

The Great Gatsby

"The Great Gatsby" is a novel by the author F. Scott Fitzgerald that was published in 1925. The story is set in the Jazz Age on Long Island and in New York City. The novel tells the tragic story of Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire, and his pursuit of Daisy Buchanan, a wealthy young woman whom he loved in his youth. The narrative explores themes of decadence, idealism, resistance to change, social upheaval, and excess, creating a portrait of the Jazz Age or the Roaring Twenties. In this novel the narrator is Nick Carraway. Nick rents a house next to Gatsby's mansion. He is Daisy's cousin and becomes Gatsby's friend. Tom Buchanan is Daisy's wealthy but unfaithful husband. Tom is arrogant, aggressive, and exemplifies the worst aspects of the American aristocracy. Finally, Jordan Baker is a friend of Daisy's and a professional golfer. She becomes romantically involved with Nick.

Key Themes

- **The American Dream:** The pursuit of success and wealth, as embodied by Gatsby's rise from poverty to wealth in an attempt to win back Daisy.
- **Love and Betrayal:** The complex relationships among characters, including Gatsby's idealized love for Daisy and Tom's infidelity.
- **Social Class:** The divide between the wealthy and the poor, and the hollow nature of the American aristocracy.
- **The Jazz Age:** The novel captures the spirit of the 1920s, a time of unprecedented economic growth, cultural change, and moral ambiguity.

Plot Summary

Nick Carraway moves to Long Island and becomes neighbors with the mysterious Jay Gatsby. Gatsby throws extravagant parties hoping Daisy, who lives across the bay, will attend. They rekindle their romance, leading to a series of tragic events culminating in Gatsby's death. Tom and Daisy return to their privileged lives, leaving Nick disillusioned with the American Dream and the society around him.

Symbolism

- **The Green Light:** Represents Gatsby's hopes and dreams for the future, particularly his desire to be with Daisy.
- **The Valley of Ashes:** A desolate area between West Egg and New York City, symbolizing the moral and social decay resulting from the pursuit of wealth.
- **The Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg:** A billboard in the Valley of Ashes, representing the eyes of God watching over the moral decay of society.

Critical Reception

Upon its release, "The Great Gatsby" received mixed reviews and sold poorly. However, it is now considered one of the greatest American novels and a quintessential tale of the American experience. It is widely studied in schools and has been adapted into numerous films and stage productions.