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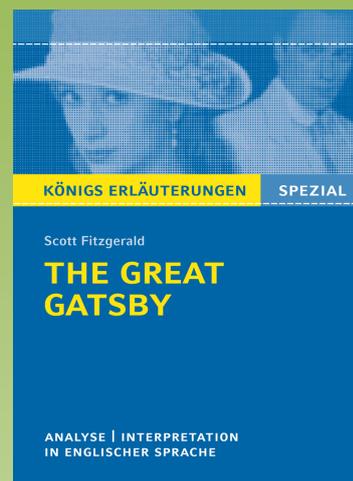
Unterrichtsmaterialien in digitaler und in gedruckter Form

## Auszug aus:

*Interpretation zu Fitzgerald, F. Scott - The Great Gatsby*

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## 1. AT A GLANCE – THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS

In order for readers to be able to find the most relevant sections quickly and easily, here is a summary and overview of the following book:

Part 2 is an introduction to the author and his works and the contemporary world.

- ⇨ p. 11 ff. → F. Scott Fitzgerald lived 1896–1940 and was considered the chronicler of the Jazz Age.
- ⇨ p. 14 ff. → The 1920s were a period of rapid and profound changes in American society, industry, culture and commercial life.
- ⇨ p. 26 ff. → He wrote novels and short stories about the society around him: his main themes included the promise of youth and the despair of age, and love and wealth.

Part 3 offers analyses and interpretations of various elements of the novel.

### ***The Great Gatsby* – Origins and Sources**

- ⇨ p. 33 ff. → The book was published in 1925.
- It was inspired in part by time the Fitzgeralds spent living on Long Island.
- The book picked up on themes which Fitzgerald had been writing about in his earlier novels and stories.
- During the writing process Fitzgerald knew that *The Great Gatsby* would be his most important work.

### Summaries

The novel is set on Long Island, New York, and tells the story, narrated by Nick Carraway, of mysterious millionaire Jay Gatsby and his love for Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby and Daisy had been in love before the First World War. During the war they lost contact and Daisy married Tom, a wealthy and brutal womaniser. As Nick discovers during the summer of 1922, Gatsby came from poor origins and changed his identity as a boy. He became wealthy in order to become worthy of Daisy. When the two of them are reunited and begin an affair, Gatsby and Tom confront each other. Daisy chooses Tom. Daisy accidentally kills Tom's mistress Myrtle in a motor accident and Myrtle's husband takes revenge by killing Gatsby, whom Tom has told him is responsible. At the end of the novel Tom and Daisy have disappeared and Nick organises Gatsby's lonely funeral before returning to his home in the Midwest, shocked and disappointed by all he has witnessed. ⇨ p.38 ff.

### Structure

The novel is narrated two years after the events by one of the characters, and therefore has an unusually complex narrative structure. Readers are encouraged to assess the events and the characters from different perspectives. This structure allows the author to use various voices and viewpoints in telling the story. Fitzgerald, writing "through" Nick, is able to give the novel a circular framework. Nick's distanced yet participatory role in the novel also complicates the structure, as there is no clear centre, and the roles of the characters within the novel are subject to interpretation. ⇨ p.59 ff.

**Characters – Constellations and Characteristics****The main characters:**

⇒ p. 69 ff.

**Nick Carraway**

the narrator: distant cousin to Daisy, familiar with Tom from their time in college, romantically involved with Jordan, and by the end of the novel Gatsby's only friend. Nick witnesses Gatsby and Daisy's reunion and the tragedies that follow, with the deaths of Gatsby, Myrtle and George. He returns to the Midwest, disturbed by the world of the East.

⇒ p. 71 ff.

**Jay Gatsby**

born James Gatz, he tried to escape his poor origins by becoming Jay Gatsby. He learned how to be rich from Dan Cody, fell in love with Daisy after enlisting to serve in World War I, and when he returned became wealthy distributing illegal alcohol across the country. He wins Daisy briefly but she returns to Tom, and Gatsby is then killed by George Wilson in a case of mistaken identity.

⇒ p. 75 ff.

**Daisy Buchanan**

beautiful and wealthy, Daisy was in love with Gatsby before the war, but was unwilling or unable to wait for him and married Tom Buchanan. She accidentally kills Myrtle Wilson while driving Gatsby's car.

⇒ p. 78 ff.

**Tom Buchanan**

an arrogant, wealthy, brutish bigot, Tom is having an affair with Myrtle Wilson. When Gatsby challenges him for Daisy, Tom persuades her to stay with him because they share a bond which Gatsby, coming from the lower classes, can never understand. He directs the vengeful George towards Gatsby.

**Jordan Baker**

⇒ p. 81 f.

a friend of Daisy and Tom, and Nick's lover. Jordan is a cool, modern woman, a professional golfer, and fundamentally dishonest.

**Myrtle Wilson**

⇒ p. 82 f.

frustrated and lonely, Myrtle is having an affair with Tom. She is killed by Daisy driving Gatsby's car.

**George Wilson**

⇒ p. 84 f.

runs a garage in an industrial wasteland. He is exhausted and poor and longs to escape to a better life in the West. After Myrtle is killed he takes revenge by killing Gatsby and then commits suicide.

**Other characters:**

⇒ p. 85 ff.

Henry Gatz – James Gatz's father

Dan Cody – The wealthy adventurer who inspired James Gatz to become Jay Gatsby

Meyer Wolfshiem – A gambler in New York who helped Gatsby establish his illegal business

"Owl Eyes" – A man who attends Gatsby's parties and funeral

Michaelis – A friend of George Wilson

Catherine – Myrtle's sister

**Notes on Themes**

Here are notes on the major themes in the novel with quotations and brief analyses: ⇒ p. 91 ff.

→ America and the American Dream

→ Society and wealth

→ The Jazz Age: the modern world

→ Desire and the past

→ Vision

### Style and Language

⇨ p. 115 ff.

Fitzgerald has always been praised as a writer whose language is unusually rich and evocative. In *The Great Gatsby* he makes excellent use of diverse “voices” and tones, as well as intricate imagery, to enhance and deepen the ideas he is expressing.

- Seasons and other imagery and symbolism
- Ambiguity
- Colour symbolism
- Narrative tone

### Approaches to Interpretation

⇨ p. 126 ff.

Here is a brief look at three major themes focussed on by literary studies on *The Great Gatsby*.

- Gender roles
- American identity and the myths of The Frontier
- The modern world



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