



Book club 33: Culture & identity

The Great Gatsby
by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Rules

In this book club you will discuss *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald in a group of 4-6 readers. The book club opens with a brief introduction that one of you reads out loud. The book club then continues in four rounds:

- 1 Round 1 consists of 5 questions about the plot. One of the group members acts as the quiz master who reads each question out loud, after which everyone (including the quiz master) writes down their answer. The correct answers will appear on the screen after you have turned over the final question card. You may then check your answers and calculate your scores.
- 2 Round 2 consists of asking and answering questions each of you have about the book/story: in turn, the players say what they did not understand about the book and try to find an answer together. When the biggest confusions are solved, round 3 starts.
- 3 Round 3 consists of discussion questions. The person with the most correct answers to the quiz questions from round 1 gets to be the first to turn over a card and respond to the question. The other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas. Take turns until all cards are flipped.
- 4 Round 4 is when you get to review the text. How many stars would you give the text and why? Discuss this together until you have reached a shared verdict. Use the text box to explain your choice.

This book club was developed by the editors of LitLab, a digital laboratory for high school literature research. For more teaching materials, visit www.litlab.nl. A teacher's guide and a didactic justification of this teaching method are available at www.litlab.nl/docenten.



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The Great Gatsby

Introduction

'They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.' (pp.164-165)

The First World War has been won by the Allies, and the Roaring Twenties are in full swing. When we first meet the narrator, Nick Carraway, he is in pursuit of the American Dream. Set in the fictional town of West Egg, Long Island, this classic American novel explores love, friendship, money, and social class. What are the differences between old and new money? Is your birthright your only right? What defines a person? What is true friendship built upon? Can relationships survive when the odds are stacked against them? These are some of the questions raised in a novel set in a time that continues to capture the imagination.

Round 1: Quiz

Turn over the 5 cards with quiz questions one by one. Write down the answer on a piece of paper.

Round 2: Initial questions

What questions popped into your head while reading *The Great Gatsby*? Were there any parts that left you confused or wondering? Take turns sharing your questions about the story and try to come up with answers together. Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

Round 3: Discussion

The player with the most correct answers to the quiz questions gets to turn over a card first from one of the two piles of discussion questions. Once they have answered the question, the other members of the group may then add to the discussion by responding and sharing their ideas.

Round 4: Review

Review *The Great Gatsby* by rating the novel on a scale of one to five stars, and then provide an explanation for your choice. Discuss what aspects you enjoyed and what aspects you didn't, and provide reasons for your opinions. Reflect on whether the discussion influenced your individual perspective, and if so, how. Incorporate examples and arguments from your responses to the discussion questions to support your review.



Question 1

How does Nick Carraway know Tom and Daisy Buchanan?

Question 2

Gatsby's mansion is in the town of West Egg. What was the design of this 'colossal affair by any standard' based upon?

Question 3

What is the name of Tom's mistress who we meet in Chapter 2?

Question 4

What rumour is going around about Jay Gatsby?

Question 5

Where is Gatsby when he is shot and what is noteworthy about the location?

Answers

- 1 Daisy is related to him and he knows Tom from college (New Haven)
- 2 It was an imitation of an Hotel de Ville in Normandy
- 3 Myrtle Wilson
- 4 That he killed a man
- 5 In his swimming pool. It was the first time he had actually used the pool himself



Question

3

Question

2

Question

1

Answers

Question

5

Question

4



Personal connections? **1**

In the novel, Gatsby carefully creates a certain image of himself. Why do you think he does this? Can you think of situations in real life where people present a different or more perfect version of themselves? Why do people do this?

Personal connections? **2**

What do you think the American Dream is nowadays? Do you think it is worth pursuing? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this ideal?

Personal connections? **3**

In the novel, characters from East Egg and West Egg live very different lives. What causes these differences? Do you see similar divisions in society today? How do they differ from the divisions in the novel?

Personal connections? **4**

In the novel, some characters avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Which characters do this, and what are the consequences of their behaviour? Why do you think people sometimes avoid responsibility?

Personal connections? **5**

'Can't repeat the past? Why, of course you can!' In what ways is Gatsby trying to recreate the past? Would you ever want to recreate something from your past? Why or why not, and how would you do this?

Personal connections? **6**

Alcohol appears in many scenes in the novel. What effect does it have on the characters' behaviour and the atmosphere? Do you think the story would be different without alcohol?

Personal connections? **7**

Daisy shows little emotion after Gatsby's death. What do you think this reveals about her? Have you ever been surprised by someone's reaction to an important event?

Personal connections? **8**

Do you think Nick is a true friend to Gatsby? Why or why not? What makes a good friend, in your opinion?



Personal connections?

3

Personal connections?

2

Personal connections?

1

Personal connections?

6

Personal connections?

5

Personal connections?

4

Personal connections?

8

Personal connections?

7



Food for thought? 1

The novel moves between different locations, such as New York City and the Valley of Ashes. What is the function of these different settings in the story?

Food for thought? 2

What kind of parents are Tom and Daisy Buchanan? How does the novel show their attitude towards their child?

Food for thought? 3

The Great Gatsby is full of colour symbolism. The colour green is particularly relevant. In what ways does the colour green appear in the story, and what does it represent?

Food for thought? 4

Nick Carraway is the narrator of the story. Is he a reliable narrator? Why or why not?

Food for thought? 5

When Daisy doesn't just show up to one of Gatsby's parties, Gatsby insists on Nick making the necessary arrangements in order for the two to reconnect. What does this reveal about Gatsby's character?

Food for thought? 6

To what extent can money buy friendship in the novel? How is this shown in *The Great Gatsby*?

Food for thought? 7

Throughout the novel, there are indications that Tom Buchanan is a racist. How is this shown in the story?

Food for thought? 8

Both Tom and Daisy have affairs with other people. How does society judge these affairs differently, and what does this reveal about gender roles in the novel?



Food for thought?

3

Food for thought?

2

Food for thought?

1

Food for thought?

6

Food for thought?

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Food for thought?

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Food for thought?

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Food for thought?

7