

Reading Assignment: *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Few American stories have captivated as many readers as *The Great Gatsby*. Set in the Roaring Twenties, the story has everything in it—greed, romantic love, intrigue, wealth, betrayal... and lots of parties!

The corruption and vice present in the story perhaps strikes readers the most—but the story presents vice and corruption as it does in order to ask deeply important questions about what it means to live as a human being and what it means to live the American dream. Some of the specific questions this story wrestles with include:

- What does it mean to be in love?
- When should you stop pursuing a potential romantic partner you deeply love?
- What does it mean to live the American Dream?
- Does pursuing the American Dream lead to a fulfilling life?
- What does it mean to be happy?
- What is the best way to achieve happiness in our lives?

There are several other questions and themes the story explores, but these are some of the most important ones we'll be discussing in class discussions. In addition to exploring the big questions of life, *The Great Gatsby* is also a fun read, and I expect you'll enjoy reading it over the course of the summer.

You should be able to find a copy of *The Great Gatsby* from any decent-sized book store. It is \$10 on Amazon, and the library system should also have several copies of the work (as long as you all aren't trying to borrow library copies at the same time!)

I look forward to discussing the big ideas of *The Great Gatsby* with all of you come August.

-Mr. DeGraaf

Writing Assignment

Please write a 400-650 word essay (MLA, double-spaced) about one of the two topics below.

1. **Option #1:** The themes of sight and blindness permeate the novel. Eyes are everywhere: Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's on the billboard, Owl Eyes, a dog "looking with blind eyes through the smoke (41), a man "blinded by the glare of the headlights" (59), and Nick's comment that the East is "haunted for me . . . distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction," (185). Analyze the treatment of blindness and sight in the novel.
2. **Option #2:** Fitzgerald tackles the idea of the American dream in his novel. How does Jay Gatsby pursue the American dream, and how does his pursuit turn out? Analyze Gatsby's pursuit and explain what Fitzgerald is saying about the pursuit of the American Dream.

Project Assignment

Please complete one of the two projects below.

1. **Option #1:** Conduct interviews with one person from three of six age groups. You must ask each person two questions: "What is the American Dream?" and "How do you try to pursue the American Dream?" Record the interviewee's answers and write detailed notes about them. This does not need to be an essay, but you organize your answers in some way (e.g. a chart or a graph that compares/contrasts response).

Age Group 1: 15-18

Age Group 2: 19-25

Age Group 3: 26-35

Age Group 4: 36-45

Age Group 5: 46-55

Age Group 6: 56+

2. **Option #2:** The cover of the Great Gatsby has been called "the most celebrated and widely disseminated jacket art in twentieth-century American literature, and perhaps of all time." Fitzgerald saw the cover before he finished the book, and loved the cover so much that he actually wrote some of the cover's symbols into the story.

In this assignment, you will be creating your own book cover for *The Great Gatsby*. This assignment will challenge you to demonstrate your knowledge of what symbolism is and how Fitzgerald employs symbolism through his writing. Your book cover should be designed on a sheet of 8 ½" x 11" paper and include an artistic representation of 2-3 symbols or symbolic messages that you discovered in your analysis of the text.

Feel free to browse through actual book covers for *The Great Gatsby* for inspiration, but make sure the cover you craft is original and unique.