

# F. SCOTT FITZGERALD THE GREAT GATSBY



YOUNG ADULT ELI READERS

## MAIN CHARACTERS

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JORDAN BAKER



TOM BUCHANAN



HENRY GATZ



NICK CARRAWAY



JAY GATSBY



'OWL-EYES'



DAN CODY



MEYER WOLFSHEIM



MICHAELIS



MYRTLE WILSON



GEORGE WILSON



DAISY BUCHANAN



THE MCKEES



CATHERINE



EWING KLISSPRINGER



DOCTOR T. J. ECKLEBURG



and garden. This was Gatsby's mansion... but I didn't know him yet. From my own ugly house I could see the Sound and a part of his lawn, and I also had the comfort of knowing that I was surrounded by millionaires – all for 80 dollars a month!

My acquaintance with the fashionable white palaces of East Egg began one summer evening when I drove there to have dinner with my distant cousin Daisy Buchanan and her husband Tom, whom I knew from college. Tom came from a wealthy Chicago family and had been a football hero at Yale. He and Daisy had lived in France for a year and had then come East for some unknown reason. Daisy said they were here to stay but I didn't believe her. The reality was, I was going to have dinner with two old friends I hardly knew.

Their house was a red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, with a line of French windows overlooking the bay. Tom was dressed in riding clothes and was standing in the sunshine on the front porch\* – a sturdy man of 30, muscular, with an aggressive manner and a rough tenor voice. Although we had never been close friends, I think he had a good opinion of me and wanted me to like him.

"I've got a nice place here," he said in a restless tone, while pointing out the view to me. Then we went inside, to a rosy-colored drawing-room, where two young women sat at either end of an enormous couch\*. I didn't know the younger one but Daisy tried to get up and then laughed as I came hesitantly into the room.

"I'm p-paralyzed with happiness," she cried, holding my hand and looking into my face. She murmured the name Baker to indicate

porch covered entrance

couch sofa



## AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES

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### Comprehension

#### 1 Who is being described in these phrases?

- 1 "deranged by grief" \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 "she was perfectly happy with her husband" \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 "completely knocked down and out" \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 "Did you get my telegram? There's trouble---" \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 "his grief was soon mixed with pride" \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 "... read one improving book or magazine a week..." \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 "Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on" \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 "careless and confused" \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 "half in love ... and extremely sorry" \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 "I saw the dog biscuits and I cried like a baby." \_\_\_\_\_

### Grammar – CAE-type activity

#### 2 Rewrite these sentences, using the verbs in brackets in an appropriate tense.

- a It would have been impossible for Nick to imagine that hardly anyone would help him to organise Gatsby's funeral.  
Nick (not realize) how little help he would get in (organize) Gatsby's funeral.
- b Tom told Wilson that Gatsby's car ran over Myrtle; perhaps that is why Gatsby is dead.  
If Tom (tell) Wilson whose car (run over) Myrtle, then Gatsby still (might) (be) alive.
- c Wilson was described as "deranged by grief" because of Catherine's evidence at the inquest.  
It (be) Catherine's evidence at the inquest which (result) in Wilson (be labelled) as "deranged by grief".
- d To Nick's surprise, when the day of the funeral arrived, Daisy hadn't rung or sent a message.  
Nick (expect) a telephone call or message from Daisy but nothing (arrive) by the day of the funeral.

- e** Both Meyer Wolfsheim and Henry Gatz were convinced that a madman had murdered Gatsby.  
Both Meyer Wolfsheim and Henry Gatz (comment) that Gatsby's murder (must) (be) the work of a madman.
- f** When Tom said "Gatsby ran over Myrtle", Nick wasn't able to reveal the true driver that day.  
Not even when Tom said "Gatsby ran over Myrtle" Nick (tell) him the truth that Daisy (drive) that day.

## Listening – CAE-type activity

► **13 3a** Listen to this short extract describing Gatsby's funeral and answer these questions.

**1** What was the weather like before the funeral? Did it change when everybody was at the cemetery?

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**2** How many cars in total were at the funeral service for Gatsby? Who was in them?

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**3** Why was 'Owl-eyes' surprised when he talked to Nick afterwards?

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**3b** Now listen again. If necessary, correct these sentences and give more information.

The funeral procession of four cars left Gatsby's house at five o'clock. Nick remembered that his first Gatsby party had been six months before.

Nick was only thinking about Daisy during the funeral service.

'Owl-eyes' took his glasses off to talk to Nick.

'Owl-eyes' didn't like Gatsby.

# Scott and Zelda – a romance “beautiful and damned”



Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda, 1920

## First meeting

When Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Sayre first met and danced together at a country club in Alabama in July 1918, Scott was a 22-year-old, smartly dressed lieutenant who “smelled like new goods” and the 18-year-old Zelda was the most popular girl in her home city of Montgomery. Beautiful, flirtatious and from a wealthy family, Zelda could have had any of the numerous college boys and soldiers who were trying to win her hand. Instead, it was the penniless soldier who captured Zelda’s heart; Fitzgerald wrote in his personal journal that he fell in love with her on 7 September, and an informal engagement began.

## Job frustration

Scott expected to go overseas to fight in the Great War but the conflict ended in November 1918 and the following February, he was discharged from the military. He went to New York to look for work and earn his fortune; however, he managed only to find a low-paid job in an advertising firm. He wrote nineteen short stories and tried to get them published in magazines but was successful with only one. "I was a failure," Fitzgerald wrote in his essay **My Lost City**, "mediocre at advertising work and unable to get started as a writer".

## Rejection

Meanwhile Zelda continued her busy social life in Montgomery and her letters to Scott – despite his depression about work and lack of success and its pressure on their relationship – gave details of parties, dances and the many boys she was dating. In March 1919, she was overjoyed when Scott sent her an engagement ring which had been his

mother's; but three months later, by mistake Zelda sent Scott a note which she had written when returning a present to another boy. Scott rushed to Montgomery; he begged Zelda to marry him but was shocked when she turned him down. The engagement was over.

## Reunited

Scott returned to his parents' home in St Paul, Minnesota, to continue writing – he revised material which he had started in the army – and he and Zelda no longer exchanged letters. "It was one of those tragic loves doomed for lack of money," he wrote in his 1936 essay **The Crack-Up**. "During a long summer of despair I wrote a novel instead of letters, so it came out all right." That novel, **This Side of Paradise**, was finally accepted by the publishers Scribner's in September 1919 and Scott immediately contacted Zelda again. Both realised that they were still deeply in love and they quickly resumed their engagement.

## And so began...

Scott's novel was published in March 1920, selling out on its first printing. He and Zelda were married in St Patrick's Cathedral, New York the following month. The struggling writer had become a literary celebrity and now had a beautiful, rich wife at his side. Two months before the wedding, with all his friends warning him about marrying the "wild, pleasure-loving" Zelda, Scott had offered a simple explanation in one of his letters: "I love her and that's the beginning and end of everything". And so began a whirlwind life of parties, poverty, jealousy, alcoholism, mental illness and, finally, separation... with deep mutual love running throughout. "We ruined ourselves," Scott wrote to Zelda in 1930, when she was first hospitalized, "I have never honestly thought that we ruined each other."