



Modernism

1915-1945



Welcome to The American Dream

Hot Dogs, Baseball, Jazz, and Money

F. Scott Fitzgerald



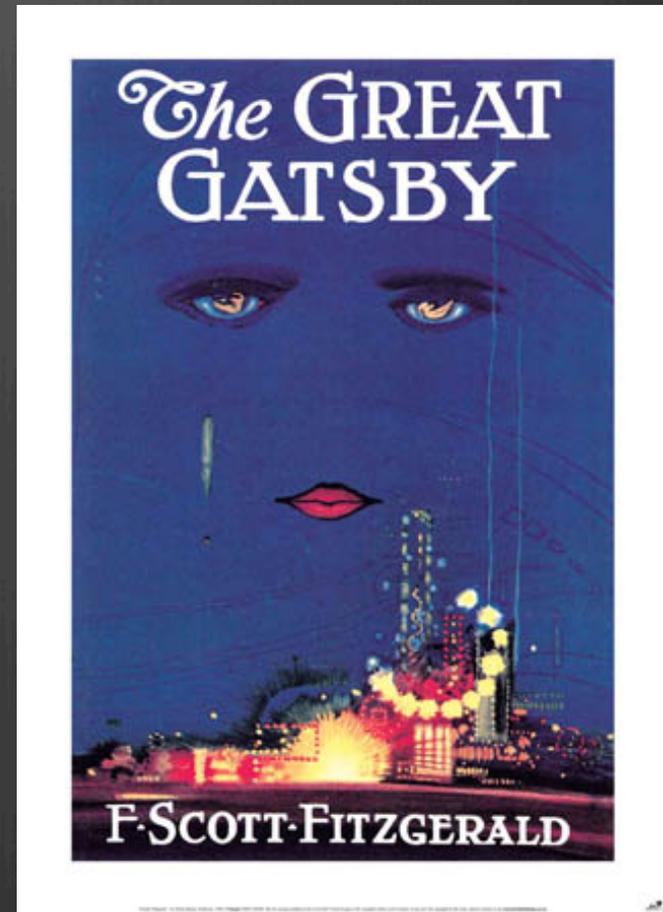
- ⊗ 1896-1940
- ⊗ Born in St. Paul, Minnesota
- ⊗ The great chronicler of The Jazz Age
- ⊗ Leaves Princeton to join the Army in 1917
- ⊗ Meets Zelda Sayre—beautiful, talented, and wealthy
 - ⊗ This relationship provides a foundation for many of his novels
- ⊗ Becomes overnight sensation with *This Side of Paradise* (1920)
- ⊗ Dies in the grip of alcohol and depression...forgotten?

- ⊗ His novels tend to explore a particular theme
 - ⊗ A surface of wealth, glamour, and privilege
 - ⊗ An undercurrent of deception, depression, and insecurity
- ⊗ Some scholars say that our notion of the American Dream can be traced to the many themes and ideas of this one book
 - ⊗ Rags to Riches Story
 - ⊗ Myth of the Self-Made Man
 - ⊗ Triumph of Capitalism
 - ⊗ Romance of “Stuff”
 - ⊗ “Only In America” Attitude
 - ⊗ A Fresh Start; A New Beginning; A New Identity



The Great Gatsby

- ⊗ Published 1925
- ⊗ The “Great American Novel”
- ⊗ A Perfect Reflection of Its Age
- ⊗ A Tale of
 - ⊗ *Myth*
 - ⊗ *Romance*
 - ⊗ *Illusion*
- ⊗ In Short—An American Tale



People to Watch

- ⊗ Nick Carraway: Originally from the Midwest, Nick is the narrator of the novel and neighbor to Gatsby
- ⊗ Jay Gatsby: Mysterious and elusive millionaire (“new money”), we learn about Gatsby primarily through others
- ⊗ Daisy Buchanan: Cousin to Nick and wife of Tom
- ⊗ Tom Buchanan: Arrogant, insecure, and racist, Tom (who comes from “old money”) is the husband of Daisy and neighbor to Gatsby
- ⊗ Jordan Baker: Daisy’s longtime friend

Things to Look For

⊗ Symbolism

- ⊗ The “green light”
- ⊗ The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg

⊗ Motifs

- ⊗ “Old sport”
- ⊗ Yawning
- ⊗ Second-hand news
- ⊗ Paradoxical or Implausible sentences

⊗ Tone and Style

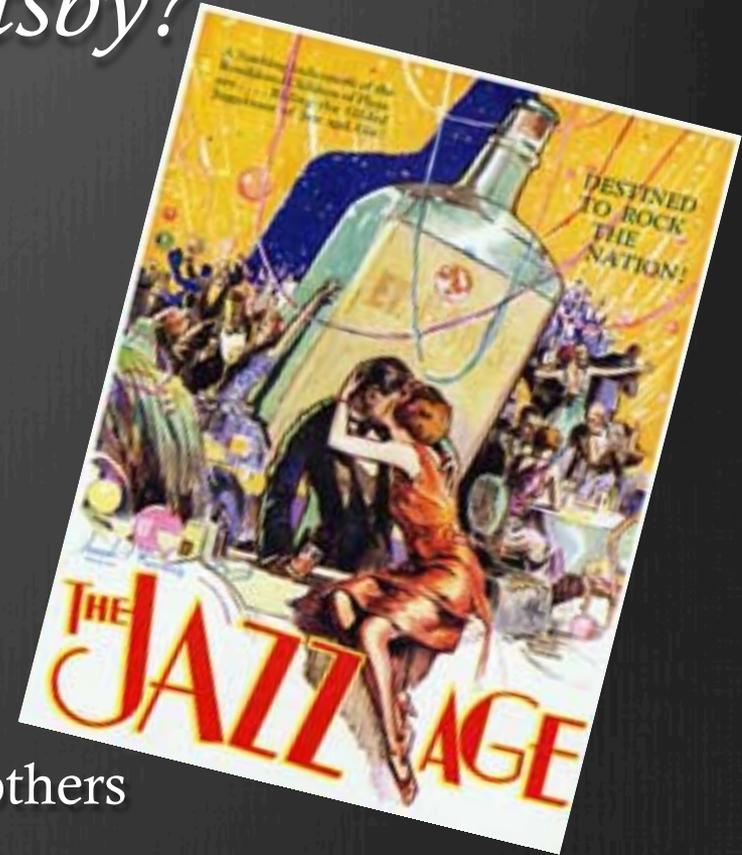
- ⊗ The “dim and hazy,” boozy, almost surreal feel of the book, the characters, and this entire era

It's All about Belief

- ⊗ Belief is the controlling force behind this story
 - ⊗ The ability to persuade others to believe
 - ⊗ Our desire—in many cases, our *need*—to believe
- ⊗ Reality rests not on truth, but on what we *believe* to be true
- ⊗ Belief shapes our identity and our destiny
 - ⊗ What we believe happened in the past
 - ⊗ What we believe we are experiencing in the present
 - ⊗ What we believe we can have in the future
- ⊗ Belief is at the center of the novel's biggest paradox: Gatsby believes that he can both escape *and* recapture his past at the same time. But are we any different?

Chapters 1-3: Myth *Who Is Jay Gatsby?*

- ❉ Mysterious and elusive
- ❉ German Spy?
- ❉ Bootlegger?
- ❉ Oxford Man?
- ❉ Owns a great mansion in West Egg
- ❉ Throws elaborate parties
- ❉ We learn about Gatsby only through others
 - ❉ *there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life ... an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person...*





- ❁ Is Gatsby a 20th century Ben Franklin?
 - ❁ Self-Made Man
 - ❁ Rags to Riches
 - ❁ A man who crafts and sculpts his life into a great success
- ❁ But Gatsby's story is very different from Franklin's prescribed plan of hard work, moderation, and virtue
- ❁ Gatsby constructs himself out of magic, mirrors, and smoke

Chapters 4-6: Romance

What Does Gatsby Want?

- ⊗ Everything Gatsby is, everything Gatsby does, is to recapture one singular lost moment from his past
 - ⊗ It is on that one moment that his future hinges
 - ⊗ It is in that one moment that his present is defined
- ⊗ What drives Gatsby?
 - ⊗ Money? Ambition? Hope? Nostalgia? Love? Acceptance?
- ⊗ Has he achieved the American Dream?
- ⊗ What defines the American Dream?

Chapters 7-9: Illusion

Can the Romance Survive Reality?

- ⊗ Is the American Dream a reality?
 - ⊗ Or is it the chase that fascinates us and occupies a lifetime?
- ⊗ Is the American Dream a lie?
 - ⊗ Does it exist outside the what we hear, read, and see in the media?
- ⊗ Can the “dream” survive the “reality”?
 - ⊗ Can reality ever live up to our dreams?
 - ⊗ And if so, can we sustain it?
- ⊗ Or is the American Dream simply an American *Illusion*?