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SEMESTER VI

ENGLISH

BLOCK- 2



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The second block contains two a comprehensive discussion on the two major American works namely *The Great Gatsby* and D*eath of a Salesman* by author F. Scott Fitzgerald and dramatist Arthur Miller respectively. Units 10,11 and 12 takes up F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* which is considered as a classic work of American literature set in the American Jazz Age and the roaring twenties. The novel unravels the captivating tale of the mysterious Jay Gatsby in the fictional town of West Egg on Long Island. It brings alive the social buzz of the party circuits contrasted with lives in the Valley- of-ashes, romantic encounters and extravagant life-styles, disillusionments and failures of the great American dream. Gatsby's unconditional sacrifice for Daisy and his frequent look-out for the green beacon of light from his lover's dock across the bay turns into some of the most memorable images of this wonderful novel.

Units 13,14 and 15 takes up Arthur Millers critically-acclaimed play *Death of a Salesman*, that had received the 1959 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and is considered as one of the finest 20th century American plays. The play is set in the background of the Depression years in America representing the widespread financial crises and the pressures of economic depression closely associated with the individual concerns of competing for position and sustainability in the American society through the characters of William "Willy" Loman and his sons Biff and Harold. The play ruptures the great American dream and exposes the tragedy of missing out on life's best in the pursuit of a shallow dream. However, it also presents the vulnerability that characterises each of us as humans as we all struggle towards our dreams.

After going through the units of the first block, the learner will be able to discuss the prescribed drama and novel in a detailed manner. While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit which have been designed to self-check your progress of study. It is important to note that the Self Learning Material (SLM) is not an end in itself and the learners are strongly advised to consult the references and other resources recommended for reading.

UNIT 10 : F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *THE GREAT GATSBY* - I

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Author

10.3.1 His Life

10.3.2 His Works

10.4 Let us Sum up

10.5 Further Reading

10.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.7 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- receive an overview of the 'Jazz Age' and the 'Roaring Twenties' in the introduction
- discuss the life and works of the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald

10.2 INTRODUCTION

The present unit explores the work of one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century, known as F. Scott Fitzgerald who is best remembered for his novel *The Great Gatsby* which is considered as an all time literary classic. It takes up a detailed discussion on Scott Fitzgerald's life and works and the various significant aspects of the text which is set in the context of the Jazz Age. The introduction provides the learner with an overview of some of the significant concepts and ideas related to the context of the novel.

A thorough study of the unit will stir your imagination and also enable you to picture the intellectual buzz and cultural hubs in the corners

of the romantic city of Paris in the roaring 1920s, together with the colourful and carnivalesque atmosphere of the Jazz Age and reflect the creative endeavours of the wayward yet sensitive Lost Generation. The 'Roaring Twenties' almost comes alive in *The Great Gatsby* which is a wonderful novel centered on the towering personality but charmingly mysterious figure of 'Jay Gatsby' who touches the life of a young Yale graduate, Nick Carraway (also the narrator of the story) in a profound way in the summer of 1920.

Roaring Twenties:

The phenomenal era of 1920s in America, right after the end of World War I (1914-1918), saw a definite change in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the writers and artists of this period who were mostly regarded as members of the Lost Generation. This significant era is much relevant to our area of study as we are concerned about the contexts of the various socio-cultural, artistic-aesthetic, material-economic growth and changes. Following the Great War, the phenomenon of the Roaring Twenties was experienced in America as well as Europe which chiefly included the metropolises of New York, New Orleans, Chicago, Los Angeles, Paris, London and Berlin.

The wave of modernity in all fields and aspects had a tremendous impact on the mindset and lifestyle of the American people. With the rising trends in economic growth and modern technology during this era, the Americans experienced new modes of luxury, fashion and lifestyle. Also, there was a distinct cultural consciousness or awakening that saw a flourishing drift in literature, arts and culture. It saw improvisations and resurgences if not a complete departure from the previous trends and traditions. But, the crash of the Wall Street in 1929 marked the end of the Roaring Twenties as the Great Economic Depression in 1929 proved to be a major setback in the nation of America.

Jazz Age and Jazz Music:

The Jazz age refers to the period of roaring twenties when jazz seeped into almost all culture and arts of America. It particularly evokes an era when jazz music was the most popular form of American

expression. It had its origins in the African American societies but gradually found its popularity among the white communities as well. Harlem, New York and Chicago were some of the rich cultural hubs that spread the jazz movement. Jazz music and the blues are forms of musical improvisations and experimentations that developed from the work songs of the African American people. The struggles and emotions of the historically suffering black people find expressions through jazz strains of musical compositions. Some of the leading jazz practitioners were Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie.

The radio stations that came to be known as "sound stations" had a great influence in broadcasting jazz music particularly in centers located in the suburbia of America. It was appealing to the African American youth who improvised jazz music combined with experimental forms of dance practices. Jazz music found its way into the ambience of pubs, lounges, nightclubs and dance halls of American night life. One of the great women jazz singers was Bessie Smith who was active in the scenario of jazz music in the 1920s. Gradually, jazz music came to define the tastes of the elite American classes as well who earlier had a preference for classical music.

Literature of the 1920s:

The literature of the roaring 1920s was an expression of tremendous creative potential which significantly represented the intellectual atmosphere of Paris such as Ernest Hemmingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, the jazz age as reflected in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque on the horrors of war experience. The age of the 1920s was also referred to as the 'Age of Intolerance', 'Age of Wonderful Nonsense' or more popularly as the 'Roaring Twenties' and the 'Jazz Age'.

Lost Generation:

The term 'lost generation' was first used by the American writer Ernest Hemmingway in the epigraph to his novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and refers to the generation of youngsters in the 1920s who experienced and emerged out of the horrors of wars in one way or the

other. As the story goes the term 'lost generation' came into being in a peculiar way as narrated by Hemmingway in his memoir *A Moveable Feast*. Hemmingway's mentor and writer friend Gertrude Stein had narrated an incident to him in which a garage owner commented on a car mechanic who was unable to repair Stein's car saying: "You are all a 'generation perdue'." Stein found this amusing and rather true to a great extent and in narration of this incident to Hemminway said: "That is what you are. That's what you all are…all of you young people who served in the war. You are a lost generation." This phrase came to define the post-war generation of young expatriates particularly settling down in the intellectual hub of Paris.

The term 'lost' refers to the sense of confusion or disorientation in the survivors of the World War I. Some of the significant writers associated with this generation are Ernest Hemmingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, Waldo Peirce and Franz Kafka among many others. Their literary works had a distinct modern appeal that captured the anarchic individual freedom, chaotic social life, rampant materialism and the perpetual disillusionment with life. This generation is also referred to as the "World War I generation" and as "Generation in Flames" in France where almost a generation of expatriates had settled down.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Briefly describe the phenomenal era of the 'Roaring Twenties'.

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Q 2: What did the literature of the 1920s reflect? Name some of the great works of this period.

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Q 3: Whom does the term 'Lost Generation' refer to?

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Q 4: What does the term 'lost' mean with reference to the Lost Generation? Name some of the writers who were considered as part of this generation.

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10.3 F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: THE AUTHOR

The following subsections will provide the learner with a detailed insight into the life and literary contribution of the prolific and influential American author and Hollywood screenwriter F. Scott Fitzgerald. The captioned headings below capture the various phases of his life and works for your quick and easy reference.

10.3.1 His Life

Early Childhood:

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (September 24, 1896 - December 21, 1940) was born to Edward Fitzgerald and Mary "Mollie" McQuillan in St. Paul Minnesota. He was more widely known as "Scott" a name that stuck after the death of his sister, Louise Scott and also his father's relative, Francis Scott Key who had authored *The Star Spangled Banner*. While his father was of both an Irish and English descent, his mother was an Irish. He was raised into the Catholic faith and a well-to-do family although his father did suffer business failures. His father was a wicker-furniture manufacturer which suffered a setback in 1898 and led him towards salesmanship in wholesale grocery for Procter & Gamble. This brought a series of shifting home from Buffalo in 1898 to Syracuse, New York in 1901 back to Buffalo in 1903 to St Paul, New York in 1908. During this last shifting, Edward Fitzgerald had lost his job with the company following which they had to change several homes

and finally settle down in Summit Avenue.

Early Education and Influences:

As the family had to relocate their home several times, Fitzgerald as a young boy had to switch many neighbourhoods, localities and regular schools. He attended several reputed missionary schools among which were Holy Angels Convent, Nardin Academy, St. Paul Academy and Newman School. During his changing school years, he was an introvert who found it difficult to form friendships with others of his age but was a bright student with a keen interest in literature and theatre. Both the parents were very caring towards their son and in one instance, even arranged for him to divide half-day at school (Holy Angels Convent) and half at home according to his choice. He developed his love for reading, writing and acting during these years and was profoundly inspired by the encouragement he received from a prominent Catholic Priest, Father Cyril Sigourney Webster Fay at Newman School. Although, he did not really fare very well in his studies at the school, he applied for the entrance examination to Princeton New Jersey in 1913 and made his way to the portals of the prestigious University.

Princeton Years and the Great War:

It was at Princeton that he took up his writing pursuits seriously and befriended with Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop who later went on to became his contemporary critics and writers. Together with writing for the Princeton magazine, he also became involved with the University Cottage Club and wrote for the Princeton dramatic society known the Triangle Club. Although, his flourishing literary activities gained him prominence, yet his academic performances saw a decline during his first year (1913-1914) at Princeton. His second year at Princeton (1914-1915) brought him his newfound love Ginevra King and later a declining health owing to Malaria. He dropped out of Princeton for a while on a probationary period to recover from his illness but nevertheless continued writing

as always. He then joined the Great War in 1917 in the hope that this would improve his poor grades at Princeton and received tough military training for the war.

Fitzgerald was relocated to various camps in Georgia and Montgomery, Alabama as a second lieutenant in the army. It was at Alabama that he met and fell in love with a beautiful young lady Zelda Sayre whom he considered as the "golden girl" at a dance in the Montgomery Country Club. As the war ended in 1918 and he was discharged form his military service, he returned to New York with the thought of pursuing a career in advertising (while also writing at the same time) in order to establish his career prospects. Thus, he began working for the Barron Collier advertising agency and led a modest life-style in Manhattan. Although Zelda's father had a social standing as a justice of the Alabama Supreme Court in contrast to Fitzgerald's career prospects yet they had a romantic courtship and were happily married in New York's St Patrick's Cathedral in 1920. His success as a writer provided them a lavish lifestyle as celebrities and a year after they had a daughter Frances Scott "Scottie" Fitzgerald.

Paris and the Hollywood Years:

Fitzgerald is known for his association with the '*Lost Generation*' as already discussed in the introduction. It was not long before Fitzgerald (who continued writing) fell into debt given their lavish lifestyle. The 1920s saw them travel frequently to Europe, particularly to France Riviera and Paris which is where he was introduced to the literary circles of the socialising American expatriates like Ernest Hemmingway, Edith Wharton, Gertrude Stein and Robert McAlmon among others. During one such trip, their marriage suffered the pressures of Zelda's romantic relationship with a French pilot which caused his disillusionment in love and turned him into an alcoholic. However, gradually things improved and with the critical reception of *The Great Gatsby* things began to look up. Then Zelda and he revisited Paris and

he began a close association with Hemmingway with whom he spent much of his time which became a subject of Zelda's envy. With a whooping turnover form the publication of his short story collection *All the Sad Young Men* and *The Great Gatsby*, he moved to Hollywood and took up several creative projects such as screenwriting. This time around, he had developed a casual relationship with a young actress Lois Moran which again disturbed his marital relation. Living under the shadow of her husband, Zelda tried hard to carve her own identity as an author, a ballet dancer and a painter but soon developed a mental illness.

Crises and Final Years :

With the increasing medical expenses for his wife together with his financial losses and debts, he began to develop both depression and alcohol addiction. A sensational article titled "Scott Fitzgerald, 40, Engulfed in Despair" based on his interview to *The New York Post* hurt him so deeply that he attempted suicide with a morphine overdose. But when the company MGM offered him a stint as a screenwriter, his creative energies were harnessed yet again. He continued providing for his wife's medical condition and his daughter. And when the times were difficult, his friend and literary agent Harold Ober provided him financial support and even helped raising his daughter. During this time, he had developed a serious relationship with a young gossip columnist Sheila Graham who had a striking similarity to the young Zelda he had once known and loved. He suffered from serious alcoholism in his final years and also suffered two major heart attacks, the last of which resulted in his demise in 1940. Zelda lived for eight years longer until the tragic event of her death in the Highland Hospital fire in 1948. They were both buried at St. Mary's Church in Maryland after their daughter had filed a petition for the same as Fitzgerald was initially buried at Rockville Union Cemetery in 1940 and there was a requirement of both religious rites and legal procedures before it could be done.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Briefly discuss the early life of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

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Q 6: What were the early interests of Scott Fitzgerald during his school years? Who was a major inspiration for his budding talent as a writer at Newman School?

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Q 7: Give a brief description of his first year at Princeton University.

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Q 8: Give a brief description of his second year at Princeton University

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Q 9: Name the group with which Fitzgerald was associated in the 1920s.

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10.3.2 His Works

The subsection explores Scott Fitzgerald's undying love for writing that kept him going through the highs and lows of life. We shall first begin with a glimpse of his early love and flair for writing before we look into his more mature years as an established writer.

Love for Writing at an Early Age:

If there was anything that was constant in Scott Fitzgerald's life it was his love for writing which is clearly noticeable right from his early student years to his university life and the rise and fall of his personal life and literary career. Fitzgerald on a more

personal note said: "[w]ell, three months before I was born," he wrote as an adult, "my mother lost her other two children... I think I started then to be a writer." His penchant for reading and writing in his early years developed into a serious literary pursuit. While he was a student of St. Paul Academy, he found his first detective story titled "The Mystery of the Raymond Mortgage" published in his school magazine *Now and Then* in 1909 which followed with the publication of his two other stories.

This was at the tender age of thirteen when he was an avid reader of adventure stories and his gradual love for novels of G.A. Henty and Walter Scott among others. Another series of publication was during his years at Newman Academy when he wrote a poem and three short stories for the school magazine *The Newman News*. This was also a time when he wrote and performed a play titled *The Girl from Lazy J* for the Elizabethan Drama Club in 1911. One of his earliest inspirations came from a Catholic priest Father Fay at Newman. Thus, this was just the initial sprouting or flowering of a talent that was later to develop into tremendous literary potential and earn Scott Fitzgerald a permanent place as one of the greatest American authors of all time.

Princeton Years and Literary Activities:

During his years at Princeton, his academics took a back-seat while he followed his writing pursuits to the fullest. He won a competition to write a book for the Princeton dramatic society, titled *Fie! Fie! Fi-Fi!* following which he found himself involved in writing for several other drama productions during his first year. He made wide contributions to the Princeton magazine *The Princeton Tiger* and continued his love for reading writers such as George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells among others. Scott Fitzgerald gained much popularity owing to the streaming literary contributions to *Princeton Nassau Literary Magazine*. During his academic probation from Princeton owing to his illness, he began contributing to the *Tiger* magazine while also working on his first novel The

Romantic Egoist, the first draft of which remained unaccepted for publication.

Significant Works During his Writing Career:

His significant novels apart from *The Great Gatsby* (1925) were *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), *Tender is the Night* (1934) and an unfinished novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon* (1941), published posthumously after his demise. Two of his novellas were titled *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz* (1922) and *May Day* (1922) both included in *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922) a significant collection of short stories. Among his other short story collections were *Flappers and Philosophers* (1921), *All the Sad Young Men* (1926), *Taps at Reveille* (1935), *Afternoon of an Author* (1957), *Babylon Revisited and Other Stories* (1960) and '*The Pat Hobby Stories*' in the *Esquire Magazine* (1940-41). His other notable works were *From President to Postman* - A Play (1923), *The Crack-Up and Other Pieces and Stories* - a collection of essays, notebook excerpts, and letters (1945).

A Glimpse at his Successful Years:

Scott Fitzgerald's successful literary years began when he signed Harold Ober as his literary agent who not only helped him professionally but also at times with his personal finances. Initially, it was the bulk of his short stories (published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The Smart Set* magazine and *Metropolitan Magazine*) provided him more of a steady income than his novels. But, gradually recognition for his novels started pouring in and his first novel *This Side of Paradise* brought him a decent earning. Following this he came up with his second novel *The Beautiful and the Damned* which did equally well with his short story anthology *Tales of Jazz Age* that contained stories which came to be considered as classics of American literature.

His novel *The Great Gatsby* for which he is known today lacked a readership in his time. This was followed by his short story collections *All the Sad Young Man*. Throughout the highs and lows

of life, while battling with his own bouts of alcoholism, his financial difficulties and even his wife's schizophrenic condition, he continued writing and chiefly earning through his short stories such as the "Basil" stories in 1928. The years 1933 and 35 saw the publications of his short story collections *Tender is the Night* and *Taps at Reveille* respectively. He also began writing screenplays for Hollywood movies and other creative projects either single-handedly or with co-authors such as *A Yank at Oxford*, *Infidelity*, *Madame Curie*, *Gone With the Wind* and *Winter Carnival* etc. During his final stage in Hollywood a series of seventeen 'Pat Hobby" stories saw publication in the *Esquire Magazine* from 1940-41 in which Fitzgerald took the liberty of laughing at himself through the fictional character of 'Pat Hobby', a dull Hollywood writer.

Film Adaptations of his Life and Literary Works

It might interest you to find that both Fitzgerald's life and select literary works have had several film adaptations. His life is captured in an adaptation titled *Beloved Infidel* in 1958. Some of his adapted works were Tender is *The Night* (in 1962), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (latest in 2010), *The Last Tycoon* (in 1976 with screenplay by the dramatist Harold Pinter), *The Last Time I saw Paris* (in 1954) and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (in 2008) among a few others. *The Great Gatsby* itself has seen numerous film adaptations, the latest being the 2000 and 2013 Hollywood adaptation of the novel. All things considered, he had a prolific writing career and achieved a reputed literary status as one of the greatest American writers.



10.4 LET US SUM UP

After a detailed study of the unit, the learner will receive a brief overview of the 'Jazz Age' and the 'Roaring Twenties' through the introduction, as it is essential to place the novel in the context

in which it was written. The learner will thus gain a detailed idea on the life and works of the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald.



10.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold (2007) *Viva Bloom's Notes: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. New York: Viva Books

2) Bloom, Harold. (2007) *Viva Modern Critical Interpretations: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby.* New York: Viva Books

3) Fitzgerald, F.Scott. (2013) *The Great Gatsby London*: Alma Classics



10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The phenomenal era of 1920s in America, right after the end of World War I (1914-1918), saw a definite change in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the writers and artists of this period who were mostly regarded as members of the Lost Generation.

Ans to Q No 2: The literature of the roaring 1920s was an expression of tremendous creative potential which significantly represented the intellectual atmosphere of Paris such as Ernest Hemmingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, the jazz age as reflected in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque on the horrors of war experience.

Ans to Q No 3: The term 'lost generation' was first used by the American writer Ernest Hemmingway in the epigraph to his novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and refers to the generation of youngsters in the 1920s who experienced and emerged out of the horrors of wars in one way or the other.

Ans to Q No 4: The term 'lost' refers to the sense of confusion or disorientation in the survivors of the World War I. Some of the significant writers associated with this generation are Ernest Hemmingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, Waldo Peirce and Franz Kafka among many others.

Ans to Q No 5: Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born to Edward Fitzgerald and Mary "Mollie" McQuillan in St. Paul Minnesota on September 24, 1896. He was more widely known as "Scott" a name that stuck after the death of his sister, Louise Scott and also his father's relative, Francis Scott Key who had authored *The Star Spangled Banner*. While his father was of both an Irish and English descent, his mother was an Irish. He was raised into the Catholic faith and a well-to-do family although his father did suffer business failures. His father was a wicker-furniture manufacturer which suffered a setback in 1898 and led him towards salesmanship in wholesale grocery for Procter & Gamble.

Ans to Q No 6: He developed his love for reading, writing and acting during his school years and was profoundly inspired by the encouragement he received from a prominent Catholic Priest, Father Cyril Sigourney Webster Fay at Newman School.

Ans to Q No 7: It was at Princeton that he took up his writing pursuits seriously and befriended with Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop who later went on to became his contemporary critics and writers. Together with writing for the Princeton magazine, he also became involved with the University Cottage Club and wrote for the Princeton dramatic society known the Triangle Club. Although, his flourishing literary activities gained him prominence yet his academic performances saw a decline during his first year (1913-1914) at Princeton.

Ans to Q No 8: His second year at Princeton (1914-1915) brought him his newfound love Ginevra King and later a declining health owing to Malaria. He dropped out of Princeton for a while on a probationary period to recover from his illness but nevertheless

continued writing as always. He then joined the Great War in 1917 in the hope that this would improve his poor grades at Princeton and received tough military training for the war.

Ans to Q No 9: Fitzgerald is known for his association with the '*Lost Generation*'.



10.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a detailed biographical sketch of the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Q 2: Discuss the literary contributions and credibility of the American author F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Q 3: Write short notes on :

a) Lost Generation.

b) Jaz music as a popular American form.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 11 : F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *THE GREAT GATSBY* - II

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Explanation of the Text

11.4 Let us Sum up

11.5 Further Reading

11.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.7 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the text of the novel *The Great Gatsby* in a detailed manner
- practice writing short notes on some of the major events in the novel
- gain a detailed idea on the thematic content of the novel
- appreciate the text of the novel

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In continuation of the previous unit, the present unit takes up a detailed explanation of the text of *The Great Gatsby*. After a thorough study of the life and works of Scott Fitzgerald, let us now move to the text of *The Great Gatsby* through a detailed discussion. The quotation marks used in certain key words and also the longer italicised sentences indicate that these have been taken or rather picked from the text of the novel. The learner will find 'captions' that highlight or pinpoint the significant incidents or aspects of all the chapters in the novel. The explanation of the text is divided in accordance to the nine chapters of the novel *The Great Gatsby*.

11.3 EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT

The summary of the chapters are as follows:

CHAPTER 1

The opening chapter begins with some of the memorable lines in English Literature: *'In my younger years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind since. "When you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'*

The Introductory Pages of the Novel:

As we open the first pages of the novel, we are drawn into the narration of a young man who unravels his personal reflections in a conversational manner and shares some of his spontaneous thoughts in his mind. He reveals his unspoken understanding with his father from whom he had learned to reserve any form of judgement on others. This particular characteristic trait developed with the worldly wisdom that circumstances often determined or shaped people's thoughts and actions. Thus, the narrator considers himself tolerant to a certain extent mentioning that he is often misunderstood for his non-judgemental approach towards others and for having access to information of *"the secret griefs of wild, unknown men"*.

Here, Nick the narrator of the long story that took place in the summer of the 1920s mentions the name of a certain Gatsby (on whom the novel is based) highly praising his personality thus : *"If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life….-it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again."* This instantly stirs the readers' curiosity to find out more about the larger-than-life personality of the mysterious figure known as 'Gatsby'. Being tired of listening to the secrets of others, Nick for a change wants people to maintain moral order and uniformity. Yet, he considers the towering personality of Gatsby as an exception to this and thus, begins to narrate the gentleman's

long story of which he was an integral part as well.

New Residence and a Visit to the Buchanans:

Nick relocates to West Egg which is situated in a slender island extending from East New York with two peculiar shapes of 'egg-shaped land' that are separated by a courtesy bay in the middle. With an intention of beginning his career prospects in the bond business, he relocates to West Egg with his house almost at the tip of the egg-shaped land beside a colossal new 'Mansion' which looks similar to a grand hotel with a tower on one side. So this happens to be the Mansion of a certain gentleman by the name of Gatsby.

Nick's second cousin Daisy Fay Buchanan resides on the exact opposite side of the bay, known as the East Egg that he could easily view from his home. The history of the summer that he is to reveal begins with his visit to his sister's home for dinner. He had only spent time with them on one occasion at Chicago after the Great War. Now he is warmly received by Tom at the Buchanan's mansion in East Egg. To his surprise on this first visit, he finds his cousin Daisy with a younger lady lying extended on their couches like goddesses with the light curtains catching a breeze. Daisy warmly welcomes him and in her child-like manner does not take much long to open up her secrets to Nick.

A Phone-call for Tom:

While chatting over a couple of drinks, Tom excuses himself from the dining table followed by Daisy. Nick learns from Miss Baker that Tom attends a phone-call from a woman in New York who is apparently his long-time mistress and Miss Baker tries to eavesdrop on their conversation. Tom and Daisy are back at the table but with a tendency of being at unrest. And after dinner, they set out for a casual stroll through the chain of connecting verandas. While Tom and Miss Baker go to the library, Daisy and Nick find a moment to talk one-to-one outside. Daisy starts a conversation with him.

Daisy's Conversation with Nick:

During their conversation, Daisy shares her feelings with Nick regarding her disappointment with her husband Tom who apart from

being involved with another woman was even absent when she gave birth to her girl. While she was glad for having a girl-child, she lamented a girl's fate saying: "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool-that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." In fact, she meant that it was exactly how society viewed and stereotyped a girl-child. Sitting in the crimson room, Miss Baker reads aloud from the *Saturday Evening Post* to Tom and throughout this chapter we find the strong presence of the young lady who could almost be mistaken for a family member. Jordan retires to sleep as she is to participate in a golf tournament at Westchester the next day. Referring to the possibility of match-making, Daisy sounds enthusiastic and even hints at Nick of possibly bringing both Jordan and him together as a couple.

When Nick take his leave from the Carraways, out of sheer curiosity, Daisy suddenly questions him if he was already engaged to someone as she had heard something of the sort from various sources. Rumours always had a way of creeping in somehow and this was one reason that Nick had in fact shifted to the West. The evening spent at the Buchanans place leaves certain impressions on Nick's mind and he thinks how Daisy was a little too superficial for his liking and Tom's adulterous relation with some New York woman, hardly a surprise given his nature.

A Figure in the Dark and a Beacon of Green Light:

Surprisingly, after his return, he notices the figure of a man, stepping out of the neighbouring grand mansion and standing fifty feet away from him. Something about the composure of this figure with his hands in his pocket and casual movements gives him the impression that this was most certainly his neighbour Mr. Gatsby himself, of whom he had heard about from Miss Baker that evening. The figure seemed rather content to be all alone and thus, Nick decides not to disturb him. But he notices that the gentleman in a strange manner stretches out his arm towards the dark waters of the bay almost trembling and looking straight towards a green beacon of light from the other end. And suddenly in the blink of an eye, the figure vanishes in the *"unquiet darkness."*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Briefly describe the place to which Nick relocates for his new career prospects.

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Q 2: What does Nick notice after his return from the Buchanan's place?

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CHAPTER 2

"But above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleberg. The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic- their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face but, instead, from a pair of a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose."

Valley of Ashes:

The above quoted lines connoting the 'grey' stretch of land is the valley of ashes which from the description can be imagined as an industrial wasteland or rather some sort of a back yard, fully covered in soot and ashes. Even the few "*ash-grey men*" who are seen there appear to be covered in dirt and ashes. The valley of ashes was halfway between West Egg and New York City and on one side of the valley was a foul river. There we come across a huge billboard with a picture of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg's blue eyes peering through yellow spectacles without an apparent face. This billboard was set up by some wild oculist and stood as if prying (with his "persistent stare" like some kind of a God) on any passerby entering or leaving that desolate and forsaken place. The valley of ashes had one thing more-it hid Tom's secret affairs under its thick veil of ashes.

Tom and his Mistress:

Tom often halted at the valley of ashes to meet his mistress who lived there with her husband. On one such drive up New York with Tom,

Nick meets the woman whom he had only heard about. Tom was rather careless for being seen with his mistress in popular cafes and chatting with acquaintances without a sense of shame or guilt. And Nick is rather forced to accompany Tom on one Sunday afternoon who wants to introduce him to his 'girl' in New York. Having to walk a hundred yards from their stop, he follows Tom's direction towards an open car-repairing shop with a banner that read : Repairs. GEORGE B. WILSON. *Cars brought and sold.* This shop and garage belonged to the woman's husband George B. Wilson. Wilson's appearance is that of a blonde, pale but somewhat handsome man who seems to lack some sort of spirit. Tom makes conversation with the man on a car-repairing deal which reflects their casual familiarity but appears rather impatient to meet his woman.

At this precise moment, a woman in her middle thirties with a thick yet sensuous figure arrives downstairs. She is rather a plump woman in a dark-blue dress who is not beautiful as expected but possesses some form of vitality in her. While she sends Wilson to fetch some chairs, both the lovers catch a moment for themselves. Tom expresses his desire to meet her and to get on the next train so that they can meet at a decided place together. Here we must note that Wilson does not have the faintest idea or suspicion that his wife has been cheating on him.

The Next Meeting:

Taking Nick along with him, Tom meets her at the decided place at New York. And the woman literally transforms into a carefree woman who changes her dress, reading magazines and making little purchases on her getaway from home. She even asks Tom to buy a dog for her and apart from granting her wish, even gives her enough money to buy ten more if she wishes the same. Here, we find out that her name is Myrtle Wilson. The couple are surprisingly headed to an apartment at 158th Street as though it is some sort of a homecoming, Myrtle decides to have some invitees to their home (including her sister Catherine). They are to shortly have a party that afternoon and it becomes the second time in his life when Nick gets drunk. From the narration, it becomes evident that both Tom and Myrtle indulge into physical relationship and that the invited

company is headed towards a wild bash or party. Myrtle becomes or rather appears more and more transformed as the party proceeds from the reflecting vitality at her bleak garage to her affected manners in the party circle.

The Party at the Secret Apartment:

So, they gather for an afternoon of a lively celebration in the small apartment. Some of the invitees for the party are Mr. Chester McKee- a photographer by profession, Mrs. Lucille McKee-his wife, Mrs. Eberhardt and Catherine-Myrtle's sister who exudes an air of defiance of the New Woman. She is a girl in her thirties with a slender figure, wearing a red bob- hair cut with an air of restlessness as though the entire place belongs to her. She wears a number of pottery bracelets on her arms and a lot of face powder. The few invitees to the house-party basically talk on contemporary art, fashion and travel. A couple of drinks (for the second time in his life) makes Nick feel comfortable and as if it is not all that bad as he initially assumes.

Catherine takes her seat beside Nick and as they start conversing, a reference to Gatsby comes up in their conversation. She tells him of having been at one of Gatsby's parties and how the man was a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm from where flowed all the pots of wealth that he possessed. But Nick is aware that such pieces of absorbing information had all the possibility of being just a speculation or some sort of a rumour. This was because she also mentions that the Buchanans were not divorced as Daisy was a 'Catholic', which Nick knew was untrue. In Nick's own words, *"[t]he late-afternoon sky bloomed in the window for a moment like the blue honey of the Mediterranean"* until things took a different turn altogether.

The Fight at the Party

As Myrtle begins to draw too many references to Daisy in her conversation with Catherine, it leads to Tom's sharp anger. She talks of how after her marriage to George whom she had once taken to be a gentleman, she was rather left disillusioned with his unimpressive ways. She feels crazy to have married a man who even had to borrow someone

else's suit for his own wedding, which reflected that he was not even self-sufficient. They had lived in their home above the garage for eleven years had before she had found her first "sweetie' Tom and entered into a secret relationship.

As the alcohol begins to take over Nick's senses, he wants to leave feeling that he was both *"within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."* Yet Myrtle continues her story of how she had first met Tom with his impressive appearance on a train to New York. She mentions her little list of requirements for the next day such as her massages and hair-waves, ashtrays and dog-collar, dresses and not to forget a 'wreath with a black silk bow' for her mother's grave. Although she is seen to have a sense of artificiality, disdain, impulsiveness, frankness and a desire for riches, yet she cares enough to remember a wreath for her mother among all other things.

As the clock strikes nine and the vibrant atmosphere of the afternoon turns into a drowsy night – Mr. McKee was asleep on his chair and Myrtle's dog was seated on the table. But towards midnight, Tom and Myrtle were caught in a fight on something regarding her right to mention Daisy's name. When Myrtle defiantly and repeatedly utters Daisy's name in front of Tom, he almost breaks her nose with his hand in anger. This incident creates a commotion and both Catherine and Mrs. McKee rush to her aid, both scolding and consoling her at once. Mr. McKee takes his leave and invites Nick to his home for lunch someday. Even Nick leaves the place to get back home by the early morning train.

CHAPTER 3

The chapter is divided into two sections; one is centered on Gatsby's party and the other on Nick's preoccupations.

Nick's Neighbourhood that Summer:

Music flowed from the grand mansion all through the summer and Nick often took notice of all the stirring activities in the neighbourhood. In his description, he took notice of guests who entered through the blue gardens, some who were aboard his neighbour's raft, while others lazing

in the sand of the beaches with motorboats slitting and surfing through the foamy waters of Long Island sound. On weekends the Rolls Royce, made several trips bearing several batches of people from the city to the grand parties. Mondays were cleaning days when a total of eight servants and a gardener cleaned up all the mess and 'ravages' of the previous nights. Every Friday there was an arrival of fruit supply- five crates of oranges and lemons which by Monday morning transformed into a pyramid of left-overs. This indicated that these citrus fruits were required as a cure to the guests who suffered from hang-overs after having drunk through the party-night. And at least once in a fortnight, there were caterers who almost lighted up his neighbour's sprawling garden.

On a Special Invitation:

Nick happened to be at one of these parties having received the rare and special invitation. That night he experienced a grand atmosphere at the mansion with eye-catching arrangements of huge buffet tables of the most exotic food of meat roasts, salads and varied liquors. To add to all of it, there was wonderful jazz music played by an orchestra with their oboes, trombones, saxophones, viols, cornets, piccolos, high and low drums. When the party began in the evening, the cars from New York were parked in the drive with the arrivals of some of the most fashionable people that added to a colourful atmosphere, brought the bar alive and introduced new interactions among strangers. While the orchestra played high-pitched cocktail music, there was a rising laughter while guests wove around from group to group. This was until the jovial atmosphere was interrupted by one of the 'gypsies' who took a cocktail glass, smashed it on the ground to draw everyone's attention (including the orchestra) to begin a dance on the floor.

To Nicks surprise, he meets Jordan who makes him feel anchored among the crowd of strangers in the party. Her company of two friends discuss on their previous visit when one of them had mistakenly torn their dresses and Gatsby like a true courteous gentleman had sent a beautiful dress in a parcel out of his genuine concern. The three girls discuss how it was said that he had killed a man though it was more to do with his

serving as a German spy during the war. Thus, speculations on the mysterious figure of Gatsby happen to arrive before he himself does at the party. This is why Nick says, *"[w]e all turned around and looked for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world."*

Thus, there was a huge gathering at the party which had brought together the nobility of the countryside-the East Egg patronising West Egg. Jordan decides to find out the invisible host of that party, Gatsby and takes Nick along through the crowds, eyeing from the bar towards the stair-tops, from the outdoor veranda to the indoors of a Gothic Library housed in that mansion. Here both of them meet a stout middle aged man, drunk and seated on the edge of a table staring at the book shelves unsteadily. Jordan cheerfully makes a brief conversation and they leave the man to himself finding that he is not Gatsby. In the meanwhile there is much dancing to jazz rhythms on the canvas in the garden and by midnight this excitement rises even higher.

An Unexpected Surprise:

While Nick is seated at the table enjoying his drink feeling as though there is something "*elemental*" about the atmosphere, a gentleman about his age approaches towards him. He politely questions Nick if he had been in the First Division during the war as he seemed familiar to him because he was in the Twenty-Eighth infantry himself. The gentleman talks about seeing him around the vicinity as well and asking him if he would like to take a ride in his new hydroplane sometime soon. At this Jordan notices that Nick becomes much more at ease with himself. Precisely at this moment, Nick expresses his drunken thoughts of not having seen the 'host', even when he happens to live nearby but the only idea he has whatsoever is that "*this man Gatsby*" had sent his chauffeur with an invitation to the party.

This almost startles the gentleman who then introduces himself at that moment saying "*I am Gatsby*." This comes as an unexpected surprise, something like a revelation which also becomes embarrassing

in a way. Gatsby was under the impression that Nick was well aware that he was the host but makes him feel comfortable apologising instead for not being a good host. Gatsby is kind towards Nick as all other guests, some of whom seemed to have no idea of what the host even looked like. Both Gatsby and Nick strike a new friendship, although the latter is yet to learn more about this mysterious personality. Gatsby fondly refers to him as "old sport" Here is what Nick has to narrate:

"He [Gatsby] smiled understandingly-much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it that you may come across forty or five times in life. It faced-or seemed to face-the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour. It understood you just as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished- and I was looking at an elegant young roughneck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care."

After, a brief conversation, Gatsby excuses himself from their company as his butler informes him of a phone call from Chicago. The moment he leaves, Nick turns around to Jordan to ask if she knows anything about the man, about his origins and his profession. All that Jordan tells him is that Gatsby had once told her that he was an Oxford educated man which she did not believe to be true. He was someone who gave "large parties", which is the one thing that she enjoyed most.

The Lively Evening:

Some sensational music at Gatsby's personal request begins to play. It was the musician Tostoff's periodical piece of musical composition which was considered as Vladimir Tostoff's Jazz History of the World.' At this point, Nick appreciates Gatsby's persona saying thus :

"The nature of Mr Tostoff's composition eluded me, because just as it began my eyes fell on Gatsby, standing alone on the marble steps

and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively right on his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed every day. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased. When the 'Jazz History of the World' was over, girls were putting their heads on men's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed for Gatsby's head for one link."

Just then, Gatsby's butler enquires for Miss Jordan Baker saying that Gatsby wished to speak to her. This comes as a tremendous surprise to her and she excuses herself for a while. It was already two o' clock, past midnight with jealous husbands and wives quarrelling about the place. Nick waits in the hall for Jordan to return until both Gatsby and Jordan come out together. It appears to him as though Gatsby still shares a last word with her. Jordan approaches Nick and says she had just heard "*the most amazing thing*" from Gatsby for all that while. It had been almost an hour but she simply found it amazing, something that she was not to reveal. Thus, she leaves him eluded and melts into the party that was almost reaching its end.

An Apologetic Nick:

Somehow, Nick wants to catch a moment with Gatsby to explain and offer him an apology for not having known or even recognised him that evening in the garden, although early on, he had tried to search for him at the party. And when he does so Gatsby does not seem to mind and instead reminds him to join for a ride in his hydroplane the next morning. Shortly, his Butler once again informs him of a phone call from Philadelphia and both the gentlemen bid goodbye to each other. As Nick walks towards home, he witnesses a minor car accident involving 'owl eyes' the name they had used for the drunk man at the Gothic Library in Gatsby's mansion.

Nick then cuts across his lawn, reflecting on the sequence of things that evening with these thoughts:

"I glanced back once. A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's

house, making the night fine as before, and surviving the laughter and the sound of his still-glowing garden. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell." (57)

With this the first section of this chapter comes to an end followed by the rather short section in which Nick narrates about his personal concerns. Nick discusses about his business-schedules, his brief affair with a girl from Jersey, how he spends his day, his dinners at Yale Club, reading in the library there and taking a stroll on the city streets at night. As a young bachelor, he begins to enjoy his life in New York and particularly the feel of its vibrant night life. But in the "*enchanted metropolitan life*" he also feels a sense of "*haunting loneliness*". He happens to meet Jordan after quite a long time and by midsummer they hang out together. Nick feels rather flattered to be seen with her, as she happens to be a well-known golf-champion and is also drawn to her by a sense of curiosity. Although, Jordan carries a sense of carelessness about her, she instinctively prefers someone unlike her which is why she likes to be with Nick. But, the young bachelor takes time before he is sure of himself and rather writes letters to Jordan instead of declaring his love impulsively.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What does Nick notice in his neighbourhood that summer?

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Q 4: What does Nick discuss in the shorter section of chapter 3?

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CHAPTER 4

Observations of a Curious Neighbour:

Some of the women attending Gatsby's cocktail or some sort of a garden party gossip about him being a bootlegger and that he had

once killed a man who had found out that he was Von Hindenberg's nephew. Although people accepted his hospitality, yet they hardly knew anything about him personally. Nick wanting to make on his own observations on Gatsby, whom he had befriended begins to write down the names of visitors or guests who visit Gatsby that summer.

The list includes names such as Chester Beckers, the Leeches, Doctor Webster Civet, the Hornbeams, the Willie Voltaires, the clan of Blackbuck, the Ismays, the Chysties, Edgar Beaver, Bunsen, Clarence Endive, the Cheadles, the O.R.P. Schraeders, the Stonewall Jackson Abrams, the Fishguards, the Ripley Snells, the Dancies, S.B. Whitebait, Maurice A. Flink, the Hammerheads, Beluga and Beluga girls mostly from East Egg.

The guests from West Egg were the Poles, the Mulreadys, Cecil Roebuck, Cecil Schoen, Gulick the state Senator, those connected to movies like-Newton Orchid, Eckhaust, Clyde Cohen, Don S. Schwartze, those connected to theatre like Gus Waize, Horace O'Donavan, Lester Myer, George Duckweed, Francis Bull followed by the promoter- Da Fontana, the Catlips, the Bembergs, G.Earl Muldon, those that came to gamble Ed Legros, James B., the De Jongs and Ernest Lilly. There were several New Yorkers too such as the Chromes, the Backhyssons, the Dennickers, Russel Betty, the Corrigans, the Kellehers, the Dewars, the Scullys, S.W. Belcher, the Smirkes, the divorced Quinns, Henry L. Palmetto (who later commits suicide), Benny Mc Clenahan with his regular group of girl partners, Faustina O'Brien, the Baedeker girls, war-injured Brewer, the couple Mr. Albrucksburger-Miss Haag, Ardita Fitz Peters, former head of American Legion-Mr. P. Jewett, Miss Claudia Hip with her chauffeur and Duke, a prince of some place. Nick also mentions about a boarder by the name of 'Klipspringer' who says mostly stayed at the Mansion which often made others doubt if he had any other home-referring to him as the boarder.

Thus, from Nick's counting observation, we can well imagine the huge get-togethers at Gatsby's party that summer which mostly comprised of the rich and elite. Then one morning, Gatsby for the first time

approaches Nick in his stunning car. This was rare and although Nick had attended two of Gatsby's high-profile parties, this happen to be the first time that the gentleman makes a personal visit to his neighbour's home. Gatsby gives him the priviledge of a ride on his hydroplane and to make use of his beach for recreation. Gatsby reminds him that they were to lunch together. When Nick takes a ride in his car, Gatsby begins his first intimate conversation with him.

A Personal Conversation Between Gatsby and Nick:

Gatsby poses the question on what honest opinion did Nick have on him. Nick who does not know much about Gatsby tries to evade the question by generalising his answer but Gatsby interrupts him saying, *"Well, I'm going to tell you something about my life. I don't want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories that you have heard."* During this car trip he briefly discloses about his origins, his family, his education and his younger days when something very sad had happened to him. He also talks about his service in the war when he was decorated as a Major-Major Jay Gatsby "For Valour Extraordinary" as testified by a piece of decorated medal that he always held in his pocket. He had another souvenir which was a photograph of his younger self at the Trinity Quad during in his Oxford days. These personal possessions convince him that Gatsby was indeed telling the truth for all the time that Nick had held his reservations particularly on his Oxford education.

Then Gatsby tells him that he would make a big request to him that day which is why he felt that Nick had the right to know some bits of his personal information saying thus : *"so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn't want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me."* And he further, adds that he would most certainly hear about it that afternoon. However, this final piece of revelation was not to arrive during their lunch together but at tea time when Nick would take Miss Baker for tea. Nick verifies if it was something regarding Gatsby falling in love with Miss Baker and Gatsby assures him that it rather concerned something else. And then he

holds his silence without saying another word during their long ride together.

Roaring Noon:

They cross the 'great bridge' past Wilson's garage which is where Nick gets the feeling that anyone could expect any kind of surprises on crossing the great bridge- which in a way also forebodes the future events to take place around that particular palce later on. At noon time, Gatsby and Nick take a lunch at an airy Forty-Second Street cellar in the presence of a friend Mr. Wolfshiem to whom Nick is introduced. Gatsby's Jewish friend Wolfshiem appears to be an aged man of about fifty years with a small frame, a flat nose and tiny eyes. Through their conversation Nick realises that the old man mistakenly confuses him for an expected businessman when the man shows an interest saying *"I understand you're looking for a business gonnegtion [connection]."* But Gatsby is quick to correct him that Nick is rather the friend he had talked about, at which the old man pardons himself. At this moment Gatsby also apologises for taking Nick by surprise for that entire morning. But, the only discomfort that Nick expresses is that he did not like mysteries particularly with reference to the Gatsby's 'untold secret' that was to be revealed by Miss Baker and not him. But Gatsby assures him that it was nothing "underhand" and nothing to worry about.

When Gatsby excuses himself to make a phone call, Wolfshiem admiringly refers to Gatsby saying *"Fine fellow, isn't he? Handsome to look at and a perfect gentleman."* He also reveals that Gatsby was the kind of who never even looked at other women. Then after a reference to Gatsby's Oxford education, he goes on to share his memories of how he had met him after the war with an expression of gratitude. When Gatsby returns, the old man politely takes his leave from their company. Gatsby on being questioned about the old man, reveals to Nick that Mr. Wolfshiem was a dentist who was involved in money-fixing the World's series that had created sensational news in the year 1919.

A Meeting with Tom Buchanan During Lunch:

At this moment, Nick finds Tom Buchanan right there at the

restaurant and takes the opportunity of introducing Gatsby to Tom. On finding Nick, Tom expresses his surprise saying Daisy had been furious with the absence of his phone calls for all that while. Perhaps, with this utterance Gatsby realises that the man happens to be Daisy's husband- this also becomes evident in his rather embarrassed expression and without as much as a parting word Gatsby almost vanishes before Nick draws both Tom and Gatsby into further conversation.

Jordan's Shares Gatsby "matter":

When Jordan meets Nick for tea at the Plaza hotel, she begins narrating the past events in order to reveal Gatsby's secret matter which he had held so long in his heart. In this section, we find her narration that begins with her describing Daisy's early days in early 1917. Daisy came from an affluent family and was by far one of the most popular girls from Louisville. Jordan knew Daisy as a young girl- just eighteen years of age, who had a roadster, wore pretty dresses and received much attention from young officers. Then one day she saw Daisy seated with a young lieutenant in her car and both of them gazing intently into each others eyes. That was the last time she had seen the gentleman for over four years. He was Jay Gatsby who was in love with Daisy. Even after Jordan met Gatsby at Long Island it was after long that she realised it was the same lieutenant whom she had seen at Louisville. At that time there had been wild rumours about Daisy having packed her bags to leave for New York to bid goodbye to a soldier (perhaps Gatsby). Following this incident, she no more flirted with any army person and rather stuck to other "*flat-footed, short-sighted*" young men who could never make their way into the army.

Daisy's Wedding with Tom:

She was even engaged to be married to a man from New Orleans but ended up marrying Tom Buchanan of Chicago in a grand wedding at Louisville. Tom gifted her a string of pearls that was valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars the day before their wedding. On the very day of her wedding, Jordan had found her with a bottle of alcohol in one hand and a letter from Gatsby in another. On that day after having read the letter, she had asked Jordan to tell everyone that she had just

changed her mind. She began to cry without stopping, without letting go of the letter which she had ultimately squeezed it into pulp in the cold bath-tub. Finally, she had to be given spirits of ammonia, ice cubes on her forehead and have her wedding dress and pearls hooked. And as though nothing of that emotionally charged incident had transpired that particular day, she was happily wedded with Tom "*without so much as a shiver*" followed by their three-month honeymoon trip to the South Seas. It had appeared as though, all the sorrow she had felt on receiving Gatsby's letter no longer mattered to her.

After their return from their honeymoon trip, she found Daisy too possessive about her husband and both of them lost in each other. But things seemed different when the newspapers published the sensational news of Tom's car accident while driving on the Ventura road with a girl who happened to be a chambermaid of the Santa Barbara Hotel. Daisy gave birth to her girl child "Pammy", following which they settled in Chicago. The couple was known to have moved around in the fast crowd of young, rich and wild people in Chicago. Yet, Daisy maintained a clean reputation as she did not drink among the "*hard-drinking*" circles.

The Core of the "matter":

Jordan then arrives at the heart of the matter when she reveals that it was six weeks before she had heard the almost forgotten name of Mr. Gatsby. When Jordan had questioned Nick if he knew Gatsby from West Egg in their first meeting at the Buchanans home, Daisy was somehow unable to recall or even remember either the name or the reference to her old lover. But it is also possible that she simply wanted to avoid embarrassment or express her pent up emotions in front of Tom. As Jordan and Nick leave the Plaza Hotel to drive towards Victoria through Central Park, she tells him that Gatsby had precisely brought his mansion so that Daisy would be right across the bay (from where shone the emerald beacon of light). And now Gatsby wanted to know if after learning all of "*this matter*", Nick would invite his cousin Daisy to visit his house on some afternoon.

This request made through Jordan surprises Nick. Perhaps, what may have seemed like an enormous task to Gatsby was only a little thing

on his part. He wonders at Gatsby's modesty, the man who after having waited five long years in the hope of finding his love and also buying a grand mansion with his riches- now stood hesitating to make such a small request to Nick. Jordan asks for his confirmation on this matter as Gatsby eagerly awaits his reply. Yet Nick is still caught in his surprise, wondering if there was any need at all for him to know all about Gatsby's story in such a lengthy manner, to be actually convinced on inviting Daisy over to his place. All of this could have been done directly but Gatsby was too polite and formal in his ways, who found it difficult to be forthright or straightforward in expressing his thoughts. Jordan tells him that Gatsby was in truth afraid of offending Nick yet he wonders why he did not ask Jordan to help him. Jordan explains that it was precisely because Gatsby for a long time had wanted Daisy to see his mansion and almost half-expected her to wander into one of his parties some night-although she never did. He had also begun asking people casually if they knew her until he found Jordan did. And this was why he had requested a private moment to talk to Jordan during the previous night's party. Although Jordan had also suggested that they could all meet at a lunch in New York yet, the only thing Gatsby said was: *"I want to see her right next door."*

Jordan tells him that Gatsby also had second thoughts when Jordan had told him that Nick was Tom's friend, he felt like abandoning the entire idea as he did not know much about Tom. He had only read Chicago papers for years just so that he may catch a glimpse of Daisy's name by chance. He had nothing to do with Tom. This makes Nick wonder : *"There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired."*

As Nick and Jordan drive along after spending time together, he draws her closer and kisses her.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What personal information does Jay Gatsby share with Nick during their car trip?

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Q 6: What does Jordan reveal about Gatsby's secret to Nick? What did Gatsby want from Nick regarding his "matter"?

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CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we find that Daisy has no idea about all of this excepting the fact that Nick sends her an invitation for tea at his house.

Nick Sends his Invitation:

Nick happens to come across Gatsby who walks towards his home. He tells Gatsby that he would invite Daisy the next day for tea just so that he is assured and yet again asks as to what time would be suitable to him. Gatsby in his embarassment wants to rather put it off for a few days later. In the middle of their conversation, he expresses his concern towards Nick asking him if he wanted to make some money as he had some "*sort of sideline*" business there to be able to engage him. But Nick politely refuses.

The next morning Nick invites Daisy for tea, specifically warning her not to bring Tom along. In the meanwhile, Gatsby instructs his helpers to mow the lawn and arrange Nick's home for the arrival of the expected guest. Nick drives to West Egg village to buy some cups, lemons and flowers. Gatsby arrives at his place dressed in a white flannel suit but with dark eyes that reflect signs of sleeplessness. It is a rainy day anxiously await Daisy's arrival with Gatsby turning restless by the minute and even getting up to go. But a large car arrives bringing Daisy along. Her voice came like "*a wild tonic in the rain*."

The Meeting at Nick's Place:

As she stands knocking on door, Gatsby becomes "*as pale as death*" and receives her into the living room. Nick waits aside hearing nothing for half a minute followed by a choking murmur and a bit of a laughter. Gatsby and Daisy finally meet after a long time. Gatsby finds it difficult to maintain his composure just as Daisy who seems frightened and there are a few moment of awkwardness until Nick steps into the living room. After all, they had not met for almost five years. In Nick's own description the situation

was such that "*[a]mid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain physical decency established itself*." They were both terribly embarrassed and Gatsby is almost found hesitant like a little boy.

Daisy at Gatsby's Mansion:

When the weather improves and the sun shines again, they visit Gatsby's enormous mansion. Gradually, the embarrassment begins and both of them look at each other, with Daisy's face covered in tears and Gatsby's face reflecting a certain glow. She expresses her gladness and unexpected joy to meet Gatsby again. He shows her around the huge mansion and Daisy is almost caught in ecstasy on seeing the grand interiors, the admirable gardens, canopy of trees and everything about the place. They wander into the music rooms, salons, the Library, luxurious bathrooms, dressing rooms, pool rooms and decorated bed chambers. They also meet Mr. Klipspringer who is the 'boarder' in his home and find Gatsby's rather simple apartment with a bedroom, bath and a study. To note Nick's observations: *"He [Gatsby] hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in the house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes too he stared around and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs."*

His apparent joy knows no bounds and he seems to be almost in a daze of wonder finding her so close to him. Gatsby shows them his cabinets of clothes, taking out the folded piles of his linen, silk and fine flannel shirts into heap. At this moment Daisy ends up crying as she is overwhelmed and over come by her emotions that she had buried in some corner of her heart for all those years that she had lost her Gatsby. When Gatsby lovingly consoles her all that she manages to say is that the shirts were so beautiful. Daisy is never seen to articulate her feelings easily, given her suppressed self under the shadow of her husband. As it still rains he reveals to her saying: *"If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay…You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock."* This rather becomes more symbolic owing to the fact that Daisy was a married woman with a family

and a home that suddenly became veiled under a curtain of rekindled love after her meeting Gatsby again just as the her home across the bay was covered in mist. The "*colossal significance*" of the green light seemed to have vanished into thin air now that she was with him.

Gatsby calls for the boarder Ewing Klipspringer, a young man with shell-rimmed glasses and blond hair who is requested to play the piano for them. He requests him for the musical piece "The Love Nest". The words of the song are :

"In the morning
In the evening,
Ain't we got fun…
One things's sure and nothing surer
The rich get richer and the poor get- children.
In the meantime/ In between time…"

Gatsby takes hold of Daisy's hands and whispers something low in her ear that stirs in her a rush of emotion. Nick realises that they are lost in each other and decides to leave them together, stepping out in the rain in his wonder.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Describe the precise moment when the old lovers Daisy and Gatsby meet again.

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Q 8: What does Gatsby reveal in his cabinets to Nick and Daisy in one of the striking moments of the novel? How does Daisy react to the same?

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Q 9: Name the boarder at Gatsby's home. What does Gatsby request him to do?

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CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, we discover the grandeur of Gatsby's party to which he invites Tom and Daisy for the first time. There were many stories of his various illegal involvements that circulated among the very people who accepted his hospitality in his parties.

Amidst Rumours:

Gatsby was supposed to have been a business partner of Dan Cody who was also once his best friend. Nick once again speculates from all the stories and rumours doing the rounds that perhaps Gatsby whose real name was 'James Gatz' was the son of poor, unsuccessful farm people who could never accept the reality of his condition. He simply invented a name at the age of seventeen calling himself Gatsby and set out to test his fate and make his share of fortune out in the world. Although he was said to have known women before, they were of no particular interest to him. He dreamt of a fantastic future and his "*reveries provided him an outlet of his imagination*." He was said to have despised working as a janitor or rather a sweeper, but things changed the day Dan Cody's yacht dropped anchor on the shores of Little Girl Bay.

Cody was a fifty year old man who belonged to the silver-fields of Nevada and was a millionaire. It came to be thought that he was the destiny for the ambitious young boy Gatsby who was taken aboard as Cody's steward, mate, skipper and secretary after he saved Cody's life in the rough waters. Their sailing lasted for three years and they sailed about three times around the continent. Cody had several underhand dealings and had passed away, leaving Gatsby inherited money- a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars. There was lot of wild rumours that made things seem unbelievable. But we find that amidst all the rumours Gatsby later reveals the essential truths about his past to Nick.

Tom at Gatsby's Place by Chance:

Nick visits Gatsby's home to surprisingly find Tom being brought in by his accompanying rider friends Mr. Sloane and a pretty lady. Tom vaguely remembers Gatsby from their brief meeting at the restaurant a few weeks before. During this meeting Gatsby tells him in a direct manner

that he knew Tom's wife and moreover, Tom is also surprised to learn that Nick happens to be Gatsby's neighbour. Although Gatsby requests them to stay for supper as some other people are expected to arrive yet, the lady in return invites him to dinner at her place although she does not mean it sincerely. And on the pretext that they are running late, they leave rather abruptly.

Gatsby's Party:

The following Saturday, Gatsby arranges another of his parties inviting both Tom and Daisy. Tom is rather uncomfortable at the party as he does not seem to know anyone around and besides he suffers a sense of insecurity regarding Daisy. Gatsby plays the hospitable host and even introduces the couple to other guests in the party. He even requests her for a dance and they both roam about Nick's place, sitting on the steps requesting Nick to keep watch in case Tom comes searching. Tom catches up with them at supper time, while Gatsby goes to attend his urgent phone calls. Following supper, Nick waits with the Buchanans for their car to arrive which is when Tom expresses his suspicion on Gatsby regarding his profession. Tom has the feeling that Gatsby is some kind of a big bootlegger, the kind of people who get newly rich from such underhand activities. In fact, he resolves to find out who Gatsby really is and what is the real nature of his profession.

Somehow at the end of the party when a sad piece of waltz "Three O' Clock in the Morning" is playing, Daisy feels helplessly drawn into the party yet again. While she has no choice but to leave with Tom, Nick stays back in keeping with Gatsby's request. When Gatsby returns to find Nick, he expresses his inner feeling that perhaps Daisy had been unable to enjoy the party even though Nick assures him otherwise. In his heart Gatsby expresses wanting nothing more than Daisy telling Tom that she had never loved him. He imagines Daisy, freed from her marriage and both of them going back to their Louisville days and getting married. He is lost in his thoughts as he walks past the heap of discarded fruit rinds- which in a sense is symbolic of Gatsby's hopeless dream. Yet, like a tragic hero, he expresses his desire to 'repeat the past' to his confidant

Nick who obliges as a patient listener.

Nick's Thoughts on the Romantic Gatsby:

"*…One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling, and they came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight. They stopped here and turned towards each other. No it was a cool night with the mysterious excitement in it which comes at two changes of the year.*"

As they walk together, Nick finds himself at a loss of words as much as the love-sick Gatsby who becomes lost in his sentimental thoughts.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10: What is Gatsby's only desire with regard to Daisy?

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CHAPTER 7

The following chapter is one of the most important chapters of the novel in which things take unexpected turns, almost deciding Gatsby's destiny.

Summer Afternoons and Two Lovers:

For sometime Gatsby is not seen around the place leaving Nick to wonder if he had fallen sick. But when Gatsby reaches out on the phone, Nick finds out that Gatsby is fine except that he happens to fire all the servants at home wanting at least someone who did not gossip about him. He tells him that Daisy spent several afternoons with him. They spend secret hours together at his place all by themselves. Nick gets to understand that "*the whole caravanserai had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval of her eyes*." And on her request he even calls up to ask Nick to accompany him for lunch at Daisy's place the next day.

Lunch at the Buchanan's Home:

It was a boiling summer day when Gatsby and Nick arrive at the

Buchanan's home. Daisy and Jordan happen to relax on a couch in their white dresses almost stuck in that reclined position like some form of idols. In the meanwhile, Tom returns after having attended his phone call (from Myrtle Wilson). At this moment, Daisy takes a chance to press a kiss on Gatsby's mouth saying: "*You know I love you*." Jordan makes her aware of being present there and at that precise moment a little girl, Daisy's daughter 'Pammy' walks towards her. At the sight of the little child, Gatsby looks at her with partly an expression of surprise and disbelief. Having cuddled her, Daisy sends her along with the nurse. When Tom accompanies Gatsby out in the open, he discloses that his mansion happened to be right across the bay in West Egg which comes as a striking piece of information to Tom. After a luncheon, Daisy in her worried confusion comes up with the plan of going to town together.

Tom is quick to sense Daisy's attraction towards Gatsby and is almost astonished to read both their faces that veiled something he had not suspected for so long. And when he realises this in his temper, he decides to go to town. Daisy pleads to have some fun together even in that heat simply in order to evade her conscience. She literally loses her composure as is evident in her sudden restlessness to escape to the town from the confines of her home and her mixed up emotions.

Drive to Town:

While the ladies arrive in their new dresses, Gatsby asks them if they would be driven in his car. Tom interrupts saying that he would rather drive Gatsby's yellow car and Gatsby Tom's coupe. A rather sarcastic Tom asks Daisy to follow him to Gatsby's "*circus wagon*" but Daisy refuses asking him to take Jordan instead. Thus, while driving the car, Tom expresses his anger by discussing Gatsby's falsities.

Brief Halt at Wilson's Garage:

They arrive at the valley-of-ashes where Tom reluctantly halts to refill the car. He makes conversation with Wilson who seems desperately in need of money and would even buy the yellow car if it was sold to him. Wilson is in urgent need of money so that he is able to leave for the west with his wife Myrtle who apparently had wanted the same for the last ten

years but was suddenly in two minds when he finalised his decision to take her there. The truth is that Wilson has no idea that Tom was the main reason for her indecision. The only thing that he knows is that Myrtle had "*some sort of life apart from him in another world*" which is why Wilson seemed unwell and guilty.

The billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's eyes appears to almost stare down at them as though they warning them of unexpected things to come.

In the meanwhile, Myrtle is seen peering through the windows of her home above the garage. Nick catches sight of her looking at the waiting car with utmost jealousy, perhaps mistaking Jordan to be his wife. In Nick's observation, *"Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic. His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate, were slipping precipitately from his control."* This time he steps on the car accelerator in a bid to overtake Gatsby. In one instant Daisy even shouts from the opposite car suggesting Gatsby's car to go watch movies but Tom decides that Gatsby's car follow his car to the Central Park in front of the Plaza.

At the Parlour of a Suite in Plaza Hotel:

They arrive at the Plaza hotel and gather at the parlour of a suite in the hotel. Daisy's mindless and "*crazy*" ideas do not seem to end just as she suggests hiring five bathrooms to take cold baths. But when Tom scolds her, Gatsby speaks up on his behalf reminding him that he was the one to decide coming to town. When Daisy finds that Tom takes offense and things could simply go out of hand, she breaks in saying that she would not stay for even a minute if they make any form of personal remarks on each other. And thus strains of jazz music plays on in the parlour as they all switch their conversation.

Yet Tom does not give up too easily and rather sarcastically questions Gatsby on his being an "*Oxford man*" (as it seemed unlikely and impossible to him). But when he insists on knowing more, Gatsby silences him for good saying he had been at Oxford in 1919 for a span of five months, the reason why he felt awkward to really call himself an Oxford guy. This was an opportunity that was granted to some of the officers after the armistice

by way of which they could opt to go to any of the universities in England or France. This frank piece of information almost silences Tom's sarcasm and makes Nick feel proud too as he thinks to himself : *"I wanted to get up and slap him o n the back. I had one of those renewals of complete faith in him that I'd experienced before."*

All for Lady Love:

However, Tom does not stop there expressing his want to drop one last question on his reason of causing a row in his home. The moment Daisy tries to defend Gatsby, Tom bursts out in anger at this 'nobody' from 'nowhere' referring to Gatsby coming and interfering in his family life. Gatsby somewhat maintains his composure but also comes out with his thoughts saying, *"Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me…. She never loved you, do you hear? She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved anyone except me."*

Tom is suddenly caught in a state of disbelief wanting to hear the same from Daisy. But, he too challenges Gatsby on this matter, as they were both married and much in love. Tom says, "*And what's more, I love Daisy too. Once in a while I go off on a spree and make a fool of myself , but I always come back, and in my heart I love her all the time*." The term 'spree' here implies his affairs and hearing it being mentioned by her husband, Daisy finds him revolting. At Gatsby's insistence, she hesitatingly denies of having loved Tom but is suddenly caught in a spate of emotions and cries out to Gatsby for pushing everything too far. She says, *"Oh you [Gatsby] want too much! I love you now- isn't that enough? I cant help what's past. I did love him once. But I loved you too."* The words "*loved you too*" strikes Gatsby who finds it difficult to believe that she probably feels nothing for him now. She also adds that she could never say that she had never loved her husband as that would be untrue even if it did not seem to matter to Tom.

When Daisy expresses her mind to leave Tom for good it makes him so angry that he calls Gatsby "*a common swindler*." comes out with all the snippets of information that he had gathered so far. He refers to the

kind of "*side-street drugstores*" that Gatsby and Wolfshiem had brought together in New York and Chicago together with their shady underhand dealings of grain alcohol selling. He even refers to knowing one of Gatsby's earlier friends, Walter Chase who had much to reveal about Gatsby's involvements. Gatsby does not react and simply bears Tom's insulting words.

The Evening at Plaza Hotel Ends:

To add more injury to the insult, Tom again adds to it saying that the drugstore business was just *"small change"* and now Gatsby had something more up his sleeve about which Walter Chase was afraid to disclose (to Tom). Gatsby suffers all of this in silence, as though he had just *"killed a man"* and only looks towards Daisy who stands terrified between her husband and her old lover. Gatsby knows that it is of no good trying to pursue her against believing all those accusations flung at him. This leaves him with only the fragment of his *"dead dream"* because something strikes Daisy who withdraws *"further and further into herself."*

Tom in his moment of triumph over Gatsby insists that Daisy is escorted home in Mr. Gatsby's car with the confidence that by then his rival Gatsby must have realised that his *"flirtation"* was over.

At this moment Nick suddenly realises that he had almost forgotten his own birthday on that day with him stepping into thirty years of age. And he thinks to himself *"[b]efore me stretched the portentous, menacing road of a new decade."* Further, he observes, *"Human sympathies has its limits, and we were content to let all their tragic arguments fade with the city lights behind. Thirty- the promise of a decade of loneliness…"* And by seven in the evening both Jordan and Nick get into Tom's coupe to return home.

George Wilson at his Garage:

George Wilson looks pale and unwell, seated in his office at his garage. His neighbour a Greek young man by the name of Mavromichaelis, visits him and advises him to take rest. But there is a terrible racket upstairs which explains that he had locked Myrtle in her room. Wilson is seen determined to finally taken her away with him after two days. Mavromichaelis takes his leave from Wilson with the intention of coming back later.

When he does return around seven in the evening, he overhears Myrtle yelling loudly and scolding Wilson in the garage below. And suddenly a moment later finds her rushing out in the dark, shouting and waving her hands to run into a car accident. The newspaper headlines read “death car” and creates sensational news only for a short while. In his statement to the police Mavromichaelis expresses his confusion on the colour of the car. As the accident occurs in an instant, he is not really able to assert the colour of the car that had come from New York.

During the accident the car headed towards New York halts and the driver finds Myrtle’s lifeless body. The driver of that car and Mavromichaelis happen to rush together towards her to find her fatally injured and almost ripped apart. It was at this moment that Tom in his rather high spirits arrives at the accident-spot not knowing that his own mistress had died of an accident. Tom, Nick and Jordan step out of the coupe to find out what had happened. And Tom literally pushes his way through the crowd in the garage to find Myrtle’s dead body wrapped and laid there. Beside her body is her grieving husband Wilson being consoled by others. There is nothing Wilson could see or hear at that painful moment of having lost his wife. While the police writes down the Mavromichaelis statement, Tom interrupts them in order to know what had just happened. The police narrates the accident on how Myrtle was instantly killed in a car accident when she had run out towards a car coming from New York which was driven at a speed of forty miles an hour. In fact, a black man reveals that the big car was yellow in colour driven around fifty to sixty miles an hour. This is when it strikes Tom that it was none other than Gatsby’s car and Gatsby himself who was responsible for the accident.

Tom and his Priggish Nature:

The next thing that Tom does is that he gets hold of Wilson and tries to convince him that the yellow car that he had been driving that afternoon was not his car. He drills it into his head that he had in fact not seen the yellow car for most of the day and that he had just reached there a few minutes from New York in his own blue car. Moreover, he even makes it a point to assert that as per the earlier deal they had had

in person and over phone, he had brought his own blue coupe in order to sell it to Wilson. When the policeman questions or rather enquires regarding what Tom had told Wilson, Tom makes up a lie saying Wilson knew that the owner of the yellow car was responsible for Myrtle's death. He makes it known to the police that he had been driving the blue coupe straight from New York to avoid any form of charges. And after he gives all the clear indications to the police that he is not responsible nor had anything to do with the accident, moves out of that place.

The Return Home that Evening:

After these turn of events, Tom drives rather slowly suppressing his loss and grief. Nick hears a low husky sob and finds that tears over flow on his face. As Tom arrives at the driveway at home he finds that Daisy is already at home. He apologises for being unable to drop both Jordan and Nick at their homes, asking them to get some supper at his place while he telephones for a taxi-cab service to take them.

Although, Jordan invites Nick inside to stay back for a while, Nick feels too sick to oblige and desires to be left alone. His expression of disinterest hurts Jordan's ego as we find out later. As Nick walks a few yards away from the Buchanans, he hears Gatsby calling his name from behind some bushes in the path. And taken by surprise, Nick enquires why was he had been hiding there and if he knew anything about the car accident at which Gatsby reveals about the same with his seeming concern for Daisy alone. For a moment Nick suddenly feels a sharp anger towards Gatsby about the brutality of the accident. But he also finds out that it is rather 'Daisy' and not Gatsby who is responsible for the accident. Gatsby possibly had decided to take the blame on himself.

Daisy's Driving:

Daisy was very nervous that evening and had felt that it would steady her composure if she drove his car. But what had happened was almost instantaneous and too unexpected as Gatsby narrates: *"It all happened in a minute, but it seemed to me that she wanted to speak to us, thought we were somebody she knew. Well, first Daisy turned away from the woman towards the other car, and then she lost her nerve and turned back. The*

second my hand reached the wheel I felt the shock-it must have killed her instantly." Although Gatsby tried to put on the emergency brake, the woman had already been ripped apart. The only thing that Gatsby did not know was that the woman was Myrtle Wilson, Tom's mistress.

Gatsby's Vigilant Watch at Night:

Gatsby decides to keep a secret watch on the Buchanan's home as Daisy locks herself in her room and has the possibility of calling up Gatsby for help in case things turned from bad to worse with Tom. And there was the possibility of Tom finding out that Daisy was the one driving which would in fact even make him draw some sort of connection (his wife killing his mistress). But that night there seems to be no trouble as Nick finds out that Daisy and Tom turn sober, seated opposite the other at the kitchen table. Through the kitchen window Nick happens to find Tom sincerely convincing her of something and her perfectly nodding her head in agreement. At that moment it appears as though they share the perfect sense of *"natur*al *intimacy*" as a couple. Nick assures Gatsby that everything seems fine yet Gatsby decides to wait and keep vigil until Daisy falls asleep. So Nick walks away leaving Gatsby to his thoughts and patient waiting.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: What was the sensational newspaper headline in relation to the car accident?

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Q 12: Why does Gatsby decide to keep a vigilant watch over Daisy?

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CHAPTER 8

The following chapter reveals the sad order of things and how Gatsby's tragic fate is sealed once and for all.

Nick's Timely Warning:

Nick struggles to sleep at night, feeling sick and worried. He

suddenly feels caught regarding his concern for Gatsby because he perceives the danger in the events of the night before and has something to warn him about. He finds out that Gatsby had kept a vigil at Daisy's place till four in the morning. Nick reaches Gatsby's mansion to find Gatsby at ease that morning. He immediately warns him that it appears almost certain that his car would be traced by the police and charges would be pressed against him even though he was innocent. But Gatsby does not seem to consider the matter because he could not possibly leave Daisy without knowing her decision to be with him. This is because he still holds a last fragment of hope in his heart that she would leave everything to go along with him and start a new life together.

Gatsby's Reminiscence:

That night Gatsby discusses their past on how Daisy was a "*nice*" girl in her younger days, the nicest he had ever known. He had been to her house with his fellow officers and had found her "*excitingly desirable*." Moreover it also excited him that many men had also loved Daisy. But at that time he was a "*penniless young man without a past*" with the uncertainty of how long he would be allowed to serve in the war. He had won her but under false pretences in order to give her a sense of security and not lose her to someone else. She belonged to a rich family who was given to her luxury and riches causing her to disappear "*into her rich house, full life, leaving Gatsby-nothing*." Yet he felt a deep sense of commitment towards her right from that moment. In order to be worthy of her, he wanted to be an accomplished man and before he left abroad, they had met one last time. Gatsby had done "*extraordinarily*" in the war as a captain and following the Argonne battles he was promoted as a major to look after the divisional machine guns.

After the armstice, he tried to go home but owing to some complication or misunderstanding went to Oxford instead. At that point of time, he had often found a sense of "*nervous despair*" in Daisy's letters. She wanted to be reassured of his presence and wanted him to come back to her. But gradually she began to drift in her ways and began keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men just to keep her

mind preoccupied. This was until he received her letter at Oxford stating that she was to marry Tom Buchanan.

And now he regrets the fact that just when he finds a second chance to be reunited with her, Tom fills her ears with all that insulting thoughts about him. He had returned from France when Daisy and Tom were on their wedding trip and visited their old Louisville. Yet he felt that if he searched hard enough there was no way that he would not find her again. It was already dawn by the time he finished the last bits of his love story and the lengths he had to go just to find his old love Daisy.

The Last Good-Bye:

It was nine in the morning when Gatsby suggests his only servant to clean the fallen autumn leaves from the swimming pool. He did not use the pool even once that summer and feels like taking a swim. At this point Nick feels a strong sense of attachment with Gatsby not wanting to leave him alone. But he has to leave for work and for some reason Nick feels that he could leave him with a kind word which he had never done before. And so he shouts across the lawn saying : *"They're a rotten crowd. You're worth the whole damn bunch put together."* And thinks to himself thus, "*I first came to his ancestral home, three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded with the faces of those who guessed at his corruption – and he had stood on those steps, concealing his incorruptible dream, as he waved them goodbye*."

The Unfortunate Turn of Circumstances:

While Nick is caught up in his work the following day, Jordan calls him to find out if he would accompany her to Southampton that afternoon. But when he suggests meeting in town instead, she takes offence yet again. Nick 'narrates' about the strange turn of events after that deadly accident which was the night when Wilson had decided to avenge himself for his wife's death. Wilson had turned adamant on finding out who owned that yellow car as he suspected that the accident was done intentionally. Although his friend Michaelis tried to convince him that it was only an accident, yet he was determined to have his way. That morning Wilson was gone and was supposed to have walked towards Gad's Hill, almost like a man who

had gone crazy. At around half-past two he reached West egg and asked someone the way to Gatsby's house. Precisely at this time Gatsby was ready to relax in his swimming pool. Nick describes how Gatsby must have had no idea about his approaching death as he says, "*I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream*."

Gatsby's Chauffeur was one of the first to hear the gun shots. The gardener later discovered Wilson's body outside in the lawn. Nick had driven his way straight to Gatsby's house from the station in his anxiety to find that Gatsby was shot. It had happened and it was just another closed chapter of the past.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: How did Gatsby win Daisy's love in his youth? Mention the reason for the same.

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Q 14: Who murders Gatsby and why?

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CHAPTER 9

We finally arrive at the last chapter of the novel that reveal Nick's solidarity towards Gatsby and how he remembers the time he had spent with his endearing and admirable friend Gatsby.

Nick Recalls the Tragic Day:

Two years after Nick recalls that tragic day when police and photographers circled Gatsby's home. There was much investigation on this matter and Myrtle's sister Catherine testified to the fact that her sister Myrtle never had anything to do with Gatsby and that she was happy in her own marriage. Thus, it was concluded that Wilson had mistakenly murdered Gatsby "*deranged by his grief*." Nick felt miserable at the tragic circumstances as he had known Gatsby intimately enough to stand in his

support for him. In fact, he held himself responsible for all that happened because he was the only sincere one to have been intensely interested in his life and personality.

He had tried calling up Daisy on that sad day but both Tom and she had left East Egg that afternoon with their baggage without leaving any address. Sadly, there was hardly anyone whom Nick had known or could trace to inform of Gatsby's funeral. He even tried to reach out to Wolfshiem in New York but was left disappointed at his indifference. Wolfshiem's written response came thus:

"Dear Mr. Carraway. This has been one of the most terrible shocks of my life to me I hardly can believe it that it is true at all. Such a mad act as that man did should make us all think. I cannot come down now as I am tied up in some very important business and cannot get mixed up in this thing now. If there is anything I can do a little later let me know in a letter by Edgar. I hardly know where I am when I hear about a thing like this and am completely knocked down and out.

Yours Truly

Meyer Wolfshiem

Let me know about the funeral etc. do not know his family at all.

Towards Gatsby's Funeral:

We find that, Nick sincerely wishes to gather at least a few people associated or related to him in some way or the other for Gatsby's funeral. Fortunately a telegram arrives-signed 'Henry C. Gatz' by Gatsby's father from a town in Minnesota with a request to postpone the funeral until he had arrived. He was an old man who looked sad and weak after having read about his son's death in the Chicago papers. We find him recalling and sharing his son's childhood years with Gatsby. Henry feels that had his son lived he would have literally helped rebuild the country. Similarly, when Nick 'personally approaches' Wolfshiem to attend Gatsby's funeral, Wolfshiem recalls how he had almost made him the man he was. Wolfshiem had first met him when he was a young major out of the army, decorated with medals and later when he had approached Wolfshiem for a job out of hunger and desperation. That was when he had him

involved in his business. Wolfshiem makes Nick understand that they were "*always together* " in everything they did and that they were inseparable friends. Yet the time had come when he had to step back for his own safety as he says: "*When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in anyway. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different –if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to the end. You may think that's sentimental, but I mean it to the bitter end."* And further adds to it saying: *"Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead."*

This shows how other acquaintances or even friends not even a handful from the grand parties bother to attend Gatsby's funeral. It proves the truth that true friends are indeed hard to find. Even the boarder Klipspringer happens to call Gatsby's home just to find out about his tennis shoes that he had left there, simply unbothered about the funeral.

Gatsby's Funeral:

When the Lutheran Minister arrives for the funeral, the funeral procession begins with the motor hearse being driven to the cemetery. He remembers that Daisy did not even send a message or a flower in memory of Gatsby- the man who had loved her till the end. The funeral saw a rainy day which made someone utter "*Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on*." Surprisingly, the old owl-eyed man whom Nick and Jordan had met in Gatsby's library during one of his party was present at the funeral. The old man pitied the fact that none from those hundreds that went to Gatsby's parties bothered about his funeral. And Gatsby was finally laid to rest.

Nick's Reflections on Leaving West Egg:

Nick reflects on his memories in West Egg and the past left behind, of the days when the place had a significance owing to Gatsby's presence. He thinks to himself*: "After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction. So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line, I decided to come back home."*

But before leaving he wishes to meet Jordan to see if he could

make amends but Jordan is already engaged to be married with another man. And so they part ways. Later on Nick happens to meet Tom Buchanan by chance one afternoon and almost expresses his suppressed anger at him. Nick is so forthright that he questions him directly on what he had said that night to Wilson that had led him to murder Gatsby. But Tom defends himself saying he had only given Wilson – Gatsby's address on that day when Wilson had come looking for him. Tom was afraid of that gun-totting madman image that he saw in Wilson who would have even killed him had he not told him the truth. Yet Tom out of his pride maintains that even if he would have instigated Wilson to kill Gatsby, it would have still served him right. After all Tom had suffered the loss of Myrtle in that fatal accident. Nick is left without words after all everything was over and nothing could change the past.

For one last time Nick looks at Gatsby's enormous empty house still finding it all that had happened that summer difficult to believe. Everything stood so vividly in his memory that he could still feel the stirring music and laughter of those grand evening parties. As he packs up to leave the place, he looks at Gatsby's house "*that huge incoherent failure of a house*" one last time in the moonlight. He wipes out an obscene word written on the steps and looks all around him. It was the island that was once looked upon with awe and wonder by the Dutch sailors, with its beauty and mystery that could never be understood. And thus, the novel ends with the following description in Nick's reflected thoughts:

"And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. 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. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter-tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther…And one fine morning…"

And ends with the famous lines: *"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 15: Name the few who were present at Gatsby's funeral.

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Q 16: Write down some of the final thoughts that Nick had at the end of the novel.

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11.4 LET US SUM UP

After a detailed study of the unit, the learner will be able to explain the text of the novel in its details. It will enable the learner to gain a deeper insight into the interesting story of the charming Gatsby and unravel some of the significant concerns that surround his world as well as the complexity of some of the characters and the tragic turn of events that take place in the novel.



11.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold (2007) *Viva Bloom's Notes: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. New York: Viva Books

2) Bloom, Harold. (2007) *Viva Modern Critical Interpretations: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby.* New York: Viva Books

3) Fitzgerald, F.Scott. (2013) *The Great Gatsby.* London: Alma Classics

11.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Nick relocates to West Egg with his house almost at the tip of the egg-shaped land beside a colossal new 'Mansion' which looks similar to a grand hotel with a tower on one side. So this happens to be the Mansion of a certain gentleman by the name of Gatsby.

Ans to Q No 2: After his return from the Buchanan's place, Nick notices that his neighbour in a strange manner stretches out his arm towards the dark waters of the bay almost trembling and looking straight towards a green beacon of light from the other end.

Ans to Q No 3: Nick takes notice of guests who entered through the blue gardens, some guests who were aboard his neighbour's raft, while others lazing in the sand of the beaches with motorboats slitting and surfing through the foamy waters of Long Island sound. On weekends the Rolls Royce, made several trips bearing several batches of people from the city to the grand parties. Mondays were cleaning days when a total of eight servants and a gardener cleaned up all the mess and 'ravages' of the previous nights. Every Friday there was an arrival of fruit supply- five crates of oranges and lemons which by Monday morning transformed into a pyramid of left-overs.

Ans to Q No 4: The short section in which Nick narrates about his personal concerns, he discusses about his business-schedules, his brief affair with a girl from Jersey, how he spends his day, his dinners at Yale Club, reading in the library there and taking a stroll on the city streets at night. As a young bachelor, he begins to enjoy his life in New York and particularly the feel of its vibrant night life. But in the "enchanted metropolitan life" he also feels a sense of "haunting loneliness".

Ans to Q No 5: During this car trip he briefly discloses about his origins, his family, his education and his younger days when something

very sad had happened to him. He also talks about his service in the war when he was decorated as a Major- Major Jay Gatsby "For Valour Extraordinary" as testified by a piece of decorated medal that he always held in his pocket. He had another souvenir which was a photograph of his younger self at the Trinity Quad during in his Oxford days. These personal possessions convince Nick that Gatsby had been telling the truth for all that while.

Ans to Q No 6: Jordan reveals to Nick that Gatsby had precisely brought his mansion so that Daisy would be right across the bay (from where shone the emerald beacon of light). And now Gatsby wanted to know if after learning all of "this matter", Nick would invite his cousin Daisy to visit his house on some afternoon.

Ans to Q No 7: At the precise moment of their reunion one finds that Daisy stands knocking on Nick's door at which Gatsby turns "as pale as death" and despite that approaches the door to receive her into the living room. This moment of reunion is significant part of the novel. Nick waits aside and hears nothing for half a minute which is followed by a choking murmur and a bit of a laugh. Gatsby and Daisy finally meet again. They are both terribly embarrassed and Gatsby is almost caught hesitant like a little boy.

Ans to Q No 8: Gatsby shows them his cabinets of clothes, taking out the piles of his linen, silk and fine flannel shirts. And Daisy in her excitement cries in her emotional thoughts that she had bottled up for a long time in her heart and yet she is unable to articulate her feelings simply uttering the words that the shirts were so beautiful.

Ans to Q No 9: The name of the boarder at Gatsby's home is Ewing Klipspringer, a young man with shell-rimmed glasses and blonde hair who is requested to play the piano for them.

Ans to Q No 10: He desired Daisy to be freed from her marriage and both of them to return to their Louisville days and settling down to a married life.

Ans to Q No 11: The newspaper headlines reads "death car" which creates sensational news in relation to the fatal car accident.

Ans to Q No 12: Gatsby decides to keep a secret watch on the Buchanan's home as Daisy locks herself in her room and has the possibility of calling Gatsby for help in case things turns from bad to worse with Tom.

Ans to Q No 13: In his youth Gatsby had won her love but under false pretences in order to give her a sense of security and not lose her to someone else who was rich and could promise her a better life.

Ans to Q No 14: Wilson murders Gatsby mistaking him as the one who caused the car accident the killed his wife Myrtle.

Ans to Q No 15: The few who were present at Gatsby's funeral are Gatsby's father Henry, Nick Carraway and the old gentleman referred to as owl-eyes.

Ans to Q No 16: Nick looked at Gatsby's enormous empty house and still found it difficult to believe all that had happened. Everything stood so vividly in his memory that he could still feel the stirring music and laughter of those grand evening parties. As he packed up to leave the place, he visited Gatsby's house *"that huge incoherent failure of a house"* one last time in the moonlight. He wiped out an obscene word written on the steps and looked around him. It was the island that was once looked upon with awe and wonder by the Dutch sailors, the beauty and mystery of which could never be understood.



11.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give a summary of the text of the novel *The Great Gatsby*.

Q 2: Describe the rekindling -romance between Jay Gatsby and Daisy Miller in *The Great Gatsby.*

Q 3: Describe the role of the narrator Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby.*

Q 4: Describe the tragic fate of Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*.

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UNIT 12 : F. SCOTT FITZGERALD: *THE GREAT GATSBY* -III

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Major Characters

12.4 Major Themes

12.5 Style and Techniques

12.6 Critical Reception

12.7 Let us Sum up

12.8 Further Reading

12.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.10 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- gain a detailed idea on the thematic content of the novel
- examine the major characters of the novel
- analyse the style and language employed by the author
- gain an insight into the critical reception
- develop a sense of interest in reading other interesting novels by F. Scott Fitzgerald

12.2 INTRODUCTION

The present unit shall take up the major aspects of the novel *The Great Gatsby* with regard to the emergent themes, style and techniques as well as the critical reception of the text. Also, the unit takes up a discussion on the characterisation in the novel. It will enable the learner to gain a holistic idea of the entire text and appreciate the remarkable mastery of the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald for his classic masterpiece that characterises modern American Literature.

12.3 MAJOR THEMES

Some of the emergent themes in the novel are as discussed below:

Romance, Idealism and the Great American Dream:

Harold Bloom reinstates the relevance of the novel *The Great Gatsby* considering the great American dream as "a concept or vision that haunts" American society. But again he opines that many critics are divided on their interpretations of the novel as reflecting the shattered myth of the American dream and as "a celebration of Romantic hope in America." Nevertheless, let us examine both these critical aspects. The unwavering romantic dream of Gatsby and his determined quest for his long-lost love gives the novel its romantic charm which Nick describes as "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness" that is found to be a rare quality in people. While we find in Gatsby the American character blinded by romantic idealism, Daisy stands as the elusive personification of the Great American dream.

According to Harold Bloom, West Egg where Gatsby resides "is the locale of the American dream in miniature." In fact, through Nick's reflection on the history of the island at the end of the novel, we learn that the Dutch sailors had once set their foot on the land which must have been an enchanting experience for them to discover *"a fresh, green breast of new world"* almost like a romantic dream. And it was here that Gatsby had brought the enormous mansion on Long Island for the sole reason that right at the opposite end, across of the separating bay stood his lover's home. The green beacon of light that shines from the opposite dock had a somewhat supernatural quality about it that eludes him and makes him long for his lady love all the more.

Gatsby is the idealistic kind of person who would trade everything for love although he would never barter his love for anything in the world. The novel is not only a tragic tale of Gatsby's unrequited love but also of his disillusionment with his romantic dream. Through the unraveling story, one finds Gatsby's consistent hope and perfect commitment to his 'romantic dream' of winning his old love Daisy till the end. In fact, he clings to the last remnants of his shattered dream-till his tragic death. In

many ways his love is unconditional particularly at the moment of crisis when he decides to take the blame of Daisy's car accident on himself in order to protect her identity. But on his death under the tragic circumstances, Daisy fails to even send a message or a flower for Gatsby's funeral let alone attend it for the sake of the man who died loving her.

David Parker in the article "The Great Gatsby: Two versions of the Hero" encapsulates the busted myth of the Great American Dream in the following words: "Together with many other works of fiction, *The Great Gatsby* is often interpreted as a parable of disenchantment with the 'American Dream'. Such it may be, but the experience of strong idealism, boundless optimism, and a sense of destiny, all terminated by the failure of actuality to measure up to hope, is not an experience peculiar to the citizens of the USA." And just as the American society was blinded by its pursuits of material success or in other words the great American dream, Gatsby loses out on his pursuit for his lady love to whom wealth and luxury was all that mattered. Thus, the dreams of the sincere Gatsby are left shattered just as Americans had suffered disillusionment in their pursuit of the great American dream.

Material Affluence and Social Standing:

Harold Bloom notes Brian Way's excerpt from an article titled "Scott Fitzgerald" published in *New Left Review* which analyses the theme of social status in the American society of the 1920s thus: "[t]he core of Gatsby's tragedy is not only that he lived by dreams, but that the woman and the class and the way of life of the rich which the novel so ruthlessly exposes – fell so far short of the scope of his imagination."

The novel clearly projects the nature of rich nobilities and the *noveau riche* who are given to the life of luxury and material comforts. In the novel, East Egg which was considered more fashionable is home to the rich Buchanans who's *"cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial Mansion"* stood on one extended oval edge of the courtesy bay. Across the opposite end of the bay at West Egg stood the towering colossal mansion of Mr. Gatsby who belonged to the *nouveau riche* and brought the mansion with his newly amassed fortunes. Gatsby is the host to the grand parties that brings together

the nobilities and celebrities of both East and West Egg together.

Nick significantly observes that *"Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor."* While on the one hand we find the presence of those with a noble aristocratic lineage like Daisy and Tom Buchanan, we also find another section that struggle for self sustenance like George B. Wilson in the desolate valley-of-ashes. Immediately, it draws to our mind the lush greens of East and West Egg on the one hand and the desolate stretch of wasteland in the valley-of-ashes.

Interestingly, there is also the instance when Nick on a car-trip with Gatsby notices a passing limousine carrying three 'black' men, two bucks and a girl being driven by a 'white' chauffeur. Anything seemed possible in the modern social scenario of the roaring twenties that also embodied the socio-cultural context in the author Scott Fitzgerald's own time. Through this novel, we gain an insight into a range of negative human characteristics such as gossiping, jealousy, dishonesty, criminality, deceit, conceit, recklessness, impulsiveness, irrationality, ingratitude and insensitivity. In fact by the end of the novel, the hollowness of the American elite society dawns on Nick when he reflects on the way things shape up. In his own words, he says, *"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made."*

The grand social parties also become a common ground for the rich to engage in making connections, indulging in casual flirtation, committing infidelities and engaging in promiscuous behaviour. Tom's adultery with Myrtle becomes an 'open secret' just as Daisy becomes partially involved with Gatsby yet again. Myrtle Wilson also deceives her husband with an adulterous relationship with Tom Buchanan who brings her the riches that her husband cannot afford. Thus, the novel is replete with scenes of wild parties, deviant natures, extra-marital affairs, criminal offenses, sensational news together with the careless celebrations of youth. We almost

find the elite classes living life on the edge with fear, shame, falsities and hypocrisies. But material affluence and social standing mattered in these circles which is also one of the reasons that Gatsby early on in his life decides to win his love by making something of himself to provide Daisy the kind of life she desired. It was indeed all for the sake of love.

Also, we find the fixated media persons and photographers churning out a constant supply of sensational news thereby adding to popular gossip. To cite a few examples we may look at the instance of Jordan's winning victory through her unfair means of tournament fixing, Mr. Wolfshiem's money swindling in the 1919 World Series, Gatsby's supposed car accident that caught the sensational headlines– "Death Car" or even the news of Tom's accident while driving with a mysterious lady. By the end of the novel we are left convinced that there are no enduring friendships in these circles and also the fact that money cannot buy or guarantee happiness.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How can we personify both Gatsby and Daisy as symbolical figures in the novel?

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Q 2: Mention a few sensational news that find the media persons and photographers fixated in the novel.

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12.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Some of the major characters in the novel are Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, Daisy Miller, Tom Buchanan and Jordan Baker who play the central characters in the novel. The minor characters of the novel are Meyer Wolfshiem (Gatsby's mentor and friend), Dan Cody (the supposed business partner of Gatsby), Mr. Sloane and the pretty lady (Tom's friends), Pammy (Tom and Daisy's girl-child), Myrtle Wilson (Tom Buchanan's mistress), George B. Wilson (Myrtle's husband), Catherine (Myrtle's sister),

Mavromichaelis (Wilson's friend), the McKees and Mrs Eberhardt (Tom and Myrtle's common friends), Mr. Klipspringer (the boarder at Gatsby's home), Owl Eyes (an old man as an invited guest at Gatsby's party) and Henry Gatz (Gatsby's father). You will gain a brief idea on these minor characters through the course of your reading of the textual content and summary. Let us now examine the major characters in a detailed manner:

Nick Carraway:

The drifting thoughts of the narrator of the novel is captured by the character of Nick Carraway who begins his story with the famous introductory line:*"In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice…"* and even ends with the oft-quoted lines *"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."* Nick hailed from a prominent family in Minnesota and the 'Carraways' were supposed to descend from the Dukes of Buccleuch. His father carried on his grand father's wholesale hardware business which his great uncle (his grand father's brother) had started. The narrator is supposed to have resembled him and even had gone ahead to take up the bond business. After his graduation from New Haven in 1915, his father decides to finance him while he begins his business for the first year.

Thus, Nick finds himself travelling from the Middle West to the East countryside in the spring of 1922, living in a rented old bungalow. This was a time when he feels like *"life was beginning over again with the summer."* During his leisure hours, he brushes up his knowledge by reading volumes on banking, credit and investment securities, useful for his new business though he confesses on possessing a more literary taste. At first although he notices the grand mansion in his neighbourhood, he learns more from others of the fact that he happens to live right next door to the great Gatsby. And with the passing of time, he unravels various facets of this admirable persona of the gentleman who leaves a life-long impression in his mind.

By nature he is an observant and discreet young man who never forgets the lessons his father had taught him. And in fact even with regard to falling in love with Jordan, he takes his time before taking it to

the next level of a love relationship. In one instance, when Jordan expresses her liking for him, he thinks to himself thus: *"Her grey, sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires….Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known."* Nick is not only honest as a person but also a very sincere and rational person who takes nothing at face value and rather believes in figuring out everything on his own. At heart he is also forgiving as we find in his new relation with Jordan by overlooking all her flaws and the truths he finds out about her. In a similar manner, although he is initially skeptical about Gatsby with all the things Nick hears about him, he later finds out the truth of this mysterious yet admirable gentleman Jay Gatsby. Nick is one of the few persons to gain the special privilege of being Gatsby's confidante and to know the various aspects of personality together with the story of his life.

Significantly, we find that Nick gets so involved in Gatsby's story that he almost loses interest in everything else that he does. And in fact, towards the end of the novel, we receive an insight into the nature of Nick's bonding with Gatsby and the solidarity that Nick feels in his heart towards him saying *"..I [Nick] began to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me [him] against them all."* Moreover, we find that Gatsby's death could have been averted if he had only heeded to Nick's advice to leave West Egg because Nick is the only one to have an insight into the entire scheme of things. In fact, Nick even forewarns Gatsby in a bid to convince him on the possibility of trouble with the on going investigations with regard to of the car accident. Till the end, we find that, Nick is that the sole person who stands up for Gatsby until his funeral day, trying to gather the closest relative or Gatsby's acquaintance so that they may not miss the chance of attending Gatsby's funeral. The development of his friendship with Gatsby and his own discreet persona is admirable and significant in the development of novel. He is an interesting narrator whose presence is felt throughout the shifting narrative.

Jay Gatsby:

Gatsby stands as the mysterious personality about whom nothing is known for certain. Gatsby is an idealist in his thoughts, a quester of his dreams, a romantic at heart and a perfect gentleman by nature. As a person he is polite yet discreet, reserved yet pleasant, withdrawn yet generous. He is someone who listens to his heart instead of his head, to his feelings instead of his thoughts and who lives and even dies with his one dream of finding his true love.

In the novel, we find that a lot of speculation, gossip and rumours on Gatsby was common especially the kind that took place during the parties that he hosted. Rumours were afloat that Gatsby was always careful to avoid trouble, he was bootlegger, his wealthy relative left him all the flowing riches, or that he had once killed a man, etc. He was a man of few words and as Nick rightly observes even after having talked to him several times, he finds that Gatsby has little to say, leaving his *"elegant sentences unfinished."* In fact Gatsby was quite aware of the *"bizarre accusations that flavoured conversation in his halls"* and yet the gentlemen never held back any hospitality or kindness towards the same gossiping guests. The only person he opens his heart to is to the initially skeptical Nick who becomes his confidant, someone in whom he confides his secret.

During one such car trip, Gatsby nervously discloses some of his personal information to him through which we come to know that he was the son of some wealthy people in the Middle East who had long passed away (although this bit is not true), is brought up in America, educated at Oxford and is left with an inheritance which is again untrue as Dan Cody who had left him a little inheritance was claimed by Cody's immediate family. We find that he puts in bits of lies just so that Nick does not consider him as a nobody. But his brief stay at Oxford and his war service record stands true. He had served in the war, a time when he wanted to almost give up on his life. But life's enchanting quality had kept him much alive. During his military service, he had also been a decorated Major for his extraordinary valour in the war. Gatsby also reveals about

an earlier time when he lived like a young king in several capitals of Europe such as Paris, Venice, Rome-collecting jewels, hunting, painting at times and collecting things solely for himself trying to forget something sad that had happened to him in his past. This sad episode was the story of his unrequited love which we find out through the course of his narration. His love of a lifetime Daisy had married the wealthy Tom Buchanan. Yet, Gatsby nurtured a sense of hope and optimism of a patient man who in the words of Jordan was *"regular tough underneath it all."*

Mr. Wolfshiem appears to be effusive in his praises of his friend Gatsby who knows him to be a perfect gentleman, well-bred and the kind that anyone would like to take to his or her home to introduce to one's mother and sister. He was known to hold a great regard towards other women and in one instance even parceled a lady-guest a new dress when she tore it by mistake at his party. Wolfshiem reveals that Gatsby was very careful about women so much so that *"[h]e would never so much look at a friend's wife*." Thus, Nick learns that in all those years that he hosted grand social parties, he had neither loved nor touched other women. Somehow, Gatsby is enchanted by his love for Daisy whom he is unable to forget in his fascinated longing for her, even years after her marriage. It was no strange coincidence that he had brought his mansion at West Egg, so that Daisy would be right across the bay whose very thought brought him a great sense of hope.

Through our entire study of Jay Gatsby as a person, one observes that somehow or the other, both the narratorial revelations and the revelations of select characters in the story testify to the fact that most of the personal detail that Gatsby reveals to Nick is true. Yet Nick reserves his doubts because Gatsby has the ability to hold his silence without uttering a word on certain things for an instance he notices that whenever he asked about the nature of Gatsby's profession, he would always avoid the subject saying *"That's my affair".* We find that within a span of three years, he had amassed a huge wealth which was probably owing to his bootlegging involvements and suspicious nature of his business deals. We learn the truth of his humble beginnings through his father who

arrives for his funeral at the end of the novel. Although we know him as Mr. Gatsby, yet his real name was James Gatz nick named as Jimmy as his father fondly would call him.

Gatsby's father Henry Gatz reveals how his son loved the East where he had earned his position. Gatsby happened to have visited him two years prior his demise. He shares his thoughts with Nick on Gatsby as a caring son with a deep concern for his folks. Gatsby had brought him the house he lived in and had provided generously for his family after having made it big. His father had always taken a certain sense of pride in him and even talked of his dreamy-eyed son in his childhood days. As a child, Gatsby was intent on discipline and hard-work as revealed through a copy of his favourite classic *Hopalong Cassidy* that contained adventurous stories of a heroic cowboy. On the flyleaf of this old book was his everyday schedule that contained a daily regimen of things to do- as highlighted below:

Rise from bed	6.00 A.M.
Dumb-bell exercise and wall scaling	6.15-6.30 A.M.
Study electricity, etc.	7.15-8.15 A.M.
Work	8.30-4.30 P.M.
Baseball and sports	4.30-5.00 P.M.
Practise elocution, poise and how to attain it	5.00-6.00 P.M.
Study needed inventions	7.00-9.00 P.M

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable]
No more smoking or chewing
Bathe every other day
Read one improving book or magazine per week
Save $5.00 [crossed out] $3.00 per week
Be better to parents

Gatsby was the kind of child who believed in improving his mind and even read his general resolves aloud (as given above) for his father to follow. He showed a promise right from his childhood days towards self-improvement and optimism for the better which is why Henry held his

son in an *"awed pride"* for all that he had achieved having risen from his humble beginnings. His calm composure and poise even under the worst of circumstances speaks volumes about his inherent or natural sense of goodness. Throughout the novel we find that he exercises a certain sense of restraint, against all the worries and struggling thoughts, through the highs and lows of his experiences and the charm of a tragic hero who lives and dies sacrificing everything for his love. Certain circumstances shape the nature of his profession, yet he emerges as one of the strongest and memorable characters in American literature. The unique attribute of his personality and his underlying innocent belief in his dreams indeed makes him the Great Gatsby.

Daisy Fay Buchanan:

Scott Fitzgerald's first love Ginevra King was also the model for the character of Daisy Fay Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby* and Isabelle Borge in *This Side of Paradise*. In fact, his disillusionment in love with Ginevra King begins with her relationship with Edouard Jozan in the French Riviera that finds a description in the book through the crisscrossed love affairs of Daisy Buchanan. Daisy is first introduced as Nick's twice removed second cousin. We first meet her at her home when she almost feels *"paralysed"* with happiness on seeing her cousin. She comes across as a carefree and flamboyant personality who lights up the room with her cheerfulness. In Nick's eyes her presence is described as possessing an infectious quality about it with her charming persona, vivacity of youth, bright eyes, a bright passionate mouth and an excitement in her thrilling voice. She is also a mother of a three year old baby whom she dotes on affectionately.

Nick finds that she initially bears some secret sadness in her otherwise lively disposition but she opens up her heart to Nick in a *"flower-like way."* At once she exudes a sense of romanticism and yet again we find a sense of superficiality towards everything around her. She also expresses a defiant sense of conceit (thinking herself to be too experienced) considering herself to be a sophisticated lady to have been everywhere and done everything. If you notice carefully, most of her

sentences are short and abrupt, almost leaving the impression that she is rather unable to formulate her thoughts. It is because she is never too sure of her thoughts; she is impulsive, indecisive and a complete nervous wreck who fears anything that is unpleasant or difficult to tackle. She bears a grave sense of carelessness, the kind who could never maintain a calm composure and spoil everything given her prevalent sense of impulsive and careless nature.

Jordan reveals that in her younger days, Daisy was very popular in Louisville and much sought after by army officers. It was then that she had met Gatsby– without taking much long to suppress her love for him (once he was out of sight) through a constant string of affairs despite her love for him. Being her closest friend Jordan reveals how she was hysterical on deciding and considering her marriage with Tom in place of Gatsby. Nothing seemed to affect her for too long. She almost got away with anything as did the rich and wild people in those circles. In one instant, Nick likens her voice with that of jingling coins or money which is also symbolic in her want of riches, luxury and anything that caught her fancy. In Gatsby's description, *"Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythms of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes."*

Even in her younger days she was the kind of girl who was easily driven by the forces of love, luxury and practicality. She falls short of being an ideal heroine although Gatsby holds her in great awe and admiration. Moreover, one finds no such saving grace in her thoughts and actions to towards Gatsby at the end of the novel. In fact, by the end of the novel, one finds her ingratitude and indifference towards Gatsby disturbing because she fails to send even a flower or a message at his funeral. Also, she is seen to lack conviction in her love for the man who happens to risk everything for her including his life.

Thomas "Tom" Buchanan:

Tom is Daisy's overbearing and protective husband who was known to Nick Carraway since his college days in New Haven. In Nick's opinion

he had changed much since his college days when he was almost a national figure with his passion for playing polo, a game played on horse back. Tom came from an extremely rich family and was so rich that during his college days, he could afford a string of polo ponies. After a brief stay in France, he and his wife had shifted their home to a lively Georgian Colonial mansion at East Egg that overlooked the bay. Tom's appearance is that of a sturdy and powerful man with straw coloured hair, arrogant eyes and a deep husky voice. He has a particular liking towards his old acquaintance Nick whom he trusts enough to be at ease with. He is also rather fond of Jordan whom he considers as a nice person. Tom comes across as both an overpowering husband with his wife Daisy and an over dominating lover to his mistress Myrtle. He bears the stereotypical characteristics of the rich and spoilt as also revealed through the narration.

Tom is both adamant and assertive in his opinions. He is also somewhat conventional regarding his opinion on women and in his own words says: *"By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish."* But while he holds such opinions on women, he himself is found to be involved with a married woman-Myrtle Wilson despite being married himself! Besides Tom is also racist in is thoughts and takes great pride in being a white man and of Nordic descent. In fact, his racial attitude is revealed through his reading preferences such as Goddard's *The Rise of the Coloured Empires* that is based on the importance of maintaining the superiority of the white race lest they all perish.

It is only when he discovers that Daisy is Gatsby's old lover, that he takes the charge of his domestic matters, persuading and convincing his wife not to leave him. He feels insecure when he finds that Gatsby almost matches up to him in wealth and status to provide Daisy a better life. This is evident in his wild and insulting behaviour towards Gatsby in the final chapters of the novel. His nature also reveals a sense of hypocrisy or double standards in his passing of judgemental remarks on Gatsby while being blind towards his own deeds and actions. At the end of the novel, we find in him an escapist tendency when he leaves East Egg with

his family without letting anyone know of the past that he had left behind. Therefore, we can conclude that although he asserts a sense of overpowering influence on others, in truth he only ends up reflecting his cowardice through his attitude towards the brewing trouble in the accident case that involves his long-time mistress Myrtle Wilson.

Jordan Baker:

Nick first meets Miss Baker during his visit to the Buchanans before they enter into a love relationship. She happens to be Daisy's friend who is also a professional golf-player. She bears an easygoing and relaxed composure with a pleasant personality. In appearance, she has a slim figure, an alert posture, polite (but impersonal) eyes, a charming face and a cool-soothing voice. She is the first to reveal about a certain Gatsby she knows who happens to be Nick's neighbour and also on Tom's extra-marital affair with a woman from New York. We learn from Tom's conversation that she is from Louisville and has an old aunt by the name of Sigourney Howard and is at the Buchanan's home to spend the summer. She reveals that as a young girl she was involved as part of the Red Cross and shared a close friendship with Daisy since her girlhood days. She was even the bridesmaid at Daisy's wedding and knew every bit of her friend's past.

Unlike Daisy she comes across as a forthright person, with a mind to speak what she considered to be correct or proper. Although, she has the ability to keep up appearances, she is unable to pretend being polite in the midst of courteous nobilities at some of the parties. She is a fun-loving person who prefers grand parties that allows one to be more carefree and privately intimate unlike the small parties. She loves New York on summer afternoons which to her had something very sensuous about it. Instead of conducting herself in a lady-like or elegant fashion, she is somewhat 'tom-boyish' in both the way she dresses and conducts herself. Even her party dresses are seen to be similar to sports clothes which she carries in a certain carefree gait. At Gatsby's grand party, she becomes the 'chosen one' in whom Gatsby confides his intended secret that she is supposed to convey to Nick.

But there is also another side to her, in which we find in Jordan a limited person who deals in universal skepticism given some of her own corrupt ways as seen particularly in the golf tournament match fixing case. She has a careless tendency and self-centered attitude in many ways which is why she feels secured and finds an inclination towards serious men like Nick.

In the course of the story, Nick who is rather observant finds that Jordan has a tendency of covering up her deeds with lies, to cite an example she utters a lie to him with regard to leaving the top of a borrowed car out in the rain and not to forget, she is also believed to have fixed her win with a *"bad lie"* in a golf tournament. She tends to avoid clever or shrewd men quite instinctively. Also Nick is aware she has to tendency to be *"incurably dishonest"* yet he does not really blame her, he rather opines that *"dishonesty in a woman is never a thing you never blame deeply."* He also narrates another incident of her reckless driving when she almost takes a close turn almost short of running over a pedestrian on the road. Yet she shows no signs of regard nor regret for her reckless ways. Moreover, she suffers no sense of fear, restraint or danger as such and rather wants people to keep out of her way instead of it being the other way round. But, she also confesses of not liking careless people like herself which is precisely the reason for her liking towards Nick. But at the end of the novel, she ends her relationship with Nick due to a simple misunderstanding and her sharp sense of pride.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Give a brief account of Nick's family and his career prospects.

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Q 4: "Gatsby showed a promise right from his childhood days." Discuss with reference to his childhood activities and resolutions

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12.5 STYLE AND TECHNIQUES

In an introduction to *Modern Critical Interpretations: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* (2007) Harold Bloom considers the work as a "lyrical novel" supporting the critical opinion of Lionel Trilling who had opined that "if the book grows in weight of significance with the years, we can be sure that this could not have happened had its form and style not been as they are." Indeed, Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is one of the most captivating and fascinating narratives that is narrated through the conversational and retrospective mode of the young narrator Nick Carraway. Through his narration, he literally conjures topographical images of Long Island Sound with its egg shaped opposite masses of land– West and East Egg separated by a courtesy bay, its ambience, its buzzing activities, its hidden secrets and its enveloping mystery. The captivating narration not only stirs the senses of the curious reader but also raises a curiosity to know more by stretching the limits of the reader's imagination.

The shifting narration from the past to the present also contains multiple revelations through which we gain a complete perspective on the mysteries of the past, the nature of the characterisations and the revelations of various untold secrets or essential truths. Also, Nick Carraway provides space to some of the influencing characters to participate in the narration, for an instance, Gatsby's own disclosure of his origins and personal details to Nick Carraway, Wolfshiem's appraisal of his long-time friend and business partner Gatsby, Jordan Baker's narration of Daisy's youthful days and Tom's conversation on Jordan's life. But it is only the central narration of Nick Carraway that intricately weaves together all these threads of narration into one.

Fitzgerald presents Nick as an eloquent narrator who through the use of the shifting narrative technique constantly combines the narrative thread of the past –to the narrative thread of the present, blending Gatsby's story –with his own personal details, encompassing Gatsby's romantic perceptions –with his own realisations. And although he constantly shifts

the reader's flow of thought and imagination, it is also done in a smooth manner without sudden diversions for an instance when he wants to change the subject of narration from the present to the past, he maintains his courteous *"[n]ow I want to go back a little and tell what happened at…"* before shifting the reader's perspective. This Nick does with absolute finesse without upsetting the readers' sense of understanding and taking the reader into confidence.

Initially, the general speculations, circulating rumours, popular gossip-vines together with the snippets of sensational media news and information happens to cast a spell of doubt and disbelief in his mind. But through the gradual clarity of his thought, Nick brings the truth to the fore and makes sense of many things that appear rather mysterious, confusing or even unbelievable. We find that at the end of the novel, Nick grasps the necessity of being worldly-wise in an elite world where 'wisdom' takes a backseat to the indulgent nature of such hollow societies.

In the novel, we find several striking quotes which remain with the reader long after the novel is over especially the famous opening and ending lines of the novel. Also, the narrative is studded with little gems of wise cracks and quotes such as Nick's observation: *"No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart"*, *"There is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind"* or when Jordan says *"Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall."* The language used in the text is lyrical and has a poetical quality that particularly comes across through Nick's elegant articulation of words or elaborate descriptions. We also find the inputs of lyrics of a musical composition, Mr. Wolfshiem's short letter to Nick, a roster of Gatsby's guest lists noted by Nick, Gatsby's list of general resolves and things to do in his childhood days in the text of the novel. Also, we find a wide use of the American vernacular and its variations for an instance you may notice the speech of Mavromichaelis when he says "…an' the one comin' from N'York…goin' thirty or forty miles an hour" or when Gatsby's father Henry says "*He told me I et [ate] like a hog once, and I beat him for it*" and "*He'd of [have] helped build up the country*." In a letter to Scott Fitzgerald, Maxwell E. Perkins dated 20

November 1924 praised the novel as an “extraordinary” work and made a few critical suggestions to the author. A few of these suggestions were that Gatsby’s nature of work must remain mysterious and facets of his personality must be revealed only in the form of fragmented bits without giving away too much at a time. And further Perkins had added that the author must ensure that Gatsby’s narration of his biography must not go amiss and moreover, his Oxford days and service in the war must be highlighted. F. Scott Fitzgerald does justice to these suggestions by incorporating them skillfully in the larger narrative of the novel. Harold Bloom opines that “[f]ormal shaping is one of the many aesthetic virtues of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s masterwork: style, characterisation, and plot are all superbly balanced to achieve a highly unified end.”



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Discuss Nick Carraway as an eloquent narrator.

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Q 6: What are some of the suggestions that Perkins puts forth in his letter to Scott Fitzgerald?

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12.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

“He was better than he knew, for in fact and in the literary sense he invented a generation”

-The New York Times

In Harold Bloom’s introduction to Bloom’s notes, he shares his critical views on Scott Fitzgerald’s literary masterpiece that “The Great Gatsby has only a few rivals as the great American novel of the twentieth century; doubtless they would include works by Faulkner, Hemmingway, Cather and Dreiser.” Indeed, this particular work of Scott F. Fitzgerald stands as one of the classic pieces of particularly the jazz age and in

general as a classic of all time.

Although, Scott Fitzgerald had high hopes for the wide reception of his work *The Great Gatsby* at the time of its publication, yet the book only sold less than 20,000 copies with a few encouraging notes of appreciation from his contemporaries like T.S. Eliot among others. The literary credibility of the work was not estimated adequately in its time as was evident from the moderate reception of the novel which in time came to be considered as an American classic. While there were several positive reviews on the novel, there were also many adverse remarks from both literary critics and the reading public. Among the positive reviews were those by Edwin Clark of *The New York Times* who considered the novel as "a curious book, a mystical, glamorous story" of the contemporary period; Lillian Ford of the *Los Angeles Times* found the novel an artistic "revelation of life" and *The New York Post* reviewed the author's style of writing as the kind that "fairly scintillates, and with a genuine brilliance."

In *Bloom's Notes* (2007) edited by Harold Bloom one finds a range of discussions on the character of Jay Gatsby in which Alfred Kazin examines the central figure of Gatsby and the failure of the American Dream; Maxwell Geismar studies Gatsby as a proletarian character; A.E. Dyson reflects on Gatsby's faith; Brian Way focuses on Gatsby's heroism; Joan M. Allen considers Gatsby as a Christ figure and Joyce A. Rowe highlights Gatsby's relationship with the narrator Nick Carraway. It is an enriching book and a good source of reference that provides various critical perspectives on the figure of Gatsby together with the biography of Scott Fitzgerald, thematic content of the novel, its structural analysis, short discussion on the characterisation and a lucid introduction by Harold Bloom.

The Great Gatsby mirrors the American society of the 1920s and presents the underlying satire of some of the disillusionments and excesses of the age. Andrew Hook considers the novel as "a novel of manners" which unravels the superficialities and the harsh realities of the American society in the Roaring Twenties. He is also quick to note that one is bound to suffer disillusionment in the revealing natures of the representative characters in the novel. And he points to the figure of Jay

Gatsby who despite his likely illegal business involvements bears an inherent good nature nurturing his "incorruptible dream" of finding his dream woman, as contrasted with the Buchanans who despite their noble heritage are disappointing with their carelessly indulgent and spoilt ways of the rich. Brian Way in his discussion of the representative figure of Gatsby (who represents the romantic American spirit) and his heroism opines that: "By the close of the novel, Fitzgerald has completed his immensely difficult task of convincing us that Gatsby's capacity for illusion is poignant and heroic, inspite of the banality of his aspirations and the worthlessness of the objects of his dreams".

In their shared correspondences, Maxwell E. Perkins appreciated the draft of the novel writing thus: "I think you have every kind of right to be proud of this book. It is an extraordinary book suggestive of all sorts of thoughts and moods." While F. Scott Fitzgerald shared his own thoughts of the novel with Perkins writing thus: "in my new novel I'm thrown directly on purely creative work– not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world." And true to his own opinion of the novel, the captivating story of Gatsby in his unwavering commitment to his dream and the mystical elements of his persona bring out one of the best creations of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

But, mostly critics and reviewers were widely disappointed with the work which they examined in the light of his other popular novels. The unexpected negative reviews and criticism of the novel together with pouring sarcasm and sympathies with the author, from all quarters had convinced Scott Fitzgerald that no one had really understood the true literary worth of the book. Indeed, Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* awaited a judicious critical reception in the future and stood the test of time, suiting the literary preferences of a wide readership that made it internationally acclaimed. And therefore, plucked out of its context and time in which it was read and examined, it emerged as an outstanding work of value that had outdone many other American literary works. *The Great Gatsby* captured the passing of an era in a genuinely artistic finesse and yet remains more than a period piece. Ironically, and true to

Scott Fitzgerald's own estimate, *The Great Gatsby* survived amidst much criticism in comparison to his other novels to find its permanent place in the canons of American literature.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: What had convinced Scott Fitzgerald that no one had really understood the true literary worth of his novel *The Great Gatsby*?

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Q 8: Explain why F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is considered more than a period piece of American Literature.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

The discussions on the significant emergent themes and characters provide a better insight into the text of the novel. Also, the learner will be able to examine the use of style and language together with an overall idea on the critical reception of the work. The unit intends to stir one's sense of interest to explore the other interesting novels authored by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The learner is also advised to refer to the resourceful standard edition of The Cambridge University Press Edition (1991) of *The Great Gatsby* as a good source of critical reference to the novelist and his work.



12.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold (2007) *Viva Bloom's Notes: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. New York: Viva Books

2) Bloom, Harold. (2007) *Viva Modern Critical Interpretations: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby.* New York: Viva Books

3) Fitzgerald, F.Scott. (2013) *The Great Gatsby.* London: Alma Classics

12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: While we find in Gatsby the American character of the romantic idealism, Daisy stands as the elusive personification of the great American dream.

Ans to Q No 2: We find the fixated media persons and photographers churning out a constant supply of sensational news adding to the popular gossip mill such as Jordan's winning victory through tournament fixing, Mr. Wolfshiems's money swindling in the 1919 World Series, Gatsby's supposed car accident that clinched the headlines which read the "Death Car" or even the news of Tom's accident while driving with a mysterious lady to mention a few

Ans to Q No 3: Nick hailed from a prominent family in Minnesota and the 'Carraways' were supposed to descend from the Dukes of Buccleuch. His father carried on his father's wholesale hardware business which his great uncle (his grand father's brother) had started. He is supposed to have resembled him and even had gone ahead to take up the bond business. After his graduation from New Haven in 1915, his father decided to finance him while he began his business for the first year.

Ans to Q No 4: The flyleaf of Gatsby's childhood book *Hopalong Cassidy* contained his everyday schedule and resolutions almost like a daily regimen of things to do as given below:

Rise from bed	6.00 A.M.
Dumb-bell exercise and wall scaling	6.15-6.30 A.M.
Study electricity, etc.	7.15-8.15 A.M.
Work	8.30-4.30 P.M.

Baseball and sports	4.30-5.00 P.M.
Practise elocution, poise and how to attain it	5.00-6.00 P.M.
Study needed inventions	7.00-9.00 P.M

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable]

No more smoking or chewing

Bathe every other day

Read one improving book or magazine per week

Save $5.00 [crossed out] $3.00 per week

Be better to parents

Ans to Q No 5: Nick Carraway is presented as an eloquent narrator who through his shifting narrative constantly combines the narrative thread of the past to the narrative thread of the present, blending Gatsby's story with his own personal details, expressing Gatsby's romantic perceptions with his own realisations and world-views. Nick constantly shifts the flow of thought and imagination but this is also done in a smooth manner instead of sharp diversions

Ans to Q No 6: In a letter to Scott Fitzgerald, Maxwell E. Perkins dated 20 November 1924 praised the novel as an "extraordinary" work and made a few critical suggestions to the author. A few of these suggestions were that Gatsby's nature of work must remain mysterious and facets of his personality must be revealed only in the form of fragmented bits without giving away too much at a time. And further Perkins had added that the author must ensure that Gatsby's narration of his biography must not go amiss and moreover, his Oxford days and service in the war must be highlighted.

Ans to Q No 7: The unexpected negative reviews and criticism of the novel together with pouring sarcasm and sympathies with the author, from all quarters had convinced Scott Fitzgerald that no one had really understood the true literary worth of the book.

Ans to Q No 8: *The Great Gatsby* is more than a period piece as it captured the passing of an era in a genuinely artistic finesse.

Ironically, and true to Scott Fitzgerald's own estimate, *The Great Gatsby* survived amidst much criticism in comparison to his other novels to find its permanent place in the canons of American literature.



12.10 MODEL QUESTIONS.

Q 1: Discuss the major themes in the novel *The Great Gatsby.*

Q 2: Give a detailed character sketch of the following characters:

a. Jay Gatsby

b. Daisy Miller

c. Tom Buchanan

d. Nick Carraway

Q 3: Briefly examine the style and language employed by Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*.

Q 4: Describe the critical reception of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Q 5: Write short notes on the following topics:

a. The Roaring Twenties

b. The Lost Generation and literature in the 1920s

Q 6: Describe the friendship and solidarity that Nick shared with Gatsby.

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UNIT 13 : ARTHUR MILLER: *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Arthur Miller: The Playwright

13.3.1 His Life

13.3.2 His Works

13.4 Let us Sum up

13.5 Further Reading

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.7 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- learn about Arthur Miller and his contribution to American drama
- describe and appreciate the works of Arthur Miller

13.2 INTRODUCTION

One of the great American dramatists, Arthur Miller is the point of discussion in this unit. You must be aware that post-war American drama reached an exalted position with the works of this playwright. The unit deals with one of his famous works, *Death of a Salesman* published in 1949, a play that reflects the socio-economic conditions of that period. Most importantly, as you read the unit, you will find that Miller has focused on an individual's internal journey. The capitalist society serves as a background in understanding Miller's play.

With a description of the major aspects of the play, the unit shall lead you towards analysing the various facets of Miller's technique and style. We have included facts about the life of the playwright and also mentioned his contributions. The next thing that you will find while reading

the unit is a discussion on the context of the play. In order to critically appreciate the play as well as the playwright, it is important for us to be aware of the background or source of the play. The play has been summarised here for your better understanding and easy comprehension. Few of the major themes have also been outlined in this unit along with a crisp and clear description of the characters of the play. Lastly, what we have included deals with the reviews and discussions that the play has evoked among various literary critics.

13.3 ARTHUR MILLER: THE PLAYWRIGHT

In the following subsections, the learner will be introduced to the prominent American playwright Arthur Miller who to his literary credit wrote several plays both for stage adaptations and radio broadcasting, screen plays together with a range of non-fiction works. Miller had received the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Drama in the year 2001. Also, he won several other awards such as the Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature as “the undisputed master of modern drama”, the Praemium Imperiale Award in 2002 and the Jerusalem Prize in 2003 while also being an early recipient of the Four Freedom Award for Freedom of Speech and the National Medal of Arts both in the year 1993. As one of the leading American playwrights of the twentieth century, whose career spans across six decades, he also received the honour of the ‘American Theatre Hall of Fame’, New York for his outstanding contributions to theatre of which he was an inductee in as early as the year 1979.

Arthur Miller believed in representing the social and particularly the moral thread of American society through his thought-provoking plays as you will also find in his *Death of a Salesman* (1949) which almost portrays the tragic degeneration of American society, the worn out moral fabric of the American psyche, the pressures of survival in a world of economic crisis, the disillusionment of the American vision towards material success and the rupture of the great American Dream. Miller was much inspired by the social realities portrayed in the works of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and the dramatic techniques of the German

playwright, Bertolt Brecht with his use of 'symbolism' and the expressionistic mode of presenting his characterisation in his works. Let us now study the following subsections to unravel the life and works of the American playwright Arthur Miller.



LET US KNOW

Expressionistic mode: Expressionism was both an art and aesthetic movement that began in Germany and influenced the arts together with literary forms of expression that took place from 1910-1925. Among the German dramatists, Bertolt Brecht was one of the expressionists to employ expressionistic modes through which he created 'human types' that powerfully represented what he intended to voice or express.

13.3.1 His Life

The following section highlights the life of the well-known American playwright Arthur Miller by tracing his early years and his gradual development as a playwright, glimpses of his personal life and the legacy that he had left behind with his significant literary contributions in the development of twentieth century American drama.

Family and Childhood:

Arthur Asher Miller (October 17, 1915-February 10, 2005) better known as 'Arthur Miller' was born to a prosperous family that settled in Harlem, New York. His father Isodore Miller was an Austrian Jewish immigrant who ran a successful manufacturing business specialising in women's clothing and his mother Augusta Miller was a home-maker. With a younger sibling named Joan Miller in tow, he was a hard-working boy who understood the value of labour at a young age when he worked as a bread-delivery boy while also attending school. In fact, he earned his own tuition expenses during his college life through his employment in various simple jobs. In the wake of the American economic depression in

1929, things began to change in the family fortunes and they had to shift base to Brooklyn and lead a modest and hard-working life.

Education and the Drift Towards Becoming a Playwright:

He graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in 1932 and enrolled at the University of Michigan to study Journalism although he took up English later. Miller's talent for writing found a creative outlet through his early plays which also earned him awards and his contribution to the university paper *Michigan Daily*. His talent was noticed early during these student years when things fell into place in such a sequence that he naturally drifted towards writing for the theatre as a career. And as his plays began to draw several awards earning him recognition, he began to churn out work after work as an independent playwright, and even dropped an offer from 20th Century Fox with a chance to be a scriptwriter. While taking up various writing projects he wrote for the radio and even worked for the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Having devoted himself to full time playwriting, he also gradually began to gain much critical acclaim and popularity for several decades ahead of him. He earned many accolades that took him to places and exposed him to various challenges of theatrical productions particularly with regard to writing for the stage and enriching his knowledge on the functionalities of stagecraft.

Personal Life:

If we take a brief glance at Miller's personal life, we may consider his familial concerns and paternal responsibilities among other things. He was first married to Mary Grace Slattery with whom he had two children in 1940 until he drifted away from his marriage in 1956. This was owing to his love affair with the beautiful Hollywood actress 'Marilyn Monroe' that led to his second marriage after his separation from Slattery in 1956. But after a brief period of being together, the celebrity couple had divorced and separated ways. Monroe tragically passed away at the prime of her youth, after one and a half years of separation with Miller and her long term battle

with severe depression followed by an overdose of medicated drugs. Miller had both reflected and recorded his personal experiences with Monroe in his play *After the Fall* (1964) and well-known non-fictional work entitled *Timebends: A Life* (1987).

While continuing his productions some of which received accolades and some mixed reactions, Miller went on to settle down with photographer Ingeborg Morath in 1962. Together they had two children Rebecca and Daniel and the couple remained committed till Morath's last. She passed away in 2002 having suffered from lymphatic cancer. A sad truth was that Miller was estranged from his son Daniel who suffered from Downs' Syndrome for a long time before he was convinced to reunite with his grown up son. After a period of two years of having lost his third wife in 2004, he fell in love with Agnes Barley, a painter and the two lived together until his demise. Also his sister had provided for his care during the last years of his battle with cancer and other associated ailments.

Honours, Legacy and Death:

A detailed insight into his writing career is included in the following section that focuses on his works and literary contributions. But as far the honours and accolades conferred on him are concerned they are aplenty most of which have been listed in 13.3.2 under the caption 'Literary awards and recognitions' which also includes the National Medal of Arts (1993), the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters (2001), The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2002) and the Jerusalem Prize (2003). After having led an eventful and also a professionally fulfilling life, Miller breathed his last on 10 February 2005 at the age of 89. He suffered a cardiac arrest owing to multiple health related problems caused mainly due to cancer. His family and friends together with many of the leading personalities from the film and theatre world paid their tributes in honour of the playwright who left his mark in the scenario of modern American drama.

Arthur Miller gained much popularity through several

decades particularly the 1940s to 1960s apart from earning an international repute as a celebrated playwright through several distinguished honours, awards and recognition. And thus, he came to be considered as one of the leading American dramatists of all time. The Arthur Miller Theatre was established in the year 2007, in keeping with his ardent desire to establish a theatre at his University where he first began his love for writing and where his talent was first discovered by one of his Professors. The University of Michigan where Miller had studied went ahead to establish the Arthur Miller Award in 1985 and Arthur Miller Award for Dramatic Writing in 1999. Also, the University of Texas had archived all his personal and professional drafts and documents at its Henry Ransom Humanities Research Centre. Moreover, 'The Arthur Miller Foundation' and the New York City Public School Education founded in his honour continue to carry forward his legacy particularly through special emphasis in the theatre-related field and activities. All things considered, Arthur Miller had a fulfilling life and career over several decades establishing his permanent place in the canons of American literature.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Write a short note on Arthur Miller's education and early start as a playwright.

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Q 2: Name the famous personality with whom Miller began his love affair that led to his second marriage in 1956.

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Q 3: Name the University where Miller's personal and professional drafts and documents were archived.

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LET US KNOW

The Crucible (1953) remains one of the most significant works of Arthur Miller which was based on his historical research on the Salem witch trials of 1692. The play was first staged in a Broadway production on 22 January 1953 and continues to be widely celebrated as an exceptional work of all time. In this work, Miller drew a similarity between the historical past of the infamous Salem witch trials to the contemporary activities of House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) which was a committee of the United States House of Representatives that was 'anti-communist' in its stance and completely intolerant of any Communist affiliation or association in the nation.

The witch trials of Salem stand as a historical fact which refers to a period of several court trials of people who were suspected or known to have practiced witchcraft. Witchcraft was regarded as a practice related to the evil spirit or Satan and thus was regarded with contempt of being religiously irreverent. This had led to several executions during the 17th century in the American colony of Salem. Similarly, the House Un-American Activities pursued those who were suspicious or known to have involvements with the Communists.

13.3.2 His Works

Let us now gain an overview of the literary contributions and credibility of Arthur Miller as a modern American playwright and grasp his dedication to the social discourses of the American society through his representative works.

Miller's Writing Talent and Early Success in his Career:

An enrollment in a seminar on playwriting with Professor Kenneth Rowe exposed Miller to the nuances of the theatrical form and brought out his hidden talent in this area. Professor

Rowe became his guide and lifelong friend as he was also the first person to have nurtured and honed his writing talent. Miller's writing success had won two Avery Hopewood Awards in 1936 and 1938 for his plays *No Villian* and *Honors at Dawn* respectively. He had graduated from the University of Michigan in the year 1937 to join the Federal Theatre Project in the young hope of finding new job prospects in the theatre. And while he worked for the Brooklyn Navy yard he continued writing plays some of which were broadcasted on the radio. He found a break through his play entitled *All My Sons* (1947) which apart from its Broadway success marked his foray into the world of American drama and theatre. He also gained a brief correspondence with the American dramatist Eugene O'Neill who expressed his appreciation of the work two years later in 1949. Gradually, his works gained much critical attention and acclaim particularly with works such as *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953).

A Glimpse at his Works:

Followed by his first play *No Villian* (1936), he wrote several plays spread across several decades such as: *They Too Arise* (1937), *Honors at Dawn* (1938), *The Great Disobedience* (1938), *The Grass Still Grows* (1938), *The Golden Years* (1940), *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1940), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), *After the Fall* (1964), *Incident at Vichy* (1964), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), *The American Clock* (1980), *Some Kind of a Love Story* (1982), *The Last Yankee* (1991), *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1994), *Broken Glass* (1994), *Resurrection Blues* (2002), *Finishing the Picture* (2004) among a few others.

To enlist the plays written for the 'radio' they are as follows: *The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man* (1941), *Joel Chandler Harris* (1941)**,** *The Battle of the Ovens* (1942)**,** *Thunder from the Mountains* (1942)**,** *I Was Married in Bataan*

(1942)**,** *That They May Win* (1943)**,** *Listen for the Sound of Wings* (1943)**,** *Bernardine* (1944)**,** *I Love You* (1944)**,** *Grandpa and the Statue* (1944)**,** *The Philippines Never Surrendered* (1944) and *The Story of Gus* (1947)**.** Also he wrote several screenplays, a few of which were adaptations of his plays *All My Sons* (1948), *Death of a Salesman* (1985), *The Crucible* (1995) and *Mr. Peter's Connections* (1998) apart from others like *The Hook* (1947), *Let's Make Love* (1960), *The Misfits* (1961 from his 1957 novella of the same title).

Also some of his other works of fiction include a novel titled *Focus* (1945) and the collections of short stories known as *I Don't Need You Anymore* (1967) and *Presence: Stories* (published later in 2007). Among his non fictional writings are: *Situation Normal* (1944) based on his research of war correspondence, *In Russia* (1964) on his accounts of Russian society, *In the Country* (1977) based on glimpses of life in Connecticut, *Chinese Encounters* (1979) as travel accounts of China, *Salesman in Beijing* (1984) based on his challenges as a director staging *Death of a Salesman* in China and *Timebends: A Life* (1987) on his personal experiences with Marilyn Monroe.

The 1960s to the Late 1990s:

He became the first elected American president of PEN International in 1965 serving for a period of four years. The 1970s saw him travelling with his photographer wife Ingeborg Morath and producing several short plays and other non-fictional accounts such as *The Country and Chinese Encounters* (1979). He also published a collection of essays titled *Theatre Essays* (1978) that reflected his in-depth knowledge on theatre in its transforming phases. He wrote several non-fictional works in addition to publishing his later plays such as *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1994), *Resurrection Blues* (2002), *Finishing the Picture* (2004). He was also selected to deliver the prestigious Jefferson Lecture in 2001 by the U.S. government's National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Miller

as an intellectual in his own right was very articulate with regard to his opinions not just on his area of expertise but also on politics and social discourses.

Miller even wrote several unpublished works against prevalent racism in America even before the civil rights movement as revealed by his biographer Christopher Bigsby. According to the author Alan M. Wald, he was also to have supposedly written under the pseudonym of 'Matt Wayne' as an active member of the Communist Party's editorial unit in the year 1946. His works were also known to have been banned in the U.S.S.R during the late 1960s when he voiced his support for the politically non-conformist or rebellious writers of the Soviet. All in all, his plays reveal his insight into the socio-psychological concerns of the American individual and the larger human experiences of mankind as such. It is of no wonder that the thematic concerns of his works have a universal significance and appeal which still continues to find its relevance in the contemporary modern world.

Literary Awards and Recognitions:

Some of the prestigious literary awards and recognitions that Arthur Miller had received right from his student years were two Avery Hopwood Award for his first play *No Villian* (1936) and his second *Honors at Dawn* (1938); Theatre Guild's National Award for his play *The Man who Had All the Luck* (1940); Tony Award for Best Author of *All My Sons* in 1947; PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award in the category of Master American Dramatist in 1998; Tony Award for Best Author, the New York Drama Circle Critics' Award and the Pulitzer Prize all in 2001 for his work *Death of a Salesman* (1949).

Also he won the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters (2001), Spain's Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature and the Jerusalem Prize in (2003).



LET US KNOW

You will be surprised to know a few facts on Arthur Miller's most famous and critically acclaimed work *Death of a Salesman* which was adapted for 742 stage performances. It was rather co-incidental that Miller breathed his last on the day that marked the 72nd anniversary of the play. Miller had begun writing and completing the first act of the play in just one day at his new studio in Connecticut in the year 1948. Further, he completed *Death of a Salesman* within a short period of one and a half months. It was first staged on Broadway on 10 February 1949. And it was during its 50th anniversary that the play once again saw a Broadway production in the year 1999 which in fact earned a Tony Award in the category of best play revival thereby clinching a huge success and popular reception. It also won the Tony Award in the same category of best revival of a play yet again in 2012. The popularity of *Death of a Salesman* can be felt through the several adaptations in the form of film and television series.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Write a short note on the early literary works and achievements of the playwright Arthur Miller.

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Q 5: Name some of the plays written by the American playwright Arthur Miller.

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Q 6: What were the literary awards and recognitions received by Arthur Miller?

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

After you finished reading the unit, you shall be acquainted with one of the notable writers of American drama, Arthur Miller and his literary outputs. In the next unit we shall take up the explanation of the text *Death of a Salesman* in a detailed manner.



13.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold (ed.) (2007) *Arther Miller's Death of a Salesman.* New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.

2) Gilbert, Miriam, Klaus, Carl H. and S. Field, Bradford (1994) *Modern and Contemporary Drama.* New York : St. Martin's Press.

3) Hinchliffe, Arnold P. (ed.) (1979) *Drama Criticism, Developments since Ibsen: A Casebook. London :* The Macmillan Press Ltd.

4) Raman, Meenakshi. (ed.) (2005). *Critical Perspectives in American Literature.* New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.



13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1. He graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in 1932 and enrolled at the University of Michigan to study Journalism although he took up English later. Miller talent for writing found a creative outlet through his early plays and his contribution to the university paper *Michigan Daily*. His talent was noticed early during these student years with events falling into place in such a sequence that he naturally drifted towards taking playwriting and the theatre as a profession. And as his plays began to draw several awards earning him recognition, he began to churn out

work after work as an independent playwright, and even dropped the offer from 20th Century Fox to be a scriptwriter. While taking up various writing projects he wrote for the radio and even worked for the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Having devoted himself to full time playwriting, he also gradually began to gain much critical acclaim and popularity through several decades. He earned many accolades that took him to places and exposed him to various challenges of theatrical productions particularly with regard to writing for the stage and functions of stagecraft.

Ans to Q No 2: He developed a love affair with the beautiful Hollywood actress Marilyn Monroe that led to his second marriage after his separation from his first wife Mary Grace Slattery in 1956.

Ans to Q No 3: The University Texas had archived all his personal and professional drafts and documents at its Henry Ransom Humanities Research Centre.

Ans to Q No 4: An enrollment in a seminar on playwriting with Professor Kenneth Rowe exposed Miller to the nuances of the form and brought out his hidden talent in this area. Professor Rowe became his guide and lifelong friend as he was also the first person to have had nurtured and honed his writing talent. Miller's writing success had won two Avery Hopewood Awards in 1936 and 1938 for his plays *No Villian* and *Honors at Dawn* respectively. He had graduated from the University of Michigan in the year 1937 to join the Federal Theatre Project in the young hope of finding new job prospects in the theatre. And while he worked for the Brooklyn Navy yard he continued writing plays some of which were broadcasted on the radio. He found a break through his play entitled *All My Sons* (1947) which apart from its Broadway success marked his foray into the world of American drama and theatre. He also gained a brief correspondence with the American dramatist Eugene O'Neill who expressed his appreciation of the work two years later in 1949. Gradually, his works gained much critical attention and acclaim particularly with works such as *Death of a*

Salesman (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953).

Ans to Q No 5: *No Villian* (1936), he wrote *They Too Arise* (1937), *Honors at Dawn* (1938), *The Great Disobedience* (1938), *The Grass Still Grows* (1938), *The Golden Years* (1940), *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1940), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), *An Enemy of the People* (1950), *The Crucible* (1953), *After the Fall* (1964), *Incident at Vichy* (1964), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), *The American Clock* (1980), *Some Kind of a Love Story* (1982), *The Last Yankee* (1991), *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1994), *Broken Glass* (1994), *Resurrection Blues* (2002), *Finishing the Picture* (2004) among a few others.

Ans to Q No 6: Some of the prestigious literary awards and recognitions that Arthur Miller had received right from his student years were two Avery Hopwood Award for his first play *No Villian* (1936) and his second *Honors at Dawn* (1938); Theatre Guild's National Award for his play *The Man who Had All the Luck* (1940); Tony Award for Best Author of *All My Sons* in 1947; PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre Award in the category of Master American Dramatist in 1998; Tony Award for Best Author, the New York Drama Circle Critics' Award and the Pulitzer prize all in 2001 for his work *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Also, he won the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters (2001), Spain's Principe de Asturias Prize for Literature and the Jerusalem Prize in (2003).



13.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Describe your idea regarding Arthur Miller as a playwright.

Q 2: Write a short note on the works and literary achievements of Arthur Miller.

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UNIT 14 : ARTHUR MILLER: *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* -II

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Context of the Play

14.4 Summary of the Play

14.5 Let us Sum up

14.6 Further Reading

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.8 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the central idea of the play
- situate the context of the play
- discuss the text of the play *Death of a Salesman*

14.2 INTRODUCTION

The present takes up a detailed discussion on the prescribed text of Arthur Miller titled *Death of a Salesman.* In order to supplement the learner's reading the relevant context of the play has been provided along with the summary of the text.

14.3 CONTEXT OF THE PLAY

The context of the play as forwarded by Arthur Miller is as follows: "The first image that occurred to me which was to result in *Death of a Salesman* was of enormous face the height of the proscenium arch which would appear and then open up, and we would see theinside of a man's head. In fact, *The Inside of His Head* was the first title. It was conceived half in laughter, for the inside of his head was a mass of

contradictions . . . The Salesman image was from the beginning absorbed in with the concept that nothing in life comes "next" but that everything exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be "brought forward" in a human being, but that he is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to."

14.4 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Structurally, the play *Death of a Salesman* is divided into two Acts and is followed by a requiem. A requiem is an organised mass for a dead person in order to free the soul of the departed soul and let it rest in peace. In the play, Miller uses requiem to portray the funeral of the salesman. As you read the play, you will notice how Miller has used music, particularly flute to depict the various emotional stages of the salesman's life. It must be noted that the play revolves around twenty-four hours in the life of the salesman but Miller's technique of juxtaposing past and the present together gives it a totally different stance by offering the readers a major glimpse into the salesmans' attitude, dreams and his personality. Let us now discuss each of the Acts in details in order to have a thorough idea of the issues that Miller sought to explore through the play.

ACT I

Miller opened the play with the description of the stage. A flute was being played mildly in the background. He elaborated on the salesman's house which was surrounded by 'towering, angular shapes behind it' and gradually with the brightening light on the stage, they seem to be apartments. Miller used colours to describe the mood of the play; for an instance, the salesman's house with all its dreamy portrayal is shown by the blue-coloured light whereas the colour 'orange' was used to set the surrounding areas. The kitchen with the 'kitchen table, three chairs, and a refrigerator' seemed to be full of life, a real one though not much of it could be clearly visualised. A 'draped entrance' at the back of the kitchen led towards the living-room whereas on the right side of the kitchen, there was a bedroom where a trophy was kept. Another bedroom at the back of the kitchen could barely

be seen. All these elaborations on the part of the playwright were aimed to throw light on the status of the salesman who led an ordinary life along with his wife and two sons. You must note that the action in the play moves back and forth, into the past and present, including both a dreamy world and the reality.

Willy Loman, the salesman of the play, was sixty years of age and there was a possibility that his age was bothering his duty as a salesman. His job required of him to travel every week and that disturbed his wife who wished for his well-being. As the play began, he was tired and exhausted from an official trip and complained his wife about his fatigue. Willy most importantly revealed that while driving he was taken aback by the natural scenery around so much that it would have landed in an accident.

Willy: *I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I'm going' off the road! I'm tellin' ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I'd've gone the other way over the white line I might've killed somebody. So I went on again – and five minutes later I'm dreamin' again, and I nearly . . . have such strange thoughts.*

The above lines stated the mixed feeling and fickle-mindedness of the salesman, who is used to travel along in his imaginative world. His physical journeys were symbolic of his constant mental journeys. His wife, Linda was worried and asked him to seek a job from Howard Wagner, his employer, in New York that did not require travelling. Their two sons, Happy and Biff were asleep. Linda related to her husband about their sons and asked him to stop rebuking Biff, their elder son. Willy Loman was upset with Biff's involvement as a labour on a farm. At the age of thirty four, having no income, Biff was considered a 'lazy bum' by his father. However, you are to note that in another instance, Willy considers Biff as having abundant personal attractiveness and says that 'he's not lazy'. You are to note this contradiction in Willy Loman whose life and vision gradually merges the line between reality and illusion. In Willy, there is an affirmation of the competitive attitude of the people; the struggle for survival among all the people is rooted in the changing socio-economic structure of the American society. With competition getting

harder in the field of service, Willy finds himself withdrawn and weak. In the act, we find Willy jumping from present to past and again vice versa, by imagining the glorious days of the past in relation to the inconsistency and economic crisis of the present. In an instant, he moves from the hardships of the present to the satisfactory life he had once led.

We come to know that Biff is two years elder than Happy. We also are informed that Biff is 'well-built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured' whereas Happy is *"tall, powerfully made . . . and has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat"*. Both these brothers go on to recollect their youthful days. Happy and Biff are concerned about their father's strange behaviour of talking to himself. Happy informs Biff that their father often mumbles keeping the 'absent Biff' into mind. They discusses that it may be the effect of his concern for Biff's insecure life that is not yet settled. Biff had been into many professions since he passed high school, like 'shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or the other', etc. and then on a farm. He informs Happy that, the realisation that he is not progressing, made him return home. Happy has a job but aspires to become a manager one day. Biff, being an idealist, dreams of going to the West along with his brother. Happy reveals that in order to survive and progress, he had opted to even sleep with the girlfriends of his bosses. Biff plans to seek help from Bill Oliver, his ex-employer for a loan in order to buy a ranch. Happy advises Biff to settle down there and not leave them again.

Next we find Willy again lost in his dreams, thinking of the young Biff and Happy. The young boys wash and polish the car as Willy returns from his trip. Biff said to his father about the football that he has borrowed from the locker room. Willy is moved by his son's affection on him and tells them of his dream: *"Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home anymore"*. At this, Happy compares his father to that of Charley but Willy announces that he ought to become 'bigger than Uncle Charley'. Willy has visited many places and tells his son about his popularity everywhere. He was a successful salesman and boasts of his position.

Willy is proud of his son, Biff who is made the captain of the football team in school. However, at this point of time, Charley's son and Biff's friend Bernard moves in to ask Biff about his studies and particularly mathematics. Bernard is a loyal friend and is worried about Biff, who seems to devote more time in practicing football rather than studies. Willy analyses Bernard as a studious boy who would however, never be able to climb higher in the business world for he did not have good looks. He holds the view that 'the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead' and explains his sons that this was the factor that contributed towards his success as a salesman. Linda comes along and asks of their car, the Chevrolet, which Willy so hold dear to. He tells Linda about his sales on that day which was about 'seventy dollars and some pennies' and they plans on their list of things to be bought and repaid to others.

Willy Loman expresses his disappointment that he had to work hard for a living since he became unnoticed and therefore less popular. But Linda assures him that he was lively and good. Willy explains his defects to Linda by calling himself foolish and an object of fun for others. In order to cheer the depressed Willy, Linda calls him the 'handsomest man in the world'. Willy expresses his gratitude towards his wife. However, as he converses with Linda, he hears the voice of a 'Woman', his mistress, and often talks with her in his day dreams. The laughter of both the women merges into one, the past and the present becomes one. Willy is aware of his own mental condition and comes back to reality. Coming out of his dream world, Willy accepts that Biff is good for nothing. He asks Bernard to help his son by giving him the answers. However, Bernard replies that he could not provide answers to Biff in the state examination. Both Linda and Willy are suddenly tensed to realise Biff's reality, who is 'too rough with the girls', drives the car 'without a driving license', have the possibility to 'flunk math' and is involved in 'stealing'. The realisation of Biff's worthlessness clashes with Willy's image of his paternal pride and this in turn results in his distress. It must be noted that Biff is placed opposite to Bernard in terms of success and Willy opposite to his brother, Ben. Happy tries to interrupt Willy from thinking of Ben who is now dead. For Willy, Ben

was an inspiration. He repented that he had not joined Ben to Alaska. Had he joined him, Willy would have been as successful as Ben who became rich at a very young age. Willy expresses his inability to cope up with the expenses and looks towards his family for help.

Charley, Bernard's father and Willy's neighbour enters their house. He is a 'large man, slow of speech, laconic, immovable' and a good neighbour. He could sense Willy's sad condition though Willy tries to hide from him and offers him a job. Charley advises Willy to let his son go to the Texas. But for Willy, the only reality that is known to him is that his sons were most dear to him and he could not tolerate separation from them. While talking with Charley, Willy is reminded of Ben and talks to him. He imagines Ben and replies to him, although in reality it was Charley with whom he was talking to. However, once Charley is sure of Willy's absent-mindedness, he departs from there. After Charley is gone, Willy engages himself in a world of his own and talks with Ben. Willy remembers one of Ben's visits and recollects how Ben had talked with the boys about their grandfather.

It is learnt that before Ben went to Alaska and discovered the gold mine, both he and Willy used to sell flutes that their father manufactured. Willy shouts as Ben takes his leave from him and as a result Biff and Linda hurries towards him out of curiosity. Biff is informed by his mother that Willy has been behaving in a strange manner since several days and it worsens when Biff is near to him. Willy's strange behaviour was the outcome of losing his job. She further adds that Willy borrows fifty dollars every month from Charley and pretends it to be his salary. Even his car accidents are caused due to severe depression and anxiety and 'weren't accidents' but failed attempts of suicide. While overhearing their conversation, Willy becomes disappointed with Biff for calling him 'crazy'.

Willy gets to know that Biff is going to meet Bill Oliver asking for a loan. This makes Willy happy for the time being by welcoming the idea of Biff and Happy working together in a business of their own. However, his attitude towards Linda is rude as the act ends and we see Willy Loman losing his mind gradually.

ACT II

The second act starts with a note of optimism and both Willy and Linda are in a hopeful mood for their two sons went together to see Bill Oliver. Willy thinks of buying 'a little place out in the country, and I'll raise some vegetables, a couple of chickens…' Willy seems excited to hear from Linda about the evening meal that his son has invited him to. He became hopeful and left for his work. You must note that the dreamer in Willy never stops dreaming about impossible things like building guest houses and getting a non travelling job in New York and so on.

Willy goes on to meet his employer, Howard Wagner to ask if there was any New York based job for him. As he enters, Willy sees Howard is busy with a tape recorder. Willy asks him for a favour; he does not want to continue to be a travelling salesman. He even agrees to a salary of forty dollars a week if he is provided a job in New York. Howard is so busy with his tape recorder that he ignores Willy. Moreover, on listening to Willy's request, Howard says that there is no such job that he could offer to him and further asks Willy to leave the job and take rest at home. Willy's disappointments begin not only for his inability to get a New York based job but also his utter dismissal from it. To add to it, the thought of Biff's failures added to his disappointment and frustrations. Out of despair, Willy once again feels Ben to be near him and urges, imagining him to be around, to tell him the reason of the latter's success. The salesman's condition was worsening as it can be explained by more frequent dives into imaginary world and imaginary people.

Coming back to reality, Willy asks Charley about the cause that led to Biff's failure. Charley points out that Biff would have done well if he had visited the summer school as he failed in maths. Willy had ignored Charley and his son Bernard, who had become a successful young man now whereas his own son remained stagnant in terms of prosperity and success in life. Being a friend of Willy, Charley understands Willy's condition and agrees to lend him fifty dollars. Willy, however, does not confess about his earnings to him but promises Charley that he would returns his money. His condition was however overtly pathetic

and he could not help but confide in Charley about the loss of his job. We should remember that in the entire play, it is only Charley who attempts to understand Willy's growing frustrations and tries to bring him to face the reality. As a result, Charley tries to persuade Willy that his philosophy of being well-liked and personal attractiveness is of less importance in such a materialistic set up. In order to get recognition in the society, money is very important unlike the factors Willy considered important. Charley tries to remove the veil of illusion from Willy's mind but fails as Willy becomes a non-receptive person.

The next thing that is focussed is the get together of Willy, Biff and Happy at Frank's Chop House for dinner. Biff explains to Happy that his meeting with Bill Oliver went very bad. He fails to get the loan from Bill. When Biff seeks Happy's help in telling the episode of his meeting with Bill Oliver, Happy realises that it was not a time to tell their father anything regarding the meeting. Willy was already too weak to handle such negativity. He therefore did not help Biff to show Willy the reality around him.

Willy arrives at the restaurant and confronts Biff who waited there desperate and in a frustrated mood. When asked, Biff planned to relate the entire episode of his visit to Bill Oliver to his father. He thought to expose his father to the bitter realities of the present situation. As soon as Biff tried to speak of how his meeting was a failure, Willy interrupted him and once again projected his dreams on him which led Biff to speak what his father desired to listen. In a way, it highlights Willy's inadequacy to adjust himself and realise the realities of his situation. He always has an intention of running away from his reality. At this point of time, Biff finds it difficult to state the truth before his father.

Another sojourn into Willy's past is represented by Bernard telling Linda about Biff's failure in math exam. Willy is always in a defensive mode when it comes to include Biff. However, he scolds him for stealing Bill Oliver's pen and asks him to return it. As Willy was about to be positive about Biff, he retorts his father about the hopelessness associated with him. He tells his father that Willy should not hope from him much. Both of them reach such a point in their conversation that nothing much

remained to be talked about. Following such a glimpse into the past, Willy is again lost in his world of dreams. Biff leaves the restaurant and Happy goes out to the accompaniment of two call girls and Willy is again left alone to suffer. He had a dream about his life in Boston and his affair with the Woman. Imagining a woman calling at the bathroom door, Willy finds Biff outside the door as he opens it. However, to add to his tragedy, the Woman shocks Biff and Willy by her physical presence before them at the restaurant. Though Willy tries to settle differences with Biff regarding this, all his attempts fail and Biff expresses his hatred towards him. Biff goes on to say that he was affected by his father's behaviour of gifting Linda's stockings to that Woman; this was the reason of Biff's disinterestedness and diversion from attending school. With words of reproach for his father, Biff walks away from him.

Willy is then informed by Stanley, a waiter that his two sons had left the restaurant. Curiously he asks him about a seed store. The search for a seed store may be related to or symbolic of Willy's existential crisis and a search for stability in life. At home, Linda is infuriated with both sons for their indecent behaviour towards Willy. Though Happy is less bothered about the scorns from Linda, Biff is somewhat guilty and plans to apologise Willy as soon as he returns home. Willy's imaginary talks with the dead Ben at this juncture of his life reveal his intention of killing himself. Biff approaches his father and told him about the failed meeting with Bill Oliver. Willy fumes after listening this. Biff for the first time tells Willy that his failure was a result of Willy's own wrong philosophies of life. He adds that the meaninglessness of his existence must be accepted by Willy and says that: *"Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take the phony dream and burn it before something happens?"* For Willy, life can not give him what he wants, and so he commits suicide at the end. Act II hence ends with Willy's death.

Requiem

The scene now takes place in the graveyard and Linda, Biff, Happy and Charley are present. Everyone regrets Willy's absence. Linda is shattered that nobody turned up in his funeral though he was so

charming and popular in his life time. However, Biff talks of the 'wrong dreams' of his father and is aware of the bitter fact that "he never knew who he was". Charley however modifies what Biff has said: "Nobody dast blame this man . . . Willy was a salesman . . . a salesman is got to dream boy. It comes with the territory". On the other hand, Happy is still in an illusionary world and views himself in relation to his father's dreams. He disagrees with Biff's views and decides to live the rest of his life based on his father's dream and ideals. In a tragic moment, Linda speaks up her heart addressing Willy's grave. She laments about his departure and rhetorically tells him about the debts they had paid. It took them thirty five years to pay the debt but tragically, once it is paid, the house does not have anyone to accommodate it. The 'Requiem' serves its purpose by bringing the play into a justified conclusion. The funeral of Willy, unattended by any of his acquaintances except Charley and his family is highlighted here. It establishes the fact that Willy was not actually well-liked and popular as he thought himself to be. In actuality, Willy was a victim of self-deception borne out of the struggle to survive and lead a happy life in a society marked by utter competition on the one hand and the struggle within the individual on the other. In following his father's dream, Happy seems to give himself no scope for self improvement. However, Biff's acceptance of reality makes him stronger and holds him in a positive and hopeful light.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What was the earlier title of the play as conceived by Arthur Miller?

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Q 2: What is meant by requiem?

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Q 3: How did the playwright describe the salesman's ordinary existence?

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Q 4: Describe the meeting between Willy Loman and Howard Wagner.

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Q 5: What is the significance of the requiem in the play?

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14.5 LET US SUM UP

After you finished reading the unit, you have been acquainted with one of the notable writers of American drama, Arthur Miller and his literary outputs. The unit dealt with one of his plays titled *Death of a Salesman* and provided you with an idea regarding the American society and the American dream— the two most significant aspects dealt by the playwright. You are now familiar with the themes and characters of the play.

As the title suggests, the play is about the eventual but gradual death of the dream the salesman had dreamt throughout his life. The play ends tragically depicting the futility of his dream and uncovering the truth about the salesman. As a whole, your reading of the play has instilled in you ideas about American drama in general and Arthur Miller in particular. You are advised to read more plays by Arthur Miller in order to grasp the thematic concerns of the playwright as well as to comprehend his techniques of writing and presentation.



14.6 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold (ed.) (2007) *Arther Miller's Death of a Salesman.* New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.

2) Gilbert, Miriam, Klaus, Carl H. and S. Field, Bradford (1994) *Modern and Contemporary Drama.* New York : St. Martin's Press.

3) Hinchliffe, Arnold P. (ed.) (1979) *Drama Criticism, Developments Since Ibsen: A Casebook. London :* The Macmillan Press Ltd.

4) Raman, Meenakshi. (ed.) (2005). *Critical Perspectives in American Literature.* New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.



14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: *The Inside of His Head.*

Ans to Q No 2: A requiem is an organised mass for a dead person in order to free the soul of the departed soul and let it rest in peace. In the play, Miller uses requiem to portray the funeral of the salesman.

Ans to Q No 3: The elaborations on the part of the playwright throw light on the status of the salesman who led an ordinary life along with his wife and two sons. The salesman's house with all its dreamy portrayal is shown by the blue-coloured light whereas the colour 'orange' was used to set the surrounding areas. The kitchen with the 'kitchen table, three chairs, and a refrigerator' seemed to be full of life, a real one though not much of it could be clearly visualised. A 'draped entrance' at the back of the kitchen led towards the living-room whereas on the right side of the kitchen, there was a bedroom where a trophy was kept. Another bedroom at the back of the kitchen could barely be seen.

Ans to Q No 4: Willy goes on to meet his employer, Howard Wagner. At that time, Howard was busy with a tape recorder. Willy asks him for a favour; he does not want to continue to be a travelling salesman. He even agrees to a salary of forty dollars a week if he is provided a job in New York. Howard is so busy with his tape recorder that he ignores Willy. Howard said to Willy that there is no such job that he could offer to him.

Ans to Q No 5: The 'Requiem' serves its purpose by bringing the play into a justified conclusion. The funeral of Willy, unattended by any of his acquaintances except Charley and his family is highlighted here. It establishes the fact that Willy was not actually well-liked and popular as he thought himself to be.



14.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write a brief note on the context of the play *Death of a Salesman.*

Q 2: Give a summary of *Death of a Salesman* as a tragedy of common man?

Q 3: Describe the setting of the play *Death of Salesman*.

Q 4: Relate the idea of "American Dream" with reference to the play *Death of a Salesman*.

Q 5: Do you agree, that Willy was a victim of self-deception. Justify your answer.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 15 : ARTHUR MILLER: *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* -III

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Major Themes

15.4 Major Characters

15.5 Style and Techniques

15.6 Critical Reception

15.7 Let us Sum up

15.8 Further Reading

15.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.10 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the major themes as well as describe the major characters of the play
- comment on the style and techniques of Arthur Miller
- critically discuss the play by emphasising on its reception
- learn the issues explored by Miller and appreciate his skillful handling of the text

15.2 INTRODUCTION

The unit takes up the thematic concerns, style and technique together with a critical reception of the text *Death of a Salesman.* Also it provides a detailed analysis of some of the major characters in the play who are central to the play and will help the learner in grasping the action of the play.

15.3 MAJOR THEMES

The following section shall deal with one of the significant aspects of the play. The play has highlighted several important themes which are discussed below:

Depiction of the American Dream:

The American dream is suggestive of having a comfortably successful life with a happy family. Moreover, as represented in the play, it also incorporates having social popularity. Along with this, the American dream promotes freedom and hard work as well. In the play, Willy Loman is influenced by the American dream and throughout the play he strives to lead his life based on the values represented by the American dream. 'Personal attractiveness' is considered by Willy Loman to be enough a reason for the popularity and success of his sons. He is proud that his sons are well-liked. Willy's tragic ending owes a lot to his dream. It is the non-fulfillment of his dream that leads him to a distressed situation. Unable to cope up with his own reality, Willy commits suicide. His inability of dividing the lines between dream and reality and his further rejection of the reality around him are the cause for the death of the salesman. In fact, critics often read the play as Arthur Miller's critique of this American dream. The emphasis on success is closely related to seeking material fulfillment in life. This is what the salesman sought from his life.

***Death of a Salesman* as a Tragedy :**

The play *Death of a Salesman* is about Willy Loman, the salesman and his tragic ending. Miller confessed that while writing the play, he structured the events in such a way that complements Willy Loman's way of thought that is characterised by contradictory feelings and emotions. The way Miller represented the 'inside of' Willy Loman's 'head' brings about the tragic element in the play. Willy fits into a tragic hero in his inability to differentiate between the real world and the illusionary world. He lives in an imaginary world for most part of the play. His continuous dialogic exchanges with his dead brother create sympathy for him. His world is so full of imaginations that he pathetically fails to make sense

of his existence and is unable to differentiate the real from the imaginary. His philosophy of being 'well liked' and 'personal attractiveness' fails miserably not only in his own case but also in the case of his sons. He lives in a dreamy world and forces his sons to base their lives on his illusionary views. As a salesman, Willy has the right to dream as Charley mentions in the play. But his impractical vision regarding himself costs him his life. Throughout the play, Willy confirms his dream through Biff. His frustrations owes to his inability to hold his family together. Moreover, Biff was unable to meet Willy's expectations. The financial crisis is the major outcome of Willy's insufficient understanding of his own existence. Willy's illusions, dreams and lack or proper understanding of himself finally brings about his tragic ending. Most importantly, Miller has drawn Willy as a common man whose dreams ends only with his death yet poignantly self-deceived till the end.



ACTIVITY 15.1

We have discussed only two of the themes above. You are to find out the other themes that strike you as you read the play. List those themes in an orderly manner and try to analyse them in the context of the play. (**Hints**: Theme of 'Memory', 'Dream versus Reality', 'Symbolic significance of the setting' and so on.)

15.4 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Willy Loman:

Willy Loman is the character around whom everything in the play revolves. Aged sixty, Willy is the salesman who is presented to be struggling for his job. He is the unconventional hero of the play. With him, a sense of tragedy gets attached for he is portrayed as a man torn between two halves- one present and the other past. His past memories often serve as a contrast to his present, unhappy life. As a salesman, Willy has to travel weekly and this becomes difficult for a man of his age. He regards himself as a popular salesman who is respected everywhere.

He is sure that he is well-liked. In fact, he thinks the same about his two sons as well. Success is closely attached with physical charm in his field which both his sons have. This is one of his philosophies which can enable a man to survive in such a cut-throat competitive world. However, he fails to understand his own reality and the love bestowed upon him by his family. It is not that he is unaware of his condition; in fact, he is fully aware of it and this leads to an imbalance in him. All his despair and frustrations owing to his inability to compete further in the capitalistic world. Devoid of money and comfort in life, Willy's world becomes a dream world. Often he seeks happiness in his past memories because it is totally absent in his present life. Willy in his youth was influenced by a salesman called Dave Singleman. This man does so well that ever since his youth, Willy admired and followed him. But he does not realise that it developed in him an illusionary sense. Most of the thing that Willy says about himself in the play is thus the reproduction of his illusions. He created a world of illusion in which he is his own hero. Though Willy had a good relationship with his wife, Linda, he also had a mistress who is referred to as the 'Woman' in the play. Willy's relationship with this 'Woman' may be seen as his realisation and claiming of his self-worth other than an erotic inclination. Except Biff, his other family members accept Willy's illusionary revelations and do not rectify it which worsens his mental condition. He not only talks to himself but also with his dead brother, Ben. It must be noted that Willy never brings himself out of his illusionary world and died along with it. The failure of Willy Loman is balanced against by Charley, who is his neighbour. When Charley offers him a job, Willy turns it down in order to maintain his self-respect. Willy Loman serves as the tragic protagonist who is haunted by his own imaginations throughout the play. For him, the most precious gifts of his life are his two sons and he sacrifices himself at the end for them- to secure their lives.

Linda Loman :

Linda Loman is the wife of Willy Loman. She represents a supportive and loving wife and a caring and indulgent mother. Being a devoted wife, Linda accepts her husband just the way he is. Instead of

pointing out the illusions and faults of her husband, Linda always agrees with Willy and further strengthens his illusions. She is, in a way, responsible for the tragic incidents in the play. Though she realises her husband's condition, she does not help him to come out of his world. In fact, when Willy realises himself to be foolish- a reality that Willy arrives at, she assures him that he was the handsomest man ever and thus Willy returns to his own illusionary world again. Her love for Willy makes her reject both their sons. However, she tries to make the father-son bond stronger. She informs her sons about Willy's degrading health and tries to bring them closer to him. As a mother, she is worried and concerned about her sons. Her constant company to Willy is noteworthy. In fact, the most important element of Linda's character is her inability to comprehend neither the illusionary world of Willy, nor accept the realistic world completely.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What idea do you get about the 'American dream'?

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Q 2: Write a very brief note on Willy Loman.

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.....

Q 3: Who is Linda?

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.....

Biff Loman:

Biff Loman is the elder son of Willy and Linda. He is often glorified by Willy in his dreams. He can be called the projection of Willy's hope. Among the Lomans, it is only Biff who confronts his own failure. After discovering his father with another woman, Biff develops resentment for him. He leaves home and does various kind of jobs. He is trapped in the competitive world and hence returns home after his failed attempts in search of his self-identity. His attempt to face the reality demands attention.

He begins to dislike his father when he sees him with another woman. As a result, his relation with his father becomes a bitter one; the latter however always rebukes him for not being able to realise his dreams. Moreover, at the age of thirty-four and that too, unemployed, Biff Loman finds himself lost and devastated in life. However, it is Biff on whom Willy's hopes and aspirations rests. Biff realises the futility and vagueness of Willy's philosophy that 'personal attractiveness leads to success.' Biff eventually rejects his father's dream and develops his own set of ideals. He is the only one from the family of the Lomans to have identified his selfhood to some extent and confronts the reality that is stark. Financial crisis takes hold over the family who is to pay up so many people. They lead a life of debt and Biff accepts this harsh truth of life.

Happy Loman:

Happy Loman is the younger brother of Biff. He is 'powerfully built' and is attractive to women. Unlike Biff, he has a job. In order to survive and upgrade himself in the corporate world, Happy immorally sleeps with many women. His physical charm is what he boasts off like his father. Throughout the play, Happy is given less importance by Willy than his elder son whom he considers the talented one. Though at first Happy seems to be easy-going and ambitious, he is a failure in reality and he hardly has the ability to distinguish the real from the ideal. He is a self-deceiver and a day dreamer and feels content to place himself in a superior position.

Charley and Bernard:

Charley is Willy's neighbour and friend. Although he does not have high regard for Willy yet he helps him in his distress. He is depicted in a contrasting position to Willy. Unlike Willy the dreamer, Charley is a man of practicality. He analyses Willy's deteriorating condition in a logical way and even offers him a job. He is protective and cares for Willy's well being. Charley suggests Willy to see things in practical terms but Willy seems reluctant to come to terms with the reality. Willy, on the other hand, finds Charley ridiculous because he does not maintain the same view as Willy in terms of personal attractiveness. He is the only character who is aware of

Willy's reality and makes efforts to help him which however are to no avail.

His son Bernard acts as an opposite to Biff. Like his father, Bernard is anxious about Biff's recent exam and tries to help him. He is a serious student whereas Biff is not. Biff is encouraged more by his father for getting the captainship of the football team of his school rather than studies. The father son duo, Charley-Bernard is important so as to set the difference between Willy Loman and his son Biff respectively. They represent the opposite ideals to that of the Lomans.

Ben:

Ben is Willy's elder brother. However, as the play progresses it is known that he has died weeks ago. Ben is the epitome of success for Willy. He has made money and a great fortune by going to Alaska where he had became rich after discovering gold mines. Willy regrets that had he accompanied his brother to Alaska, he would not be facing such a pathetic situation in his present life. In the play, Ben's physical presence is not felt; he is only represented inside Willy's head. Willy imagines him and it is through Willy's imagination that we are drawn towards the successful and dominant personality of Ben. He remains in the subconscious state of mind of Willy acting almost as his alter-ego.

15.4 STYLE AND TECHNIQUES

The successful dramatisation of the innner dilemmas and way of thinking of the salesman is achieved by Miller's dramatic techniques like setting, symbolism and the structure in which the play is written. You must have observed while reading the summary that Miller has embraced the mechanical details of the stage. This has been intentionally done to highlight the psychological condition of the salesman. The dimming and fading away of light is suggestive of the past memories and the fusion of dreams that often frequents the salesman. The way Miller has structured the play is worth observing. Although the plot deals with just one day in the life of Willy the salesman yet Miller's dramatic technique has captured a period of over twenty five years in Willy's life. Hence, we get a glimpse

of Willy's past life and are able to analyse his comparisons of the past with the present. Regarding his craft, Arthur Miller wrote : "There are no flashbacks in this play but only a mobile concurrency of past and present, and this again, because in his desperation to justify his life Willy Loman has destroyed the boundaries between now and then..." (Miller)

For Miller, as he has done in *Death of a Salesman*, time is an important factor while writing a play. Because the events that a play has to describe revolves around the characters not only from a single point of view; rather the events that are narrated results from a continuous kind of psychological and emotional baggage of the characters.

Miller commented that "where the play does pretend to give us details of hours, months, and years which are not clearly and avowedly germane to the symbolic meaning, we come closer and closer to what is called a realistic style."

Miller's symbolism must be discussed in order to have a better understanding of the play. As mentioned earlier, the flute playing in the background, which is emphasised by Miller, is suggestive of creating a dream-like world and an attempt to communicate the ideas of such a world to the audience. Attention must be drawn towards Miller's symbolic use of stockings as well. It symbolises Willy's guilt-ridden mind. He could not bear Linda mending the stockings because once, in his past, Willy had gifted his mistress, Linda's stockings. It is also suggestive of Linda's acceptability to her fate. Throughout the play, there are many references of mending stockings which suggests that Linda expects nothing much from life and is satisfied with the way things are as long as she has her loving husband by her side.

As the techniques are concerned, Miller had used the element of 'dream' which enabled him, like the expressionists, to take full liberty of time and space and reflect varied layers of consciousness of the characters. In any reading of the play, Miller's technique and style stands out to reflect the ingenious playwright that he was.

15.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

The play was a success on stage. It ran into 742 performances and has earned the credit of being one of the 'fifty longest recorded Broadway runs'. The play has received several criticisms, both good and bad. It has also won many awards and prizes. The play was critiqued from a Marxist point of view also. Commenting on the play, Lois Gordon said: "*Death of a Salesman* is a drama of a man's journey into himself; it is a man's emotional recapitulation of the experiences that have shaped him and his values, a man's confession of the dreams to which he has been committed; and it is also a man's attempt to confront, in what is ultimately a metaphysical sense, the meaning of his life and the nature of his universe."

Daniel E. Schneider commented on the structure of the play as such: "The form of his play *(Death of a Salesman)* is not that of "flashback" technique, though it has been classified as such. It is rather the same technique as that of *Hamlet*: the technique of psychic projection, of hallucination, of the guilty expression of forbidden wishes dramatized... It is visualised psychoanalytic interpretation woven into reality..."

The play's success can be measured by the several awards, screen adaptations and the uproar it created among the literary critics. This is definitely one of Miller's best plays. With *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller became a prominent and striking personality in any discussion on American drama.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What is the point of difference between Biff Loman and his father?

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.....

Q 5: How are Charley and his son set as a contrast to Willy and his son?

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Q 6: Who is Ben?

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.....

Q 7: Comment on the significance of the flute playing in the background.

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15. 7 LET US SUM UP

After you finished reading the unit, you will be more familiar with the themes and characters of the play. You have also learnt about the critical reception of the play and will be more familiar with the popularity of the playwright. As a whole, your reading of the play has instilled in you the ideas about American drama in general and Arthur Miller in particular. You are advised to read more plays by Arthur Miller in order to grasp the thematic concerns of the playwright as well as to comprehend his techniques of writing and presentation.



15.8 FURTHER READING

1) Bloom, Harold. (ed.) (2007) *Arther Miller's Death of a Salesman.* New Delhi: Viva Books Private Limited.

2) Gilbert, Miriam, Klaus, Carl H. and S. Field, Bradford. (1994). *Modern and Contemporary Drama.* New York : St. Martin's Press.

3) Hinchliffe, Arnold P. (ed.) (1979) *Drama Criticism, Developments Since Ibsen: A Casebook. London :* The Macmillan Press Ltd.

4) Raman, Meenakshi. (ed.) (2005). *Critical Perspectives in American Literature.* New Delhi : Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.

15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The American dream is suggestive of having a comfortably successful life with a happy family. Moreover, as represented in the play, it also incorporates having a social popularity. Along with this, the American dream promotes freedom and hard work as well.

Ans to Q No 2: Willy Loman is the character on whom everything in the play revolves. Aged sixty, Willy is the salesman who is presented to be struggling for his job. He is the unconventional hero of the play. With him, a sense of tragedy gets attached for he is portrayed as a man torn between two halves- one present and the other past. His past memories often serve as a contrast to his present, unhappy life. Willy Loman serves as the tragic protagonist who is haunted by his own imaginations throughout the play. For him, the most precious gift of his life is his two sons and he sacrifices himself at the end.

Ans to Q No 3. Linda Loman is the wife of Willy Loman. She represents a supportive and loving wife and a caring and indulgent mother.

Ans to Q No 4: He is the only one from the Lomans' family to have identified his selfhood to some extent and confronts the reality.

Ans to Q No 5: The father son duo, Charley-Bernard is important so as to set the difference between Willy Loman and his son Biff respectively. They represent the opposite ideals to that of the Lomans. Charley is a man of practicality and lives in the reality. His son is brought up to become a successful man.

Ans to Q No 6: Ben is Willy's elder brother who is dead. Ben is the epitome of success for Willy. He has made money and a great fortune by going to Alaska where he had become rich after discovering gold mines. Willy imagines him and it is through Willy's imagination that we are drawn towards Ben. He remains in the subconscious mind of Willy acting almost as the alter-ego.

Ans to Q No 7: It is suggestive of creating a dream like world and an attempt to communicate the ideas of such a world to the audience.



15.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Describe your idea regarding Arthur Miller as a playwright.

Q 2: What are the major themes that Miller dealt with in the play? Explain.

Q 3: What is the significance of the American Dream in the play? Discuss with reference to the character of Willy Loman.

Q 4: Analyse the major characters of the play *Death of a Salesman.*

Q 5: Write a brief note on the context of the play *Death of a Salesman.*

Q 6: Discuss *Death of a Salesman* as a tragedy of common man?

Q 7: Explain the importance of the intermingling of the past memory and the present in the play.

*** ***** ***



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Name of the Paper: Course Code:

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Learner's Feedback on Course

Dear Learner,

Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

The Director, Centre for Internal Quality Assurance, KKHandiqui State Open University
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(E-mail id: ciqa@kkhsou.in)

1. Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course?

2. Please give your opinions (by √ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I.	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II.	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III.	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV.	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V.	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI.	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII.	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII.	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX.	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1. Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

---

2. What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

******