

# Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

## Vocabulary

abyss - (n) a deep hole, canyon, or chasm

aesthetic - (adj) relating to beauty and art; relating to the study of beauty

ambiguous - (adj) having two or more potential meanings; unclear

ambivalent - (adj) having two or more feelings about a subject; having mixed emotions

amorphous - (adj) lacking definite form; shapeless

*On planet Pudding, Captain Kirk wrestled with an amorphous blob.*

antecedent - (n) a past circumstance, event, object, style, phenomenon; an ancestor

*A pronoun should agree in number with its antecedent, the word to which it refers.*

append - (v) to add as a supplement; to attach or suspend as a pendant

benediction - (n) literally "a good word"--a blessing

chafe - (v) to make sore by rubbing; to irritate, annoy

*The troops chafed under the orders of General Deathear.*

complacent - (adj) pleased, content, or satisfied, especially with oneself or one's circumstances, often without awareness of potential danger

*The nation grew complacent due to its enormous wealth, but signs of decay were all around.*

confound - (v) to perplex, bewilder, or confuse

*"This math problem confounds me," Billy Thoughtful said.*

corroborate - (v) to confirm, verify, authentic, or make more certain

*The custodian's testimony corroborated the ex-con's story.*

debauchee - (n) a person who is debauched - (To be debauched is to display the effect of excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures like drinking and fornication)

deflower - (v) to deprive a woman of virginity, to ravish, to violate; to despoil of freshness, beauty, or sanctity

defunct - (adj) no longer in effect or use; dead

dilatory - (adj) inclined to delay or procrastinate; tardy, not prompt

discreet - (adj) tactfully selective in sharing information

dishevelled - (adj) unkempt; disordered; disarranged

dissension - (n) strong disagreement, contentiousness, or discord

distraught - (adj) deeply agitated or upset; distracted and bewildered

dog days - (n) hot days in August in the Northern Hemisphere when Sirius (the "dog star") is up

eddy - (n) a small whirlpool of water, air, gas, etc., though usually water

elemental - (adj) starkly simple, primitive, or basic; relating to unadulterated nature or first principles

ennui - (n) boredom; weariness or discontent as a result of satiety or lack of interest

euphemism - (n) any word, phrase, or expression substituted for one deemed offensively harsh or blunt.  
*To "pass away" is a euphemism for "to die."*

fantastic - (adj) imaginary, not real

fay - (n) a fairy

florid - (adj) having a red complexion, ruddy; having a flowery, ornate style

foil - (n) a person or character that makes another seem better by contrast; a contrasting character in literature.  
*Creon is Oedipus' foil in Sophocles' great play Oedipus Rex.*

fractious - (adj) quarrelsome; unruly

fragile - (adj) delicate; easily broken

garrulous - (adj) excessively talkative

gibberish - (n) nonsense; mumbo-jumbo

gilt - (adj) golden; covered with gold (also gilded)

grail - (n) a cup or chalice, which according to medieval legend was used by Jesus at the Last Supper

harlequin - (n) a buffoon-like comic character in a commedia dell'arte dressed in multicolored, triangulated tights (adj) fancifully varied in color, decoration, etc.

hauteur - (a) haughtiness (condescension; looking down upon someone or something)

hedonist - (n) one who is devoted to sensual pleasure as a way of life

incarnation - (n) literally meaning "in the flesh," an incarnation is the assumption of human form by a divine being

incredulous - (adj) disinclined to believe; skeptical; not credulous

indignant - (adj) expressive of anger or outrage at a perceived injustice

ineffable - (adj) beyond words, incapable of being expressed

inept - (adj) not skillful at a particular activity

insidious - (adj) operating inconspicuously but to grave effect

insolent - (adj) saucily disrespectful, impudent; brazen; overbearing

intimation - (n) a hint or suggestion

inviolable - (adj) free from injury; not violated (i.e. not raped); not desecrated

jauntily - (adv) in a sprightly, easy manner

laudable - (adj) praiseworthy

libertine - (n) one who is morally or sexually unrestrained

lucid - (adj) clear in thought or expression

magnanimous - (adj) generous in forgiving an insult or injury; high-minded, noble

meretricious - (adj) from the Latin meretrix (prostitute) - alluringly showy and flashy,  
but false

nebulous - (adj) hazy, cloudy, foggy; vague, indistinct

nostalgia - (n) sentimental longing for the past

pap - (n) a teat, nipple

pasquinade - (n) a satire or lampoon, especially one published in a public place

poignant - (adj) strongly affecting or moving the emotions

portentous - (adj) suggestive of something about to happen, especially something  
negative

precipitately - (adv) prematurely, hastily, or rashly carried out

prig - (n) one who demands of others pointlessly precise conformity or propriety,  
especially in a self-righteous manner

prodigal - (adj) wastefully or recklessly extravagant; giving or yielding profusely  
(n) a person who spends his money or substance wastefully

prosaic - (adj) the opposite of poetic, hence matter-of-fact, direct; dull, unimaginative

protégé - (n) a person under the patronage or care of someone interested in his career  
or welfare

provincial - (adj) not sophisticated, not cosmopolitan, not urbane; from the provinces

punctilious - (adj) extremely attentive to details, particulars, and fine points, often in  
the observance of formalities of conduct and action

rancour - (n) bitter, rankling resentment or ill will

redolent - (adj) fragrant; having a pleasant odor

reproach - (n) an expression of blame or censure (v) to find fault with; to upbraid

reverie - (n) a waking dream, a daydream

romantic - (adj) fanciful, imaginary, fictitious; dominated by idealism; unpractical,

unrealistic; preoccupied with love

row - (n) (rhymes with cow) a noisy dispute or quarrel

sage - (adj) wise; judicious (n) a profoundly wise person

satiate - (v) to supply to excess, to glut, surfeit; to satisfy to the full

sea-change - (n) any momentous or striking change

sentiment - (n) a feeling

skepticism - (n) doubt; the questioning of purported fact, particularly in matters of religion

sober - (adj) not drunk, not inebriated; calmly thoughtful

somnambulatory - (adj) relating to sleepwalking

subterfuge - (n) an artifice or expedient used to evade a rule, escape punishment, avoid censure, or hide something.

supercilious - (adj) haughtily disdainful or contemptuous

superfluous - (adj) more than is needed; unnecessary

suppress - (v) to hold down or put down

synesthesia - (n) mixing of sensory perception, as in red music

Teutonic - (adj) Germanic; Northern European

transitory - (adj) not lasting, not permanent, not eternal; short-lived, fleeting, ephemeral

truculent - (adj) fierce, cruel, savagely brutal

tumultuous - (adj) chaotic; full of tumult (wild activity)

turgid - (adj) swollen, distended, tumid; inflated, overblown, or pompous

vestige - (n) a trace or remnant of something no longer present or in existence; a very slight amount of something

*Every last vestige of hope was lost when Ninna saw the toy boat sinking.*

vicarious - (adj) not directly participating in

*Reading is a vicarious experience--you live other people's lives while laying on a couch.*

vigil - (n) wakefulness maintained during sleeping hours, especially for religious reasons

vacuous - (adj) empty; devoid of meaning

*"I'm tired of hearing a bunch of vacuous ideas bandied about by idiots," said Bruiser Bob Congressmender.*

# Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

## Issues

As you read The Great Gatsby, look for the following:

- contrasts, including the following:

- appearance/reality
- East/West
- free will/determinism
- Gatsby's mansion/Tom's mansion
- light/dark (what is the Latin for light?)
- masculinity/femininity
- mystical/mundane
- natural/artificial
- Old World/New World
- order/chaos
- past/future
- planning/spontaneity
- poetic/prosaic
- spiritual/material
- stasis/flux
- subjective time/objective time
- truth/lies
- up/down
- youth/age

- repeated images, phrases, metaphors, and issues, including but not limited to the following:

- alcohol
- allusions, stated or implied to: David Belasco, Wild Bill Cody, Ben Franklin, Midas, James J. Hill, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Maceanas, Jesus Christ, Greek Sirens, Warren G. Harding
- automobiles
- birth imagery
- Broadway
- capitalism
- children (compared to dogs)
- colors, especially green, gold (yellow), gray, and white
- death/resurrection
- dust/powder/ash
- eggs
- femme fatales (women who destroy men)
- football/sports
- friends
- funerals
- ghosts
- housekeeping
- July 4
- military metaphors
- music/song/dance
- nautical (sailing) matters
- pathetic fallacy
- religion/ethics/religious images
- sexual double-standard
- sight/vision
- social class/race issues
- stocks and bonds
- T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land
- water/names of bodies of water
- World War I