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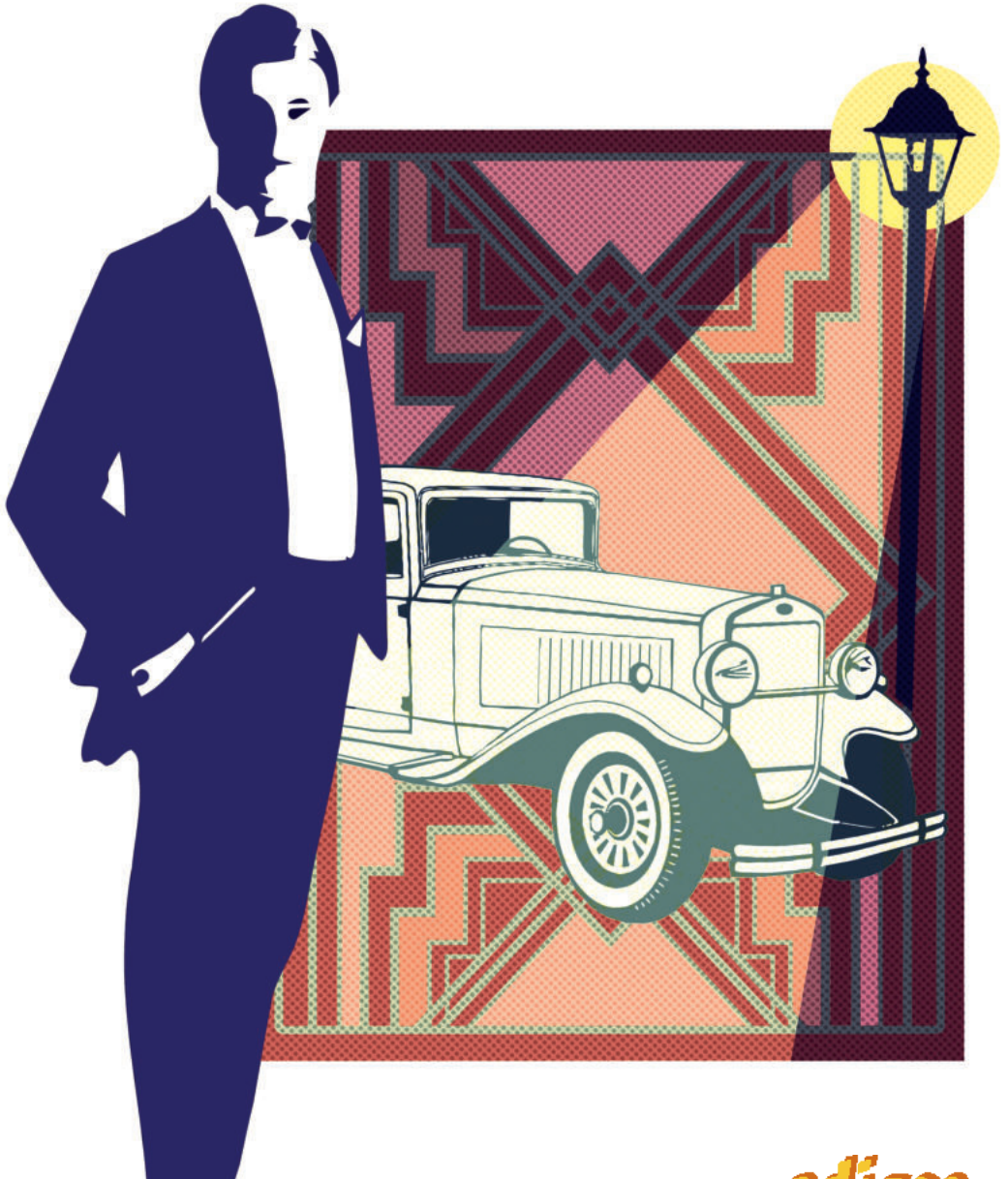


B2 (Vantage)

R A I N B O W S

The Great Gatsby

Francis Scott Fitzgerald



edisco



R A I N B O W S

Francis Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby

Adaptation, dossiers and activities by
Cristina Gioli



edisco

The Great Gatsby

Project editor: Manuela Barbero

Revisor: Annabel Pope

Cover: Mauro Borgarello

Design: Manuela Piacenti

Quality controller: Lunella Luzi

Page layout: Studio Pattern, Torino

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Our email address: info@edisco.it

Our website address: www.edisco.it

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Via Pastrengo 28

10128 Torino (Italy)

Tel. (+39) 011.547880

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The Author

Francis Scott Fitzgerald



Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A. and came from a middle-class family. He attended Princeton University, but he never took his degree, leaving university in 1917 to enlist in the army. He was sent to a training camp in Alabama, but the 1st World War ended while he was still there, so he never went to Europe to fight.

While he was in Alabama, Fitzgerald met Zelda Sayre, a young and beautiful socialite¹, daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. They fell passionately in love, but she refused to marry him because he was poor. In order to earn money, Fitzgerald moved to New York, where he only found a badly paid job in advertising.

In 1920, however, he completed his first novel, ***This Side of Paradise***, a portrait of young people's lifestyle at the beginning of the 1920s – *The Roaring Twenties*, as they were later called, or *The Jazz Age*, as Fitzgerald himself called the period. The book was an immediate success; it gave him money and also the girl he loved. In fact, one week after the novel was published, he and Zelda Sayre were married.

Thanks to the royalties² and to the very well-paid short stories that he contributed to magazines, the Fitzgeralds were able to live expensively and glamorously. For a while they settled on Long Island, New York, in a large house where they led a frenetic social life, drinking too much and throwing extravagant parties, like the ones described in ***The Great Gatsby***.

During the 1920s, they became a sort of living legend, the personification of that Jazz Age that Fitzgerald was describing in his writings. Although he was living a very disorderly life, in fact, he was writing constantly, to earn the money which was necessary for their

1. *socialite*: someone who is famous because they attend many upper-class social events.

2. *royalty*: the payment made to a writer for each copy of his work sold.

lifestyle. His earnings were very good, but the money was never enough, and they were always in debt.

In 1920, his first collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosophers*, appeared. In 1922 he published another collection of stories, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, and his second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*. This shows the decadence of a generation who have lost all ideals, and whose only purpose is living for pleasure, which can be obtained only through money.

The Fitzgeralds were restless³ and in 1924 they moved to Europe, where they remained for more than two years, mostly in Paris and the French Riviera.

In 1925 he published *The Great Gatsby* – his masterpiece and probably the best fictional analysis of the Jazz Age – while they were staying in Paris. There, he made friends with writer Ernest Hemingway and also with other members of the community of expatriate⁴ writers and artists who lived there.

The following years marked the beginning of Fitzgerald and Zelda's decline. He became more and more addicted to alcohol, while she started to have mental problems that made hospitalization necessary. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and from 1934 to 1947, the year of her death, she spent most of her life in sanatoriums⁵.

In 1934 Fitzgerald published *Tender Is the Night*, which, unlike the previous works, was not a success. In it, he spoke of rich people on the French Riviera, but times had changed: now America was experiencing *The Great Depression*⁶ and people were no longer interested in those themes.

Since he needed money desperately to pay for Zelda's treatment, he signed a contract as a scriptwriter for Metro-Goldwin-Mayer. He moved to Hollywood, where he worked on fourteen films and started writing another novel, *The Last Tycoon*. However, this was never finished because on December 21, 1940, when he was only forty-four, he had a heart attack and died.



Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda

3. *restless*: unable to be quiet or still.
4. *expatriate*: someone who leaves their own country to live in another one.
5. *sanatorium*: a hospital for people who have chronic illnesses.
6. *The Great Depression*: in the U.S.A., a decade of poverty and unemployment, which began with the Wall Street Crash in 1929.



BEFORE READING

1 The story you are going to read is set in New York at the beginning of the 1920s. Surf the Internet to find the following information about New York City.

- a. Population today:
- b. Extension today:
- c. Who founded it and when:
- d. What its original name was:
- e. When it was renamed New York:
- f. How many boroughs (districts) it includes:
- g. What the boroughs are called:
- h. Where the immigrants arrived when they landed in America:

2 Read the description and describe the woman in the picture.

In the 1920s, fashionable young women were called *flappers*.

The American actress Louise Brooks (1906-1985) is considered a flapper icon. Her style was imitated and adopted by thousands of women.



The Great Gatsby

First Impressions

Chapter 1

When I was younger, my father gave me a piece of advice that I have always kept in mind.

“Whenever you want to criticize someone, think that maybe they haven’t had all the advantages that you’ve had!”

As a consequence of his advice, I’ve always tended to reserve my judgement on people. It is an attitude of tolerance which often attracted the intimate confessions of young men when I was in college, though I am sure that, in revealing their secrets, those young men conveniently¹ forgot to mention those pieces of information which showed them in a bad light.

However, I must admit that my tolerance has a limit. So, when I came back from the East² last autumn, I didn’t want to listen to the intimate revelations of people anymore. I was tired of the glimpses³ into the human heart that people had offered me in New York, and I realized that I had left the city because it didn’t have the same standards of morality as I had.

Only Gatsby was excluded from this reaction of mine, although he represented everything I had always hated. But Gatsby was special. There was something gorgeous about him: an extraordinary gift for hope and a romantic attitude to life that I have never found in anybody else. No, he was all right in the end.

I come from a rich family – the Carraways – who have lived in this Middle-Western⁴ city for three generations. My father still carries on the hardware⁵ business that my grandfather’s brother started in 1851. I graduated from Yale University in 1915 and a little later took part in the 1st World War.

1. *conveniently*: in a way that is suitable for your needs.
2. *the East*: the East Coast of the U.S.A. Here: the New York area.
3. *glimpse*: a very brief look at someone or something.

4. *Middle-Western*: referring to the north central area of the United States.
5. *hardware*: equipment and tools used in the house or the garden, usually made of metal.

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When I came back from the war, I was restless. Before going to Europe, the Middle-West had seemed to me the centre of the world, but after my return it looked like the remote edge of the universe. So, I decided to go East and learn the bond business⁶. My father agreed to finance me for a year, and I moved to New York permanently – I thought – in the spring of 1922.

I rented a house, an old bungalow which seemed to be made of cardboard⁷, for eighty dollars a month. I had an old car – a Dodge – and there was a Finnish woman who cleaned and made breakfast for me. I was a bit lonely at first, but the warm season and my optimism made me feel that life was beginning all over again.

There was so much to study! I bought a dozen books on banking and credit and put them on my shelf, where they shone all red and gold like new money, and I meant to read many other books as well.

The house I had rented was on Long Island, where there are, among other things, two strange formations of land. If seen from above, they look like two enormous eggs, separated by a small bay, the Long Island Sound⁸. They are called East Egg and West Egg. I lived in West Egg, the less fashionable of the two.

My little place was at the tip⁹ of the egg, between two enormous houses. The one on the right looked a bit like a French castle: it had a marble swimming pool, a tower on one side and more than forty acres¹⁰ of garden. It was Gatsby's house.

Across the bay I could see the white palaces of the more fashionable East Egg, where the story of that summer begins, on the evening when I went there to have dinner with Daisy and Tom Buchanan.

Daisy was my second cousin and I'd met Tom in college. At university, Tom had become famous as one of its strongest football

6. *the bond business*: the business of buying and selling bonds on a large scale. A bond is a document showing that you have lent money to a particular company or government, which will pay you back at a certain interest.

7. *cardboard*: hard paper, used to make boxes.

8. *sound*: here: a narrow area of sea surrounded by land.

9. *tip*: the pointed end of something.

10. *acre*: unit of land measurement, equal to 4.047 square meters.



"Where there's smoke there's fire."
by R. Patterson

players ever. His family were enormously rich and now he had moved East in the most luxurious style: he had brought down a number of horses from Chicago, for example.

I don't know why Daisy and Tom had moved East. I knew that they had spent a year in France for no particular reason and then they had moved here and there just to be with other people who played polo and were rich together.

Daisy told me on the telephone that this time it was a permanent change, but I felt that Tom would never really settle down. Anyway, on a warm windy evening, I drove to East Egg to see two old friends that I knew very little. Their house was a beautiful mansion in Georgian Colonial style overlooking the bay, with a garden which was a quarter of a mile long. Along the front of the house was a series of French windows¹¹, which were open and reflected the golden sunlight.

When I arrived, I saw Tom in riding clothes standing on the porch¹² with his legs apart. He had changed since university. He was now a strong man of thirty, with blond hair, a hard mouth and two arrogant eyes that gave an impression of aggressiveness. He had a powerful, muscular, almost cruel body. Even his voice, rough and loud, contributed to the same impression.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch, then we went inside. We walked through a high hall into a rosy-coloured room. The French windows were open, and a breeze blew the curtains like white sails, their moving shadows reflecting on the dark red rug.

Two young women, both dressed in white, were sitting on an enormous sofa. Their light dresses were also moving in the breeze, making them seem like birds which had just returned from a short flight around the house. Then Tom closed the windows and the wind stopped.

I didn't know the younger girl. She was lying on the sofa, completely still, with her chin raised, and she didn't take any notice of me. The other girl was Daisy, who leaned forward¹³ a

11. *French windows*:



12. *porch*: a covered area at the entrance of a building.

13. *to lean forward*: to move the top part of the body forward.



C. Mulligan and E. Debiki
as Daily and Jordan in the 2013 film adaptation by B. Luhrmann

little and then laughed a charming little laugh. I laughed too and went towards her. She held my hand for a moment, looking at me as if there was nobody else in the world she wanted to see so much. That was a way she had with people, a special ability to seduce.

She murmured¹⁴ that the name of the other girl was Baker. That was another of her ways – she murmured, and people had to lean towards her in order to hear. Miss Baker looked at me and then looked away again, completely uninterested. My cousin began to ask me a lot of questions in her low, charming voice. That was a voice which men found difficult to forget, because it seemed to contain a promise of many happy, exciting things to come. Her face was lovely and sad, with bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth.

I told her that I had stopped in Chicago on my way East and several people had sent their love through me.

“Do they miss me?” she asked.

“They are miserable. The whole town is in mourning¹⁵!”

“How lovely! I want to go back!” Then, she added, “You must see the baby, she’s three years old, but she’s sleeping now. She’s...”

Her husband, who had been walking up and down the room, interrupted her to ask me what I was doing in New York.

“I work in bonds”, I replied.

14. *murmur*: to say something very quietly.

15. *in mourning*: wearing black clothes to express sorrow for someone’s death.

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At that point, Miss Baker yawned and stood up. I liked looking at her. She was slim and small-breasted and held her body very straight. Her grey eyes looked at me with polite curiosity, her face was charming but didn't look happy. I thought that I had already seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere.

"I'm stiff¹⁶, she said, "I've been sitting on that sofa too long!"

Then she asked me,

"You live in West Egg, don't you? You must know Gatsby."

"Gatsby? What Gatsby?" asked Daisy.

Before I could reply that he was my neighbour, the butler¹⁷ announced dinner and we all went out to a porch, where the table had been set.

"We should arrange something," said Miss Baker yawning languidly.

"All right," said Daisy. "What shall we do?"

The conversation went on lightly and casually; sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at the same time, their eyes indifferent, showing no passion or desire.

"Civilization is going to pieces," said Tom suddenly. "I've become a terrible pessimist about everything! There is this book, *The Rise of the Coloured Empires*, which explains that the white race will be totally defeated if we don't look out. It's all scientific, you know."

"Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy ironically.

"It's our duty as dominant race to watch out, otherwise the other races will take control! *We* have produced all the things that make civilization..."

At that point the telephone rang and the butler went to answer. When he came back, he murmured something in Tom's ear. He got up and went inside without a word.

Daisy spoke again as if nothing had happened, but then, suddenly, she excused herself and went into the house. I turned to talk to Miss Baker, but she stopped me.

"Sh!" she said, leaning forward excitedly to listen to the murmur coming from the room. "I want to hear what happens."

16. *stiff*: rigid, not flexible.

17. *butler*: the most important servant in a house.

“Is something happening?” I asked innocently.

“Don’t you know? Tom’s got a woman in New York.”

Before I had time to answer, Tom and Daisy came back to the table.

“It couldn’t be helped¹⁸,” said Daisy. Then she added, “I looked outside for a minute and it’s so romantic, isn’t it, Tom?”

“Very romantic,” said Tom indifferently. Then to me, “Nick, after dinner I want to show you the horses.”

But he never showed me those horses; the telephone rang again insistently¹⁹. It was as if a fifth guest was present at the table, causing nervousness and embarrassment. After dinner, Tom and Miss Baker went back inside into the library, while Daisy led me to another porch.

We sat side by side and I saw violent emotions reflected on her lovely face.

“We don’t know each other very well, Nick,” she said. “You didn’t come to my wedding.”

“I wasn’t back from the war.”

“True. I’ve had a very bad time, Nick.”

I didn’t know what to say, so I tried asking something about her daughter. I thought it was a subject that might calm her down.

“Listen, Nick, would you like to know what I said when she was born?”

“Yes, very much.”

“Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom wasn’t there. I had just woken up from the anaesthetic and I felt completely abandoned. I asked the nurse if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, so I turned my head away and started to cry. Then I said I hoped



J. Edgerton as Tom in the 2013 film
adaptation by B. Lührman

18. *it couldn't be helped*: idiomatic expression meaning that an unpleasant situation – in this case

the telephone call – could not be avoided.

19. *insistently*: in a continuous way.

my baby would be a fool, a beautiful little fool, because that's the best thing a girl can be in this world."

Then she added,

"You see, I am pretty cynical²⁰ about everything. Everything's terrible, and I know, because I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything. You see, I'm sophisticated!"

She laughed and I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. That false smile on her lovely face made her seem part of an exclusive secret society to which she and Tom belonged.

When we went back inside, Tom and Miss Baker were sitting at the opposite ends of the long sofa. She was reading the newspaper aloud to him. She finished the article she was reading, then she stood up and said,

"Ten o'clock. Time for me to go to bed."

"Jordan's going to play in the golf tournament tomorrow, over at Westchester²¹," said Daisy.

I remembered, then, why her face was familiar. I had seen it many times on the pictures of sport newspapers. I had also heard some critical, unpleasant story about her, but I couldn't remember what it was.

"Good night," she said. "See you soon, Mr Carraway."

"She's a nice girl," said Tom after she had gone upstairs to bed.

"Is she from New York?" I asked.

"From Louisville²²," replied Daisy. "We spent our beautiful childhood there together, our beautiful white..."

"Did you give Nick a little confidential chat on the porch?" interrupted Tom. "Don't believe everything you hear, Nick!"

When I finally left, I felt confused and a little disgusted. It seemed to me that Daisy should have left that house, together with her daughter, but apparently, she had no intention of doing it. As for Tom, I was not surprised that he had "some woman in New York", or that he expressed old ideas borrowed from a racist²³ book.

20. *cynical*: not believing in human goodness or sincerity.

21. *Westchester*: a county in the state of New York.

22. *Louisville*: a big town in Kentucky.

23. *racist*: believing that other races are not as good as yours.



"I saw nothing except a single green light..."

It was summer already and it felt good outside. So, when I reached my house at West Egg, I sat down for a while in the garden. At a certain moment, I turned my head to follow a cat moving in the grass and I saw that I was not alone. In my neighbour's garden there was a man standing in the shadow, with his hands in his pockets. Something in his self-confident position and in his movements suggested that it must be the owner of the place, Mr Gatsby himself. I thought I might call out to him and introduce myself, but then I realised that maybe he didn't want to be disturbed. He had stretched his arms towards the water, and it seemed to me that he was trembling. I looked at the sea, too, but I saw nothing except a single green light, very small and far away, that probably marked the end of a dock²⁴. When I looked for Gatsby again, he had gone.

More or less in the middle between West Egg and New York there is a desolate area of land, where the waste of the big city is dumped²⁵ and burned; it is a valley of ashes²⁶. It is like a big farm where, instead of crops and hills and gardens, only ashes grow.

The road and the railway run along it, so, when you are on the train going to town, you can sometimes see men at work there. They raise clouds of grey ashes with their spades²⁷ and look grey, too, in the distance.

24. *dock*: a place where boats can land and be tied.

25. *dump*: to throw away quickly and carelessly.

26. *ashes*: the soft powder that remains after something has been burned.

27. *spade*:



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But above the grey land and the cloud of dust that covers it, you can also see the blue, gigantic eyes of Doctor T.J. Heckleburg, looking out of a pair of enormous yellow glasses, painted on a billboard²⁸. The ophthalmologist²⁹, who had wanted to advertise himself in that way, had probably moved away, and now the eyes, discoloured by time, seem to observe the ground below them.

There is a dirty, small river on one side of the valley of ashes, with a drawbridge³⁰ on which the train passes. When the drawbridge is up to let boats go under it, the train has to stop. There is always a halt of at least a minute, and it was because of this that I first met Tom Buchanan's lover.

Everybody in New York knew that he had one but, though I was curious to see her, I did not want to meet her. Tom, however, decided differently. One afternoon I went up to New York with Tom and, when the train stopped by the drawbridge, he jumped up, took me by the elbow and made me get off the train.

"I want you to meet my girl," he said.

It was Saturday afternoon and he had drunk too much at lunch; as a consequence, he was almost violent in his determination to have my company. I followed him and we walked for about a hundred metres. In front of us there was only a building, small and made of yellow bricks³¹, standing right on the edge of the valley of ashes. It contained three shops, one was for rent, another was a restaurant, the third was a garage. There was a sign over its door – *Repairs. GEORGE B. WILSON. Cars bought and sold.* – Tom went inside, and I followed him.

The interior looked poor and the only car that could be seen was an old dusty Ford in a corner. The owner came out of a door to greet us. He was blond and vaguely handsome, but he looked pale and tired. When he saw us, hope showed in his light blue eyes.

"Hello, Wilson," said Tom. "How's business?"

"I can't complain," answered Wilson, sounding insincere.

28. *billboard*: a very big board for showing advertisements in an outdoor area.

29. *ophthalmologist*: a doctor who cures eyes.

30. *drawbridge*:



31. *brick*:



“When are you going to sell me that car?”

“Next week; I’ve got a man working on it now.”

“He works rather slowly, doesn’t he?” Wilson said.

“No, he doesn’t,” answered Tom coldly. “But of course, if you don’t agree, I can sell it to somebody else.”

“I didn’t mean that, I just meant ...”

Wilson’s voice died down and Tom looked impatiently around the garage. Then, a woman entered the room. She looked about thirty-five and was rather heavy, although

she was quite sensual. There was no beauty in her face, but she seemed to have great vitality. She smiled and walked towards Tom, ignoring her husband as if he were a ghost. Then she shook Tom’s hand and wet her lips, looking him straight in the eyes.

“Get some chairs so we can sit down, won’t you?” she said to her husband.

“Oh, sure,” answered Wilson, hurrying towards the office.

“I want to see you,” Tom told her, while her husband was outside. “Get on the next train.”

“All right.”

So, we went to New York, Tom, his girl and I, although on different carriages³² on the train, so as not to attract attention. When we arrived, she bought some gossip magazines and some cosmetics, then she chose a taxi she liked and we got out of the station into the sunlight. Immediately, however, she made the taxi stop and leaned out of the window.



32. carriage: any of the different sections of a train in which the passengers sit.

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“I want to get one of those dogs,” she said, pointing at an old man, who had a basket full of little puppies for sale.

“Which one do you want, lady?” he asked when he was close to the car.

“I’d like to get a police dog.”

The man looked into the basket and pulled up a puppy by the back of the neck.

“That’s no police dog,” said Tom.

“Well, not exactly,” the man admitted, “but it has a very beautiful thick coat. This dog will never catch cold.”

“Oh, it’s so cute,” said Mrs Wilson enthusiastically. “How much is it?”

“It’s ten dollars.”

“Here’s your money,” said Tom, handing him a banknote. “Go and buy ten more dogs with it.”

By then I’d really had enough of them, so I asked to be left there, but they refused to let me go. Tom said Myrtle – that was her name – would be hurt if I didn’t go to the apartment, and she said she would telephone her sister Catherine to keep me company.

So, we arrived at an apartment on the top floor of a long row of apartment houses in 158th street. The living-room was so full of furniture that it was hard not to fall over it. There were gossip magazines on the table and the picture of a fat old lady on the wall.

As soon as we arrived, Tom took a bottle of whisky out of a locked cabinet and we started drinking. I must say that I have been drunk only twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon, so the events that followed are not completely clear in my mind.

Mrs Wilson sent the elevator boy to get some food for the puppy, then she called several people on the telephone and sent me to buy some cigarettes. When I came back, they had both disappeared into the bedroom, so I sat down in the living-room and read something that didn’t make any sense to me, maybe because of the whisky.

WORKING ON THE TEXT

1 Complete the following sentences with the appropriate character's name.

- a. was an arrogant man and a racist.
- b. left his hometown after fighting in the 1st World War.
- c. was very beautiful and had a charming voice.
- d. was a poor man who lived in the Valley of Ashes.
- e. worked in bonds.
- f. and wanted to go to the New York apartment with them.
- g. did not show any interest in Nick when she met him.

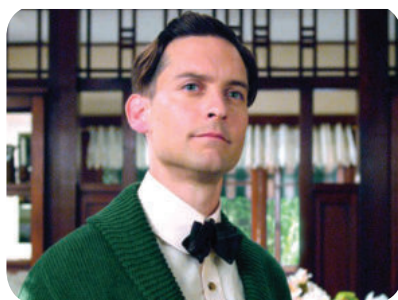
2 Complete the sentences, so as to make up a summary of the chapter.

- a. The narrator moved to New York from
- b. He was invited to dinner by
- c. Miss Baker told Nick that Tom
- d. The Waste Land was a desolate area of land where
- e. Doctor T.J. Heckleburg was
- f. Mr Wilson looked He owned a
- g. Myrtle Wilson was not beautiful but
- h. When they arrived at the apartment, Myrtle

WORKING ON VOCABULARY

3 Match each adjective to its antonym.

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| a. Tolerant | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Humble |
| b. Intimate | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Tiny |
| c. Gorgeous | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Close |
| d. Remote | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Dull |
| e. Enormous | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Intolerant |
| f. Arrogant | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Distant |



Tobey Maguire as Nick Carraway in the 2013 film adaptation by B. Lurhman

- 4 Use some of the adjectives above to complete the following sentences.
- Tom spoke and behaved in an way.
 - Nick and Daisy were cousins, but they did not have a relationship.
 - If compared to Daisy's house, Nick's place was really
 - Nick had a attitude to people.

WORKING ON GRAMMAR

- 5 *Reported Speech.* Turn the following sentences into reported speech.
- "Did you give Nick a little confidential chat?" asked Tom.
Tom asked Daisy
 - "You shouldn't believe everything you hear," he added.
He added that
 - "How's business, Wilson?" Tom asked.
Tom asked Wilson
 - "I can't complain," answered Wilson.
Wilson answered that
 - "I want to get one of those dogs," Myrtle said.
Myrtle said that
 - "Which one do you want, lady?" he asked.
He asked the lady
 - "How much is it?" she asked.
She asked



WORKING ON SKILLS

Listening



You will hear a passage about New York in the 1920's. Listen and complete the sentences.

- The end of World War I marked the beginning of in New York.
- The city was the point of from all over Europe.
- Ethnic neighbourhoods means neighbourhoods inhabited by people
- Harlem became the most important place of and blues.
- In, the 18th Amendment forbade and transportation of alcohol.
- Criminal gangs sold alcoholic drinks in called *speakeasies*.
- New York came to be known as the world
- This period saw also the building of

Writing

7

B2 First

Imagine you are Nick Carraway, recently arrived in New York. Write a letter to your parents using 140-190 words.

Tell them:

- how you have settled in the city;
- about your activities;
- about some people you have met there.

Speaking

8

The 1920s in the U.S.A. were also called *The Jazz Age* because that type of music was extremely popular. Work with a partner and talk together about the types of music which are popular now, especially among young people, and about the one you like best.

THE JAZZ AGE

In the U.S.A., the decade that goes from the end of the 1st World War in 1918, to 1929 has been called the “Roaring¹ Twenties”, because it was a period of prosperity and disorder, or the “Jazz Age”, because of the extreme popularity of this music genre. It was a period of great changes and violent contrasts. On the one hand, there was an economic boom and the middle classes enjoyed the highest standard of living ever, but on the other hand there was social unrest² and political repression. The lower classes, both in towns and in the country, fought against low salaries and low profits.



The changes involved every sector of society and also meant new morals and new patterns of behaviour. Young people rebelled against the rigid Puritanism of the previous generations, which had also imposed fixed roles for men and women. Women obtained the vote in 1920 and experienced greater independence, thanks also to the introduction of methods of birth control. They started to work outside the house and became more involved in politics.

Many young women, in particular, adopted an unconventional lifestyle, which at the time was considered scandalous and immoral. They were called “Flappers”. They abandoned the corset³ and wore short dresses – thus showing part of their legs – and high-heeled shoes. They used make-up and cut their hair short, usually in a bob⁴. Flappers drank alcohol, smoked in public, danced at jazz clubs and practised sexual freedom. Fitzgerald describes this new type of woman in *The Great Gatsby*.

1. *roaring*: loud and disorderly. Also: prosperous, successful.
2. *unrest*: a state of dissatisfaction involving protests and fighting between different groups.

3. *corset*:



4. *bob*: a hairstyle in which the hair is cut to neck length all around the head.

The period was also characterised by great technological progress. The diffusion of the assembly line⁵ method in industry, for example, led to the mass production and spread of automobiles and the consequent building of roads and highways. By the end of the decade, the radio was present in nearly every house and the movies had become an extremely popular form of entertainment.



Many people spent these years in a frenetic, thoughtless way, living for pleasure and trying to get rich – or richer. Millions of new investors invaded the stock⁶ market and unlimited credit could be obtained on almost all types of goods.

But the Jazz Age was also a period of reactionary politics and hostility towards the organisations of the workers – the Trade Unions. Throughout the U.S.A., the so called “Red scare”, that is, the fear of Socialism and Communism, was the cause of many attacks on radicals and of new anti-immigrant feelings. These were caused by the idea that the European immigrants brought with them dangerous radical doctrines, and this, in turn, led to new laws that severely limited immigration.

Racism rose; the members of the Ku Klux Klan, who primarily hated black people, but also Jews and Catholics, grew from a few thousand to several million.

In 1919 a new law introduced *Prohibition*, that is the prohibition to produce, sell and transport alcoholic drinks. Those who had wanted it had hoped to reduce the crime and violence connected with heavy drinking, but in practice the law was largely ignored. Moreover, it became an opportunity to make money for many criminal organisations which imported and sold bootleg⁷ alcohol illegally. The profits deriving from these activities were enormous. The rise of the bootlegging gangs led to a succession of gang wars and murders – not only in New York, but also in other cities.

The Jazz Age, this period of prosperity and wild excess, ended all of a sudden when the Stock Market in Wall Street collapsed in October 1929: stocks lost their value and billions of dollars were lost overnight, millions of investors were ruined, banks failed, factories were shut, unemployment and poverty spread. The Great Depression had begun and lasted for the next twelve years.

5. *assembly line*: a line of workers and machines in a factory, that progressively assemble a series of identical items.
6. *stock*: a share in the ownership of a

particular company that the public can buy as an investment.

7. *bootleg*: adjective used to describe something that is produced and sold illegally.



The Great Gatsby

A great classic of American literature. Through the rise and fall of a fascinating young man, the novel shows the decadence of the "Jazz Age" America of the 1920s. Both tragic, romantic hero and criminal, Gatsby believes that money is the key to reach success and happiness, but above all to make his impossible dream of love come true. Despite his faults, he is passionate and sincere, while the other characters move through life superficially, irresponsibly and seem incapable of real feelings. In this story, Fitzgerald presents us with all the contradictions of the period: the thoughtless way of living of the prosperous classes in the 1920s, the poverty of the lower classes and the illusory quality of the "American Dream".

beginner

- **A1** (Breakthrough)

elementary

- **A2** (Waystage)

pre-intermediate

- **B1** (Threshold)

✓ **intermediate**

- **B2** (Vantage)

post-intermediate

- **C1** (Effectiveness)

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Trinity:	Grade 7, 8 / ISE II
City & Guilds (Pitman):	Intermediate
ESB:	Intermediate 2, 3
Edexcel:	Intermediate

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