

The Great Gatsby Socratic Seminar

**In-class Work Time (write out all of the answers to the questions in PEA format):
Wednesday and Thursday, February 17-18**

****This is similar to a “take home” essay test.**

Rehearse your Socratic Seminar with your group: Friday, February 19

--> Choose a group leader (to ask the questions) and a time keeper (to make sure you are within the time limit – No less than 10 and no more than 15 minutes)

--> Practice asking and responding to the questions.

Socratic Seminars (participation is worth a test grade): Monday, February 22 and Tuesday, February 23

--> Your Socratic Seminar will be similar to a presentation. You will conduct your seminar while the class watches you (this is called “fishbowl” style).

- Write all of your answers in PEA format. Bring your papers to the Socratic Seminar
- You will be graded on your responses AND on your participation in the discussion.
- When answering questions, keep in mind the thematic concepts, symbols, and other literary elements we have discussed.
- If you are absent: answer all 6 of the questions for your group to receive credit for the **writing portion** of the assignment. **You will not receive full credit if you miss the Socratic Seminar.**

GROUP 1: THE TITLE

- A) What does the title mean?
- B) Is Jay Gatsby truly “great”?
- C) Nick tells Gatsby that he is “worth the whole damn bunch put together”. How does our perception of Tom, Daisy, and Jordan influence the reader’s impressions of Gatsby?
- D) How does our awareness of Gatsby’s motivations and decisions affect how readers see him as a person?
- E) Why do you think Gatsby’s story is still relevant and interesting to students of American literature today?
- F) Should this novel be renamed for today’s society? Why or why not?

GROUP 2: THE AMERICAN DREAM

- A) What is the American Dream?
- B) Do any of the characters in the novel find their American Dream?
- C) How does Fitzgerald relate Gatsby’s dream to the American Dream?
- D) Does the novel praise or condemn Gatsby’s dream?
- E) Has the American Dream changed since Gatsby’s time? How? Why?
- F) What seems to be the author’s message concerning the Dream as found in the last four paragraphs of the novel?

GROUP 3: LOVE AND MARRIAGE

- A) How are marriage and love depicted in the novel?

- B) How successful is the marriage between Daisy and Tom Buchanan?
- C) How is the marriage between Myrtle and George depicted?
- D) Why did Nick become involved with Jordan?
- E) Why did he break off the relationship?
- F) Judging from their actions, how do these various characters define love?

GROUP 4: REPEATING THE PAST

- A) What is Fitzgerald's purpose in detailing the characters' past lives and experiences?
- B) What is Gatsby trying to recapture, and how do his memories and experiences impact his goal?
- C) To what extent is Gatsby successful in "repeating the past"?
- D) Why do some critics view this novel as a precautionary tale (a story with a message of warning for readers)?
- E) Is reminiscing about the past a benefit to one's physical and emotional development?
- F) What is the author's view concerning "repeating the past"?

GROUP 5: AVOIDING JUDGMENT

- A) In the opening pages, Nick Carraway says he is "inclined to reserve all judgments". Do you agree that he is an impartial observer?
- B) What are his character flaws and how might they affect his narration?
- C) As narrator, how does his outlook influence our perception of characters or events?
- D) What does Nick learn from his experiences in the East?
- E) How does it affect his moral development?
- F) Is he a believable representative of his time period and/or today's time?

GROUP 6: SOCIAL CLASS AND GEOGRAPHY

- A) How does Fitzgerald describe the two worlds of the Midwest and the East?
- B) What do they represent for Nick and Gatsby?
- C) How is Nick characterized and influenced by his Midwest upbringing?
- D) How does the geography of the East and West Eggs and the Valley of Ashes contribute to the definition of social class in the novel?
- E) What are some of the differences between "old money" and "new money" in the novel?
- F) How did it affect the author's development of the characters?