

Fourth Grade / Novel

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The great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

Lecture 4

Discussions and explanations of the most important issues in the novel

Money can't buy you love (or friends)

At first I was surprised and confused; then, as he lay in his house and didn't move or breathe or speak, hour upon hour, it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested

Gatsby attempts to woo Daisy with his lavish parties and home, but ultimately, he fails, mostly because Tom informs her of the truth: He made his fortune in an illegal manner. What's more, none of Gatsby's party attendees show up to his funeral, aside from Nick.

It's not easy to leave your past behind you.

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

As the tragic conclusion and poetic closing lines to Fitzgerald's book tell us, the past can be a messy thing to escape. As hard as Gatsby tries to shirk off his reputation as a bootlegger, he's unable to do so.

Physical beauty is fickle and fleeting.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house.

From the moment we're introduced to Daisy, she seems more like a beautiful caricature of herself rather than an actual person. She flits and giggles and wins the heart of Gatsby, but ultimately leaves him in the dust in spite of his immense efforts

You know what they say about assuming

I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. 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.

Fitzgerald's tragic story quickly goes from sad to sadder, and many of the terrible events that unfold are based solely on false assumptions. When George discovers that his wife has died after being hit by a car, he assumes that Gatsby was the driver and proceeds to take revenge on him. In fact, Gatsby was covering for Daisy. Says Nick

