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Great gatsby chapter 8 summary litcharts

Great gatsby chapter 8 summary and analysis. Good to great chapter 8 summary.

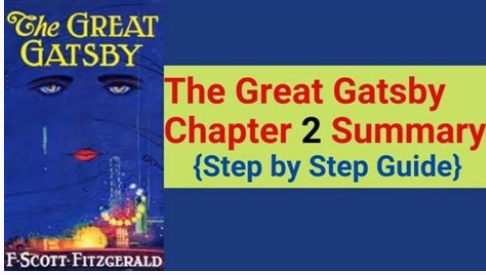
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 Jazz Age novel about the impossibility of recapturing the past, was initially a failure. Today, the story of Gatsby's doomed love for the unattainable Daisy is considered a defining novel of the 20th century. Explore a character analysis of Jay Gatsby, the plot summary, and important quotes. Read one-minute Sparklet summaries, the detailed chapter-by-chapter Summary & Analysis, the Full Book Summary, or the Full Book Analysis of The Great Gatsby.

“F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby*.”

See a complete list of the characters in The Great Gatsby and in-depth analyses of Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway, Daisy Buchanan, Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson. Here's where you'll find analysis of the literary devices in The Great Gatsby, from the major themes to motifs, symbols, and more. Go further in your study of The Great Gatsby with background information on F. Scott Fitzgerald and the novel, movie adaptations, links to resources around the web, and suggestions for further reading. © 2023 Course Hero, Inc. All rights reserved. Terms of Service Privacy Policy Copyright Policy Disclaimer Sitemap LitCharts assigns a color and icon to each theme in The Great Gatsby, which you can use to track the themes throughout the work. Class (Old Money, New Money, No Money) That night, Nick finds himself unable to sleep, since the terrible events of the day have greatly unsettled him. Wracked by anxiety, he hurries to Gatsby's mansion shortly before dawn. He advises Gatsby to leave Long Island until the scandal of Myrtle's death has quieted down. Gatsby refuses, as he cannot bring himself to leave Daisy: he tells Nick that he spent the entire night in front of the Buchanans' mansion, just to ensure that Daisy was safe. He tells Nick that Tom did not try to harm her, and that Daisy did not come out to meet him, though he was standing on her lawn in full moonlight. Gatsby, in his misery, tells Nick the story of his first meeting with Daisy. He does so even though it patently gives the lie to his earlier account of his past. Gatsby and Daisy first met in Louisville in 1917; Gatsby was instantly smitten with her wealth, her beauty, and her youthful innocence. Realizing that Daisy would spurn him if she knew of his poverty, Gatsby determined to lie to her about his past and his circumstances.

Before he left for the war, Daisy promised to wait for him; the two then slept together, as though to seal their pact. Of course, Daisy did not wait; she married Tom, who was her social equal and the choice of her parents. Realizing that it has grown late, Nick says goodbye to Gatsby. As he is walking away, he turns back and shouts that Gatsby is "worth the whole damn world" (of the Buchanans and their East Egg friends) put together." The scene shifts from West Egg to the valley of ashes, where George Wilson has sought refuge with Michaelis. It is from the latter that Nick later learns what happened in the aftermath of Myrtle's death. George Wilson tells Michaelis that he confronted Myrtle with the evidence of her affair and told her that, although she could conceal her sin from her husband, she could not hide it from the eyes of God. As the sun rises over the valley of ashes, Wilson is suddenly transfixed by the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg; he mistakes them for the eyes of God. Wilson assumes that the driver of the fatal car was Myrtle's lover, and decides to punish this man for his sins. He seeks out Tom Buchanan, in the hope that Tom will know the driver's identity. Tom tells him that Gatsby was the driver. Wilson drives to Gatsby's mansion; there, he finds Gatsby floating in his pool, staring contemplatively at the sky. Wilson shoots Gatsby, and then turns the gun on himself. It is Nick who finds Gatsby's body. He reflects that Gatsby died utterly disillusioned, having lost, in rapid succession, his lover and his dreams. AnalysisNick gives the novel's final appraisal of Gatsby when he asserts that Gatsby is "worth the whole damn bunch of them." Despite the ambivalence he feels toward Gatsby's criminal past and nouveau riche affectations, Nick cannot help but admire him for his essential nobility. Though he disapproved of Gatsby "from beginning to end," Nick is still able to recognize him as a visionary, a man capable of grand passion and great dreams. He represents an ideal that had grown exceedingly rare in the 1920s, which Nick (along with Fitzgerald) regards as an age of cynicism, decadence, and cruelty. Nick, in his reflections on Gatsby's life, suggests that Gatsby's great mistake was loving Daisy. He chose an inferior object upon which to focus his almost mystical capacity for dreaming. Just as the American Dream itself has degenerated into the crass pursuit of material wealth, Gatsby, too, strived only for wealth once he had fallen in love with Daisy, whose trivial, limited imagination could conceive of nothing greater. It is significant that Gatsby is not murdered for his criminal connections, but rather for his unwavering devotion to Daisy. As Nick writes, Gatsby thus "[pays] a high price for living too long with a single dream." Up to the moment of his death, Gatsby cannot accept that his dream is over; he continues to insist that Daisy may still come to him, though it is clear to everyone, including the reader, that she is bound indissolubly to Tom. Gatsby's death thus seems almost inevitable, given that a dreamer cannot exist without his dreams; through Daisy's betrayal, he effectively loses his reason for living. Wilson seems to be Gatsby's grim double in Chapter VIII, and represents the more menacing aspects of a capacity for visionary dreaming. Like Gatsby, he fundamentally alters the course of his life by attaching symbolic significance to something that is, in and of itself, meaningless. For Gatsby, it is Daisy and her green light; for Wilson, it is the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg. Both men are destroyed by their love of women who love the brutal Tom Buchanan; both are consumed with longing for something greater than themselves. While Gatsby is a "successful" American dreamer (at least insofar as he has realized his dreams of wealth), Wilson exemplifies the fate of the failed dreamer, whose poverty has deprived him of even his ability to hope. Gatsby's death takes place on the first day of autumn, when a chill has begun to creep into the air. His decision to use his pool is in defiance of the change of seasons, and represents yet another instance of Gatsby's unwillingness to accept the passage of time. The summer is, for him, equivalent to his reunion with Daisy; the end of the summer heralds the end of their romance. In Great Gatsby Chapter 8, things go from very bad to much, much worse. There's an elegiac tone to half of the story in Chapter 8, as Nick tells us about Gatsby giving up on his dreams of Daisy and reminiscing about his time with her five years before. The other half of the chapter is all police thriller, as we hear Michaelis describe Wilson coming unglued and deciding to take bloody revenge for Myrtle's death. Get ready for bitternessweetness and gory shock, in this The Great Gatsby Chapter 8 summary. Quick Note on Our Citations Our citation format in this guide is (chapter.paragraph). We're using this system since there are many editions of Gatsby, so using page numbers would only work for students with our copy of the book. To find a quotation we cite via chapter and paragraph in your book, you can either eyeball it (Paragraph 1-50: beginning of chapter; 50-100: middle of chapter; 100-on: end of chapter), or use the search function if you're using an online or e-reader version of the text. The Great Gatsby: Chapter 8 Summary That night Nick has trouble sleeping. He feels like he needs to warn Gatsby about something. When he meets up with Gatsby at dawn, Gatsby tells Nick nothing happened outside Daisy's house all night. Gatsby's house feels strangely enormous. It's also poorly kept - dusty, unaired, and unusually dark. Nick advises Gatsby to lay low somewhere else so that his car isn't found and linked to the accident. But Gatsby is unwilling to leave his lingering hopes for Daisy. Instead, Gatsby tells Nick about his background - the information Nick told us in Chapter 6. Gatsby's narrative begins with the description of Daisy as the first wealthy, upper-class girl Gatsby had ever met. He loved her huge beautiful house and the fact that many men had loved her before him. All of this made him see her as a prize. He knew that since he was poor, he shouldn't really have been wooing her, but he slept with her anyway, under the false pretenses that he and she were in the same social class. Gatsby realized that he was in love with Daisy and was surprised to see that Daisy fell in love with him too. They were together for a month before Gatsby had to leave for the war in Europe. He was successful in the army, becoming a major. After the war he ended up at Oxford, unable to return to Daisy. Meanwhile, Daisy re-entered the normal rhythm of life: lavish living, snobbery, lots of dates, and all-night parties.

Gatsby sensed from her letters that she was annoyed at having to wait for him, and instead wanted to finalize what her life would be like. The person who finalized her life in a practical way that made sense was Tom. Gatsby interrupts his narrative to again say that there's no way that Daisy ever loved Tom - well, maybe for a second right after the wedding, tops, but that's it. Then he goes back to his story, which concludes after Daisy's wedding to Tom. When Gatsby came back from Oxford, Daisy and Tom were still on their honeymoon. Gatsby felt like the best thing in his life had disappeared forever. After breakfast, Gatsby's gardener suggests draining the pool, but Gatsby wants to keep it filled, since he hasn't yet used it. Gatsby still hopes that Daisy will call him. Nick thanks Gatsby for the hospitality, pays him the backhanded compliment of saying that he is better than the "rotten crowd" of upper-class people (backhanded because it's setting the bar pretty low to be better than "rotten" people), and leaves to go to work. At work, Nick gets a phone call from Jordan, who is upset that Nick didn't pay sufficient attention to her the night before. Nick is floored by this selfishness - after all, someone died, so how could Jordan be so self-involved! They hang up on each other, clearly broken up. Nick tries to call Gatsby, but is told by the operator that the line is being kept free for a phone call from Detroit (which might actually be Gatsby's way of clearing the line in case Daisy calls? It's unclear). On the way back from the city, Nick purposefully sits on the side of the train car that won't take Wilson's garage. Nick now tells us what happened at the garage after he, Tom, and Jordan drove away the day before. Since he wasn't there, he's most likely recapping Michaelis's inquest statement. They found Myrtle's sister too drunk to understand what had happened to Myrtle. Then she fainted and had to be taken away. Michaelis sat with Wilson until dawn, listening to Wilson talk about the yellow car that had run Myrtle over, and how to find it. Michaelis suggested that Wilson talk to a priest, but Wilson showed Michaelis an expensive dog leash that he found. To him, this was incontrovertible proof of her affair and the fact that her lover killed Myrtle on purpose. Wilson said that Myrtle was trying to run out to talk to the man in the car, while Michaelis believed that she had been trying to flee the house where Wilson had locked her up. Wilson had told Myrtle that God could see everything she was doing.



The God he's talking about? The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg on the billboard near the garage.

Wilson seemed calm, so Michaelis went home to sleep. By the time he came back to the garage, Wilson was gone. Wilson walked all the way to West Egg, asking about the yellow car.

That afternoon, Gatsby gets in his pool for the first time that summer. He is still waiting for a call from Daisy. Nick tries to imagine what it must have been like to be Gatsby and know that your dream was lost. Gatsby's chauffeur hears gunshots just as Nick pulls up to the house. In the pool, they see Gatsby's dead body, and a little way off in the grass, they see Wilson's body. Wilson has shot Gatsby and then himself. So the moral of the story is, if you have a nice pool, try to use it more often. Key Chapter 8 Quotes She was the first "nice" girl he had ever known. In various unrevealed capacities he had come in contact with such people but always with indiscernible barbed wire between. He found her exceedingly desirable. He went to her house, at first with other officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed him—he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there—it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. It excited him too that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions. (8.10) The reason the word "nice" is in quotation marks is that Gatsby does not mean that Daisy is the first pleasant or amiable girl that he has met.

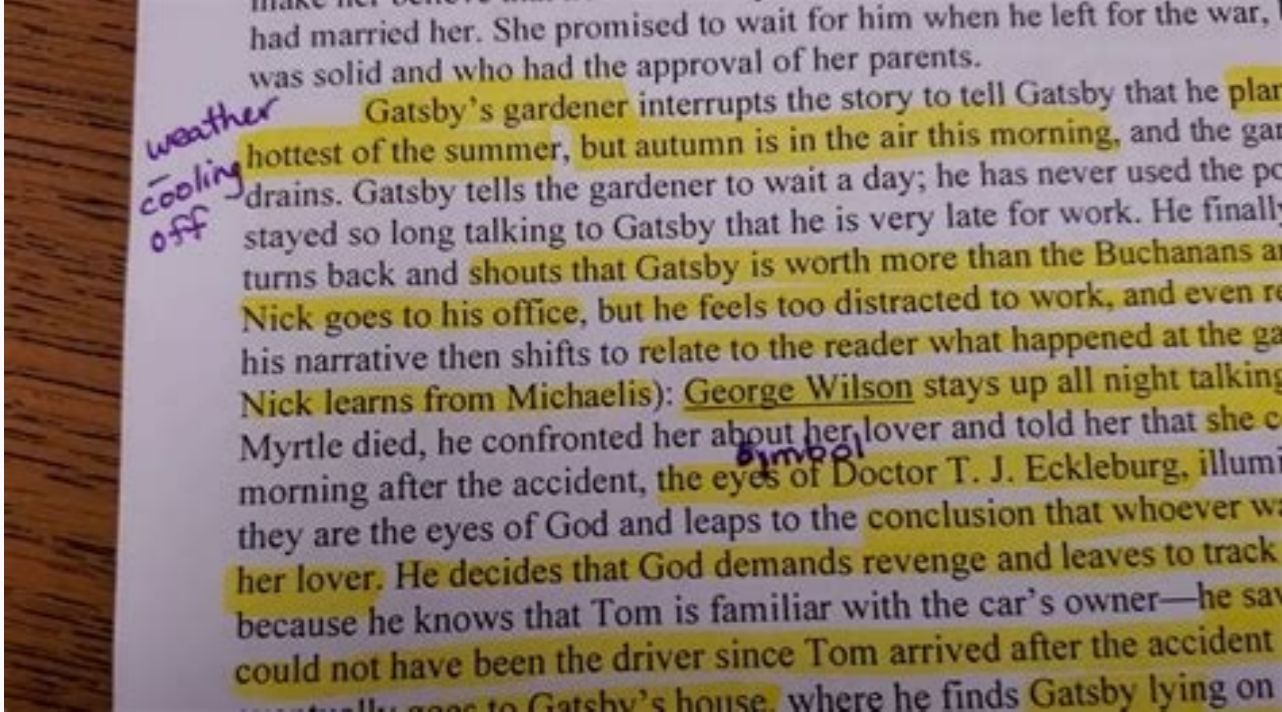
The Great Gatsby - Chapter 8 Symbolism	Symbol	Symbolic Meaning
Daisy turning out the light.	Daisy ending the affair with Gatsby for good.	

Example 2: Daisy turning out the light. Daisy ending the affair with Gatsby for good. This symbolizes Daisy's decision to end her relationship with Gatsby and move on with her life. It represents her choice to prioritize her future over her past love.

Symbol	Symbolic Meaning
Daisy	Daisy, like money, is all Gatsby wants for his future.

Example 3: Daisy. Daisy, like money, is all Gatsby wants for his future. This symbolizes Gatsby's obsession with Daisy and his desire to win her back. It represents his belief that Daisy is the key to his happiness and success.

Instead, the word "nice" here means refined, having elegant and elevated taste, ficky and fastidious. In other words, from the very beginning what Gatsby most values about Daisy is that she belongs to that set of society that he is desperately trying to get into: the wealthy, upper echelon. Just like when he noted the Daisy's voice has money in it, here Gatsby almost cannot separate Daisy herself from the beautiful house that he picks in love with. Notice also how much he values quantity of any kind - it's wonderful that the house has many bedrooms and corridors, and it's also wonderful that many men want Daisy. Either way, it's the quantity itself that "increases value." It's almost like Gatsby's love is operating in a market economy - the more demand there is for a particular good, the higher the worth of that good. Of course, thinking in this way makes it easy to understand why Gatsby is able to discard Daisy's humanity and inner life when he idealizes her. For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the "Beale Street Blues" while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the grey tea hour there were always rooms that throbbred incessantly with this its slow sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor. Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately - and the decision must be made by some force - of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality - that was close at hand. (8.18-19) This description of Daisy's life apart from Gatsby clarifies why she picks Tom in the end and goes back to her hopeless ennui and passive boredom: this is what she has grown up doing and is used to. Daisy's life seems fancy. After all, there are orchids and orchestras and golden shoes.



But already, even for the young people of high society, death and decay loom large. In this passage for example, not only is the orchestra's rhythm full of sadness, but the orchids are dying, and the people themselves look like flowers past their prime.

Chapter 8

- As Nick leaves Gatsby the morning after the accident, he remarks, "They're a rotten crowd." Who are the people "they" refers to? Why are they "rotten"?
- What is the compliment that Nick pays to Gatsby? Why does Nick feel compelled to compliment him?
- Explain Nick's meaning when he balances Gatsby's supposed "corruption" against his "incorruptible dream."
- How does Wilson view the "eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg"? Does Wilson's statement have a symbolic meaning for the novel as a whole? Explain.
- Trace the movements of Gatsby and Wilson at the end of Chapter 8. What is Nick's meaning when he says, "... The holocaust was complete"?

In the midst of this stagnation, Daisy longs for stability, financial security, and routine. Tom offered that then, and he continues to offer it now. "Of course she might have loved him, just for a minute, when they were first married--and loved me more even then, do you see?" Suddenly he came out with a curious remark: "In any case," he said, "it was just personal." What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity of his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured? (8.24-27) Even though he can now no longer see an absolutist about Daisy's love, Gatsby is still trying to think about her feelings on his own terms. After admitting that the fact that many men loved Daisy before him is a positive, Gatsby is willing to admit that maybe Daisy had feelings for Tom after all, just as long as her love for Gatsby was supreme. Gatsby is ambiguous admission that "it was just personal" carries several potential meanings: Nick assumes that the word "it" refers to Gatsby's love, which Gatsby is describing as "personal" as a way of emphasizing how deep and inexplicable his feelings for Daisy are. But of course, the word "it" could just as easily be referring to Daisy's decision to marry Tom. In this case, what is "personal" are Daisy's reasons (the desire for status and money), which are hers alone, and have no bearing on the love that she and Gatsby feel for each other. He stretched out his hand desperately as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him. But it was all going by too fast now for his blurred eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever. (8.30) Once again Gatsby is trying to reach something that is just out of grasp, a gestural motif that recurs frequently in his novel. Here already, even as a young man, he is trying to grab hold of an ephemeral memory.

"They're a rotten crowd," I shouted across the lawn. "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." "I've always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning to end. First he nodded politely, and then his face broke into that radiant and understanding smile, as if he'd been in ecstatic cahoots with me that fact all the time. His gorgeous pink rag of a suit made a bright spot of color against the white steps and I thought of the night when I first came to his ancestral home three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded with the faces of those who guessed at his corruption--and he had stood on those steps, concealing his intent."

Still, backhanded as it is, this compliment also meant to genuinely make Gatsby feel a bit better. Since Gatsby cares so, so much about entering the old money world, it makes Nick glad to be able to tell Gatsby that he is so much better than the crowd he's desperate to join. Usually her voice came over the wire as something fresh and cool as if a divot from a green golf links had come sailing in at the office window but this morning it seemed harsh and dry. "I've left Daisy's house," she said. "I'm at Hempstead and I'm going down to Southampton this afternoon." Probably it had been tactful to leave Daisy's house, but the act annoyed me and her next remark made me rigid.

"That's an advertisement," Michaelis assured him. Something made him turn away from the window and look back into the room. But Wilson stood there a long time, his face close to the window pane, nodding into the twilight. (8.102-105) Clearly Wilson has been psychologically shaken first by Myrtle's affair and then by her death - he is seeing the giant eyes of the optometrist billboard as a stand-in for God. But this delusion underlines the absence of any higher power in the novel. In the lawless, materialistic East, there is no moral center which could rein in people's darker, immoral impulses. The motif of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg's eyes runs through the novel, as Nick notes them watching whatever goes on in the ashheaps.

Here, that motif comes to a crescendo. Arguably, when Michaelis dispels Wilson's delusion about the eyes, he takes away the final barrier to Wilson's unhinged revenge plot. If there is no moral authority watching, anything goes. No telephone message arrived but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock--until long after there was any one to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old world worth, 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. (8.110) Nick tries to imagine what it might be like to be Gatsby, but a Gatsby without the activating dream that has spurred him throughout his life. For Nick, this would be the loss of the aesthetic sense - an inability to perceive beauty in roses or sunlight. The idea of fall as a new, but horrifying, world of ghosts and unreal material contrasts nicely with Jordan's earlier idea that fall brings with it rebirth. For Jordan, fall is a time of reinvention and possibility - but for Gatsby, it is literally the season

of death. The Great Gatsby Chapter 8 Analysis Now let's comb through this chapter to tease apart the themes that connect it to the rest of the novel. Themes and Symbols Unreliable Narrator. However much Nick has been backgrounding himself as a narrative force in the novel, in this chapter, we suddenly start to feel the heavy hand of his narration. Rather than the completely objective, nonjudgmental reporter that he has set out to be, Nick begins to edit and editorialize. First, he introduces a sense of foreboding, foreshadowing Gatsby's death with bad dreams and ominous dread. Then, he talks about his decision to reveal Gatsby's background not in the chronological order when he learned it, but before we heard about the argument in the hotel room. The novel is a long eulogy for a man Nick found himself admiring despite many reasons not to, so this choice to contextualize and mitigate Tom's revelations by giving Gatsby the chance to provide context makes perfect sense. However, it calls into question Nick's version of events, and his interpretation of the motivations of the people around him. He is a fundamentally unreliable narrator. Symbols: The Eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. The absence of a church or religious figure in Wilson's life, and his delusion that the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are a higher power, underscores how little moral clarity or prescription there is in the novel's world. Characters are driven by emotional or material greed, by selfishness, and by a complete lack of concern about others. The people who thrive - from Wolfsheim to Jordan - do so because they are moral relativists. The people who fail - like Nick, or Gatsby, or Wilson - fail because they can't put aside an absolutist ideal that drives their actions. The American Dream. Remember discussing variously described ambition in Chapter 6, when we saw a bunch of people on the make in different ways? In this chapter, that sense of forward momentum recurs, but in a twisted and darkly satiric way through the Terminator-like drive of Wilson to find the yellow car and its driver. He walks from Queens to West Egg for something like six or seven hours, finding evidence that can't be reproduced, and using a route that can't be retraced afterward. Unlike Gatsby, forever trying to grasp the thing out he knows well but can't reach, Wilson homes in on a person he doesn't know but unerringly reaches. Society and Class. By the end of this chapter, the rich and the poor are definitely separated - forever, by death. Every main character who isn't from the upper class - Myrtle, Gatsby, and Wilson - is violently killed. On the other hand, those from the social elite - Jordan, Daisy, and Tom - can continue their lives totally unchanged. Jordan brushes these deaths off completely. Tom gets to hang on to his functionally dysfunctional marriage. And Daisy literally gets away with murder (or at least manslaughter). Only Nick seems to be genuinely affected by what he has witnessed. He survives, but his retreat to his Midwest home marks a kind of death - the death of his romantic idea of achievement and success. Death and Failure. Rot, decay, and death are everywhere in this chapter: Gatsby's house is in a state of almost supernatural disarray, with "inexplicable amount of dust everywhere" (8.4) after he fires his servants. Amidst the parties and gaiety of Daisy's youth, her "dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor" (8.19). Nick's phrase for the corruption and selfishness of the upper-class people he's gotten to know is "rotten crowd" (8.45), people who are decomposing into garbage. Gatsby floats in a pool, trying to hang on to summer, but actually on the eve of fall, as nature around him turns "frightening," "unfamiliar," "grotesque," and "raw" (8.110). This imagery culminates in figurative and literal cremation, as Wilson is described as "ashen" (8.110) and his murder-suicide as a "holocaust" (8.113). By the way, remember that when Fitzgerald uses the word "holocaust," he isn't talking about what happened in Nazi Germany - he is writing about 20 years before WWII. Instead, the word "holocaust" here means a sacrificial offering that is burned on an altar - unrooted to any specific religion, Wilson's actions evoke an atavistic, pagan ritual sacrifice. Something is very rotten in the state of Denmark... uh, Long Island. That rotten thing? The rich. Crucial Character Beats Nick has a premonition that he wants to warn Gatsby about. Gatsby still holds out hope for Daisy and refuses to get out of town as Nick advises. Nick and Jordan break up - he is grossed out by her self-involvement and total lack of concern about the fact that Myrtle died the day before. Wilson goes somewhat crazy after Myrtle's death, and slowly becomes convinced that the driver of the yellow car that killed her was also her lover, and that he killed her on purpose. He sets out to hunt the owner of the yellow car down. Wilson shoots Gatsby while Gatsby is waiting for Daisy's phone call in his pool. Then Wilson shoots himself. What's Next? Think about the novel's connection to the motif of the seasons by comparing the ways summer, fall, and winter are described and experienced by different characters. Get a handle on Gatsby's revelations about his past by seeing all the events put into chronological order. Move on to the summary of Chapter 9, or revisit the summary of Chapter 7. Want to improve your SAT score by 160 points or your ACT score by 4 points? We've written a guide for each test about the top 5 strategies you must be using to have a shot at improving your score. Download it for free now: