

"It's so interesting the way all Gatsby's wealth doesn't really make him very happy." Shane, 14



# THE GREAT GATSBY

Nick Carraway's mysterious neighbour Gatsby gazes across the dark bay at a distant green light.

As the summer unfolds, Nick is drawn into Gatsby's world of luxury cars, speedboats and extravagant parties. But the more he hears about Gatsby – even from what Gatsby himself tells him – the less he is sure of the truth. Did Gatsby really go to Oxford University? Was he a hero in the war? Did he once kill a man?

Nick recalls how he came to know Gatsby. He recounts how he enters the world of his cousin Daisy and her wealthy husband Tom. But does their money make them any happier? How do everybody's stories connect?

Will you come to know the real Gatsby after reading Nick's account of that fateful summer?



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Retold by Sean Connolly  
Illustrated by Sam Kalda



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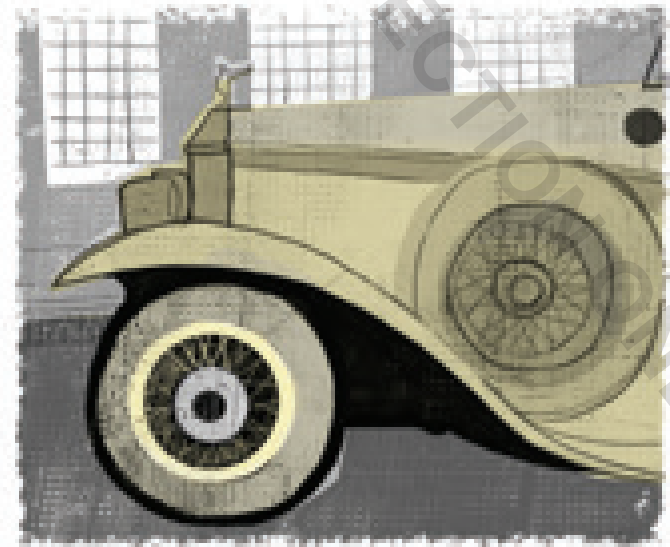
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## THE CHARACTERS

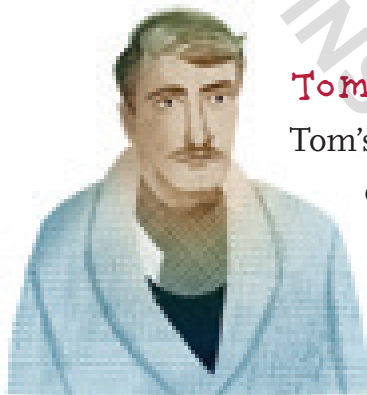
### Nick Carraway

Nick is proud of his honesty and his unwillingness to judge people. Will he be forced to take sides? If so, whose side will he be on?



### Tom Buchanan

Tom's wealth seems to make it easy for him to get what he wants. But can he be sure of keeping his own wife?



### Jordan Baker

Jordan is a champion golfer, but she is not known for playing fair. Is it time for her to change her ways?



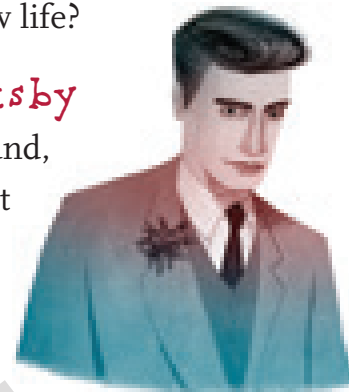
### Daisy Buchanan

Daisy is related to Nick, but they have only now begun spending any time together. She lives in comfort, but will she be forced to start a new life?



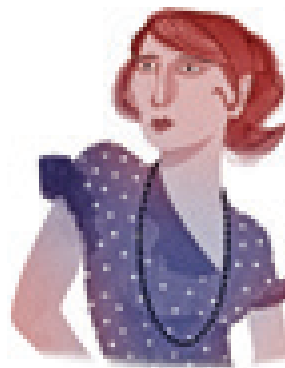
### Jay Gatsby

Gatsby is the richest person around, but no one is quite sure about just who he is. Will anyone ever find out about his past, and how he became so wealthy?



### Myrtle Wilson

Myrtle feels trapped in a grey, washed-out world. Will she ever share in the excitement of the rich people who drive by her house each day?



### George Wilson

Myrtle's husband is hard-working, but timid and usually very tired. Can he stand up to the cruel tricks that life can play?





## THE GREAT GATSBY

Some years ago my father gave me some advice that I took to heart: 'Nick – whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.' I understood his point: for three generations the Carraways had overseen a prosperous hardware business in the Middle West.

Since returning from the East, though, I have been less inclined to give people the benefit of the doubt. The only exception has been Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book. Here was a man who represented everything I scorned in life, and yet somehow he remains the one person who could sense the promises of life. His extraordinary gift for hope set him apart, but a foul dust in the wake of his dreams preyed on him.



Back home from Europe's Great War, I felt that the Middle West was too remote, and in 1922 I got a job in the bond business in New York. I rented a cottage in West Egg, a peninsula twenty miles east of the city and separated by a narrow bay from more fashionable East Egg. Some 'new money' mansions on West Egg, though, dwarf anything on the other Egg. The Gatsby property next door to me, for example, resembled a French chateau overlooking the sea.

I had some connection with the other Egg, and one summer evening drove over to have dinner with the Buchanans. Tom had been at Yale with me, and his wife Daisy was my distant cousin. Her family, the Fays, were leading lights in Louisville society. Tom, still in riding clothes, greeted me on the front porch of their waterfront Georgian mansion. 'Nick Carraway! Welcome to our humble abode.'

His friendly tone masked – but only barely – an air of aggression and superiority. Tom led me

into a bright room where two young women sat on an enormous couch. The younger, a Miss Baker, was a stranger to me. The other was Daisy, and her light laughter reminded me of all the young men who had yearned for her company.

'You must know Gatsby', Miss Baker remarked, learning that I lived in West Egg.

'Gatsby?' demanded Daisy. 'What Gatsby?'

Before I could reply we were ushered out to the porch where dinner was laid. Over dinner Tom began praising a book called *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*.

'The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be – will be utterly submerged.'

'We've got to beat them down,' whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

A telephone summoned the butler inside. He returned and whispered to Tom, who went inside without a word. Daisy made some brittle small talk and then excused herself. Miss Baker was trying to make out what was being said inside. I asked why.

American soldiers had died in World War I (or 'The Great War', as it was known) but there was no fighting on American soil; the country did not suffer in the way many European countries did. So while Europe struggled to rebuild after the destruction, America entered a decade when people worked hard and partied hard.

America did, however, undergo an important change just as the 1920s began. From January 1920 it became illegal to sell or buy alcoholic drinks in the United States. This law, known as Prohibition, remained in effect until 1933. During the Prohibition era, people could still get hold of illegal alcohol – if they had enough money or the right connections. As you can tell from the freely-flowing alcohol available to Gatsby's friends, if you had money it was still easy to obtain alcoholic drinks of every kind! Importers of alcohol, known as bootleggers, smuggled alcohol across the Canadian and Mexican borders, or from ships at night. Some people even distilled their own drinks, and 'bath-tub gin' was common in many cities.

Rival gangs fought to control this valuable trade in alcohol. Almost every day, American newspapers had stories of fierce gun battles between the 'gangsters' in Chicago and New York.

African Americans also found themselves in the news, but for less dangerous reasons. Popular music was dominated by jazz, which began in New Orleans, Chicago and Memphis – cities with large black populations. And with African Americans also becoming more prominent in politics and sports, some white people began to feel threatened.

Fitzgerald's characters reflect the different aspects of his country in the 1920s – the excitement, danger, wealth and hope. This is one reason why *The Great Gatsby* has often been called 'The Great American Novel'.

## Finding out more

We recommend the following books and websites to gain a greater understanding of F. Scott Fitzgerald and the world he lived in: