

Chapters 8+9



Gatsby in his pool

30 minutes: 13 students remain in class while three groups (1-3) work on their tasks. Afterwards, groups 1-3 must present their results to the rest of the class.

Group 1:

Creative exercise: a characteristic feature of modernism is that prose becomes more like poetry and poetry becomes more prose-like. Choose sentences from *The Great Gatsby* that, in your opinion, might just as well have been poetry.

Choose an appropriate poem form and make a poem about Gatsby (or another aspect of the novel) out of the selected lines. Write it down and present it in class, i.e. read it out loud + explain why you picked the lines you did and the ideas behind your poem. You may choose to focus on chapters 8+9.

Group 2:

Gatsby today:

On his mansion at Lake Washington (24 bathrooms, 6 kitchens, cinema, etc.), Bill Gates has written the following quote from *The Great Gatsby*: "He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it." (Erling Bjøl, *USAs Historie*, Gyldendal, 2010, p. 583).

Write an open letter to Bill Gates in which you discuss whether the quote is appropriate to use. Furthermore you must discuss to which extent the themes in the novel are still relevant. You may include quotes from the article excerpt below from *The New Yorker* in your discussion:

Fitzgerald's mythologizing of the social whirl, his casting of American types as archetypes, his framing of psychology as destiny, of style as divine grace, captured its moment. He offered glamour along with compassion and consolation, a sense of sad magic along with the expansive glow of romance. It took a few decades for "The Great Gatsby" to take root because it awaited another age of postwar prosperity—albeit one that was growing a conscience, a sense of self-doubt, of introspection and guilt that a noirish 1949 adaptation of "Gatsby" shows. The novel was adapted again in 1974, when a shambling era in thrall to the natural self began to rummage through the past in search of style.

And it's back now, in another [glittering age of incommensurable inequality](http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/movies/2013/04/the-great-gatsby-the-raw-material.html), where, as my colleague George Packer recently wrote, "The fetish that surrounds Google Glass or the Dow average grows ever more hysterical as the economic status of the majority of Americans remains flat." "Gatsby" exults in the grand, lustrous brightness, in the irresistible allure and cavalier freedom of wealth, even as it reveals its reckless—or overmeditated—menace. But it doesn't lionize the exertion itself, which, in the wrong hands, runs the risk of veering into a Randoid hymn to supposedly self-made captains of industry. "The Great Gatsby" is, above all, a novel of conspicuous consumption—not even of appetite but of the ineluctable connection between wealth and spectacle. The central story of that storied age is slender, sleek, and graceful, neither depicting effort nor bearing its marks.

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/movies/2013/04/the-great-gatsby-the-raw-material.html>

Group 3:

- A. Write a short dialogue between Fitzgerald and his editor in which you discuss, whether or not Fitzgerald has chosen a good title for his novel?
- B. Prepare Gatsby's obituary. Did he turn out alright in the end as Nick claims in the opening of the novel?

Group 4 = the rest of the class (13 students)

You'll be assigned a number. You have 15 minutes to comment, as elaborately as possible, on the quote or question corresponding to your number (see below). You might want to look up the quote in the book in order to put it into context. You might, of course, also put your quote into perspective to other parts of the novel.

Afterwards you do a walk-about in class, i.e. you meet up with a class mate and you listen to each other's replies + comment on them. You may also ask questions if you do not understand or agree completely with

the answer you hear. When you are done you walk on, look for an available class mate and follow the same procedure. You may choose to swop quotes before you move on.

1. "There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere..." (chapter 8)
2. "...broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice." (chapter 8)
3. "It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy – it increased her value in his eyes" (chapter 8)
4. "The night had made a sharp difference in the weather and there was an autumn flavor in the air". (chapter 8)
5. "The hard brown beetles kept thudding against the dull light..." (chapter 8)
6. "He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about...like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees." (chapter 8)
7. Why do you think Gatsby is murdered in his pool? Does it have any symbolic value? (chapter 8)
8. "He [Gatsby's father] had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him than the house itself" (chapter 9)
9. What are Nick's reflections on the East Coast and the Mid-west at the end of the novel? Comment on these. (chapter 9)
10. "But I wanted to leave things in order and not just trust that obliging and indifferent sea to sweep my refuse away". (chapter 9)
11. "On the white steps an obscene word,.....stood out clearly in the moonlight, and I erased it, drawing my shoe raspingly along the stone." (chapter 9)
12. "I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes – a fresh green breast of the world..." (chapter 9)
13. "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (chapter 9). Consider the fact that these words are the very last ones in the novel. Is this a good way to end the novel?