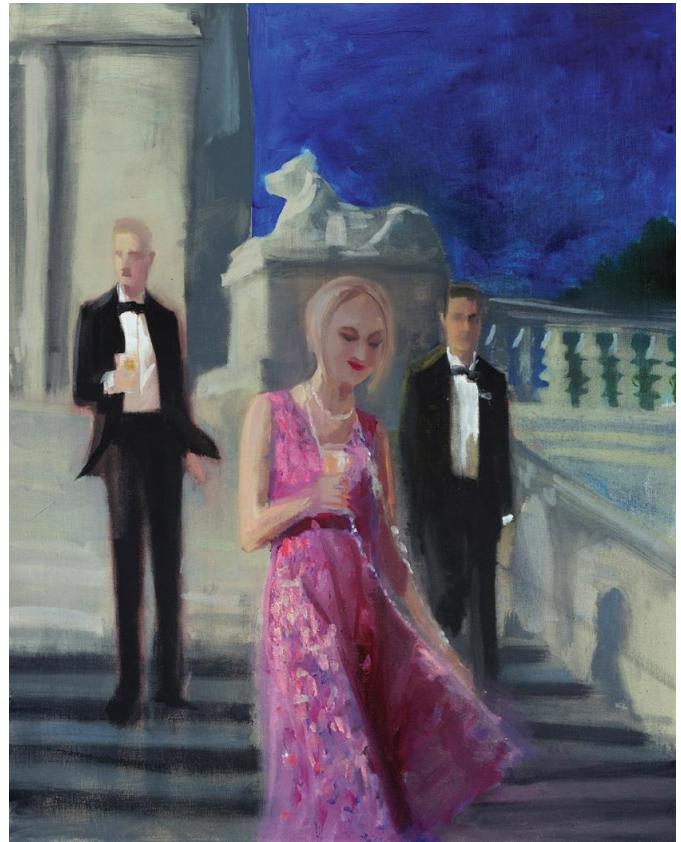




INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

F. Scott Fitzgerald's
The **Great
Gatsby**
adapted by
Simon Levy



March 17 – April 12, 2015, on the IRT Upperstage

STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts
with contributions by Janet Allen, Peter Amster
Lee Savage, Tracy Dorman, Thomas C. Hase, Victoria Deiorio
Austin Yoder, Milicent Wright

Indiana Repertory Theatre
140 West Washington Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director Suzanne Sweeney, Managing Director

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* adapted by Simon Levy

Money, class, romance, and corruption collide as the Great American Novel comes to life on stage. Opulent parties, passionate affairs, jealousy, and murder are tangled together in this powerful and vivid tale of American bravado, lost love, and post-war recovery in the Roaring Twenties. *The Great Gatsby* is an eloquent evocation of a bygone era that deeply resonates with our world today.

Estimated length: 2 hours, 15 minutes, including 1 intermission

Recommended for grades 9 through 12 due to strong language and mature themes.

Themes & Topics

The American Dream	Romantic Idealism
The Jazz Age	Love and Betrayal
Illusion vs. Reality	Social Class and Status
Prohibition and Alcohol	Heroic Rise and Fall

Student Matinees at 10:00 A.M. on October 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, & 23

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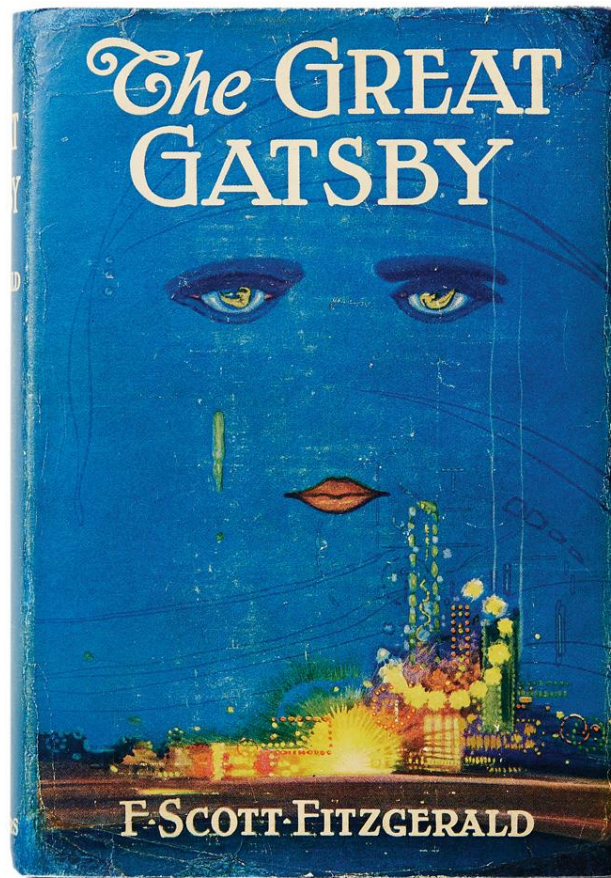
Gatsby the Great

by Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director

To say that *The Great Gatsby* is my favorite novel is only a little bit unfair. I don't tend to claim favorite works of art, since there are so many wonderful ones, but Fitzgerald's novel certainly held a large piece of my mental real estate as a teenager and young adult. After *Gatsby*, I gobbled up the rest of his novels and short stories quickly. This experience launched me into a lifetime of reading many works by a single author in quick succession, as a way to extend a love affair with a writer.

Yes, I'm a dyed-in-the-wool Fitzgerald girl, not a Hemingway girl. And yes, I'm wildly opinionated about the film adaptations: I'm a Robert Redford *Gatsby* fan, not so much a Leonardo DiCaprio *Gatsby* fan, no doubt because the Redford version came out when I was a senior in high school. (I've never seen the Alan Ladd version, but intent to find it. Netflix anyone?) When Woody Allen's quirky *Midnight in Paris* reanimated Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in 2011, my heart leapt again. Then came *So We Read On: How The Great Gatsby Came to Be and Why It Endures*, a delightful book by NPR's *Fresh Air* book critic, Maureen Corrigan. When I read it this spring, and heard her speak so rapturously about the book on *Fresh Air*, I fell in love all over again with *Gatsby*'s breathless ride toward immortality.

And why not? "It's the Sistine Chapel of American literature," says one of Corrigan's students. "Forget *great*," says Corrigan herself in the opening of her book. "*The Great*



Gatsby is the *greatest*—even if you didn't think so when you had to read it in high school." She describes it as "a novel that manages to ... say something big about America *and* be beautifully written." She notes, "*The Great Gatsby* is an elegant trickster of a novel, spinning all sorts of inspired and contradictory poetic patter about American identity and possibilities." And she adds, "Fitzgerald's plot may suggest that the American Dream is a mirage, but his words make that dream irresistible." Whew. And this is only the beginning of Corrigan's minutely observed celebration of a novel written 90 years ago, a novel that Fitzgerald died thinking was wholly forgotten. Ah, the fickleness of American culture!

Like many "important" novels, *Gatsby* merits rereading, not only for its beauty, but for the

way it morphs through time and through human experience. As a young adult, I was enthralled by its yearning, by its romance; today I am enthralled by its many layers of astounding comment on the American character. I'm also keenly aware of the depth of its moral ambiguities. It expresses how Americans hold, in seemingly equal measure, both an obsession with and a condemnation of wealth and excess. It exposes the deep ambiguities, perhaps as deep now as at any time since Fitzgerald wrote it, that we hold about social class and immigrant culture.

Fitzgerald is emotionally exploring the idea of the "haves" and the "have nots," and how basic human rights and moral compasses seem to differ depending where you are on this continuum. Consider for a minute the crime (both legal and moral) that Daisy commits near the end of the novel, and how her class, her gender, and her wealth insulate her from any repercussions. Fitzgerald both reviled class strictures and wanted desperately to break into the hallowed halls of the American upper classes. That fissure in his own psyche creates a good deal of the energy in the story, an energy that still burns



(above) Robert Redford as *Gatsby* (1974)
(below) Leonardo DiCaprio as *Gatsby* (2013)

brightly. He could never actually bring himself to condemn the fragile and privileged Daisy.



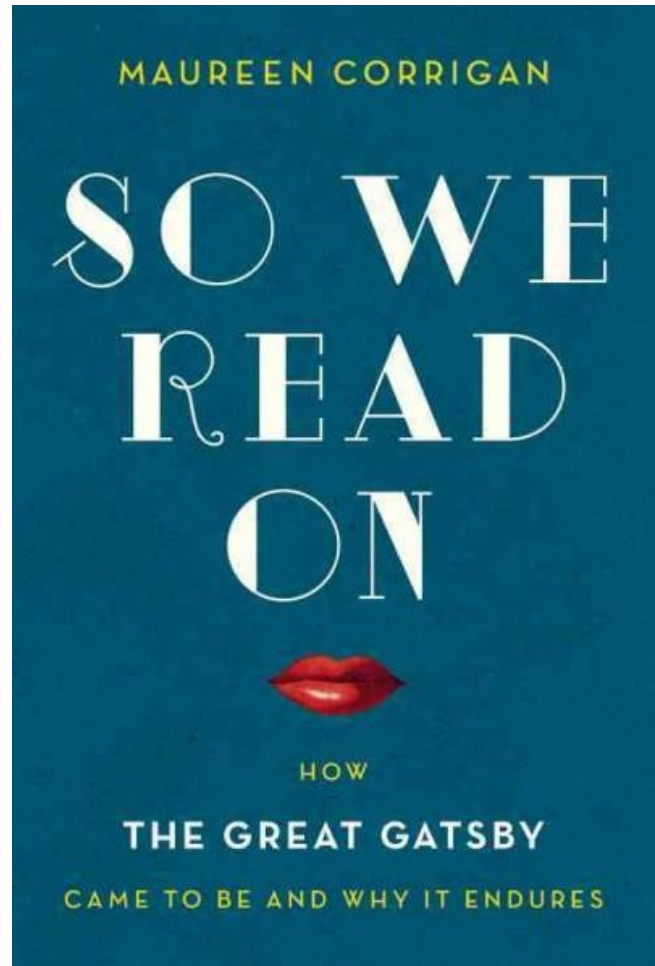
There are many layers in this book that I missed as a young reader. The presence of World War I lingers in the background of much of the story, something so calamitous that Gatsby and Nick, who fought in the trenches, can hardly speak of it. But that sense of having survived it, the furor

that it creates in them, in nearly all the characters, creates a pulse under the action—a restlessness, a frenzy to live having escaped death. While Fitzgerald didn't know the term PTSD, there is no doubt that Nick and Gatsby share some aspects of this disorder. There are other facets of the novel that make it almost a detective story, a bit of a gangster story. This *noir* feeling is part of what has made it accessible, ripe for translation and film versions. These aspects also contribute to its lasting value as a piece of quintessential American writing, both high art and populist art.

One of the subtler aspects of the novel—one that I felt differently about as a yearning young adult but that speaks loudly and unambiguously to me now—is Fitzgerald's comment on American place: the siren call of New York and the East. Nick, Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and Jordan have all left the Midwest (Minneapolis, Chicago, Louisville) in order to seek freedom and the opportunity to explore life anonymously in the East. Some of their explorations are fairly deplorable, things they might not have done closer to home. In many instances, this transplantation to the East allows these young people to reinvent themselves, to lose some of the restrictive values of Midwest life.

But eventually Nick returns to the Midwest, "to that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night." It is as if he seeks the solace of solid ground far from the rarified light and noise and water of the East, which comes to be seen by him as a mirage borne of too many excesses. This is Fitzgerald observing deeply from his own Minnesotan soul. A man

who willed himself to go to Princeton, who lived extravagantly in New York and Paris, but who never really found a home. He never quite learned from Nick that escape is merely that.



I'm thrilled to be opening our 44th season with this homage to the American spirit in all its striving and reaching, all its failings and follies. Peopled with characters we both love and condemn, whom we find heroic and hideous. Whether you are one of those forced to read this amazing book too early, or one, like me, who reads it every decade or so, or one who knows it cover to cover, I hope you enjoy re-exploring the spectral green light on Daisy's dock as much as I do.

Remembering the Jazz Age



Preliminary model by scenic designer Lee Savage.

Thomas Hase Lighting Designer

In developing a lighting design for *The Great Gatsby*, I began immersing myself in the romantic imagery of the era. Compared to the light of the 1920s, the modern world has gotten a great deal brighter—or put another way, a great deal more washed out. Just as we are bombarded by information from every direction, so too are we bombarded by light sources. A dark road is no longer dark; there is no longer the isolation of the pool of light from a streetlamp. Sunsets are no longer a directional event. Colors of daylight (and the night) are constantly mixed with the modern world's lighting noise. In this design I look back to a time when this was not so—when the world was often a dark and shadowy place. The lighting will help not only to tell the story of place and time of day, but also to invoke the text's emotional metaphors.

Victoria Deiorio Composer & Sound Designer

Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* in the midst of the Jazz Age. During Prohibition, jazz was performed in speakeasies; the music was said to be immoral and decadent, a threat to the older generation's cultural values. The most formidable artists of the era were Kid Ory's Original Creole Jazz Band (the first all-black band of musicians out of New Orleans), Bessie Smith, and the players of Chicago's hot jazz scene. At the same time in classical music, the rebellion against what had gone before was evident in what has now been termed Modernism. The dissolution of traditional tonality and the transformation of the very foundations of tonal

language were led by such composers as Schoenberg and Stravinsky. These two musical forces representing change and innovation are the perfect accompaniment to the story of *The Great Gatsby*. In our production, the world the characters live in is surrounded by Jazz, but their internal conflicts are represented by Modernism.



Costume renderings by designer Tracy Dorman for (left to right) Jordan, Daisy, and Myrtle.

Tracy Dorman Costume Designer

The Great Gatsby is set in the summer of 1922. What's interesting about the early twenties is that it's a transition time—the waist is dropping, but there is still a defined figure. The dresses are still very feminine in their silhouette and drape, but we are beginning to see the liberation of women from corsetry. This is particularly helpful in telling the stories of our characters. Jordan is an athlete, so her clothes aren't fussy and allow her to move easily. Daisy has always been coddled and knows only luxury; her clothes are beautiful, expensive, elegant. Myrtle trades in her sexuality in an effort to gain the middle-class life she aspires to; the vulgarity of her clothes contrasts with Daisy's effortless beauty and taste. Of course, it is Jay Gatsby who uses clothing to reveal or disguise his true character the most. His beautiful, elegant wardrobe illustrates his effort to inhabit Daisy's world, to win her love. He is the metaphor for everything that money can and can't buy. In this production, we've chosen to be true to the period, but to freshen it up, so that the story feels visually clear and exciting and we are immersed in the characters' world. That said, it's filtered through Nick's memories, and there is a sense that the characters are seen as he remembers them.

Gatsby on Stage

by Peter Amster, Director

The process of transformation from page to stage when adapting a work of fiction can often present greater challenges—and greater satisfactions—than more straightforward works of drama. For me this is true mostly because of the way that a stage performance can illuminate and socialize the experience of “reading” a novel or story. This is certainly the case with Simon Levy’s stage adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*.

Levy’s script is a deft compression of the novel: the main characters are illuminated as if by spotlights, and the tragic action of the story unfolds with Sophoclean velocity. The adaptation makes manifest the point of view and agency of its narrator, Nick Carraway. It is his voice we hear in our heads when we read the book; and although he seems to be only a peripheral player in the love triangle of Gatsby, Daisy, and Tom, it is Nick’s courage, his observations, his poetry, his journey from innocence to experience, that form the framework upon which the story rests. None of the film adaptations, from the silent film of the late 1920s, to the noir-like Alan Ladd version of the 1950s, to the pastel-pretty but glacially paced Robert Redford–Mia Farrow film of the 1970s, to Baz Luhrmann’s recent extravaganza, allow Nick to speak directly to us in the sustained and poignant way that he does in the novel. The stage can do it better. Nick can share with us his feelings and observations, his pain and discoveries, and then move into the scenes in which he is a participant. He can exist both in the present and in the past, both in our world and in the

world of the Jazz Age, much as he does in the novel.

But perhaps more deeply important is that the act of experiencing a novel in a theatre, rather than reading it, is a social event. We’re all seeing the same thing, and we share a point of reference that allows us to engage, not only with the story, but also with each other.

While discussing the merits of the production and the performances, we can also talk about a shared experience of the story—what it means to us to watch an illusion shattered, the American Dream destroyed. The play might even, as it did with me, send us back to the novel for a fresh look, and a greater appreciation of the timely and timeless masterpiece it is.



Preliminary sketch for Nick by costume designer Tracy Dorman

The Cast & the Characters



Zach Kenney as Nick Carraway

Nick is a classic example of a secondary character as narrator. Here Fitzgerald used elements from his own life: a St. Paul native from a genteel family, Nick (like Fitzgerald) spends a few months in New York attempting to make a career in business, then returns home to write a somewhat autobiographical novel.



Matt Schwader as Jay Gatsby

Max Gerlach is thought to be one of Fitzgerald's models for Gatsby. Born Max A. Stark in Yonkers, New York, he soon remade himself and changed his name, like Gatsby. After serving in World War I, he ran an auto dealership and was sometimes described as a "wealthy yachtsman"—a term that was often used at that time as a euphemism for rum runner. It is thought that the Fitzgeralds were among his customers. A self-styled "gentleman bootlegger," he once wrote a note to Fitzgerald that asks, "How is the family, old sport?"



Hillary Clemens as Daisy Buchanan

Daisy is said to be modeled both on Fitzgerald's wife, Zelda, and on Ginevra King (1898-1980). The daughter of a wealthy Chicago businessman, Ginevra was one of the city's most prominent debutants. Fitzgerald met her in 1915, and their passionate romance continued (mostly through letters) until 1917. In 1918 she broke off with Fitzgerald to marry the son of her father's business associate. In 1937 Fitzgerald wrote of Ginevra, "She was the first girl I ever loved, and I have faithfully avoided seeing her up to this moment to keep that illusion perfect."



Preliminary drawings by costume designer Tracy Dorman.



David Folsom as **Tom Buchanan**

Tom Buchanan was inspired by Tommy Hitchcock Jr. (1900-1944). Born into a wealthy family, Hitchcock was a polo champion at 16. As a fighter pilot in World War I, he escaped from a German POW camp and returned home a war hero. He studied at Harvard and Oxford and became America's top polo player in the twenties and thirties. A fierce and aggressive athlete, off the field he was considered charming and good-natured. It is not known how they met, but Fitzgerald often mentioned his great admiration for Hitchcock; his twisting of some of Hitchcock's virtues into Buchanan's vices is consistent with Fitzgerald's love-hate relationship with the rich.



Teagan Rose as **Jordan Baker**

Jordan's name combines two automobile makes: the sporty Jordan and the conservative Baker. Jordan was modeled on professional golfer Edith Cummings (1899–1984) she was a close friend of Ginevra King. Edith became nationally famous following her 1923 victory in the U.S. Women's Amateur at Westchester Country Club. In 1924 she was the first golfer and first female athlete to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine. Although Jordan is suspected of cheating at golf, there is no evidence that Cummings ever did.



Angela Ingersoll as **Myrtle Wilson et al.**

Myrtle considers her husband to be beneath her. Like Gatsby, she yearns to rise above her birth. Her affair with Tom is a desperate grasp at money and prestige, but she betrays herself with her crude snobbery:

"I told that boy about the ice." Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. "These people! You have to keep after them all the time."



Preliminary drawings by costume designer Tracy Dorman.



*Ryan Artzberger as **George Wilson** et al.*

George's poor circumstances stand in sharp contrast to the enormous wealth of Gatsby and the Buchanans. Although George works hard in his garage and gas station, he is unable to get ahead in life. He loves his wife deeply, and when he learns of her infidelity, his spirit is crushed. His ultimate acts of violence illustrate the desperation and anger that are kindled by poverty.



*Chuck Goad as **Meyer Wolfshiem**,
*Mr. McKee, a Policeman, et al.**

Meyer Wolfshiem was based on Arnold Rothstein (1892-1928), a racketeer and gambler and a kingpin of the Jewish mob in New York. Rothstein is widely credited with a number of criminal activities, but he was never found guilty of any crime. He is thought to have been responsible for the 1919 World Series–White Sox scandal. He was among the first to realize that Prohibition was a means to enormous wealth. He is said to have transformed organized crime from a thuggish gang of hoodlums into a big business, run like a corporation, with himself at the top. Fitzgerald once mentioned in a letter having met Rothstein.

Mr. McKee is a photographer. When Nick meets him in Tom and Myrtle's secret apartment, he calls him "a pale feminine man from the flat below."



*Constance Macy as **Mrs. McKee**,
*Mrs. Michaelis, et al.**

Mrs. McKee is a gossipy hanger-on. Nick describes her as "shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible."

Mrs. Michaelis owns and operates a diner near George's garage in the Valley of Ashes.



Preliminary drawings by costume designer Tracy Dorman.

The Great Fitzgerald

by Richard J Roberts, Resident Dramaturg

Born in 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was named for the author of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” a distant cousin. His mother came from a wealthy family; his father was a salesman for Proctor and Gamble. After several years in upstate New York, the family returned to St. Paul when Scott was 12. He attended Catholic schools and had his first published story in the school paper at 13.

After graduating from the Newman School in New Jersey, Fitzgerald went to college at Princeton. There he wrote for the *Princeton Tiger* humor magazine and *Nassau Literary Magazine*, and wrote scripts for Princeton’s Triangle Club musicals. He spent so much time on these extracurricular writing projects that he was placed on academic probation. During World War I, he dropped out of school to join the army. Suddenly afraid that he would die in the war, he quickly wrote a novel, *The Romantic Egotist*. Although the book was rejected for publication, the young writer was encouraged to submit future work.

Fitzgerald was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the infantry and was posted at Camp Sheridan outside Montgomery, Alabama. There he met and fell in love with Zelda Sayre, daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. The war ended before Fitzgerald was deployed, and after a brief fling with advertising in New York, he returned to St. Paul to rewrite his novel. *This Side of Paradise* focuses on an ambitious Midwesterner who falls in love with



F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1921.

and is rejected by two rich girls. It was published in 1920 to rave reviews, and Fitzgerald won overnight fame at age 24. He and Zelda married, and a year later they had a daughter, Frances. They spent money extravagantly, enjoying a life of celebrity and glamor with lots of drinking and parties. Fitzgerald began writing short stories such as “Bernice Bobs Her Hair” and “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz” for magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Esquire*.

The tale of a troubled marriage among the rich and famous, *The Beautiful and Damned* was published in 1922 to good reviews, cementing Fitzgerald’s status as the chronicler of the Jazz Age. He wrote: “It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.”

Inspired by wild parties they had attended on Long Island's north shore, Scott and Zelda moved to Great Neck in 1922. Their neighbors were wealthy writers and show business types—"new money." Just across the bay, in Manhasset Neck, lived more conservative, class-conscious families—"old money." Fitzgerald began planning his next novel: "something *new*—something extraordinary and beautiful and simple and intricately patterned." He wrote slowly, at one point throwing away 18,000 words and starting afresh. He strove to achieve "the sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world."

Fitzgerald finished the novel in Paris and revised it in Rome. He wrote that he felt "an enormous power in me now, more than I've ever had." But when *The Great Gatsby* was published in 1925, it received mixed reviews and sold poorly—just 20,000 copies in its first year. Fitzgerald was only 29 years old, but already the years of partying began to catch up with him. He was plagued by alcoholism and writers block, while Zelda's mental health issues kept her in and out of clinics and hospitals for the rest of her life.

Finally published in 1934, *Tender is the Night* told of an American psychiatrist living in Paris who marries a wealthy patient. The novel was poorly received. In 1937 Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood to write movies. His time there was a financial if not critical success; although he worked on a number of movies, he received few actual screen credits. He began work on a fifth novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, inspired by the life of film producer Irving Thalberg and his conflicts with studio head Louis B. Mayer. The book

was only half finished when Fitzgerald died of a heart attack in 1940 at the age of 44.

Fitzgerald died believing himself a failure, his work forgotten. Five years later, a World War II reading program issued more than 150,000 paperback copies of *The Great Gatsby* to soldiers in Europe. By the end of the decade there were articles praising the book, and its reputation steadily grew. In 1960 the *New York Times* called it "a classic of twentieth century American fiction." To date the novel has sold some 25 million copies, typically increasing that number by half a million a year; it is Scribner's best-selling book. Many readers and critics consider it to be the Great American Novel.

F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, 1920.



World War I

The Great Gatsby takes place in 1922, just 4 years after the end of World War I, an event that had profound and lingering effects on the lives of those who fought, as well as those at home. Two of the novel's main characters, Nick and Gatsby, bond quickly over their shared war experiences.



World War I began in the summer of 1914 and ended in late 1918. This conflict involved all of the world's great powers assembled in two opposing alliances: the Allies (the United Kingdom, France, the Russian Empire, the United States, and others) and the Central Powers (the German Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and others). More than 70 million military personnel were mobilized, with more than 9 million killed, due largely to great technological advances in firepower without corresponding gains in mobility. It was the second deadliest conflict in history.

The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, is seen as the immediate trigger of war; but there were many long-term causes, particularly European imperialism. Within weeks the major powers were at war, and the conflict soon spread around the world.

The Western Front soon settled into a static battle of attrition, with a trench line that changed little until 1917. Both sides

constructed elaborate trench and dugout systems opposing each other along a front, protected by barbed wire. The area between opposing trench lines (known as no man's land) was fully exposed to artillery fire. Even successful attacks sustained severe casualties as a matter of course. Living conditions in the trenches were appalling, with food shortages, lice and rats, cold and damp, deep standing water and mud, attacks of poison gas, and the constant stench of dead troops who could not yet be removed. Trench warfare was largely a battle of attrition, with a slow wearing down of opposing forces.

With the Allied victory, major imperial powers were divided into numerous smaller states and the League of Nations was formed in the hope of preventing another such conflict. Non-the-less, World War I and the break-up of empires spawned a great wave of European nationalism; this, as well as the repercussions of Germany's defeat and the Treaty of Versailles, led to the beginning of World War II in 1939.

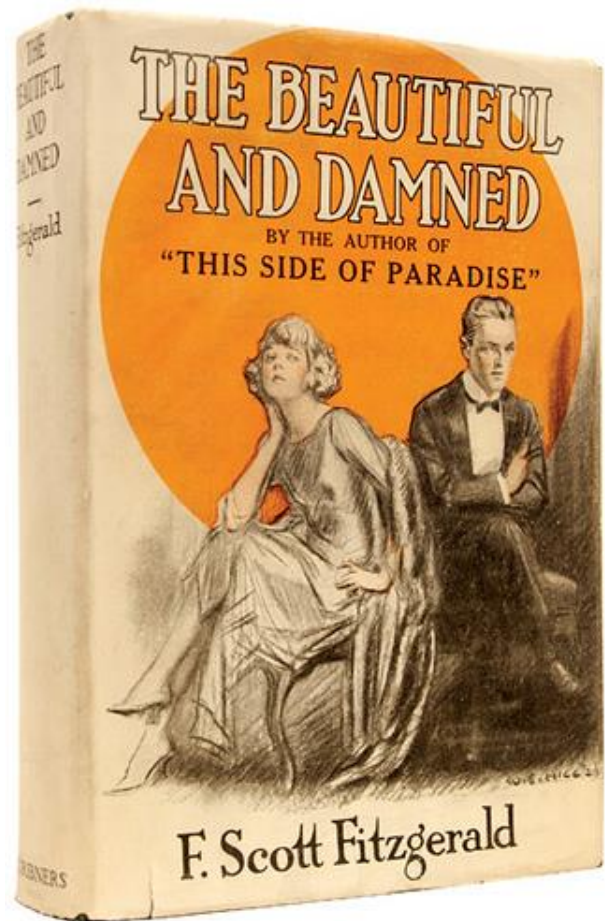
The Lost Generation

World War I can be seen as a kind of breaking point in European and American history. It was preceded by more than 40 years of peace and prosperity during which the arts and sciences flourished—an era we now refer to as the Belle Époque, a “golden age.” In contrast, World War I was an apocalypse of previously unimaginable proportions. Historian Samuel Hynes writes:

A generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honor, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned, and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance.

Many who returned from the war suffered from shell shock (a condition related to what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder).

The term Lost Generation was popularized by Ernest Hemingway, who quoted expatriate novelist and poet Gertrude Stein in the epigraph to his 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*: “You are all a lost generation.” The term refers to the generation of men and women who came of age during or immediately following World War I. They found the old pre-war values to be irrelevant, and they saw the new post-war society as



The original cover of Fitzgerald's second novel illustrates both the glamor of the Roaring Twenties and the discontent of the Lost Generation.

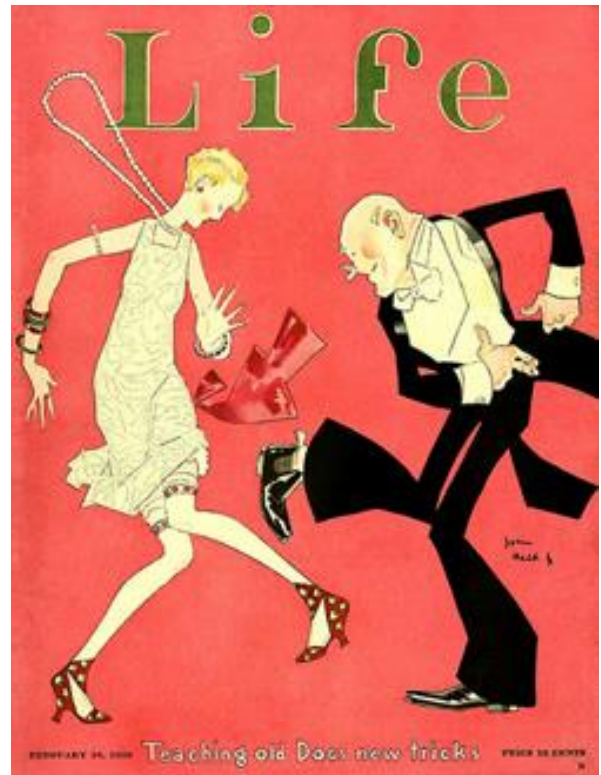
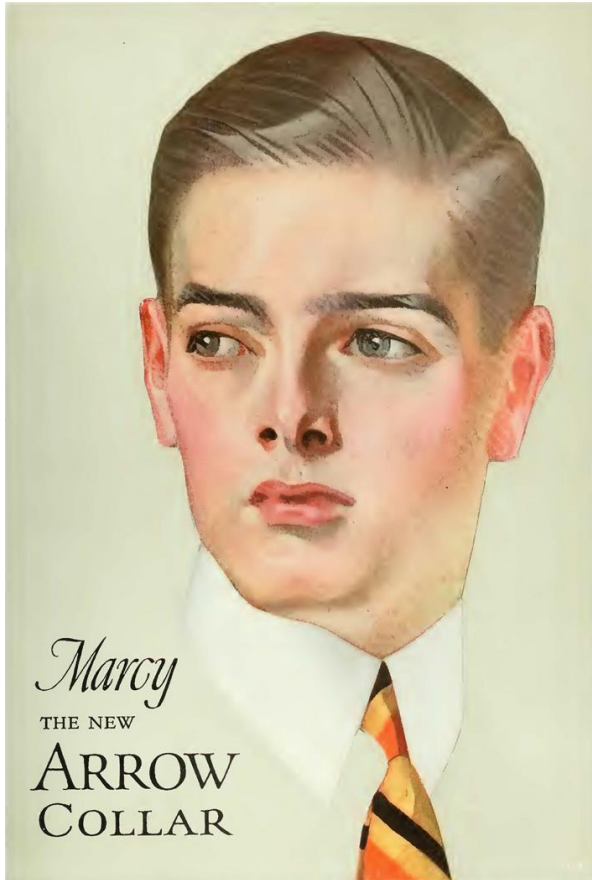
provincial, materialistic, and emotionally barren. They are often viewed as cynical, disillusioned, and without cultural or emotional stability.

Today, both Hemingway and Fitzgerald are considered major figures of the Lost Generation: supremely talented artists who drank too much, could never settle down, and, despite their fame and success, were never able to find happiness. As the beautiful, wealthy, pampered Daisy says in *The Great Gatsby*: “I think everything's terrible anyhow. Everybody thinks so.”

America in the 1920s

The Jazz Age

The first commercial radio station began broadcasting in 1920. The swift expansion of radio elevated the popularity of the new jazz music, leading to lively, uninhibited new dances: the Charleston, the Cake Walk, the Black Bottom.



The Birth of Mass Culture

National wealth doubled over the course of the 1920s. This prosperity helped make the automobile grow from a rarity to a necessity in one decade. The spread of chain stores fostered nationwide advertising campaigns. The growing popularity of the movies united all Americans in the same low-cost entertainment options at the same time.



Prohibition

Prohibition was a nationwide constitutional ban on the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverages from 1920 to 1933. Alcohol consumption declined between 30 and 50 percent; but alcoholism rates soared more than 300 percent. Scattershot street gangs grew into organized bootlegging empires built on manufacturing and smuggling illegal alcohol. Speakeasies (illegal underground bars) flourished. Without health regulations in effect, contaminated liquor contributed to more than 50,000 deaths.



The New Woman

American women were granted the right to vote in 1920. This advance corresponded with the movement of women into the business world, many as stenographers—the birth of the career girl. Labor-saving devices (vacuum cleaners, washing machines) gave women more free time at home. Flappers bobbed their hair, wore shorter skirts, smoked, danced, and drank with strangers in speakeasies.

Cultural Clashes

The Great Migration of southern Blacks moving north led to both the Harlem Renaissance—a flourishing of African American arts and culture—and to the nationwide rise of the Ku Klux Klan. The 1917 Russian Revolution led to an anti-Communist Red Scare here in the United States. The National Origins Act established anti-immigration quotas. Evolution was argued in the Scopes trial. Newly developed methods of birth control allowed sexual freedoms that challenged traditional gender roles and divided society.



Resources

Books

other novels by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

This Side of Paradise

The Beautiful and Damned

Tender Is the Night

The Love of the Last Tycoon (unfinished; published posthumously)

notable short stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

from *Flappers and Philosophers*:

“Bernice Bobs Her Hair”

“Head and Shoulders”

“The Ice Palace”

“The Offshore Pirate”

from *Tales of the Jazz Age*:

“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”

“The Diamond as Big as the Ritz”

from *All the Sad Young Men*:

“Winter Dreams”

“The Baby Party”

“The Rich Boy”

from *Taps at Reveille*:

“The Freshest Boy”

from *Babylon Revisited and Other Stories*:

“Babylon Revisited”

“Crazy Sunday”

So We Read On: How the Great Gatsby Came to Be and Why It Endures

by Maureen Corrigan

Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald by Matthew J. Bruccoli

The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald (Cambridge Companions to Literature),

edited by Ruth Prigozy

The Great Gatsby and Modern Times by Ronald Berman

The Great Gatsby: The Limits of Wonder by Richard Lehan

The Perfect Hour: The Romance of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ginevra King, His First Love

by James L.W. West

Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel by Bob Batchelor

A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald, edited by Kirk Curnutt

Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald,

edited by Jackson R. Bryer and Cathy W. Barks

Supreme City: How Jazz Age Manhattan Gave Birth to Modern America by Donald L. Miller

Films

Downton Abbey Series Five (2014)

The Great Gatsby (2013) with Leonardo DiCaprio

Midnight in Paris (2011) directed by Woody Allen

Boardwalk Empire (2010-2014)

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008) with Brad Pitt

F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer (1997—Biography Channel)

The Last Tycoon (1976) with Robert De Niro

The Great Gatsby (1974) with Robert Redford

Beloved Infidel (1959) with Gregory Peck

The Great Gatsby (1949) with Alan Ladd

YouTube

F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great American Dreamer (1997—Biography Channel)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ef90dzm_ocl&list=PLEY8oHWKB_FmIfsxIlcMeaMq2QneQLlxr

Mini BIO - F. Scott Fitzgerald

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL05VV040Ls>

The Great Gatsby: Living the Dream in the Valley of Ashes (John Green)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VhYMdnAsyM>

Midnight in Manhattan (BBC F. Scott Fitzgerald documentary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BhrzbHAoZU>

Websites

The Literature Network's Fitzgerald page:

<http://www.online-literature.com/fitzgerald/>

Find out more about F. Scott Fitzgerald:

<http://www.biography.com/people/f-scott-fitzgerald-9296261#video-gallery>

Learn more about New York in the 1920s:

http://amhistory.si.edu/onthemove/exhibition/exhibition_6_2.html

<http://www.livingcityarchive.org/htm/decades/1920.htm>

Find out more about the playwright, Simon Levy:

<http://www.simonlevy.com/>

Pre-Show Discussion Questions

What do you know about the 1920s? What social, political, and economic parallels can you see between that era and today's world? How have ideas of love and social class changed since that era? How are they the same?

What does America mean to you? What makes this country great? How could this country be better? What are the challenges that we face? What is the American Dream? How attainable is it today? What part of the American Dream has to do with economics, and what deals with more personal or emotional issues?

What is civilian life like for soldiers returning home from war today? What are the challenges they face? How were the answers to these questions different regarding the Vietnam War? World War II? World War I?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

Tom makes some particularly bigoted remarks about race. What was happening in America in the 1920s regarding racial equality? How does Tom reflect 1920s America? How are attitudes different today? How are they similar?

Nick and Gatsby both fought in World War I. How did this change their opinion of the world? What differences do you see between them and the other characters as a result of this shared experience?

F. Scott Fitzgerald was never happy with the title *The Great Gatsby*. Do you think this title is appropriate? Why or why not? What does it mean? If you could, what would you re-name the book?

The Great Gatsby is set in the 1920s, but many of the issues resonate with contemporary audiences and readers. What about the novel and play make it relevant and compelling today? What similarities do you see between life in the 1920s and life now? What similarities do you see between characters in the play and people who live today—either celebrities, or people you know?

In the play, Nick says, "You can't repeat the past." Gatsby responds, "Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!" Do you agree with Nick or Gatsby? Have you ever tried to repeat the past? What are the pleasures, disappointments, and challenges of doing so?

Nick Carraway, a secondary character in the novel, serves as the narrator of *The Great Gatsby*. How do Nick's changing perceptions of the other characters in the book color our reactions to the story? How does Nick's personal journey connect him to or distance him from the journeys of Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and Jordan? How would the story be different if it were presented in the third person? What would be lost? What would be gained? What other books can you name with a secondary character as narrator? Compare and discuss the narrative voice in these works.

The Great Gatsby has been adapted into films, a play, an opera, a musical, and even a ballet. Why are we as a culture so eager to tell this story in so many different ways? Why does it continue to speak to us?

When it was first released, *The Great Gatsby* received mixed reviews and did not sell well. Today, it is widely considered to be one of the greatest novels ever written and has sold over 25 million copies. Why do you think it so much more popular now than it was then? What other books, plays, or movies have gone through similar fluctuations in popularity? What commonalities might such stories share?

The Great Gatsby is considered by many to be the greatest American novel. Do you agree with this assertion? Why or why not? If not, what book(s) would you say are better, and why?

Gatsby insists that Daisy only loved him and never Tom. Does Gatsby have an accurate perception of Daisy's affections? Why or why not? Is it possible to be in love with more than one person?

Discuss and debate questions of ethical behavior brought up by the events of the play. Include such issues as Gatsby's possibly illegal business activities; Tom's, Daisy's, and Myrtle's marital infidelities; and Jordan's alleged cheating at golf. How do Nick's views on these matters change over the course of the play? How did your own views change?

What do the characters of Myrtle and George Wilson bring to the play? How do their dreams and expectations compare to Daisy's and Tom's? Nick's? How do the issues of social class in the play still resonate today?

Fitzgerald tells us very little about Gatsby's business dealings in the novel. Why do you suppose he made that choice? What do we know to be true about Gatsby? How do we separate rumor from fact?

Writing Prompts

The Great Gatsby, much like its protagonist's life, ends rather suddenly, with many unanswered questions about the fates of the other characters. Try your hand at writing a sequel to this play. Begin with a story outline that can be submitted to your teacher. What happens to Nick after he moves back to Minnesota? What happens to Tom and Daisy? Do they stay married? What happens to Jordan? What consequences does Gatsby's death have? What new characters would you introduce?

In the play, Nick often breaks away to talk to the audience, offering personal thoughts and insight. Try writing narration for one of the others characters in the play. What would Gatsby have to say to the audience? What about Daisy? Tom?

On the eve of her wedding to Tom, Daisy receives a letter from Gatsby, telling her that he is coming home from the war to marry her. Write a letter from Daisy responding to Gatsby. How would she tell him that she is getting married to someone else?

Within the fictional world that Fitzgerald has created, there is very little to do with Gatsby's life story about which we can be certain. Using those elements from the story that you believe to be "true," and discarding those elements you believe to be rumor or falsehood, write your own version of the "real" story of Gatsby's life.

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? To share your reviews with others, send to: education.irt@gmail.com

Activities

Ask each student to select a novel (other than *The Great Gatsby*) of his or her choice—preferably a favorite book the student has read and knows well. Ask students to identify one section of text from the book that includes both dialogue and descriptive prose. Then, have them translate that section into a dramatic script. Encourage them to capture as much of the prose as they are able through theatrical means—either as additional dialogue, stage directions (such as lighting or scenery), movement, music or any other means they select. Finally, have students read their scenes aloud for one another and discuss their challenges and the choices they made.

Ask your students each to select a candidate as *The Great Gatsby*'s central character. Give each student time to create an oral argument to support the character's position as the focus of the story. Then, ask each student to present his or her argument in the first person—as Gatsby, Nick, Daisy, Tom, Jordan, or someone else from the book—taking on the attributes of the character as they try to convince the rest of the class that *The Great Gatsby* is really about him or her. Try to avoid two consecutive monologues featuring the same character (alternate a Nick with a Daisy or with a Gatsby, etc.). After the presentations, have students discuss the challenges of both playing a character and trying to persuade an audience. How did being “in character” help their efforts? How did it distract? Was it difficult to stay in character? Why? Who was most convincing? Why?

As a class, discuss the concept of the American Dream. How is that idea exemplified (or challenged) in *The Great Gatsby*? How do different people have different ideas of what the American Dream is? Ask each student to select a personal example of someone they believe has achieved the American Dream—an entertainer, sports figure, politician, neighbor, family member, or other person. Provide each student with a poster board and have them each create a visual chart or storyboard that tracks this person's journey to achieving the American Dream. Alternatively, students could create this project digitally. Students should research their individual in order to track their personal journey of achievement. Web-based research, magazine pictures, articles from newspapers, personal documents, photographs, or other elements may all be integrated into the storyboard. You might also have each student present a brief oral report, using his or her storyboard.

Glossary

the advertisement of the man in the shirts

The Arrow Collar Man was the name given to various male models who appeared in ads for shirts and detachable shirt collars manufactured by Cluett Peabody & Company.

a bad lie

A golfer's lie is the location of the ball at rest—where and how it lies on the ground. The term typically refers to the quality of the ball's position: "a good lie" means the ball is sitting on top of healthy fairway grass; "a bad lie" means the ball has sunk down into the rough.

Bonds

A bond is a form of loan or IOU: the holder of the bond is the lender, the issuer of the bond is the borrower. At the time of the play, commercial bonds were financing the construction of many U.S. skyscrapers. Eventually, this boom led to overbuilding and then widespread vacancies. Price declines in the bond market in the late 1920s preceded the crash of the equity markets and the start of the Great Depression.

the Cunard or White Star Line

Cunard and White Star were British shipping companies that offered transatlantic passenger service. Cunard's *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* were famed for their speed, while White Star's *Olympic*, *Titanic*, and *Britannic* were the largest and most luxurious ships in the world.

Debut

A debutante is a young upper class lady who is introduced to society at a formal debut. "Coming out" features a series of balls, teas, dances, and dinner parties. The young lady may now respectably receive romantic attention and marriage proposals from young gentlemen.

drug stores

During Prohibition, drugstores were permitted to sell whiskey by prescription, and some drugstores were fronts for bootlegging.

grain alcohol

Grain alcohol is produced by fermenting and distilling grain. Also known as ethyl alcohol or ethanol, it is used in the production of alcoholic beverages, as a solvent, and in a variety of other industrial applications. Because it is so potent, it should not be consumed straight.

honky tonk jazz

Honky tonks were rough, working class taverns with live music, and sometimes dancing and/or prostitution. Honky tonk pianos have tacks on the pins to give a more tinny or percussive sound. The origin of the term is disputed; today it is associated with country music.

hydroplane

A seaplane, a powered fixed-wing aircraft capable of taking off and landing on water.

Seaplanes were popular before World War II, when there were fewer airports in remote areas and seaplanes were often the only access by air.

intermarriage between black and white

Anti-miscegenation laws, barring marriage or sex between blacks and whites, were established in colonial America as early as 1691. In the South, such laws were not repealed until 1967.

Kaiser Wilhelm

Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941) was the last German emperor, ruling from 1888 to 1918. One of the chief instigators of World War I, he soon became essentially a figurehead.

Midas

In Greek mythology, Midas wishes that everything he touches would turn to gold. He achieves great wealth, but everything he tries to eat turns to gold, and eventually he curses his gift.

Nordics

According to eugenicists, Nordics had light-colored hair and eyes, fair skin, long and narrow skulls, and tall stature; they were truthful, equitable, competitive, naïve, reserved, and individualistic. The Nazis identified Nordics as the “master race.”

Orderi di Danilo

The Order of Prince Danilo I of Montenegro is an honor that was established by Prince Danilo Petrović Njegoš in 1853. It was awarded to three Princetonians during World War I.

Oxford

The University of Oxford in England is the oldest university in the English-speaking world, and the world’s second-oldest surviving university. Oxford alumni include 27 Nobel laureates, 26 British Prime Ministers, and many foreign heads of state.

personality

Here the word seems not to be the neutral term as used today, but perhaps a somewhat more archaic meaning: charisma, magnetism, charm, presence—the special qualities that makes someone interesting or extraordinary.

ragtime jazz

Ragtime was popular between 1895 and 1918, known for its syncopated or “ragged” rhythm. It began as dance music in African American red-light districts in St. Louis and New Orleans and eventually became popular as sheet music. Scott Joplin (ca. 1868–1917) was the most famous ragtime composer, with such hits as the “Maple Leaf Rag” (1899) and “The Entertainer” (1902).

The Rise of the Coloured Empires

This fictional title alludes to *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat against White World Supremacy* by Lothrop Stoddard (1883-1950), published in 1920. Stoddard's book postulates the collapse of colonialism and a white world empire because of population growth among people of color; he advocates a eugenic separation of the "primary races" of the world. (Eugenics claims to improve the genetic features of human populations through selective breeding and sterilization, based on the idea that it is possible to distinguish between superior and inferior elements of society.) Stoddard's book is an example of scientific racism, the use of scientific techniques and hypotheses to support or justify racist beliefs. In the 1920s, scientific racism was considered a legitimate area of anthropological study, and was used as justification for eugenics programs, compulsory sterilization, anti-miscegenation laws, and immigration restrictions in Europe and the United States. The actions of Nazi Germany (1933–45) discredited scientific racism in academia, but racist legislation based upon its theories remained in some countries (including the United States) until the late 1960s.

Roadster

an open or convertible two-seat car with a sporting appearance or character

sauterne

a sweet white dessert wine

Securities

Banknotes, bonds, stock, etc. that are purchased for long-term investment purposes, as opposed to those that are purchased for immediate resale or short-term speculation.

spirits of ammonia

Smelling salts. The usual active compound is ammonium carbonate, a colorless-to-white, crystalline solid. When mixed with water, they are called "aromatic spirits of ammonia."

studies

In art, a study is a preparatory or preliminary sketch for a larger, more complex work.

the Third Division

A World War I division—28,000 men—consisted of two brigades. Each brigade consisted of two infantry regiments and one machine-gun battalion.

von Hindenburg

Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934) was Germany's Chief of the General Staff, marginalizing Kaiser Wilhelm and leading Germany throughout World War I in a de facto military dictatorship. The famous *Hindenburg* zeppelin was named for him.

Geography Terms

Adriatic Sea

The Adriatic Sea forms the eastern shore of the Italian peninsula.

Atlantic City

The 1920s are considered the golden age of Atlantic City. Prohibition was largely unenforced in Atlantic City, and as the resort's popularity grew, it dubbed itself as "The World's Playground." The HBO series *Boardwalk* focuses on Atlantic City in the 1920s.

Broadway riffraff

In the 1920s, Broadway was known not only for its theatres, but also for its grind houses, nightclubs, all-night diners, gamblers, con artists, and pickpockets.

Deauville

Deauville is a prestigious seaside resort located on the northern coast of France, with a race course, marinas, villas, Grand Casino, and sumptuous hotels.

East Egg

East Egg is a fictional community on Long Island, which extends easterly from Manhattan Island through Brooklyn and Queens and beyond. East Egg, where Tom and Daisy live, corresponds to Manhasset Neck, which was populated by conservative, old-money people.

the Forties

As they are today, the streets around Times Square in the 1920s were crowded with theatres and nightclubs that generated heavy traffic.

Fifth Avenue

Fifth Avenue was a highly fashionable residential area in the 1800s; in the early 1900s it was transformed into one of the most fashionable and expensive shopping streets in the world.

Montenegro

Montenegro is located in Southeastern Europe on the eastern shore of Adriatic Sea. It is Europe's 10th-smallest nation, larger than Cyprus but smaller than Slovenia.

Montreal

After World War I, the prohibition movement in the United States led to Montreal becoming a destination for Americans looking for alcohol.

the Plaza

The Plaza is a luxury hotel in Manhattan at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Central Park South, one of the world's most famous hotels, featured in countless books, stories, and films.

the Punch Bowl

A peak on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, north of Honolulu.

Queens

Queens is the easternmost and largest in area of the five boroughs of New York City, today the most ethnically diverse urban area in the world. Its population more than doubled in the 1920s, due to a new train tunnel into Manhattan and the rising popularity of the automobile.

the Riviera

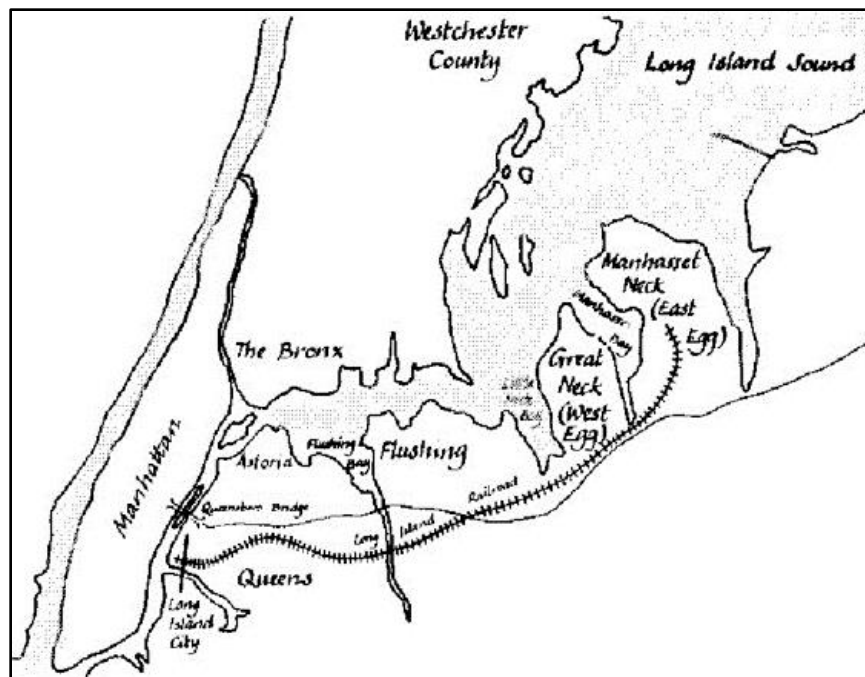
The French Riviera, or Côte d'Azur, is the Mediterranean coastline of the southeast corner of France, also including Monaco. The Italian Riviera continues along the northwest coast of Italy. This area is one of the world's most beautiful and exclusive resort destinations.

the Valley of Ashes

What Fitzgerald calls the Valley of Ashes is based on the Corona dumps in Flushing, Queens, a swamp that during the early twenties was being filled with ashes from coal-burning furnaces, as well as horse manure and garbage. It was located on the site where Shea Stadium is today.

West Egg

West Egg is a fictional community on Long Island. West Egg, where Nick lives next door to Gatsby, corresponds to Great Neck, which was a popular area for show business people; Fitzgerald lived there from 1922 to 1924 while writing early portions of *The Great Gatsby*.



Going to the Theatre: Audience Role & Responsibility

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:



Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.