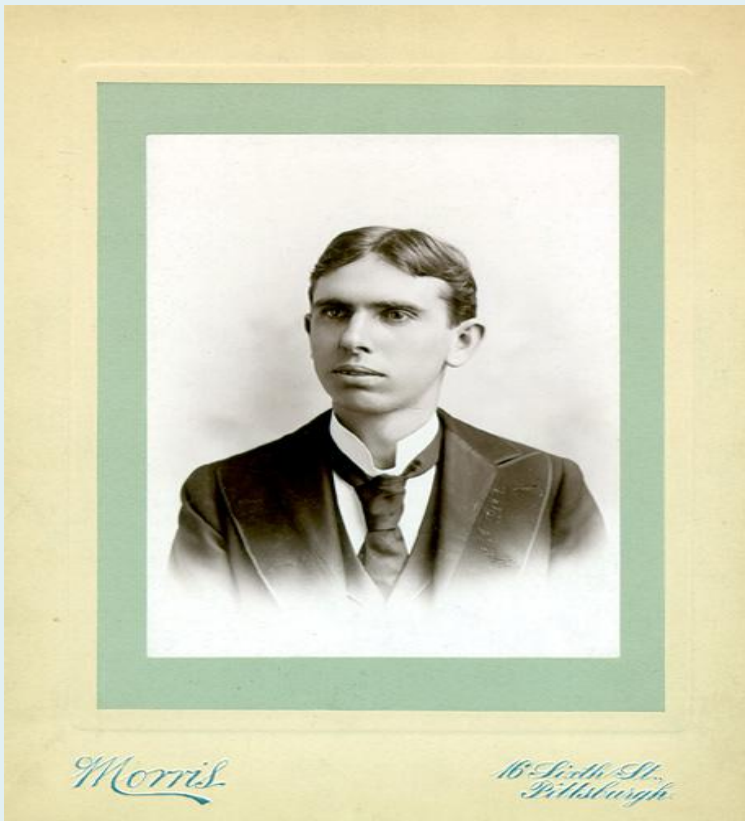
- made detailed documentation of life: nothing but the truth, more naked and wicked than realities
- created gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere

Representative figures:

Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London
and Theodore Dreiser



Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)



No Money

No friend in power

No formal education

No family tradition in
letters





Dreiser's Life





Family: Dreiser was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, to Sarah and John Paul Dreiser—a German immigrant family. He was the twelfth of thirteen children (the ninth of the ten surviving). A poor and strict Roman Catholic family.

Education: got educated at a Catholic school, and later to a public school (Indiana University). Apart from school education, he read widely by himself, such as Shakespeare, Zola, Mark Twain, Balzac, Charles Darwin, Emerson and Thoreau etc.









Marriage: After proposing in 1893, he married Sara White on December 28, 1898. They ultimately separated in 1909, partly as a result of Dreiser's infatuation (迷恋) with Thelma Cudlipp, the teenage daughter of a work colleague, but were never formally divorced.

Career: at the age of 15, he began to earn a meager support by doing some odd jobs. Later on, he slowly groped his way to authorship.



Dreiser's Major Works



- 1) *Sister Carrie*: «嘉莉妹妹» (1900)
 - tells the story of a woman who flees her country life for the city (Chicago) and falls into a lavish life.



- 2) Jennie Gerhardt (1911)
«珍妮姑娘»
 - the first of a long succession of books that marked his turn to writing as a full time career.

Sylvia Sidney in Theodore Dreiser's "JENNIE GERHARDT" with Donald Cook, Mary Astor and H.B. Warner
a B. P. Schulberg Production
A Paramount Picture







3) *The Trilogy of Desire* 欲望三部曲

- *The Financier* «金融家» (1912)
- *The Titan* «巨人» (1914)
- *The Stoic* «斯尔葛» (not published until 1947)

4) *The Genius* 《天才》 — an autobiographical work, the most satisfactory long novel

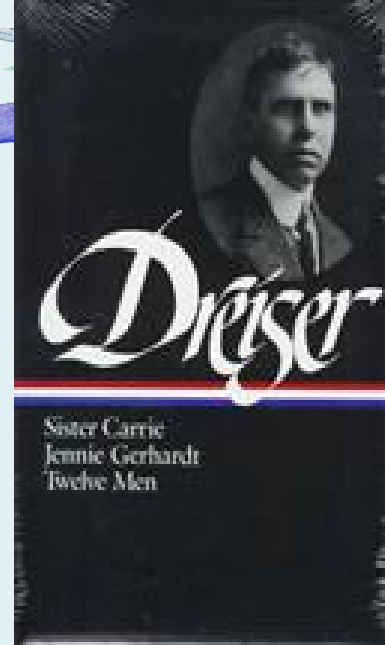
5) *An American Tragedy* 《美国悲剧》 it is based on a true crime case, Dreiser's greatest and most successful novel.





Dreiser's Style

- deficient characterization
- lack in imagination
- Simple words
- Journalistic method of reiteration
- 重复新闻手法
- Techniques in painting (word-picture, sharp contrast, truth in color, movement in outline)



Analysis of *Sister Carrie*

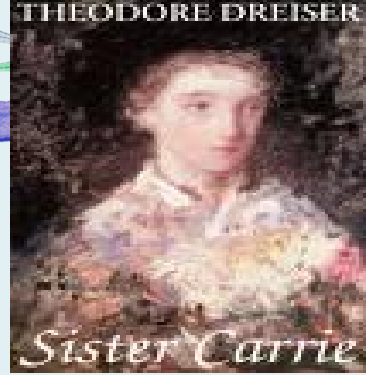


The Plot Overview

- Carrie Meeber leaves her rural home to seek work in **Chicago** → accepts Drouet and becomes his mistress → During Drouet's absence, she loves his friend George Hursthood, a middle-aged, married and wealthy man → elope to Montreal and then to **New York** → Carrie becomes a star of musical comedies and Hursthood falls down to a beggar and gets abandoned by Carrie and commits suicide



Main Characters



- **Carrie Meeber**: the heroine of the story. Dissatisfied with her present living condition, Carrie determined to seek for the better life in the upper class.
- **Charlie Drouet**: a charming, flashy salesman with a strong appetite for romance. But he never takes any romantic affairs seriously. It is he who pushes Carrie to Hursthood.
- **George Hursthood**: a married, wealthy manager, who is enthralled(着迷) by Carrie's beautiful appearance. They two elope to Montreal and get married.



Discussion Questions

- Do women have more vanity than men? Is it more difficult or much easier for women to gain success than men? Why do you think so?
- Carrie Meeber satisfied her material desire in the end of the story, but she seemed unhappy. What is your understanding of happiness?



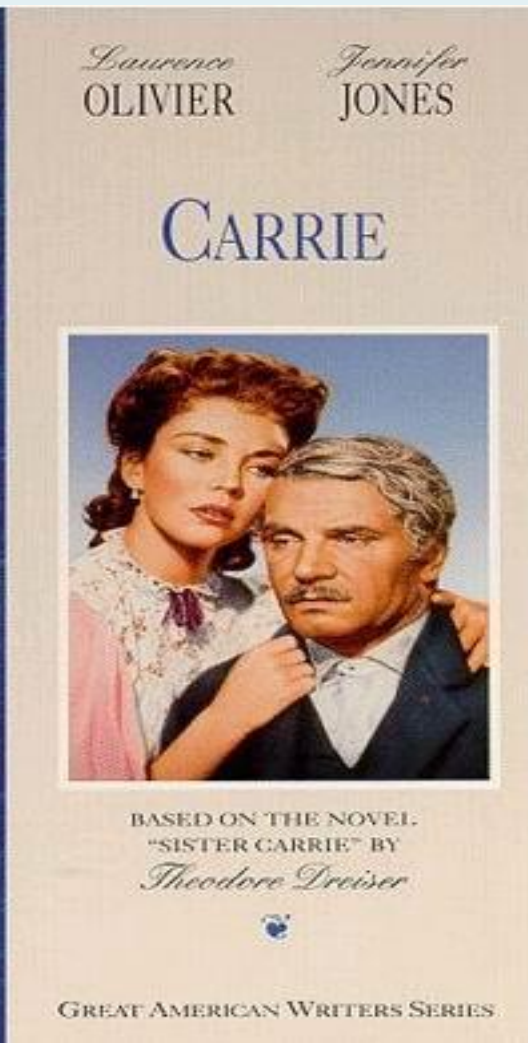


Survey results from the Pew Research Center:



- * The happiest age group is men 65 and older; the least happy: men 18 to 29.
- * Married people are happier than singles.
- * College grads are happier than those without a college degree.
- * Sun-belt residents are happier than other U.S. residents.





Topics for Presentation



1. Analyze the characters of Sister Carrie.
2. Analyze Theodore Dreiser's writing style.
3. Analyze Sister Carrie's American Dream



Appreciating the dialogues in Chapter 1

- In 1889, eighteen-year-old Caroline Meeber boards a train headed for Chicago, leaving behind her small home town of Columbia City. She carries only four dollars, a few paltry belongings, and her sister's address in Chicago.
 - As the train pulls out of Waukesha, Wisconsin, she becomes aware that a man is observing her. Despite her reserve, she strikes up a conversation with him. The man's name is Charlie Drouet, a traveling salesman, and his flashy clothing and talkative ways make a positive impression on Carrie.
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Dialogue 1: Para 5-14 (first impression)

- What is Carrie's response upon her first conversation with Drouet?


Nervous, maidenly reserve, convention called her to forestall and deny..., conscious of...

- How did Drouet do when he met Carrie for the first time on the train?

he controlled the conversation, fidgeting, leaned forward, make himself volubly agreeable.


Key sentence: the daring and magnetism of the individual prevailed







Dialogue 2: Para 18-24

(Carrie's affection for Drouet)

- Carrie Meeber became conscious of **inequality** between her and Drouet: different clothing and wearing (her shabby & Drouet's decent); different life experience (shallow eyesight & rich and colorful travelling experience)
 - In dialogue 2, Ss should notice the description of Carrie's inner feeling, showing her desire for material rise and reputation.
 - Key sentence: there was something satisfactory in the attention of this individual with his good clothes.
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Dialogue 3: Para 25-43 (reciprocal attraction)



- What changes occurred to Drouet and Carrie when the conversation was carrying on?

Para28

Drouet: he recognized the indescribable thing that made up for fascination and beauty in her.

Carrie: she realised that she was of interest to him..., some things she did appeared bold.




Para 43 He could not tell how his luring succeeded. She could not realise that she was drifting, until...






Dialogue 4: Para 51-64

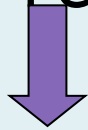
(Carrie's attachment to Drouet)

- What are Carrie's different attitudes toward her sister (the only relative she can seek for help in the big city) and Drouet (a stranger whom she got to know on the train)?
 - Carrie's attitude towards her sister: she felt **cold reality** taking her by the hand. **No world of light and merriment. No round of amusement.** With her sister she was much **alone.**
 - Carrie's attitudes towards Drouet: she felt something lost to him when he moved away. When he disappeared she **felt his absence thoroughly.**
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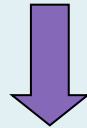


Para 7, para28, para43 and para64
The changes of their relationship

Her maidenly reserve and convention




Something she did appear bold



She could not realize that she was drifting, until he
secured her address; she had yielded something





She felt something lost to her when he moved away





Analysis of *Sister Carrie*

- **Before Carrie came to Chicago:** bright, timid, full of the illusions of ignorance and youth.
 - **After Carrie got acquainted with Drouet:** innocent but usually felt her inferiority before Drouet (good clothes and fat purse)
 - **After Carrie met Hursthood:** coveted the lavish life of the upper class; unsatisfied desire; selfish; empty and lonely
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Themes in *Sister Carrie*

- American dream

Sister Carrie: material needs and social status

Charlie Drouet: has achieved the American dream, but seek for romantic love to color his life.



Hursthood: has the wife, the established home and family, and a good position. He, though, wants more.

- **Change and transformation** (Carrie & Hursthood)
- **Wealth and poverty** (distinction between social class)
- **Identity**: Carrie never really has an identity but act her "act" to fit the situation.
- **People's inability and the role of heredity and environment**







The American Dream

- The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.
 - In a word, the traditional way from rags to riches: through thrift and hard work.
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Social Significance of *Sister Carrie*

- Their identities are constantly subject to change, reflecting the modern American experience that had been ushered in by the developing capitalist economy. In the process of this development, thousands of rural Americans rushed to the cities to find jobs and to build themselves new lives and identities. Through Carrie, Dreiser makes a panoramic picture of the whole society.
 - It is the **vivid reflection of naturalism**. (heredity and environment)
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Further Questions



- What lessons can you get from *Sister Carrie*?
- As a woman in modern society, how will you gain success in your career?
- Compare *Sister Carrie* & *Jane Eyre*, what are their differences?



F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby* (1896 -1940)

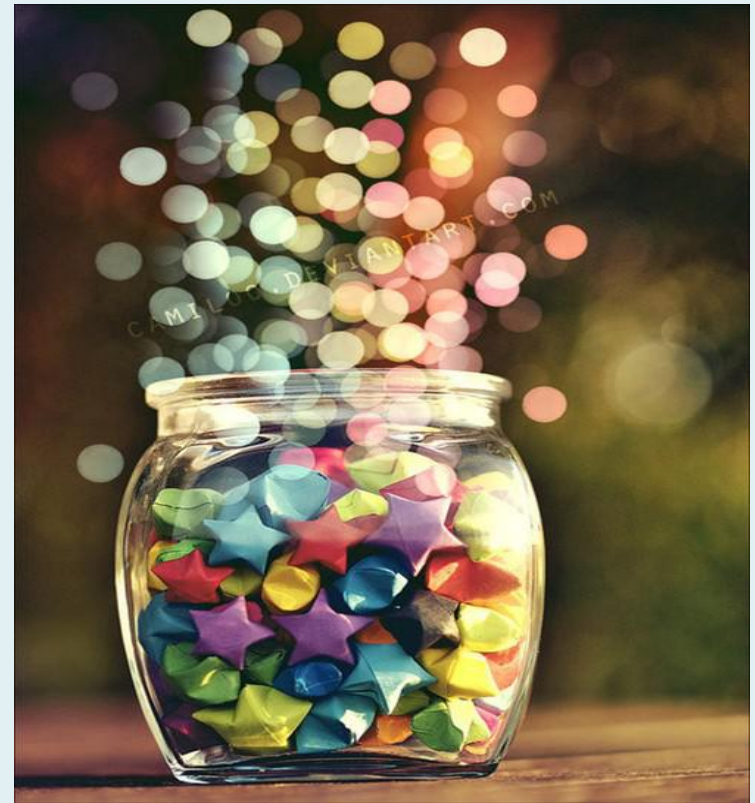


—the representative author
of the Lost Generation

— the spokesman of the
Jazz Age

Teaching Focus



- Lost Generation
- Jazz Age
- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Great Gatsby*



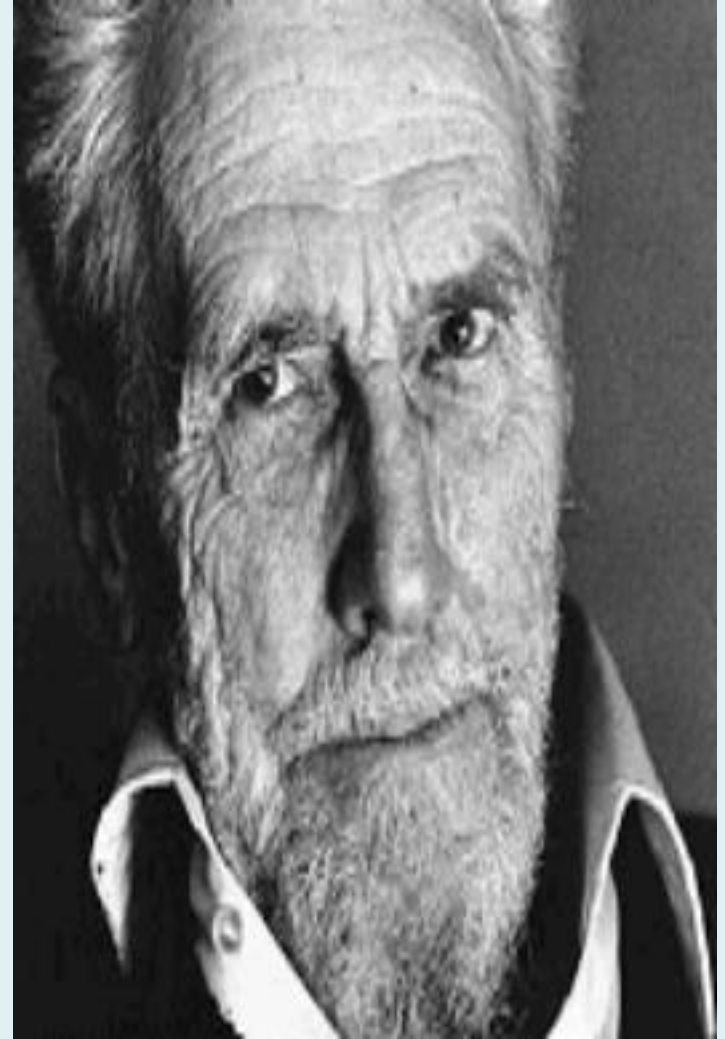
The Lost Generation

- Gertrude Stein—Ernest Hemingway
- The phrase signifies a disillusioned post-war generation characterized by lost values, lost beliefs in the idea of human progress, and a mood of futility and despair leading to hedonism. The mood is described by F. Scott Fitzgerald in *This Side of Paradise* (1920) when he writes of a generation that found all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken.

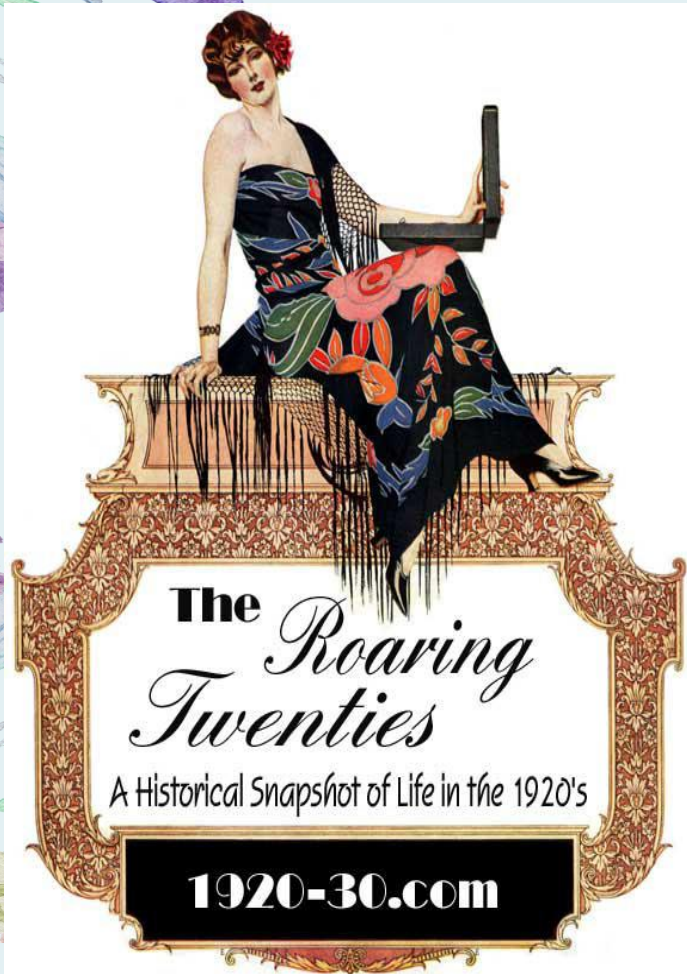





- Lost generation usually refers specifically to the American expatriate writers associated with 1920s Paris, especially Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and to a lesser extent T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Hemingway used the phrase "You are a lost generation" as the epigraph to his first novel *The Sun Also Rises*.



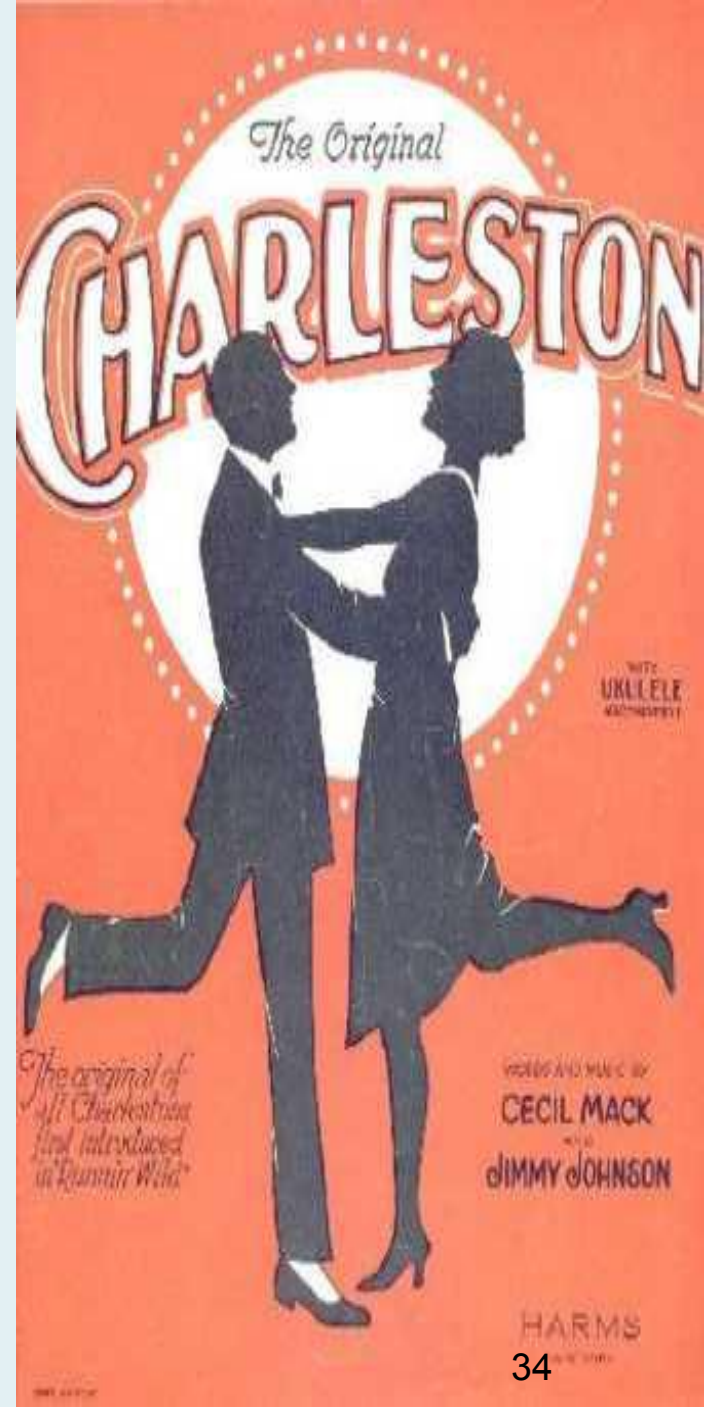
The Jazz Age (The 1920s)




F. Scott Fitzgerald coined the term "Jazz Age" retrospectively to refer to the decade after World War I and before the stock market crash in 1929, during which Americans embarked upon what he called "the gaudiest spree in history". He was the most famous chronicler of 1920s America.



The Jazz Age was a movement that took place during the 1920s or the Roaring Twenties from which jazz music and dance emerged. The movement came about with the introduction of mainstream radio and the end of the war. This era ended in the 1930s with the beginning of The Great Depression but has lived on in American pop culture for decades.



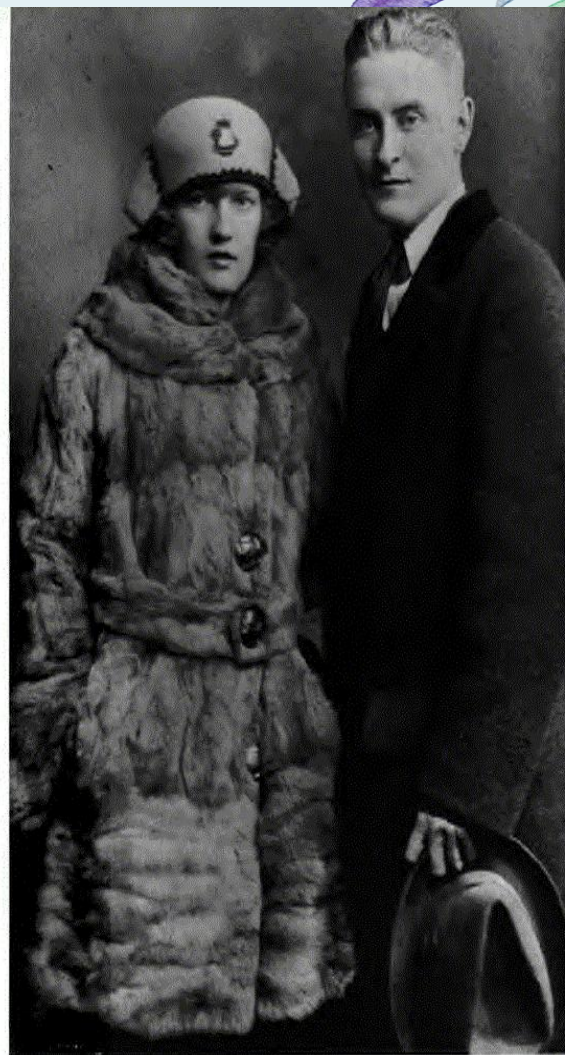


Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)



Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Fitzgerald was the only son of a socially prominent and genteelly poor family. He entered Princeton University in 1913. In 1917 he left before graduating to serve in the U.S. Army in Alabama, where he met and fell in love with Zelda Sayre, an embodiment of all his romantic notions of a southern Belle. After his discharge from the army in 1919, he took a job with an advertising agency and worked on short stories and a novel at night.

During that time, he began working on his first novel, *The Side of Paradise*. Published in 1920, the novel was an instant success and brought him enough money to marry Zelda that same year. The young couple moved to New York City, where they became notorious for their madcap lifestyle. The charm, glow and the pathos of their flamboyant life together had been an inspiration for Fitzgerald. But the couple were also fighting each other all the time.



Throughout the previous winter one small matter had been a subtle and omnipresent irritant—the question of Gloria's gray fur coat. At that time women enveloped in long squirrel wraps could be seen every few yards along Fifth Avenue. The women were converted to the shape of tops. They seemed

perine and chicene; they resembled kept women in the concealing richness, the feline animality of the garment. Yet—Gloria wanted a gray squirrel coat.

—*The Beautiful and Damned*



Fast Track 3/19/90 F. Scott Fitzgerald

Zelda began to have **breakdown**, and had to be put in a mental institution. This occurred in the early thirties—it was a **tragic time**. Fitzgerald had to write harder to earn more money to send Zelda to the best mental hospital and their daughter, Scottie, to the best and most fashionable school.

Three things eventually combined to break him down: **loneliness, alcohol and the awareness that he was dissipating his talent**. In **1940**, he died of a heart attack at the age of 44 .



Zelda and Scott's grave in
Rockville, Maryland, inscribed with the
final sentence of *The Great Gatsby*

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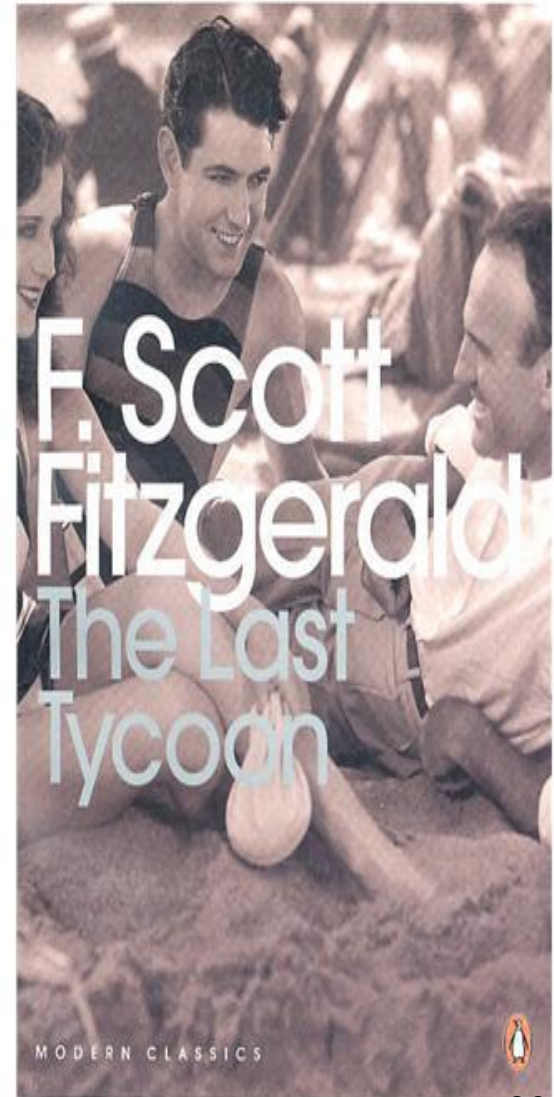
So we beat on, boats against the
current, borne back ceaselessly into
the past.

于是我们奋力向前划，逆流向上的小
舟，不停地倒退，回到过去。

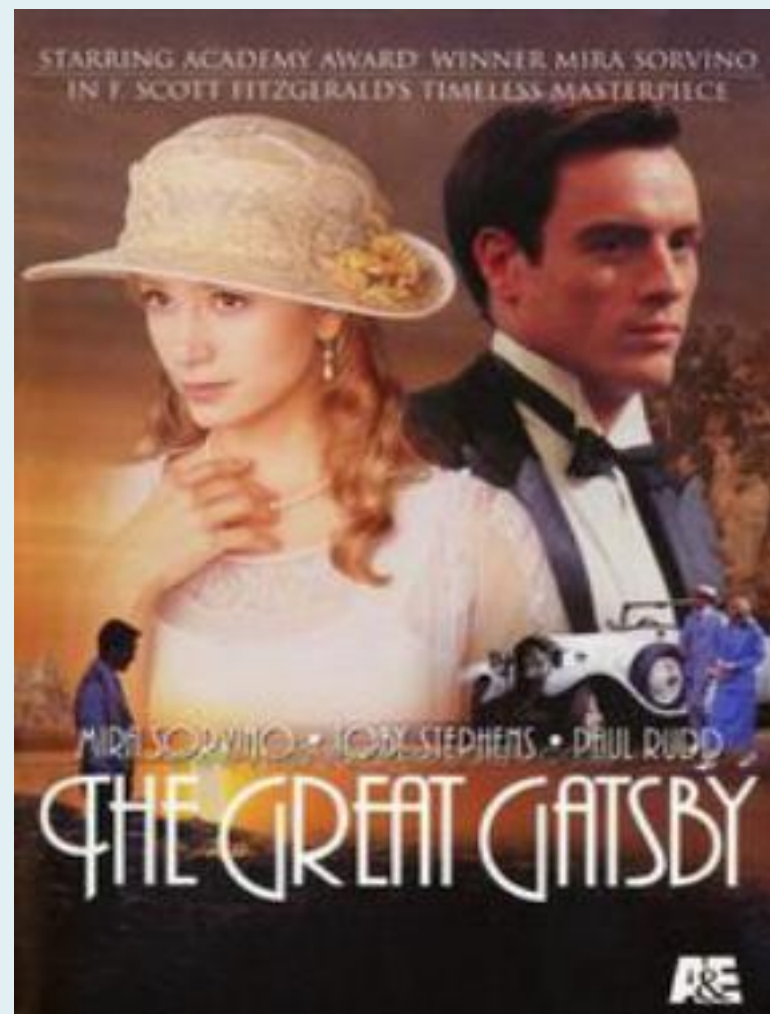
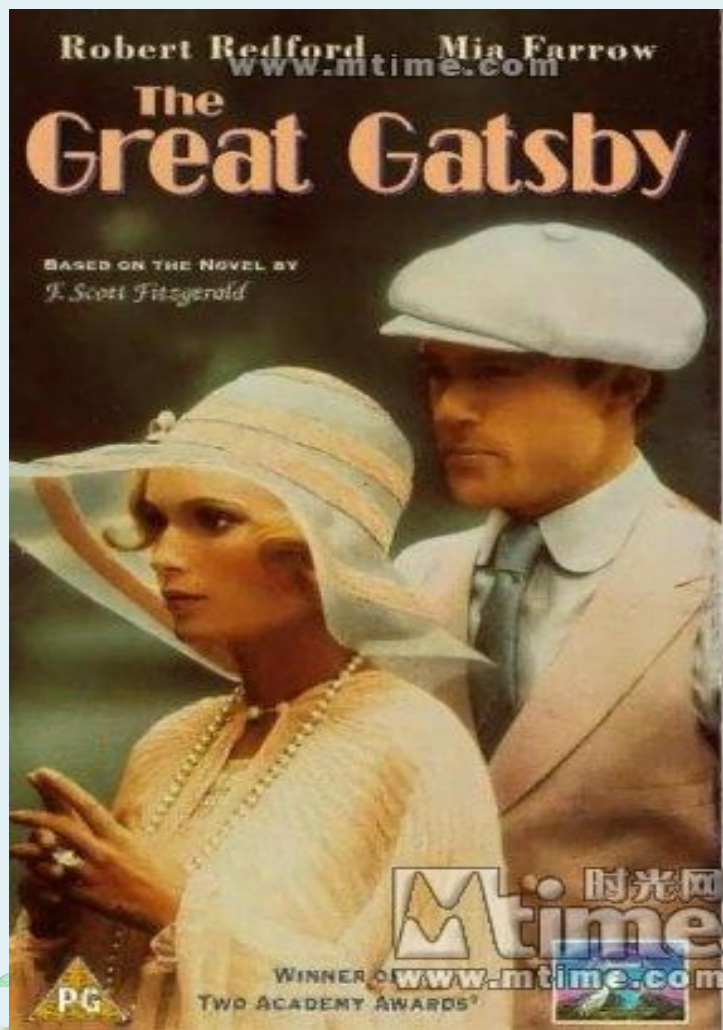


Major Works

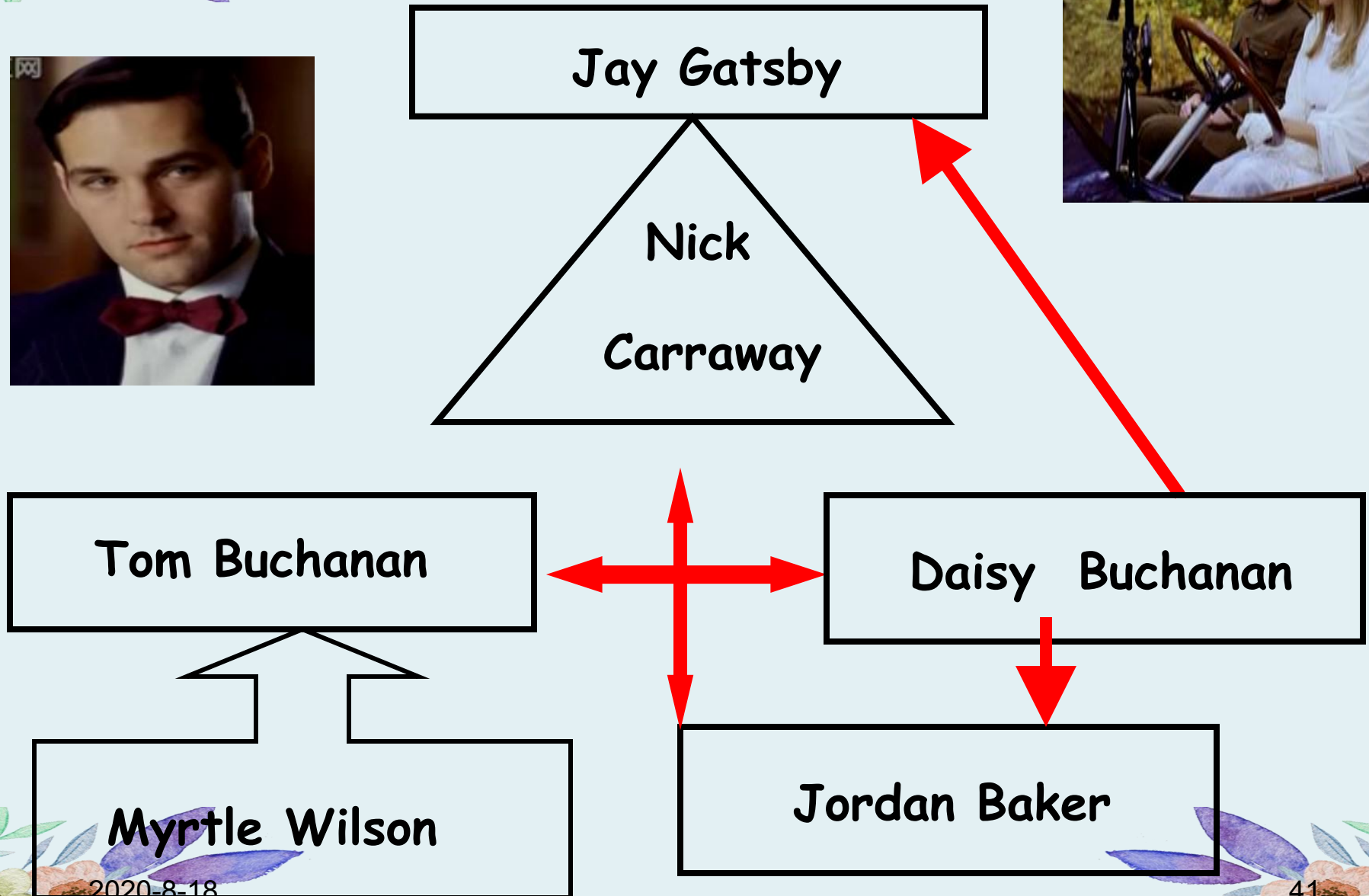
- *This Side of Paradise* (1920)
- *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920)
- *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922)
- *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922)
- *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
- *Tender Is the Night* (1934)
- *The Crack-Up* (1936)
- *The Last Tycoon* (1941)



The Great Gatsby



Main characters



Topics for Presentation

1. *The Great Gatsby* is regarded as Fitzgerald's summative comment on the Jazz Age: In what ways is this chapter related to the **Jazz Age**?

2. Is Gatsby's life the fulfillment of the **American dream** of wealth?

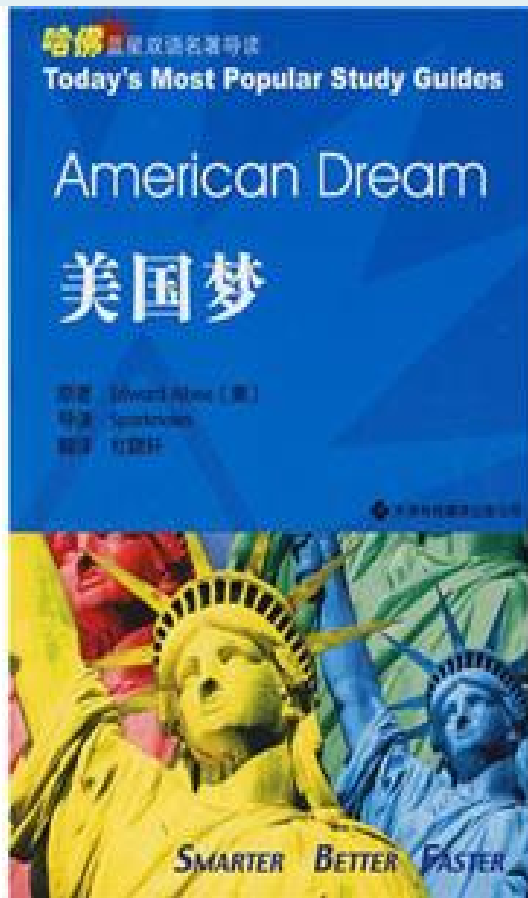


Gatsby's American Dream

- Dream of wealth and dream of love
- Dream of wealth: But his mansion and fabulous entertainment are financed by bootlegging and other criminal activities.
- Dream of love: Love is merely a vehicle that can transport him to a magic world of eternal happiness.
- Gatsby's pursuit of his dream only proves to be futile since what he seeks is nothing but an illusion.



Disillusion of American Dream



- He **was accused by** Tom of his illegal behaviour in making his fortune.
- He **was revenged by** George Wilson. While Daisy and Tom fled to Europe for travel without feeling gratituted for "his generous deeds".
- His tragic destiny reflects the tragedy of the **Jazz age** and **the Lost Generation**.

Theme of the novel

- The breakdown of American Dream
- American dream in the 1920s is ruined by the unworthiness of its **object—money and pleasure.**
- The Hollowness and hypocrisy of the Upper Class





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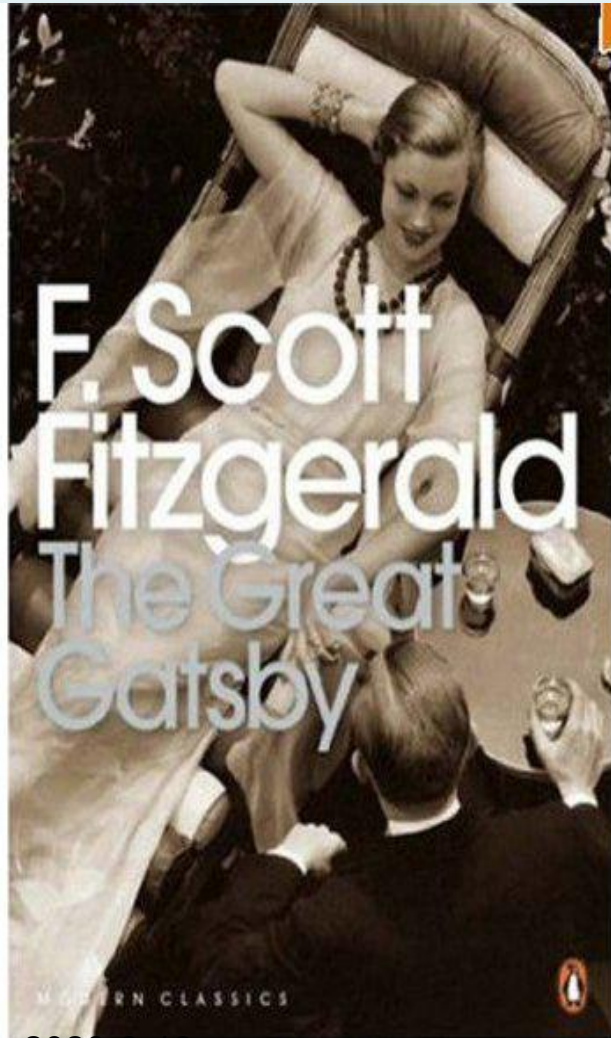


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Lead-in Questions



- Who is the narrator of the novel? What's the function of the narrator? What kind of person is he?
- Why did Gatsby hold parties every Saturday night? Were the guests invited? Did they know each other? What can you learn from this?

Nick Carraway

- The dramatic **narrator**.
- Nick is suited to narrating The Great Gatsby because of his **temperament**. He is **tolerant, open-minded, quiet, and a good listener**, and, as a result, others tend to talk to him and tell him their secrets.
- As a result of his relationship to these two characters, **Nick is the perfect choice to narrate the novel**, which functions as a **personal memoir** of his experiences with Gatsby in the summer of 1922.





- Chapter III is devoted to the introduction of Gatsby and the lavish, showy world he inhabits. Fitzgerald gives Gatsby a suitably grand entrance as the aloof host of a spectacularly decadent party. Despite this introduction, this chapter continues to heighten the sense of mystery and enigma that surrounds Gatsby, as the low profile he maintains seems curiously out of place with his lavish expenditures.



Group Discussion

- 1. Who is your favorite character in the novel and explain the reasons.
- 2. Discuss Gatsby's character as Nick perceives him throughout the novel. Do you think Gatsby deserves to be called "the great"? Why?



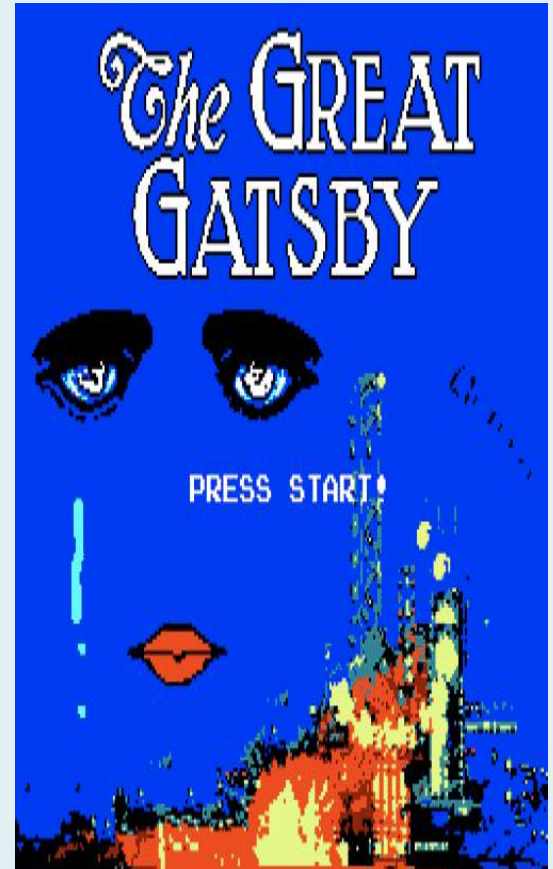
Analysis of the Major Characters

- **Gatsby**: wealthy, living in illusion, pursuing his so-called dream (to be rich, to find his love back).
- **Daisy**: snobbish, money-admirer, selfish, indifferent, false in love affair.
- **Nick**: a typical young man in "Lost generation" and got lost in "Jazz Age"
- **Tom**: wealthy, disloyal, evil, and hypocritical



What Makes Gatsby Great?

- Gatsby is a person with double character (round)
- a practitioner of **American dream** (to satisfy his vanity in material desire, but fail to achieve the essence of American dream)
- His firm love for Daisy (to find his love back, to be a scapegoat for Daisy, but repaid little from Daisy)
- As readers, we should look at Gatsby objectively (criticized and pitied)

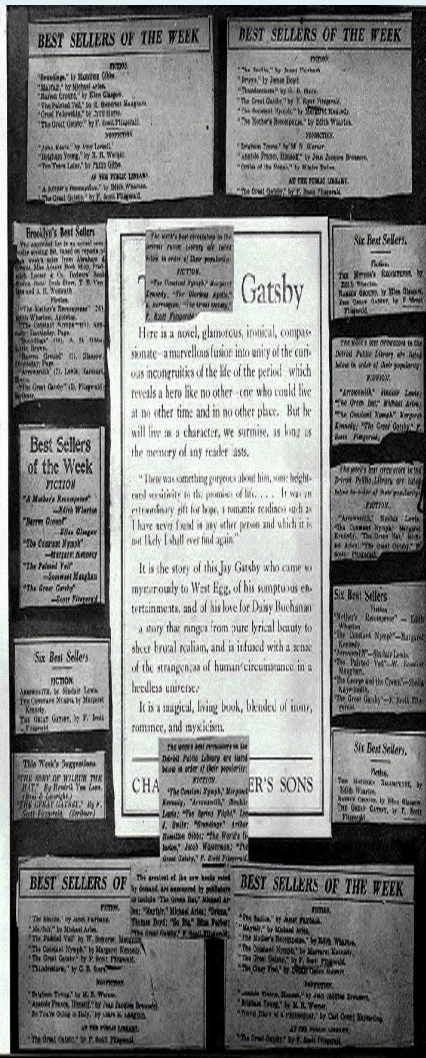


Comment on Fitzgerald



- Famous American novelist, short story writer, and essayist
- the spokesman of the Jazz Age
- Fitzgerald's greatness lies in the fact that he found intuitively, in his personal experience, the embodiment of that of the nation and created a myth out of the American life.

Further Discussion



1. In what sense is *The Great Gatsby* an autobiographical novel? Does Fitzgerald write more of himself into the character of Nick or the character of Gatsby, or are the author's qualities found in both characters?
2. Compare and contrast Gatsby and Tom. How are they alike? How are they different? Given the extremely negative light in which Tom is portrayed throughout the novel, why might Daisy choose to remain with him instead of leaving him for Gatsby?
- 3.. What are some of *The Great Gatsby's* most important symbols? What does the novel have to say about the role of symbols in life?

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