



**ORLANDO  
SHAKESPEARE  
THEATER**  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UCF

# Study Guide 2016-2017



**By F. Scott Fitzgerald**

**Adapted for the stage by Simon Levy**

## Sunshine State Standards

### **Language Arts**

LAFS.910.RL.1.2: Central Idea  
LAFS.910.RL.1.3: Character Development  
LAFS.910.L.2.3: Language  
LAFS.1112.RL.1.2: Central Ideas  
LAFS.1112.RL.1.3: Author's Choices  
LAFS.1112.L.2.3: Language

## Common Core Standards

### **Theatre Arts**

TH.912.O.1.4: Write an adaptation  
TH.912.S.2.3: Character Analysis  
TH.912.C.2.6: Artistic Choices  
TH.912.C.1.6: Historical Contexts  
TH.912.C.1.7: Personal Perceptions  
TH.912.C.1.8: Aesthetics and Criticism

### **Content Advisory:**

If it were a movie, the student matinees of *The Great Gatsby* would be rated "PG13."

# The Great Gatsby

## Table of Contents

<b><u>Introduction</u></b>	p. 3
<b><u>Enjoying Live Theater</u></b>	
Theatre is a Team	p. 4
The Actor / Audience Relationship	p. 5
Before and After the Show	p. 6
<b><u>About the Play</u></b>	
Plot Summary	p. 7
Meet the Characters	p. 8
Meet the Language	p. 9
Meet the Playwright	p. 10
Meet the Author	p. 10
<b><u>Historical Context</u></b>	
Prohibition	p. 11
<b><u>Themes</u></b>	p. 13
<b><u>Discussion Topics</u></b>	p. 14
Why The Great Gatsby Endures	p. 15
<b><u>Activities</u></b>	
Page to Stage	p. 16
Write a Review	p. 18
<b><u>Bibliography</u></b>	p. 18

# The Great Gatsby

## An Introduction

Educators:

Thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedule to bring the joy of theatre arts to your classroom. We at Orlando Shakes are well aware of the demands on your time and it is our goal to offer you supplemental information to compliment your curriculum with ease and expediency.

What's New? Lots! First, let me take a moment to introduce our new Children's Series Coordinator, Brandon Yagel. Brandon comes to us with a Masters in Theatre for Young Audiences from the University of Central Florida. We are excited to have him be a part of our team and look forward to growing with his input and passion! If you come to see a Student Matinee or Children's Series performance, please introduce yourself!

Second, we are adding in-depth Discussion Topics and Key Questions to our Signature Series Study Guides to help structure the Q&A TalkBack portion of our Student Matinee Field Trips. We will review the questions in the curtain speech, but we strongly encourage you to present them to your students before your visit. Our hope is that by focusing on certain key themes and questions that the play presents, your students will be even more engaged while watching and in the discussion after the performance.

Additionally, please take a moment to explore our website at <http://www.orlandoshakes.org/education/scripts.html#.V0W5wpMrKhc>. We've added 10-15 minute "on your feet " activities that you can do in your classroom to supplement your curriculum. We've also posted edited Shakespeare scripts that range from 60 – 120 minutes long that are perfect for school productions. As always, we've included Sunshine and Common Core Standards to assure you that those curriculum needs are being met.

We look forward to hosting you at the Lowndes Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, should you wish to bring our Actor/Educators into your classroom, we will work around your schedule. Feel free to contact us at Orlando Shakes should you have any questions or suggestions on how we can better serve you. We are always learning from you. Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Anne Hering  
Director of Education



# The Great Gatsby

## Enjoying Live Theater: Theater is a Team

The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.



**Stage Manager -**  
Stacey Renee  
Norwood  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.

The **Shop** and **Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.



**Creative Team** of The Merry Wives of Windsor  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.

The **Theater** is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students

**Sound Designer -**  
Britt Sanducky  
Photo: Rob Jones



**Costume Designer -**  
Denise Warner  
Photo: Rob Jones

### Our Mission and Vision

With Shakespeare as our standard and inspiration, the Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF produces bold professional theater, develops new plays, and provides innovative educational experiences that enrich our community. Our vision is to create theater of extraordinary quality that encourages the actor/audience relationship, embraces the passionate use of language, and ignites the imagination.



# The Great Gatsby

## Enjoying Live Theater: The Actor/Audience Relationship



Photo: Rob Jones

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an **ACTIVE** participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snuffle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!

There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And **NO TEXTING!**
- Please stay in your seat.
- Use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

# The Great Gatsby

## Enjoying Live Theater: Before and After the Show

### **Before the Show: Themes and Key Questions**

Before you see the show, consider some of the **Themes** and **Key Questions** that this show addresses. Think about the production and what it says about these topics. You'll have a chance to talk to the actors after the show to ask questions and share your opinions.

Look at pages 13-15 of this Study Guide for a more in depth analysis of these ideas to prepare for the show.

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| CLASS AND STATUS   | — If you were to assign each character a number of 1 through 10, one being the lowest social status and 10 being the highest, what number would Gatsby be? Myrtle? Tom?                                      |
|                    | — What role does money play in the characters' status. What role does race play? What about gender?  |
|                    | — Who do you think has the lowest status. Why?   |
| THE AMERICAN DREAM | — Do you think every American citizen has an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative?   |
| SYMBOLISM          | — What do you think the sign of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg symbolizes? What other symbols does the author employ?  |
| POINT OF VIEW      | — The story is told from Nick's point of view as the narrator. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from Nick's perspective? How would it be different from Daisy's perspective? Or Gatsby's? |

### **After the Show: Talkback**

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play and the production. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you and enrich your artistic experience.

Consider the Themes and Key Questions above and ask yourself:

1. What Key Questions did the play answer?
2. Do you agree with everything the play said about these themes?
3. How did the actors, directors, and designers all address these themes?
4. What opinion did the artists bring to the process, did those opinion change throughout the process (designing, rehearsing, performing) and how did that impact their work?

# The Great Gatsby

## About the Play: Synopsis

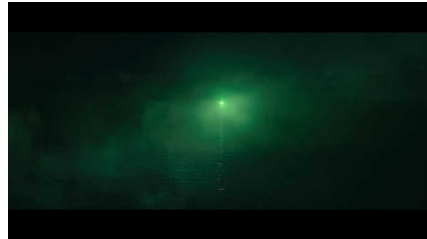


The Great Gatsby is the story of eccentric millionaire Jay Gatsby as told by Nick Carraway, a Midwesterner who lives on Long Island but works in Manhattan. Gatsby's enormous mansion is adjacent to Carraway's modest home, and Carraway becomes curious about his neighbor after being invited to one of his famous parties. Nick soon learns that Gatsby is in love Daisy Buchanan, Nick's cousin and the wife of one Tom Buchanan, an acquaintance of Nick's from Yale. Buchanan takes his old friend for a day in the city, where Nick learns that Buchanan has a kept woman, Myrtle, the wife of a long island mechanic.



Gatsby sends a message through his and Nick's mutual friend, professional golfer Jordan Baker, insisting that Nick plan a "chance" meeting for Gatsby and Daisy. Nick learns that Gatsby, Jay Gatz at the time, and Daisy had once been in love, but Daisy married Tom while Gatsby was in Europe during the Great War. In the aftermath of this, Jay Gatz abandoned his old identity, becoming Jay Gatsby and amassing a fortune with the help of notorious criminal Meyer

Wolfsheim. Gatsby chose the site of his house in Long Island because it was across the bay from Daisy's house, from which a green light could be seen at night.

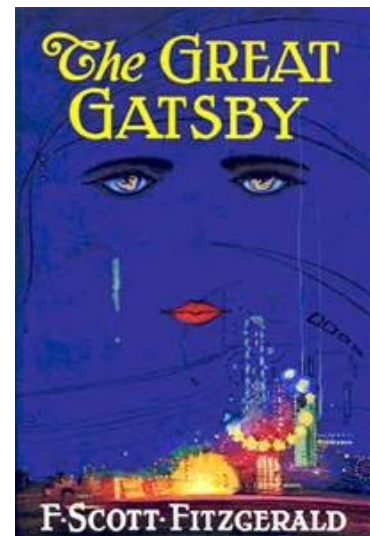


Nick manages to get Gatsby and Daisy together, and while the meeting is awkward at first, Gatsby soon relaxes and invites Nick and Daisy back to his mansion. Gatsby and Daisy begin to see each other secretly with some frequency. Nick and Gatsby also become close, as Nick is one of the only people who continues to support Gatsby despite the myriad rumors that circulate around the man. Buchanan eventually confronts Gatsby in Manhattan about the affair, and the two argue at length about who it is that Daisy genuinely loves. Daisy claims to love both of them, but she decides to return to Long Island with Gatsby, not her husband. Daisy drives Gatsby's car, but she accidentally kills a woman on the side of the road, and then speeds off. It turns out that this woman is Buchanan's girlfriend Myrtle—she had only run out to see the car because she thought it was Buchanan's.



Myrtle's husband blames Buchanan for the death, but Buchanan informs him that it was Gatsby's car that killed the woman. The mechanic goes to Gatsby's house, where he shoots Gatsby and then himself. Daisy refuses to confess to her crime, and only a few people, including Gatsby's father Henry, show up for Gatsby's funeral.

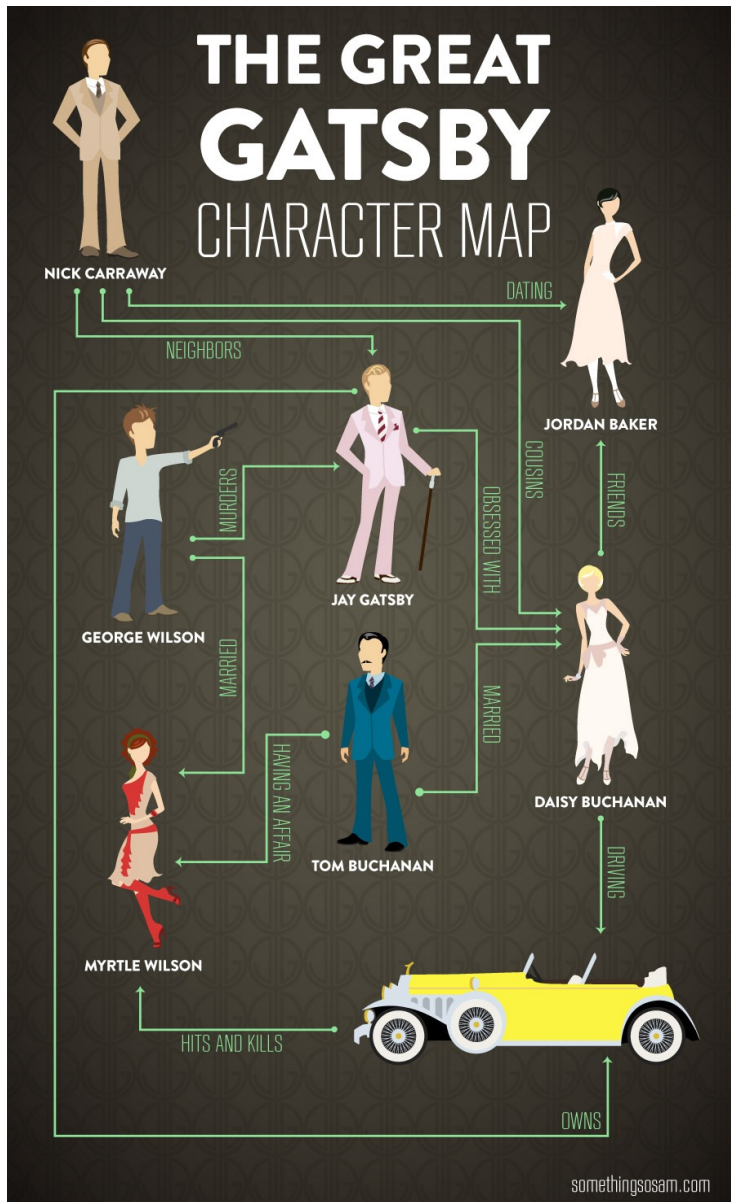
<http://www.articlemyriad.com/summary-great-gatsby-fitzgerald/>





# The Great Gatsby

## About the Play: Meet the Characters



### Nick Carraway

He is a conservative young man from the Midwest, who comes to New York to seek freedom and escape his small-town background. During the course of the novel, he turns thirty and decides to leave the East, judging it to be shallow and meaningless.

### Jay Gatsby

A poor young man in the army, he falls in love with Daisy Fay, a wealthy and shallow “golden girl.” He spends the rest of his short life trying to win Daisy’s love. In order to attract her attention, he amasses a fortune, earned from bootlegging and other illegal means, and builds a huge, gaudy mansion across the bay from the home of Daisy and her husband.

### Daisy Fay Buchanan

She had a fling with Gatsby when he was stationed in the army in Louisville, her hometown, and fancied that she loved him. When Gatsby was sent to Europe to fight in the war, she waited for him to return for a short while. Soon bored and impatient, she began to date other men of her same social class. She met and fell in love with the wealthy Tom Buchanan, whom she married.

### Tom Buchanan

Daisy’s wealthy husband. He plays with cars and race horses, has sordid affairs, and treats Daisy shabbily. She, however, will always remain with Tom, for he offers her security and the life style to which she is accustomed.

### Myrtle Wilson

The gaudy mistress of Tom Buchanan and the wife of George Wilson. Tom keeps an apartment for her in the city, which is the scene of a rather wild party during the book.

### Jordan Baker

Daisy’s good friend. She is an attractive and wealthy young golfer whom Nick dates while he is in New York.

### George Wilson

Myrtle’s husband and the owner of a garage in the Valley of Ashes.

### Mr. and Mrs. McKee

The couple who lives in the apartment below the one that Tom keeps for Myrtle in the city.

### Meyer Wolfsheim

The shady Jewish business associate of Gatsby. He wears human molars as cufflinks, is said to have fixed the World Series of 1919, and makes his money through gambling and racketeering.

### Mrs. Michaelis

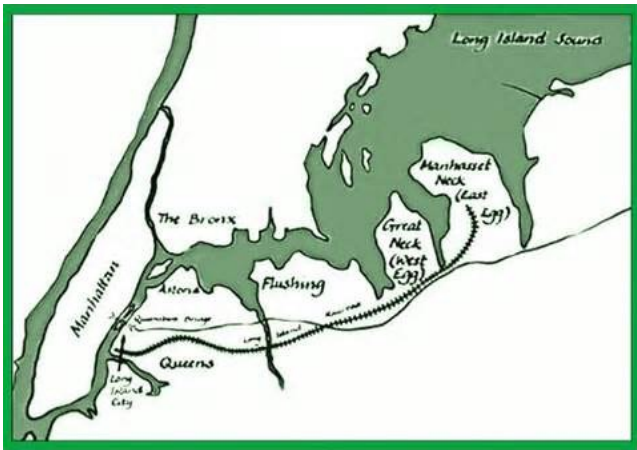
Wife of a man who owns a coffee shop in the Valley of Ashes, located next to Wilson’s garage. She is the only eye witness to Myrtle’s accident.



# The Great Gatsby

## About the Play: Meet the Language

- East Egg vs West Egg - The towns in Long Island where New York's nouveau riche built their mansions in Fitzgerald's time were called East Hampton and West Hampton. (Today they're just called "The Hamptons"). One theory of why they became called East Egg and West Egg is that in the 1920s, most Americans' favorite breakfast was ham and eggs, and if you lived in Manhattan, those eggs probably came from poultry farms on Long island. So the Long Island/Ham/Egg connection was strong in people's minds. In *The Great Gatsby*, they represent the clash between "old money" and "new money." East Egg represents the established aristocracy, West Egg the self-made rich.



- the Sound - Long Island Sound is a tidal estuary of the Atlantic Ocean, lying between the eastern shore of Bronx County, New York City, the southern shores of Westchester County and Connecticut, and the northern shore of Long Island.
- Polo - a game of Eastern origin resembling field hockey, played on horseback with a long-handled mallet.
- Nordics - relating to or denoting a physical type of northern European peoples characterized by tall stature, a bony frame, and light coloring.
- Kaiser Wilhelm - was the last German Emperor (Kaiser) and King of Prussia, ruling the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia from 15 June 1888 to 9 November 1918. An ineffective war-time leader, he lost the support of the army, abdicated in November 1918, and fled to exile in the Netherlands.
- von Hindenburg - was a German military officer, statesman, and politician who served as the second President of Germany during the period 1925–34. He was opposed to Hitler and was a major player in the increasing political instability in the Weimar Republic that ended with Hitler's rise to power.

- Oxford University - The University of Oxford (informally Oxford University or simply Oxford) is a collegiate research university located in Oxford, England, United Kingdom. Throughout its history, a sizeable number of Oxford alumni, known as Oxonians, have become notable in many varied fields, both academic and otherwise, ranging from T. E. Lawrence, British Army officer known better as Lawrence of Arabia to the explorer, courtier, and man of letters, Sir Walter Raleigh.
- denizen - an inhabitant or occupant of a particular place: denizens of field and forest.
- The World Series of 1919 - matched the American League champion Chicago White Sox against the National League champion Cincinnati Reds. The events of the series are often associated with the Black Sox Scandal, when several members of the Chicago franchise conspired with gamblers to throw (i.e., intentionally lose) the World Series games.
- hydroplane - a light fast motorboat designed to skim over the surface of water.
- debut - the first appearance of a debutante (an upper-class young woman) making her first appearance in fashionable society.
- jonquils - a widely cultivated narcissus with clusters of small fragrant yellow flowers and cylindrical leaves.
- Brooks Brothers - An expensive men's clothing store in New York City.
- the Charleston - a lively dance of the 1920s that involved turning the knees inward and kicking out the lower legs.
- bootlegger - one who made, distributed, or sold whiskey illegally.
- riffraff - disreputable or undesirable people.
- The Plaza Hotel - a landmark 20-story luxury hotel located in the Midtown Manhattan.
- coupe - a car with a fixed roof and two doors.
- mint julep - a drink consisting of bourbon, crushed ice, sugar, and fresh mint, typically served in a tall frosted glass and associated chiefly with the southern US.



# The Great Gatsby

## About the Play: Meet the Playwright and Author



**Simon Levy** (born May 12, 1949) is an award-winning theatre director and playwright, who has been the Producing Director/Dramaturg with The Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles since 1993. Levy was born in Surrey, England and grew up in San Francisco. He graduated from City College of San Francisco with an AA and San Francisco State University with an BA and MA in Theatre, and began his theatre career as an actor in San Francisco, primarily with the New Shakespeare

Company and then The Alley Theater in Houston, Texas. Prior to studying theatre, he was a music major, played the saxophone, and was a jazz and rock-and-roll musician. He made his debut as a professional stage director in 1980 at the One Act Theatre Company in San Francisco, where he focused on the development of new work, directing many of the plays of Michael Lynch, among others, and at the Magic Theatre, directing the plays of Lynne Kaufman, among others. He moved to Los Angeles in 1990 and joined the staff of The Fountain Theatre in 1993. He has taught Playwriting at UCLA Writer's Extension and Chapman University, been a site evaluator for the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council, and is a member of numerous theatre and humanitarian organizations, including the Dramatists Guild, Society for Directors and Choreographers, and Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, among many others.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon\\_Levy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Levy)



**F. Scott Fitzgerald** was born on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota. His first novel's success made him famous and let him marry the woman he loved, but he later descended into drinking and his wife had a mental breakdown. Following the unsuccessful *Tender is the Night*, Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood and became a scriptwriter. He died of a heart attack in 1940, at age 44, his final novel only half completed.

### Fitzgerald's Early Life

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota. His namesake (and second cousin three times removed on his father's side) was Francis Scott Key, who wrote the lyrics to the "Star-Spangled Banner." Fitzgerald's mother, Mary McQuillan, was from an Irish-Catholic family that had made a small fortune in Minnesota as wholesale grocers. His father, Edward

Fitzgerald, had opened a wicker furniture business in St. Paul, and, when it failed, he took a job as a salesman for Procter & Gamble that took his family back and forth between Buffalo and Syracuse in upstate New York during the first decade of Fitzgerald's life. However, Edward Fitzgerald lost his job with Procter & Gamble in 1908, when F. Scott Fitzgerald was 12, and the family moved back to St. Paul to live off of his mother's inheritance.

Fitzgerald was a bright, handsome and ambitious boy, the pride and joy of his parents and especially his mother. He attended the St. Paul Academy, and when he was 13, he saw his first piece of writing appear in print: a detective story published in the school newspaper. In 1911, when Fitzgerald was 15 years old, his parents sent him to the Newman School, a prestigious Catholic preparatory school in New Jersey. There, he met Father Sigourney Fay, who noticed his incipient talent with the written word and encouraged him to pursue his literary ambitions.

After graduating from the Newman School in 1913, Fitzgerald decided to stay in New Jersey to continue his artistic development at Princeton University. At Princeton, he firmly dedicated himself to honing his craft as a writer, writing scripts for Princeton's famous Triangle Club musicals as well as frequent articles for the Princeton Tiger humor magazine and stories for the Nassau Literary Magazine. However, Fitzgerald's writing came at the expense of his coursework. He was placed on academic probation, and, in 1917, he dropped out of school to join the U.S. Army. Afraid that he might die in World War I with his literary dreams unfulfilled, in the weeks before reporting to duty, Fitzgerald hastily wrote a novel called *The Romantic Egotist*. Though the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons, rejected the novel, the reviewer noted its originality and encouraged Fitzgerald to submit more work in the future.

Fitzgerald was commissioned a second lieutenant in the infantry and assigned to Camp Sheridan outside of Montgomery, Alabama. It was there that he met and fell in love with a beautiful 18-year-old girl named Zelda Sayre, the daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. The war ended in November 1918, before Fitzgerald was ever deployed, and upon his discharge he moved to New York City hoping to launch a career in advertising lucrative enough to convince Zelda to marry him. He quit his job after only a few months, however, and returned to St. Paul to rewrite his novel.

<http://www.biography.com/people/f-scott-fitzgerald-9296261#early-life>



Scott, Zelda and Scottie Fitzgerald



# The Great Gatsby

## Historical Context - Prohibition

The ratification of the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—which banned the manufacture, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquors—ushered in a period in American history known as Prohibition. The result of a widespread temperance movement during the first decade of the 20th century, Prohibition was difficult to enforce, despite the passage of companion legislation known as the Volstead Act. The increase of the illegal production and sale of liquor (known as “bootlegging”), the proliferation of speakeasies (illegal drinking spots) and the accompanying rise in gang violence and other crimes led to waning support for Prohibition by the end of the 1920s. In early 1933, Congress adopted a resolution proposing a 21st Amendment to the Constitution that would repeal the 18th. It was ratified by the end of that year, bringing the Prohibition era to a close.



### ORIGINS OF PROHIBITION

In the 1820s and '30s, a wave of religious revivalism swept the United States, leading to increased calls for temperance, as well as other “perfectionist” movements such as the abolition of slavery. In 1838, the state of Massachusetts passed a temperance law banning the sale of spirits in less than 15-gallon quantities; though the law was repealed two years later, it set a precedent for such legislation. Maine passed the first state prohibition law in 1846, and a number of other states had followed suit by the time the Civil War began in 1861.

By the turn of the century, temperance societies were a common fixture in communities across the United States. Women played a strong role in the temperance movement, as alcohol was seen as a destructive force in families and marriages. In 1906, a new wave of attacks began on the sale of liquor, led by the Anti-Saloon League (established

in 1893) and driven by a reaction to urban growth, as well as the rise of evangelical Protestantism and its view of saloon culture as corrupt and ungodly. In addition, many factory owners supported prohibition in their desire to prevent accidents and increase the efficiency of their workers in an era of increased industrial production and extended working hours.

### PASSAGE OF THE PROHIBITION AMENDMENT

In 1917, after the United States entered World War I, President Woodrow Wilson instituted a temporary wartime prohibition in order to save grain for producing food. That same year, Congress submitted the 18th Amendment, which banned the manufacture, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquors, for state ratification. Though Congress had stipulated a seven-year time limit for the process, the amendment received the support of the necessary three-quarters of U.S. states in just 11 months.

Ratified on January 29, 1919, the 18th Amendment went into effect a year later, by which time no fewer than 33 states had already enacted their own prohibition legislation. In October 1919, Congress passed the National Prohibition Act, which provided guidelines for the federal enforcement of Prohibition. Championed by Representative Andrew Volstead of Mississippi, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, the legislation was more commonly known as the Volstead Act.



# The Great Gatsby

## Historical Context - Prohibition



### ENFORCEMENT OF PROHIBITION

Both federal and local government struggled to enforce Prohibition over the course of the 1920s. Enforcement was initially assigned to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and was later transferred to the Justice Department. In general, Prohibition was enforced much more strongly in areas where the population was sympathetic to the legislation—mainly rural areas and small towns—and much more loosely in urban areas. Despite very early signs of success, including a decline in arrests for drunkenness and a reported 30 percent drop in alcohol consumption, those who wanted to keep drinking found ever-more inventive ways to do it. The illegal manufacturing and sale of liquor (known as “bootlegging”) went on throughout the decade, along with the operation of “speakeasies” (stores or nightclubs selling alcohol), the smuggling of alcohol across state lines and the informal production of liquor (“moonshine” or “bathtub gin”) in private homes.



In addition, the Prohibition era encouraged the rise of criminal activity associated with bootlegging. The most notorious example was the Chicago gangster Al Capone, who earned a staggering \$60 million annually from bootleg

operations and speakeasies. Such illegal operations fueled a corresponding rise in gang violence, including the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in Chicago in 1929, in which several men dressed as policemen (and believed to be have associated with Capone) shot and killed a group of men in an enemy gang.

### PROHIBITION COMES TO AN END

The high price of bootleg liquor meant that the nation’s working class and poor were far more restricted during Prohibition than middle or upper class Americans. Even as costs for law enforcement, jails and prisons spiraled upward, support for Prohibition was waning by the end of the 1920s. In addition, fundamentalist and nativist forces had gained more control over the temperance movement, alienating its more moderate members.



With the country mired in the Great Depression by 1932, creating jobs and revenue by legalizing the liquor industry had an undeniable appeal. Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for president that year on a platform calling for Prohibition’s appeal, and easily won victory over the incumbent President Herbert Hoover. FDR’s victory meant the end for Prohibition, and in February 1933 Congress adopted a resolution proposing a 21st Amendment to the Constitution that would repeal the 18th. The amendment was submitted to the states, and in December 1933 Utah provided the 36th and final necessary vote for ratification. Though a few states continued to prohibit alcohol after Prohibition’s end, all had abandoned the ban by 1966.

<http://www.history.com/topics/prohibition>



# The Great Gatsby Themes

## Class (Old Money, New Money, No Money)

The Great Gatsby shows the newly developing class rivalry between "old" and "new" money in the struggle between Gatsby and Tom over Daisy. As usual, the "no money" class gets overlooked by the struggle at the top, leaving middle and lower class people like George Wilson forgotten or ignored.

## Past and Future

Nick and Gatsby are continually troubled by time—the past haunts Gatsby and the future weighs down on Nick. When Nick tells Gatsby that you can't repeat the past, Gatsby says "Why of course you can!"

## The American Dream

The American Dream—that hard work can lead one from rags to riches—has been a core facet of American identity since its inception. Settlers came west to America from Europe seeking wealth and freedom. The pioneers headed west for the same reason. The Great Gatsby shows the tide turning east, as hordes flock to New York City seeking stock market fortunes.

## The Roaring Twenties

F. Scott Fitzgerald coined the term "Jazz Age" to describe the decade of decadence and prosperity that America enjoyed in the 1920s. Though the 1920s were a time of great optimism, Fitzgerald portrays the much bleaker side of the revelry by focusing on its indulgence, hypocrisy, shallow recklessness, and its perilous—even fatal—consequences.

# The Great Gatsby

## Discussion Topics

1. The novel's action occurs in 1922 between June and September. How does Nick's non-chronological narration shape your response to the events surrounding the mystery of Jay Gatsby?
2. Nick believes he is an honest, nonjudgemental narrator. Do you agree?
3. Gatsby believes that the past can be repeated. Is he right?
4. Why does Daisy sob into the "thick folds" of Gatsby's beautiful shirts?
5. What do the faded eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg symbolize? Is there a connection between this billboard and the green light at the end of Daisy's dock?
6. Perhaps the novel's climax occurs when Gatsby confronts Tom in New York. Did Daisy's ultimate choice surprise you? Is it consistent with her character?
7. Do you agree with Nick's final assertion that Gatsby is "worth the whole damn bunch put together"? Why or why not?
8. How does Fitzgerald foreshadow the tragedies at the end?
9. Does the novel critique or uphold the values of the Jazz Age and the fears of the Lost Generation?
10. Fitzgerald wrote, "You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say." What did he have to say in Gatsby?

<http://www.neabigread.org/books/greatgatsby/readers-guide/discussion-questions/>





# The Great Gatsby

## Maureen Corrigan On Why 'The Great Gatsby' Endures



Essayist and critic Maureen Corrigan, whose voice has long been featured on Fresh Air and Washington Post's Book World, recently wrote a comprehensive study of *The Great Gatsby*, embellishing the book's rich history with her personal experiences reading and compulsively re-reading it. Below, she discusses exactly why Fitzgerald's novel remains moving, relevant and enjoyable:

### **Why, in a sentence, do you think *The Great Gatsby* endures?**

*Gatsby* endures because it's our most American and our most un-American novel at once: telling us the American Dream is a mirage, but doing so in such gorgeous language that it makes that dream irresistible.

### **According to your book, you weren't exactly taken with *Gatsby* the first time around — why was that?**

I first read *Gatsby* in high school and promptly decided that it was a boring novel about rich people with whom I couldn't "identify." I think in high school many of us are reading for clues about how we're going to fit in the wider world and since I grew up in a Catholic blue collar family in Queens (more Valley of Ashes than West or East Egg), *Gatsby*'s opulent visions of wretched excess meant little to me. Also, I think that, while high school students may connect with *Gatsby*'s obsessive pursuit of Daisy, the voice of Nick Carraway, our narrator, is full of regret and yearning for times past. Generally speaking, Nick's voice resonates more with older readers, rather than readers who are still in their teens.

### **You weren't alone in that assessment. The book wasn't always popular in America, either. Why was that?**

When the novel was published in 1925, many newspaper reviewers under-read it as a hardboiled crime tale — three violent deaths! bootlegging! infidelity! — and saw nothing more in the novel besides entertainment. Fitzgerald told Max Perkins that he thought *Gatsby* didn't sell because there are no likable female characters in it and that women drive the fiction market. I think that judgment of his is so interesting because that's what we say now: that women buy fiction and men buy nonfiction.

### **Do you think *Gatsby* comes close to earning its epithet as a Great American Novel?**

Yes. Absolutely. The novel is all about aspiration: the first time we see *Gatsby*, he's stretching out his arms to that oft-discussed green light across the water. It's that gesture of reaching — not the green light — that's the all-American symbol of the novel. In fact, everyone in the novel is reaching for someone or something that's ungraspable. *Gatsby* celebrates the doomed beauty of trying in ordinary American language made unearthly by Fitzgerald's great poetic gifts.

### **You've noted that the book isn't perfect — in fact, it's pretty problematic. Why do you think its lack of strong female characters (with the questionable exception of Jordan) sits well with contemporary readers?**

Even in 1925, there were female readers — Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton, among them — who looked beyond identification with *Gatsby*'s female characters and connected, instead, with Fitzgerald's profound message about the promise of America. Readers today — female and male — who've lived through the earthquakes of the modernist and post-modernist movements in literature may be even more used to a certain ironic distance from the main characters in a novel. All that said, I think *Gatsby* is a particularly weird novel. It's not character driven nor especially plot driven; rather, it's that oddest of literary animals — a voice-driven novel. I think once we grow past the idea that we have to identify with or like characters in order to be drawn into a book, we can allow ourselves to be "carried away" by Nick Carraway's voice as a narrator.

There are lots of novels — classic and contemporary — that don't contain likable female characters, but their other strengths compensate. I'm thinking, um, of *Moby Dick*, for instance, and in recent literary history, Claire Messud's *The Woman Upstairs* and Brian Morton's just published *Florence Gordon*.

### **Fitzgerald considered many other titles for the book, including the now laughable *Gold-Hatted Gatsby*. What would you have named the book?**

Don't ask me to improve upon *The Great Gatsby*! Both Zelda Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald's legendary editor, Maxwell Perkins, thought *The Great Gatsby* was a fine title: their opinion is good enough for me.

### **Which writers working today would you compare to Fitzgerald?**

A few months before he died in 1940, a very depressed Fitzgerald wrote to Maxwell Perkins, wondering how to keep *The Great Gatsby* alive for readers (remaindered copies had been stored in Scribner's warehouse since 1925) and remarking on his influence: "Even now," Fitzgerald wrote, "there is little in American literature that doesn't bear my stamp." I'd now widen out his remark to say that there is little in world literature that doesn't bear his stamp. Writers who carry forward that beautiful attentiveness to language are working in the Fitzgerald mode. I'm thinking of Alice Munro, Denis Johnson, Jen Egan, Michael Cunningham, Dinaw Mengestu, Joseph O'Neill, Ha Jin... the list goes on and on.

# The Great Gatsby

## Activities: Page To Stage

Bringing a book to life on stage is difficult. It sometimes means cutting out events, storylines, and even whole characters. Our playwright had a challenge turning F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, told in various into a stage play.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's book:

'Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late!' He looked at his watch as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere. 'I can't wait all day.'

'Don't be silly; it's just two minutes to four.'

He sat down, miserably, as if I had pushed him, and simultaneously there was the sound of a motor turning into my lane. We both jumped up and, a little harrowed myself, I went out into the yard.

Under the dripping bare lilac trees a large open car was coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy's face, tipped sideways beneath a three-cornered lavender hat, looked at me with a bright ecstatic smile.

'Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one?'

The exhilarating ripple of her voice was a wild tonic in the rain. I had to follow the sound of it for a moment, up and down, with my ear alone before any words came through. A damp streak of hair lay like a dash of blue paint across her cheek and her hand was wet with glistening drops as I took it to help her from the car.

'Are you in love with me,' she said low in my ear. 'Or why did I have to come alone?'

'That's the secret of Castle Rackrent. Tell your chauffeur to go far away and spend an hour.'

'Come back in an hour, Ferdie.' Then in a grave murmur, 'His name is Ferdie.'

'Does the gasoline affect his nose?'

'I don't think so,' she said innocently. 'Why?'

We went in. To my overwhelming surprise the living room was deserted.

'Well, that's funny!' I exclaimed.

'What's funny?'

She turned her head as there was a light, dignified knocking at the front door. I went out and opened it. Gatsby, pale as death, with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets, was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes.

With his hands still in his coat pockets he stalked by me into the hall, turned sharply as if he were on a wire and disappeared into the living room. It wasn't a bit funny. Aware of the loud beating of my own heart I pulled the door to against the increasing rain.

For half a minute there wasn't a sound. Then from the living room I heard a sort of choking murmur and part of a laugh followed by Daisy's voice on a clear artificial note.

'I certainly am awfully glad to see you again.'

A pause; it endured horribly. I had nothing to do in the hall so I went into the room.

Gatsby, his hands still in his pockets, was reclining against the mantelpiece in a strained counterfeit of perfect ease, even of boredom. His head leaned back so far that it rested against the face of a defunct mantelpiece clock and from this position his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy who was sitting frightened but graceful on the edge of a stiff chair.

'We've met before,' muttered Gatsby. His eyes glanced momentarily at me and his lips parted with an abortive

attempt at a laugh. Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the pressure of his head, whereupon he turned and caught it with trembling fingers and set it back in place. Then he sat down, rigidly, his elbow on the arm of the sofa and his chin in his hand.

'I'm sorry about the clock,' he said.

My own face had now assumed a deep tropical burn. I couldn't muster up a single commonplace out of the thousand in my head.

'It's an old clock,' I told them idiotically.

I think we all believed for a moment that it had smashed in pieces on the floor.

'We haven't met for many years,' said Daisy, her voice as matter-of-fact as it could ever be.

'Five years next November.'

The automatic quality of Gatsby's answer set us all back at least another minute. I had them both on their feet with the desperate suggestion that they help me make tea in the kitchen when the demoniac Finn brought it in on a tray.

Amid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain physical decency established itself. Gatsby got himself into a shadow and while Daisy and I talked looked conscientiously from one to the other of us with tense unhappy eyes. However, as calmness wasn't an end in itself I made an excuse at the first possible moment and got to my feet.

'Where are you going?' demanded Gatsby in immediate alarm.

'I'll be back.' 'I've got to speak to you about something before you go.'

He followed me wildly into the kitchen, closed the door and whispered: 'Oh, God!' in a miserable way.

'What's the matter?'

'This is a terrible mistake,' he said, shaking his head from side to side, 'a terrible, terrible mistake.'

'You're just embarrassed, that's all,' and luckily I added: 'Daisy's embarrassed too.'

'She's embarrassed?' he repeated incredulously.

'Just as much as you are.'

'Don't talk so loud.'

'You're acting like a little boy,' I broke out impatiently. 'Not only that but you're rude. Daisy's sitting in there all alone.'

He raised his hand to stop my words, looked at me with unforgettable reproach and opening the door cautiously went back into the other room.



# The Great Gatsby

## Activities: Page To Stage (Cont.)

Now read the following scene from Simon Levy's play:

Start

NICK. Does she want to see him?  
JORDAN. She's not to know about it. Gatsby doesn't want her to know. You're just supposed to invite her to tea. Alone, of course.  
NICK. I'm not sure I'm comfortable —  
JORDAN. Daisy ought to have something in her life. Don't you think?  
NICK. And what about you? What if I invited you to tea? Would you come?  
JORDAN. Ask me. *(Nick draws her close and they kiss as Nick's cottage forms around them: a small couch and too many flowers. Jordan exits. Gatsby enters and paces, looking extremely nervous. He wears a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold tie, and is carrying a leatherbound album.)*  
GATSBY. Have you got everything you need in the shape of ... of tea?  
NICK. All set.  
GATSBY. Are you sure you're all right with this? I wouldn't want to do anything out of the way.  
NICK. It's fine. Fine. Would you like something while you wait?  
GATSBY. No, no. *(Sound of rain. Looking out, horrified.)* It's raining.  
NICK. I noticed. *(Gatsby sits, leafs through the album, anxious. He suddenly slams the album shut and jumps up.)*  
GATSBY. I'm going home.  
NICK. What?  
GATSBY. Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late! I can't wait all day. *(He starts to leave.)*  
NICK. Don't be silly. It's just two minutes to four.  
GATSBY. You don't understand, old sport, I — *(Sound of a car driving up and a horn.)*  
NICK. See? *(Nick exits. Gatsby fidgets, panicking, then runs off in the other direction. Nick reenters with Daisy, both under an umbrella.)*  
DAISY. Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one? It's adorable! Absolutely adorable! *(Nick looks for Gatsby.)* Are you in love with me? Is that why I had to come alone? *(There's a knock at the front door. Gatsby enters, dripping wet. Awkward beat.)* Jay.  
GATSBY. Hello, Daisy. *(Beat.)*  
DAISY. I'm glad to see you again. *(Beat.)*  
GATSBY. *(To Nick.)* We've met before. *(Nick nods, enchanted by the awkwardness between them.)*  
DAISY. We haven't met for many years.  
GATSBY. Five years, next November. *(Beat.)*

End

DAISY. *(Turning to Nick.)* Jordan says you've been naughty with her.  
NICK. Have I?  
DAISY. See? I'm the perfect matchmaker! Though I'm very angry with her. She left my car out in the rain with the top down and it's ruined, absolutely ruined! At first she lied about it. So you be careful with her, Nick. She's incurably dishonest. *(Beat.)*  
NICK. Well, if you'll both excuse me.  
GATSBY. Where you going?  
NICK. I thought I'd get some tea and cake.  
GATSBY. I'll help you. *(Gatsby chases after Nick.)* Oh, God!  
NICK. What's the matter?  
GATSBY. This is a mistake ... a terrible, terrible mistake.  
NICK. You're just embarrassed, that's all. Daisy's embarrassed too.  
GATSBY. She is?  
NICK. Just as much as you are.  
GATSBY. Does the suit look alright?  
NICK. It's very nice.  
GATSBY. What'll I do? What'll I say?  
NICK. You're acting like a little boy. Not only that but you're rude. Daisy's sitting in there all alone. Go on. *(Nick exits. Gatsby crosses back to Daisy.)*  
DAISY. I thought if we ever met again it'd be when we were old — and decrepit. *(Gatsby stares at her as if she were a dream. And now we hear their love theme.)* You're as handsome as ever, Lieutenant Gatsby.  
GATSBY. Would you like to sit?  
DAISY. Yes. *(They sit on the couch like teenagers on a first date.)* Did you know I'd be here?  
GATSBY. I arranged it. *(He hands her the photo album.)* Here. *(She opens it, then quickly flips through the pages.)*  
DAISY. Are these all ME?  
GATSBY. They're newspaper clippings from the last five years.  
DAISY. My debut! ... Chicago! ... Oh, look at that silly hat ... Even Europe. *(She stops at a photo of Tom.)*  
GATSBY. He's a good polo player.  
DAISY. Yes, Tom has a knack for winning. *(Turning to him.)* Jay, I tried to wait, really I did, but —  
GATSBY. Look at this. *(He turns to the last page. She looks at it and begins to cry.)*  
DAISY. How handsome you are in your uniform. *(He stares at her, enthralled.)* You never marr —

What are the major differences you notice?

First, take a highlighter and highlight all the stage directions *(all the text in italics and in parenthesis. These tell the actors and director what to do. These are not lines spoken out out.)*

Next, take a different color highlighter and highlight all of the dialogue that happens between Nick, Gatsby and Daisy. Now, using that same color highlighter, return to the text from the novella and highlight the corresponding text that is represented by the actors' dialogue in the play.

### REFLECT

You'll notice that the playwright left out some of the conversation that is found in the book. Why do you think that is?

What are some of the challenges in adapting a story from a look book into a two-hour play?

What are some of the main characterization differences you find in these parallel scenes? Do you get more insight into Nick's character in one version? Does Gatsby seem more mysterious in a certain version of this scene?

Discuss why you think the playwright decided to fashion the scene in the way he did. What did he cut from the original text, and why? Does the playwright effectively tell the story of this scene in a more concise manner, or has he manipulated the source-scene to bend the characters to better fit his story? Does he have the right to do that? Have you seen that happen with some of your favorite book/movie adaptations *(Hunger Games, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter)*?

Which scene is more engaging, more fun, and more excited to experience as an audience member? Why is that?

# The Great Gatsby

## Activities: Write a Review

### Write a Review

Explain to students that the director's job is to take the words on the script from the printed page to the stage and bring them to life. Explain that theater critics review shows and publish their opinions. For AmericanTheatreCritics.org, critic Sherry Eaker wrote, "My point of view was that it wasn't the theatre critic's place to tell the playwright what he or she should be doing; instead, the critic should focus on what is already there and explain either why it works or why it doesn't work."

After seeing the production, have each student write a review of Orlando Shakes' production of *The Great Gatsby*. The review should include one paragraph each for:

Introduction – What did you watch, where and when, and maybe, why?

The script – Did you like the writing, the story, the characters? Why or why not?

The score - Did you like the music? Why or why not?

The acting – Did you believe and care about the characters as portrayed? Why or why not?

The design – Did you like the set, costume and light designs? Why or why not?

The staging – How did the director stage the violence? Was it effective?

The audience – What ways did the audience respond to particular moments?

Conclusion – What will you remember about this performance?

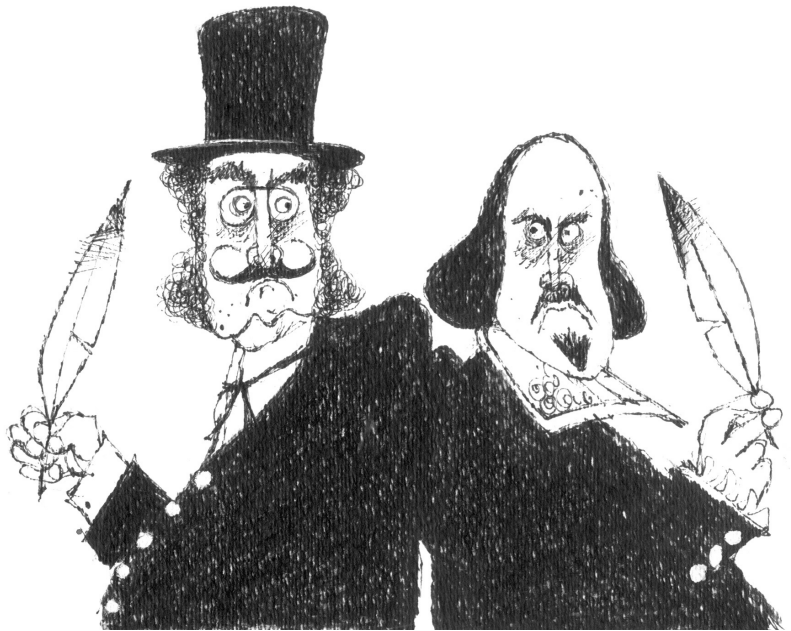
If you wish, send your reviews to us at:

[anneh@orlandoshakes.org](mailto:anneh@orlandoshakes.org)

We'd love to hear your opinions of our show!

Read more: How to Become a Theater Critic

- eHow.com <http://www.ehow.com/>



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