The Great Gatsby: Quotations

_The Great Gatsby_ (1925) is one of the greatest American classics. The novel was written in Paris by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and it has come to be seen as a representation of the Jazz Age. _The Great Gatsby_ relates the story of Jay Gatsby—as told by Nick Carraway. Here are a few quotes from Fitzgerald’s _Great Gatsby._

**Quotes**

- "Whenever you feel like criticizing any one...just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "In two weeks it'll be the longest day in the year... Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "Civilization's going to pieces. I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things... The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be--will be utterly submerged... It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool... You see, I think everything's terrible anyhow... And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "All right... I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "a single green light, minute and faraway, that might have been the end of a dock."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 1

- "This is a valley of ashes--a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, _The Great Gatsby_, Ch. 2
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"I belong to another generation... As for me, I am fifty years old, and I won't impose myself on you any longer."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 4

"A phrase began to beat in my ears with a sort of heady excitement: 'There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the tired.'"
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 4

"Gatsby, pale as death, with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets, was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"It makes me sad because I've never seen such - such beautiful shirts before."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay... You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"One thing's sure and nothing's surer/ The rich get richer and the poor get - children./ In the meantime,/ In between time--"
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams--not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 5

"His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people--his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God... and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6

"It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6

"She was appalled by West Egg... by its raw vigor that chafed... and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6
• "He wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6

• "Can't repeat the past?... Why of course you can!"
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6

• "He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 6

• "Daisy and Jordan lay upon an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "It occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so profound as the difference between the sick and the well. Wilson was so sick that he looked guilty."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "There is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind, and as we drove away Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic. His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate, were slipping precipitately from his control."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "I love New York on summer afternoons when everyone's away. There's something very sensuous about it - overripe, as if all sorts of funny fruits were going to fall into your hands."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "With every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, despairingly, toward that lost voice across the room."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning briefcase of enthusiasm, thinning hair. But there was Jordan beside me, who, unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age..."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

• "So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight."
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7
"Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table... They weren't happy... yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 7

"It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy—-it increased her value in his eyes."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 8

"God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!"
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 8

"He must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about...like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 8

"He had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise, and when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall... his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

"When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different... I stuck with them to the end... Let us learn to show friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

"After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction. So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy--they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money of their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

"Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his
capacity for wonder."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

- "And as I sat there, brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out Daisy's light at the end of his dock. He had come such a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close he could hardly fail to grasp it. But what he did not know was that it was already behind him, somewhere in the vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

- "Filled with faces dead and gone. Filled with friends gone now forever. I can't forget so long as I live the night they shot Rosy Rosenthal there....they shot him three times in the belly and drove away."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

- "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all--Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9

- "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And one fine morning-- So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. 9