



***The Great Gatsby* (1925), by F. Scott Fitzgerald** **DEBATABLE ISSUES**

Debatable Issue #1

The Great Gatsby has attained its status as a great American novel in large part because it succeeds in defining something essential about American cultural values. Tom Buchanan represents the aggressive industrialist, cold realism, and materialism; while, Jay Gatsby represents the creative innovator, dreamy idealism, and romanticism. In the two characters' climactic struggle for the love of Daisy Fay Buchanan, the novel delivers the brutal truth that the story of America is the story of the triumph of Buchanan over Gatsby.

Debatable Issue #2

The most famous lines in *The Great Gatsby* are its final lines.

[Gatsby's] dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night. 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.

The meaning of these lines, and of the novel which they crown, can be summarized as: our desire to re-capture the past holds a deep allure, but this desire is both unachievable and self-destructive.



Debatable Issue #3

In a short story called “The Rich Boy” that Fitzgerald wrote in 1925 – the year he published *The Great Gatsby* – the narrator says, “Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me.” Different, but how? Ernest Hemingway’s dismissive retort, published in *Esquire* magazine ten years later, was, “Yes, they have more money.”

Fitzgerald’s attitude toward wealth and the affluent has been a question that literary critics have repeatedly asked, debated, and written about for nearly 100 years. In your view, what is *The Great Gatsby*’s attitude toward the rich, and toward money itself?

Debatable Issue #4

At the end of Chapter 3, Nick says, “I am one of the few honest people I’ve ever known.” But even Nick is affected by the atmosphere of corruption, dissolution, and dishonesty that permeates the novel, so that in his “coming of age” through the narrative means that he too loses his integrity and honesty.

The Great Gatsby is in fact a cynical book, depicting a world which undermines ideals, and in which everyone is more false than true, more impure than pure.