Character Roles (Protagonist, Antagonist...)

Protagonist

Jay Gatsby

Jay Gatsby is the main focus of the work, and it is his story that follows the classic tragedy plot. When we first meet Jay Gatsby, we know only that he is a fabulously wealthy man who throws enormous parties. Mystery and intrigue surround him. Who is he? What does he do for a living? Has he done some terrible thing, like kill a man? Because of these unknowns, we’re not sure at first how comfortable we are with Gatsby as the protagonist. The title certainly helps – we expect the man to be great, after all, so we look to him to fulfill our common expectations of what a protagonist should be. We expect him to be someone with whom we sympathize, someone we want to succeed. And indeed, we do feel for Gatsby. We, the reader, want him to get Daisy. Fitzgerald has created in Gatsby such a heartfelt character, and in Tom such a villain, that we don’t even judge Gatsby for trying to steal someone else’s wife. As far as we’re concerned, Gatsby fits the protagonist bill.

Antagonist

Tom Buchanan

Tom Buchanan prevents Jay Gatsby from "living happily ever after," both in Gatsby’s head (for much of the story) and then literally (by denying him Daisy and then taking actions that lead to Gatsby’s death). Nick introduces Tom Buchanan as an excellent sportsman, but that’s about the only thing he has going for him. Tom is wealthy, restless, and cruel – not a good combination. Fitzgerald gets us to dislike – if not flat out hate – Tom, so that we root for Gatsby. Tom’s violent and abusive nature certainly contributes to our emotions.

But if you like your antagonists cut out in clear black-and-white, Tom is not the guy for you. Just when we feel safe about sticking Tom in the villain box and sealing the lid shut, we start to (gasp) feel sympathy for him. At the Plaza, for the first time we see a sensitive side to Tom. Or, as Nick says it, the man displays "a husky tenderness" towards his wife. He declares he loves her, that he’s always loved her, mentions some tear-jerking scenes between them, and declares he’s going to treat her better from now on. By the end of the novel, even Nick is won over – at least a little bit. He declares that he can’t forgive Tom for what he’s done, but that he certainly understands that, in Tom’s mind, all his actions were justified. So there you have it: Tom Buchanan, the not-so-evil bad guy.
Gatsby’s Dream

Alternatively, Gatsby’s antagonist could be seen as the "dream" he has to be with Daisy. This is the dream that has driven his actions, propelled him forward, and, ultimately, clouded his judgment in a way that led to his death. Gatsby can never come to grips with the reality of the present because he is stuck in his dreams of the past.

Guide/Mentor

Nick Carraway

Well, we had to get him in here somewhere. Nick serves as a guide for a few different people. The first one, the easy one, is Gatsby. Nick helps Gatsby out by giving him advice – unfortunately, Gatsby never listens. Nick enables Gatsby’s affair with Daisy, using action to help his friend. He later uses words, advising Gatsby that he "can’t repeat the past." He is also the one to warn Gatsby that he ought to leave town after the Myrtle’s death. Again, the man just doesn’t listen. The interesting part comes in at the end of the novel, when Nick says that we are all "borne back ceaselessly into the past." Because this stands in contrast to what Nick told Gatsby earlier, and because it in fact mirrors Gatsby’s prior sentiments, you could argue that Gatsby in return acts as a guide for Nick. We definitely didn’t see that one coming.

Guide/Mentor

Dan Cody

Dan Cody serves as Gatsby’s friend and mentor. He not only gives Gatsby a taste of "elite" life, but he also provides him with the only education he receives – a by-the-seat-of-your-pants education that gives Gatsby the skills and experience to head off in pursuit of wealth and class.

Foil

Jordan Baker and Daisy

Jordan Baker can be viewed in opposition to Daisy. While Daisy wishes to be admired and adored, while she carries the dreams of the past into the present, Jordan is far more practical. Tom and Gatsby see Daisy as an angel, something to be protected and put on a pedestal; Jordan Baker would be damned before she’d let anybody do that to her.

Foil

Tom Buchanan and George Wilson

Tom is in many ways the opposite of Wilson. While George is weak and passive, Tom is physically strong and controlling. This is clearly the reason for Myrtle’s attraction to him; she
feels he has a certain masculinity that her husband lacks. There is also the issue of social caste, as Tom is a wealthy member of the upper echelon and Wilson is working class. Myrtle likes this about Tom, as well, declaring that she married George not knowing of his poverty and status. You could even argue that Myrtle is attracted to Tom’s violent nature, since she later berates her husband for being a "coward" and begs him, "Beat me!"
Tools of Characterization

Social Status or Societal Position

We’re guessing you saw this one coming. Because social status is considered a defining quality by the characters in the book, it naturally becomes a means by which we, the reader, come to define the characters. That Gatsby isn’t socially in the upper class (even if he is economically) becomes the dividing line between him and Daisy, and arguably the blockade on the way to realizing his dreams. Tom is in part defined by his money (along with the abusive nature and that whole "The Hulk" thing). And Daisy? Well, we think Gatsby sums it up best when he simply says, "Her voice is full of money."

Location

Gatsby lives in West Egg, but Daisy resides in East Egg. Having been told that East Egg is the wealthier of the two, this difference in location highlights the differences between Jay and Daisy’s societal rank. It’s also worth noting that Jordan, Nick, and Daisy are all in East Egg together, while Nick and Gatsby reside together in West Egg. This division makes sense toward the end of the novel, when Nick takes Gatsby’s side against the others – the "rotten crowd."

Occupation

Gatsby ends up largely defined by his occupation – bootlegging. It is because of the stigma carried by this profession that he tries so hard to conceal it. The illegal nature of his job is a constant reminder that Gatsby got to where he is unnaturally; that he doesn’t really belong in New York’s high society. Nick, on the other hand, is "a bond man," a job that, like Nick, is straightforward and clean. Additionally, at one of his lavish parties, Gatsby insists on introducing Tom as "the polo player;" because Jay defines Tom by his physicality, Jay expresses his impression of the man by suggesting that Tom’s work is of a physical nature.

Speech and Dialogue

Gatsby’s effort to sound well-educated

For the most part, characters in The Great Gatsby are well-educated. Their speech and dialogue reflect this education, which in turn reflects their wealth and social status. The narrator takes note, however, of Gatsby’s affected speech, speech of "elaborate formalities" that borders on "absurd." It is clear to him that Gatsby must practice to sound educated and wealthy – he must practice at being a part of Daisy’s world. The fact that Nick isn’t fooled would suggest that others, too, are not so taken in by Jay’s efforts. His transformation to a man of high society is incomplete at best, and failed at worst.
Mr. Wolfsheim’s lower-class diction

Mr. Wolfsheim speaks in a dialect that indicates his lack of education, lack of class, and general lack of what wealthy, snobby people in the 1920s might have called "good breeding." Oxford becomes "Oggsford;" "Connection" becomes "gonnection." The use of different dialects works to reveal the differences between the working class and the upper class. By contrasting Wolfsheim’s and Gatsby’s diction with that of people like Nick Carraway, Fitzgerald suggests that those involved in organized crime are necessarily working class – no matter how wealthy and powerful they appear to be.
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Nick Carraway

While the title The Great Gatsby might suggest that the central puzzle of this novel is “The Great Gatsby,” we disagree. Gatsby himself is, after all, almost shockingly simple once you can put his character together from the various pieces picked up along the way. On the other hand, Nick – seemingly plain, straightforward, “honest” Nick – ends up being the ultimate mystery at the end. Nick changes profoundly over the course of the novel, and his transformation is just as intriguing as Gatsby’s dramatic story.

Who is Nick Carraway (at the beginning)?

We know very little about Nick. The facts he chooses to present are few: he grew up in a respectable Chicago family and went to Yale, he likes literature and considers himself one of those "limited" specialists known as a "well-rounded man," and he works in the bond business (that is to say, in finances) in New York City. He’s connected to wealthy and important people, like his cousin Daisy and Tom, a college acquaintance, but he is by no means one of them. Unlike the people who surround him, Nick Carraway isn't drowning in wealth. His perch on the outside of these lofty social circles gives him a good view of what goes on inside; he has a particularly sharp and sometimes quite judgmental eye for character, and isn’t afraid to use it.

While Nick is fundamentally a pretty honest guy when first we meet him, it doesn’t mean that he’s always a very nice one. He’s skilled in the art of getting along with everyone in public and rather sassily analyzing them in private (that is, to us, his readers). Nick may be polite and easy to get along with on the outside, but he’s not afraid to tell it like it is. Nick still seems to see himself as a good Midwestern boy with high standards for everyone he meets, including himself, and prides himself on maintaining his standards, even in the corrupt, fast-moving world of East coast high society.

Because Nick is tangentially a part of Daisy and Gatsby’s intersecting worlds of wealth and fabulousness, but not entirely immersed in them, he makes a perfect narrator – not quite outside, not quite inside. During the course of the novel, Nick gradually gets sucked into the world he’s observing, both through his friendships (if you can call them that) with Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby, and through his romantic relationship with Jordan. The deeper he is drawn into these relationships, the less honest he becomes – until at the end, Jordan rebukes him for being just as dishonest and careless as the rest of them.

Who is Nick Carraway (at the end)?

So what happens to our narrator? At the end, Nick has come to realize that he’s changed and will never be the same. It seems his character dilemma is never fully resolved. We do not know where he will go ("West" is pretty vague), or what he will do, only that he is leaving the house he’s resided in for the course of the book. His observation that all the players in this story were
“Westerners” is an apt one – it sums up one of the novel’s main themes, the idea that we might be defined by where we’re from, or the kinds of worlds we grow up in.

Nick ultimately realizes that he has no place in West Egg or in New York, in the callous, judgmental, and fast-moving East; unfortunately, we have to wonder if he can really go back home again, after seeing what he has seen. Though he used to believe that you couldn’t turn back the clock and return to the past, Nick’s perspective has changed: his neighbor Gatsby is gone. Tom and Daisy are gone. Jordan Baker is gone. Nick's greatest fear – that he will be alone – has come true.

The final lines of the text suggest the inevitability of what will overcome Nick: inclinations towards Gatsby's nostalgia and an inability to separate the dreams of the past with the reality of the present. And if you want further evidence for that one, consider the fact that Nick is telling us this story at all, after it has all unfolded – he's still dwelling in the past.

Nick Carraway Timeline

- Nick moves to Long Island and begins a job in New York City. He seeks out his second cousin, Daisy, and meets Jordan.
- Nick goes into the city with Tom and meets his mistress, Myrtle Wilson. He gets extraordinarily drunk that day.
- Nick and Jordan attend a party at Gatsby’s house, meet Gatsby, and waits while Gatsby has a private tête-à-tête with Jordan.
- This is the same party at which he meets the owl-eyed man.
- Nick and Jordan have their conversation about "careful drivers."
- Nick and Gatsby have lunch with Gatsby’s business associate, Meyer Wolfsheim.
- They run into Tom. Gatsby, surprisingly, disappears when Nick tries to introduce him to Tom.
- Nick learns the Daisy/Gatsby story from Jordan, who asks him if he’ll arrange a meeting. Nick agrees to do it.
- Nick arranges the meeting but disappears while Daisy and Gatsby reconnect. When Gatsby takes Daisy to his house to show her where and how he lives, Nick accompanies them.
- Nick describes Gatsby’s life before and after meeting Daisy.
- Nick observes the initial meeting between Tom and Gatsby.
- He is present for the party attended by Tom and his wife. He observes their interactions with each another and concludes that Daisy doesn’t approve of the lavish extravagance.
- Nick goes to East Egg for drinks with Daisy, Tom, and Jordan.
- He goes in Gatsby’s car but with Tom and Jordan, not Gatsby, as they all drive to the city.
• He observes Tom’s interaction with Wilson on the way to the city.
• Nick is present for big showdown in the Plaza suite.
• Nick is with Tom and Jordan when they all happen upon the "after" scene, when Myrtle Wilson is already dead.
• Nick and Gatsby talk outside the Buchanan house and Nick sees Daisy and Tom conspiring together, in a scene of marital intimacy.
• Nick warns Gatsby to leave town, but Gatsby refuses.
• Nick has a phone conversation with Jordan in which they kinda-sorta break-up.
• Along with Gatsby’s servants, Nick sees the bodies of Gatsby and Wilson.
• After Gatsby is dead, Nick takes care of his affairs – contacting his friends, business partners, and family members, and making the funeral arrangements.
• He finds out more about Gatsby from the man’s father.
• He discusses with the owl-eyed man how horrible it is that everyone came to Gatsby’s parties, but no one came to his funeral.
• Nick more officially breaks up with Jordan over the phone. Jordan tells Nick that he, too, is a "bad driver."
• Nick stands on Gatsby’s lawn and ruminates on the man and his life, the present and the future, and, of course, the past.

**Jay Gatsby**

**Origins: Jimmy Gatz**

Long before Gatsby was “great,” he was a small town kid with big dreams. We learn Gatsby’s real back story fairly late in the game, but when we finally do, it adds infinitely to the real human tragedy of his life and death. It turns out that the pre-West Egg Gatsby wasn’t in fact the “young rajah” he pretended to be; instead, he was just a boy from North Dakota without connections, money, or education. We might see the original James Gatz and his alter-ego as opposite sides of a kind of magic mirror – on one side, we have Gatz, the everyday real person, and on the other, Gatsby, a fabulously embellished, impossibly perfect reflection of a poor boy’s dreams and fantasies.

So who was the real James Gatz (Jimmy to his dad), and how did he become Jay Gatsby? Apparently, even before he had the means, Jimmy Gatz had a plan – his desire to escape his circumstances and make a name for himself. This early motivation demonstrated the same determination and passion we see in his later incarnation, Gatsby. His father’s pride in young Jimmy’s motivation, even years later, is heartbreaking and telling; from a young age, Jimmy knew that he was capable of great things, perhaps even destined for them. As far as we can tell, he spent his whole youth training for his big break, and when it drifted into the harbor in the form of Dan Cody’s yacht, he was ready for it.
The Man: Jay Gatsby

Jimmy Gatz died the moment he rowed up to Cody's boat, and a new man was born – Jay Gatsby. This self-invented character is too much to believe, and, like Nick, we're skeptical of him at first. When we meet him, Jay Gatsby is a man with a lot of money, a lot of acquaintances, and very few friends; the rumors that circulate around him make him out to be some kind of mysterious superhero or supervillain. The tale of an adventurous boyhood and wartime heroics that he himself tells is simply too ridiculous to be true, but he backs it up with enough evidence to please Nick, so we kind of believe him, too. The self-propagated myth of Gatsby is enticingly thrilling – we want to believe that someone as incredible as Jay Gatsby can exist in the world, even if we're sure he can't.

Glamorous Jay Gatsby seems like he couldn't be further from the young country boy he once was, but the similarities between Gatsby and his younger self emerge throughout the novel. By the end of the book, once all the puzzle pieces scattered through time are reassembled, we have a full portrait of one man, spread over two images. The complete Gatsby shows a spectacular kind of determination and singleness of purpose that's really quite mind-boggling – whether his goal is getting out of North Dakota or reclaiming Daisy, Gatsby accomplishes them with amazing tenacity. We get the feeling that he never forgets anything, and that his vision of the past is perhaps even more clear than his vision of the present (and certainly of the future).

This ties into his incredible sense of loyalty unequalled by anyone else we meet in the dishonest, tricky world of Fitzgerald's novel; Gatsby is unfailingly loyal to everyone he loves, from his father to Dan Cody to Daisy. The problem is, he doesn't always get the same measure of loyalty in return. Even though Gatsby seems to be a worldly, perhaps unsavory, somewhat corrupt bootlegger, on the inside, he's incredibly innocent – and it's this trace of innocence that makes him so compelling, and ultimately, so tragic.

The Legend: The Great Gatsby

So here's the million dollar question: what makes the Great Gatsby great? On the surface, Gatsby/Gatz is a guy whose sickening wealth, sketchy business dealings, and questionable background make him both fascinating and repulsive – the people at his parties are glad to partake of his riches, but they're all sure that there's something not quite right about him. This sense of mystery is a large part of the public persona of the Great Gatsby; people are intrigued by him, but very few actually find out what's at the core of this enigma.

Nick is one of these few – perhaps the only person who really comes to understand Gatsby in the end. What makes Gatsby “great” to Nick is not just the extravagance of his lifestyle and the fascinating enigma of his wealth, but his true personality: Nick slowly realizes that Gatsby, in his heart of hearts, doesn't care about wealth, or social status, or
any of the other petty things that plague everyone else in his shallow world. Instead, Gatsby is motivated by the finest and most foolish of emotions – love.

From this point of view, Gatsby's love for Daisy is what drives him to reinvent himself, rather than greed or true ambition, and at the end of the day, this unsullied, heartfelt goal puts Gatsby ahead of the rest of the madding crowd. Despite the fact that he attempted to fulfill his “incorruptible dream” through distasteful, sometimes dishonest means, we still emerge from this story profoundly sympathetic to him; he may have been a fool at times, but he’s a fool for love. Even though he’s a self-created image built out of nothing, Gatsby’s emotional honesty, eternal optimism, and simplicity of heart ironically single him out as the only real person in a crowd of fakes – as Nick says, Gatsby is “better than the whole damn bunch put together.”

How do you feel about Gatsby? Do you agree with Nick?

**Jay Gatsby Timeline**

- Gatsby throws fabulous parties all the time, but nobody seems to know much about him or who he is.
- Nick Carraway meets Gatsby at a party but does not at first know who he is. Later, Gatsby asks to speak privately with Jordan.
- Gatsby and Nick spend some time in New York together, but when Nick tries to introduce him to Tom Buchanan, Gatsby literally disappears.
- Nick learns that Gatsby is in love with Daisy Buchanan and is hoping Nick will arrange for the two of them to meet under the pretext of tea.
- Jordan fills in the background of how Gatsby and Daisy met.
- Nick arranges the tea as requested.
- Although the meeting goes well, it’s clear to Nick that Gatsby’s idealized dream of Daisy is more real to Gatsby than the real Daisy herself.
- Gatsby and Daisy begin an affair and Gatsby begins to dream of her leaving Tom.
- Gatsby meets Tom.
- Gatsby has a party attended by Daisy and Tom.
- Tom, suspicious, begins to "investigate" who Gatsby is and how he got his money.
- Gatsby, Tom, Daisy, Jordan and Nick spend time in the city together, and Tom realizes Gatsby loves Daisy. He confronts him about it.
- During the confrontation, Gatsby tries to get Daisy to say she never loved Tom, but she is unwilling to say it.
- Gatsby and Daisy ride back to Long Island together. Daisy drives, supposedly.
- On the way (according to Gatsby’s later story), Daisy hits Myrtle Wilson and kills her – but she keeps driving.
Gatsby hangs around outside the Buchanan home, making sure Daisy is safe after Tom comes home.

George Wilson comes after Gatsby and kills him and then himself.

Only three people attend Gatsby’s funeral: Gatsby’s father, Nick, and the owl-eyed man who once admired the books in Gatsby’s library.

Daisy Buchanan

Gatsby’s entire fortune, and his entire life, really, are built upon the hope that someday he might rekindle his old love with Daisy. This, we have to admit, is an amazing, perhaps unbelievable, premise. The question that emerges from it is a simple but fundamentally important one: what kind of girl could possibly inspire such heights of devotion? In other words, what’s so great about this Daisy, anyway?

The answer isn’t simple – it’s as much about Gatsby himself as it is about Daisy. But there’s certainly something about Daisy that makes her special; she’s not like any of the other women in the novel, and we get the feeling that, in the eyes of both Gatsby and Nick, she’s not quite like any other girl in the world. What is it about her that’s so different, so thrilling, so intriguing? Sure, she’s beautiful – in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, she was always the belle of the ball (which we learn from Jordan’s account of their girlhood). She’s also fun-loving and something of a flirt; her conversation is charmingly sassy and delightfully frivolous. Even Nick, her cousin, can’t help but be taken in by Daisy’s many charms. But simply being charming isn’t enough to make Daisy stand out from the crowd. What, then, is the deciding factor? Let’s examine the different aspects of Daisy’s character and see what we find.

The Siren

Daisy’s beautiful, mysterious, flirtatious, intriguing, delightful, thrilling, sensuous, famously “full of money” voice is one of the central images in this novel; characters from Nick to Jordan to Gatsby all comment upon the magic of this remarkable instrument. Daisy’s voice is full, not just of money, but of promises – there’s something about it that tells the listener that wonderful things are on the horizon. Daisy’s voice is irresistibly seductive, and all the other characters are drawn to her because of it.

This brings to mind the image of the Siren. In Greek mythology, the island-dwelling Sirens sang to passing sailors, and their song was so seductive that the sailors would throw themselves into the sea and drown trying to get to them. Daisy is kind of a modern Siren; when Gatsby stretches his arms out to the green light across the water, we can almost imagine him throwing himself into the Sound to reach her. Her voice speaks of everything Gatsby desires – Daisy herself, wealth, social status, true happiness – and its call is irresistible.
The Dreamer

Daisy, like Gatsby, is something of a dreamer. One of the things they share is their idealized image of their relationship the first time around — and this rose-colored view makes everything in the present seem dull and flat in comparison. Daisy’s view of the past is both wistful and cynical at the same time. While Daisy recognizes that society’s pressures are forces to be reckoned with, she also longs for the innocent period of her “white girlhood,” before she was forced/forced herself into her marriage to Tom. Though the Daisy of the present has come to realize that more often than not, dreams don’t come true, she still clings to the hope that they sometimes can.

The Real Girl

The real problem is that Daisy isn’t really some mythical, divine creature, nor is she entirely an idealistic dreamer like Gatsby. She’s ultimately a real, living, breathing woman, who’s flawed, just like the rest of us. Daisy is used to her life being a certain way — she follows certain rules, she expects certain rewards — and when Gatsby challenges her to break free of these restraints, she’s understandably frightened. Ultimately, Daisy returns to Tom because he’s what she knows; the prospect of giving up her whole life to run off with Gatsby is just too overwhelming, no matter how unhappy she is. At her core, Daisy is also incredibly selfish, just like everyone else (Tom, Jordan, perhaps even Nick) — everyone except Gatsby, that is. The real Daisy is not the magical thing she’s made out to be: in the end, she’s simply too human to meet Gatsby’s expectations.

Daisy Buchanan Timeline

- Nick Carraway goes to visit his second cousin Daisy and her husband Tom.
- We learn of Daisy’s history from Jordan.
- Potentially, Daisy never wanted to marry Tom. Either that or she just had some intense wedding jitters.
- Nick arranges for Daisy and Gatsby to meet.
- Daisy is overwhelmed by Gatsby’s devotion to her and they begin a love affair.
- Daisy attends one of Gatsby’s parties with her husband.
- Daisy hangs out with Tom, Gatsby, Jordan, and her husband on the hottest day ever.
- They all go into the city.
- Daisy finds herself in the middle of a fight between her husband, Tom and Gatsby. She cannot bring herself to say she never loved Tom.
- Daisy is driving Jay Gatsby’s car (according to Gatsby) when she hits Myrtle Wilson, Tom’s mistress, killing her instantly. The accident occurs in front of George Wilson’s gas station and the home he shares with his wife Myrtle.
● It seems that Daisy and Tom conspire together to make Gatsby the guilty party for the accident.
● Daisy and Tom disappear.

Tom Buchanan

Tom Buchanan is Daisy’s husband, an extremely wealthy man, a brute, and an athlete. He’s selfish and does what he needs to get what he wants. Most of all, he seeks control of his life and control of others. When Tom figures out that Daisy loves Gatsby, he forces a confrontation. He is then able to use Daisy’s momentary hesitation to regain control of his wife. Master of the situation once more, Tom dismisses Gatsby – and his wife – giving him permission to drive his wife home. "He won't annoy you," he tells her. "I think he realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over." With that note of condescension, it is clear to all that Tom has the upper hand. Although Gatsby maintains hope beyond this scene, we all know it’s over.

But the quality of Tom that’s most likely to stick with you is the fact that he’s abusive. While we never see him get violent with his wife, there are hints of his unbridled physicality when Daisy reveals a bruise on her finger that, although accidental, was caused by Tom (or the "brute," as she calls him). Although he might not be physically abusive to his wife, Tom certainly causes her some emotional damage. There is, of course, his series of affairs, but he hurts Daisy in other ways, too. When Daisy tells us about her daughter being born, she casually adds that "Tom was God knows where." He is neither attentive nor sensitive towards his wife – especially in contrast to Gatsby. But, of course, Tom’s violent streak really comes across when we see him break Myrtle’s nose with the "short, deft movement" of his open hand. The curt language Fitzgerald uses here makes it clear that such violence means little to Tom.

Tom Buchanan Timeline

● We meet Tom in Chapter One, and learn through the narration that he went to Yale with Nick and they graduated in 1915.
● Tom introduces Nick to his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, and the three of them spend a day together in New York.
● Tom gets angry at Myrtle and hits her in the face, breaking her nose.
● It is revealed through Jordan’s story that Tom has a history of cheating on his wife, even as early as weeks after their honeymoon.
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- When Tom meets Gatsby, he takes an immediate disliking to the man.
- Tom attends Gatsby’s party with his wife; he becomes suspicious and starts sniffing around trying to find out how Gatsby made all his money.
- Tom finally figures out that Gatsby and his wife are having an affair. He confronts them and challenges Gatsby’s claim on his wife.
- Tom gets Daisy to confess that she loved him, and he sends her off with Gatsby in contempt. He’s won that little battle.
- Driving home from the city after his confrontation with Gatsby, Tom and Nick and Jordan come upon the accident that killed Tom’s mistress, Myrtle Wilson. Tom assumes that Gatsby is guilty.
- At home, Tom and Daisy conspire together to make sure Gatsby is the one who pays for the accident.
- When George Wilson comes around the day after his wife’s death to find out who was driving the car that killed her, Tom lets it slip (intentionally) that the car belongs to Gatsby.
- Tom and Daisy disappear.

Jordan Baker

Nick might end up "halfway in love" with Jordan, but he consistently describes her as cynical, having seen too much and heard too much to be fooled by anybody. And perhaps because of her dishonesty, she is aware more than anybody else in the book that appearances are deceiving.

Jordan is possibly the least important of all the major characters in the book, yet she provides an important contrast to Daisy Buchanan. She appears first in the Buchanan’s home, a young woman with too much time on her hands. In some ways, she epitomizes the concept of "ennui" – she is bored to tears, except for her active sports career in golf. Cynical and hard, she cheated to win her first golf tournament. This in itself is evidence of her practicality. Ultimately, she and Nick end up "together" (in a fashion) and Nick mentions how grateful he is that she is not like Daisy. That is, she is not the kind of girl who holds onto the past, a girl "too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age."

But Daisy and Jordan aren’t quite polar opposites after all, and it is Jordan’s place in that "rotten crowd" that drives a wedge between her and Nick. Well, maybe. We offer a different explanation in Nick’s analysis, so take your pick. But you can’t really argue about the fact that Jordan is just as careless as Daisy. Daisy "smash[es] things up" and then "retreat[s] […] into […] vast carelessness." Does that last word look familiar? Nick tells Jordan she is "careless," and after a brief attempt at denying it, she pretty much gives him a "whatever" in return. She callously says that other people have to stay out of her way. This might be the reason Nick comes to dislike her, but the reason he is taken in at first is her following line: "I hate careless people." Looks like they have something in common, after all.
Jordan Baker Timeline

- Nick meets Jordan when he goes to see his second cousin, Daisy, and her husband, Tom.
- Jordan and Nick start hanging out together, in the romantic sense of the word.
- She reveals that she likes Nick because he isn't careless.
- Jordan introduces Nick to Jay Gatsby at a party they attend at Gatsby's house.
- Gatsby takes Jordan aside at the party to tell her something.
- We find out that Jordan probably cheated in a golf tournament.
- Jordan admits to being a horrible driver and says she'll be fine as long as she doesn't meet another careless person. She's also a practical girl. And jaded.
- Nick really falls for Jordan.
- Jordan asks Nick if he'll arrange for Gatsby and Daisy to meet.
- Jordan goes to the city with Nick, Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy, and is present for the showdown between the two men.
- She rides back to Long Island with Nick and Tom and is present when they come upon the hit-and-run aftermath.
- She has an awkward phone conversation with Nick in which they seem to break up.
- Later, after Gatsby's death, they have a more explicit phone conversation. Jordan confesses that no one has ever broken up with her like that. She accuses Nick of being dishonest and of being a "careless driver."

George Wilson

Poor George. He really gets the short end of the stick in this one. And, seeing as he's one of the few characters without staggering flaws, it seems he doesn't really deserve it. From what we can tell, Wilson is hard-working and not cheating on his spouse. He's in a marriage with a woman who not only seems to not love him, but also can't respect him – in large part because of his poverty. Despite all of this, Wilson still blames himself for his wife's death. The conversations between him and Michaelis (later revealed to us through Nick) are simply agonizing to hear; George is clearly in terrible emotional pain. Not only has his wife been killed, but he also found out just before her death that she'd been having an affair. George's repeated cries of "Oh, my God" could have to do with the fact that his wife has died, but they could also be his astonishment at her infidelity. Then again, they could be guilty cries as well; if Wilson hadn't called her out on the affair, she might not have run out into the street, and she might not have been killed. This "George feels guilty" theory gains some credibility when he commits suicide after shooting Gatsby.