

THE GREAT GATSBY

SOCRATIC SEMINAR #1

POINT BREAKDOWN FOR SEMINARS

40 points: Discussion

- 10 points for a meaningful contribution supported with quotes
- 7 points for a meaningful contribution not supported with quotes
- 5 points for a repetitive or obvious statement

20 points: Written preparation

Respond to the questions from the discussion question list in writing. Find at least two quotations per question in the text to support your answers. Your answer should be at least 4-5 sentences in length. Make sure you flag/mark your responses in the book.

20 points: Annotations

10 points: Observation Form

10 points: Exemplary participation and contribution to seminar

QUESTIONS

1. Why Nick? Fitzgerald could have chosen any perspective for his point of view but he chose first person narration, and he developed Mr. Carraway for a purpose. Why? Based on what you've read so far, what do you think Nick's role is? How does it connect to the author's own perspective? Does telling the story from Nick's point of view make it more believable? Why or why not?
2. Consider Nick's father's advice in chapter one: "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." Do you feel that Nick Carraway is a reliable narrator? Can we trust that his reporting in the story is unbiased? Can we trust Nick? Is he objective? Does he make assumptions? What are his values, biases? Does social status or gender affect his opinions? Give some examples to back up your argument.
3. What is the significance of the Valley of the Ashes? What images does Fitzgerald use to describe the landscape? How does the setting seem to affect the people who live there? There is a remarkable contrast in the atmosphere of the "valley of the ashes" with the atmosphere of West Egg and East Egg as well as that of Manhattan. He also mentions dust and smoke (at the party). All three of these reappear numerous times throughout the novel. What could they symbolize?
4. Compare when Nick is introduced to Tom and when Nick is introduced to Gatsby. What do Nick's first encounters with the two show about their character? How does Fitzgerald's description of Tom and Gatsby's homes and lifestyles develop an understanding of society in the 1920s?
5. Why might Tom not want to divorce Daisy?
6. Why did Myrtle marry George if she didn't love him?
7. How is the party in chapter 2 different from the party in chapter 3? How is it similar?
8. What is your impression of Jay Gatsby? Give page numbers and specific support/examples.
9. Look back at the first paragraph of chapter 3. This paragraph hints at one of the major themes of this novel. What is it and how does it hint to it?
10. What is Nick's cardinal virtue? What is ironic about this?