

Quotes

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, opening words.

Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, Nick on Gatsby.

[Tom] would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, Tom.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, Daisy on her newborn girl.

I KNOW. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything...Sophisticated - God, I'm sophisticated.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, Daisy.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 2.

He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 2, Tom, on Wilson and his wife Myrtle, with whom Tom is having an affair.

I married him because I thought he was a gentleman...I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 2, Myrtle on Wilson.

He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in, and never told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out...I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried...all afternoon.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 2, Myrtle.

I wanted to get out and walk eastward toward the park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair. Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 2.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited - they went there.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 3.

I've been drunk for about a week now, and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 3.

It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too - didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 3.

He smiled understandingly-much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced--or seemed to face--the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 3, on Gatsby.

I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others - poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner - young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 3, Nick.

It takes two to make an accident.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 3.

Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 3, Nick on himself.

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.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 4.

I belong to another generation....You sit...and discuss your sports and your young ladies....As for me, I am fifty years old, and I won't impose myself on you any longer.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 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."

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 5.

Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 5.

It makes me sad because I've never seen such - such beautiful shirts before.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby
Chapter 5.

One thing's sure and nothing's surer
The rich get richer and the poor get - children.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 5, Nick, on Gatsby's idealization of Daisy.

The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6.

It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6, on Daisy.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6, on Gatsby.

Can't repeat the past?...Why of course you can!

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6, Gatsby.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6, Gatsby on his first kiss with Daisy.

Daisy and Jordan lay upon an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 7.

Her voice is full of money.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 1, Gatsby about Daisy.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 7, Nick, on Tom Buchanan.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 7, Jordan.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 7, Tom Buchanan on Gatsby.

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, undesperingly, toward that lost voice across the room.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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....So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 7.

It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy - it increased her value in his eyes.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 8.

God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 8.

"They are 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 we'd been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 8, Nick on Gatsby.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 9, Nick on the Buchanans.

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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 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-

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 9.

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 9, Nick on resilience.