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## CHAPTER 8

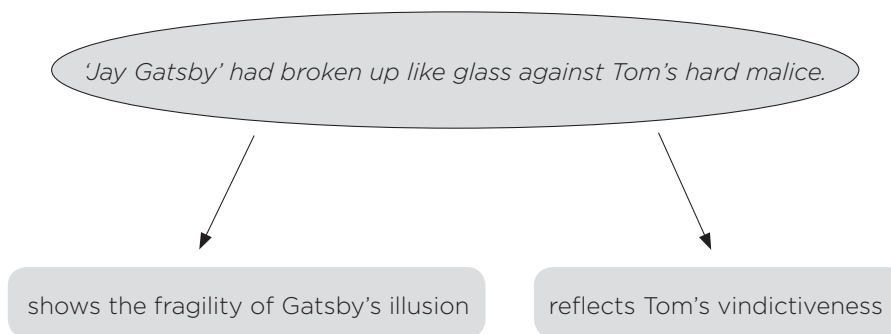
### THE REST OF GATSBY'S STORY

#### Plot

This chapter relates the final destruction of Gatsby's dream. He tells Nick the rest of his story, and Nick gives his final judgement of Gatsby. The world of the valley of ashes invades Gatsby's world in the person of George Wilson.

#### Symbolism/imagery

Nick uses evocative images to talk about Gatsby's dream, his *secret extravaganza*. He describes how reality shatters Gatsby's world of illusion:



#### Looking at the text

1. Why does Nick talk of *grotesque reality* in the opening sentence of the chapter? Comment on the irony of these words in your answer.
2. Write a brief summary of the movements of George Wilson from the moment he leaves the garage.
3. What evidence does Wilson offer to support the idea that Myrtle is having an affair?
4. Find evidence that Nick is unequivocally on Gatsby's side.
5. Gatsby's comment *In any case ... it was just personal* baffles both Nick and the reader. What does it suggest about Gatsby's character?
6. Read the paragraph *The track curved ... and the best, forever*, which is similar in style and impact to the closing paragraphs of the novel. How does this paragraph relate to the theme of time?
7. Contrast the behaviour of Nick and Daisy towards Gatsby.

When Wilson says that Myrtle *couldn't fool God*, Michaelis is shocked to see Wilson, deranged by grief and shock, staring at the billboard of the eyes of Dr T.J. Eckleburg. The symbolic world of the valley of ashes is a godless place, a moral wasteland where nothing good can survive. Gatsby and Wilson become casualties of the moral carelessness of the *foul dust*.

## Character

Let's take a look at Nick's relationship with Jordan Baker:

- ▶ Nick is *annoyed* that Jordan has left Daisy's home. We see his determination to remain with Gatsby, and to offer whatever comfort he can. As a man of *essential decency*, he is disappointed that Jordan cannot do the same for her friend, Daisy.
- ▶ We also note that although Nick says that he wishes to see Jordan, he declines her suggestion that they meet that afternoon. He is emotionally disengaging from someone whom he sees as superficial.
- ▶ When the conversation peters out, Nick acknowledges that he didn't care. Against the enormity of the collapse of Gatsby's dream, Nick cannot pursue trivial, and essentially meaningless, relationships.

## The end of Gatsby's story

Focus on the image of Gatsby on the steps of his house, raising his hand in farewell.

8. Why does Nick recall a similar image from three months previously?
9. Why does Nick mention the *gorgeous pink rag of a suit* here?
10. Comment on the irony of Gatsby's *incorruptible dream*.
11. In the paragraphs dealing with Gatsby's killing, Nick imagines how Gatsby must feel in a world without Daisy. Discuss the emotive effect of these words: *He must have ... shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the ... grass.*
12. Ironically, George Wilson, who looks as though *there was not enough of him for his wife*, is filled with determination to avenge Myrtle's death. Discuss the impact of the description of George as *that ashen, fantastic figure* who glides out of the trees towards Gatsby.
13. Gatsby's body is called an *accidental burden*. To which theme does this refer? Explain your answer.
14. In what way is Gatsby's death an anticlimax?

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The word *holocaust* - meaning wholesale sacrifice or destruction - is used to describe the deaths of Gatsby and George Wilson. Today, *holocaust* has specific connotations of Hitler's massacre of the Jews during World War II, but this happened long after the novel was written. In this holocaust, the following things have been lost:

- ▶ Three lives have been destroyed.
- ▶ Nick has lost the enthusiasm and hope with which he embraced his new life in the East. He now feels old and disillusioned.

## Character and theme

In his role as narrator, Nick completes the story of the Gatsby/Daisy romance for us. Read the section *It was this night ... while he was still at Oxford*.

1. What is the *indiscernible barbed-wire* that kept people like Gatsby away from a *nice girl* like Daisy? (3)
2. Read the sentence *There was a ripe mystery ... were scarcely withered*.
  - 2.1 Explain why Gatsby is so fascinated by Daisy's home. (3)
  - 2.2 Link these examples of diction with the character of Daisy: *ripe mystery, gay and radiant, fresh and breathing*. (3)
3. Explain why Gatsby needed to possess Daisy physically. (2)
4. Gatsby had intended that his liaison with Daisy would be a casual sexual encounter. What changed this perception of Daisy for him? Comment on theme and imagery in your answer. (5)
5. The sentence *Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware ... of the poor* contrasts the lives of the rich and the poor. With close reference to the text, explain this contrast in your own words. (4)
6. Write down a few words of your own to describe the tone of Gatsby's description of his last afternoon with Daisy, and explain your choice of words. (3)
7. Why was Daisy not able to remain faithful to the love she and Gatsby shared? (3)
8. Gatsby tells Nick that he allowed Daisy to believe *that he was fully able to take care of her*. This is a critical comment in our understanding of Daisy's character. How does this comment help us to understand Daisy's relationship with - and ultimate choice of - Tom? (4)

**(30 marks)**



A still from the 1949 film production of *The Great Gatsby*.