

Executive Summary

Metaphors in *The Great Gatsby*



F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) employs a dense system of metaphors that transform a Jazz Age romance into a searching critique of American aspiration. This analysis identifies and examines the novel's major figurative structures.

The green light at Daisy's dock operates as the central symbol, representing hope, the American Dream, and the paradox that desire requires distance. Once Gatsby possesses Daisy, "his count of enchanted objects had diminished by one." The Valley of Ashes provides geographical counterpoint: an industrial wasteland where "ash-grey men" embody wealth's hidden costs, overlooked by the disembodied eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, a godless god of failed oversight.

East Egg and West Egg encode class division as topography, appearing identical yet utterly distinct. Temporal metaphors (defunct clocks, boats against currents) reveal Gatsby's tragic belief that the past can be repeated. His self-invention emerges from a "Platonic conception," faithful to an adolescent ideal. Meanwhile, gold degrades to yellow throughout the novel, and Daisy's voice proves "full of money," wealth made audible.

These metaphors accomplish what direct critique cannot: they make visible the invisible forces of class, time, and desire that determine fate. Fitzgerald's genius lies in rendering social criticism as poetry, seducing readers with the very dreams he dissects.



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