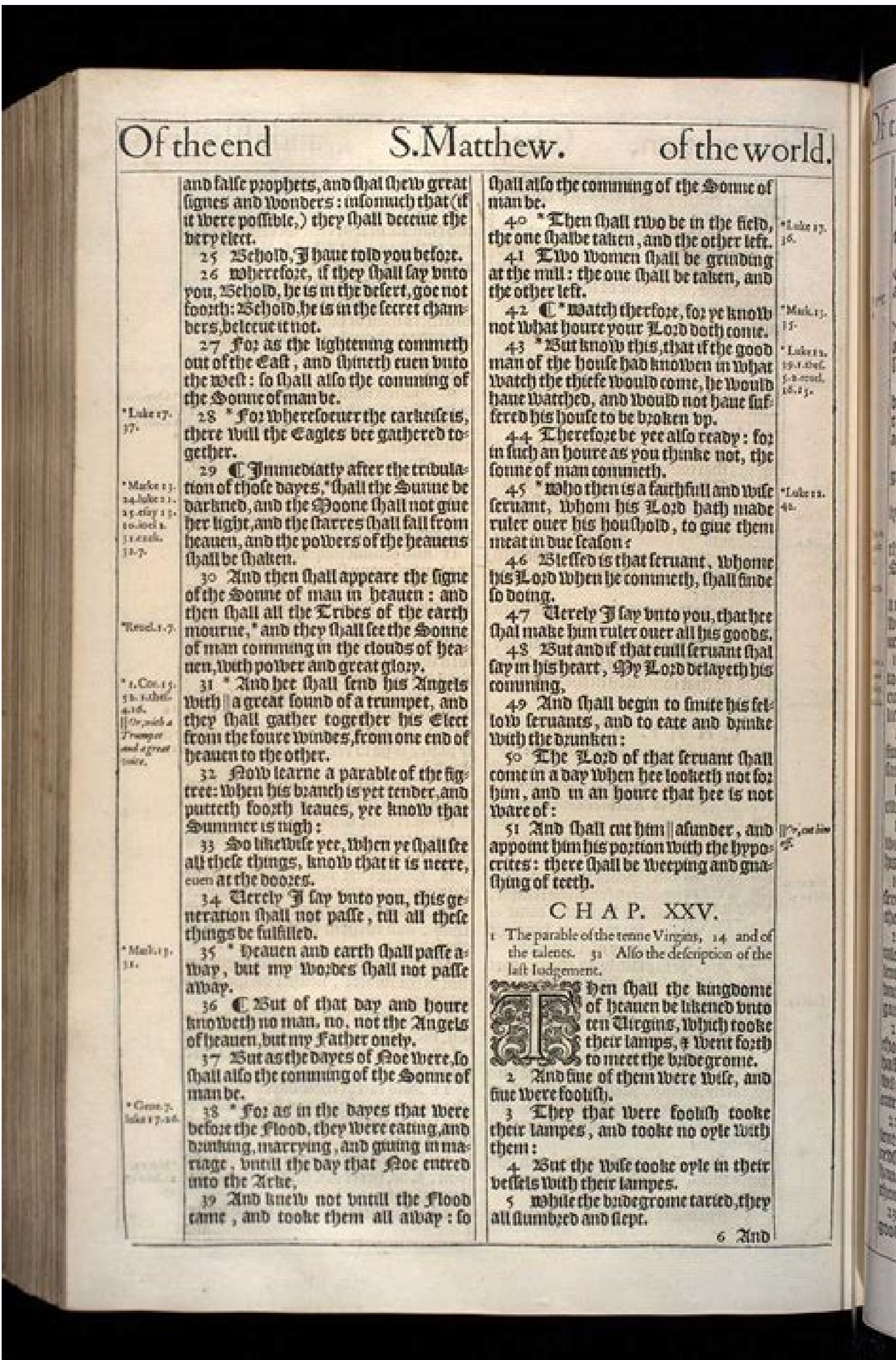
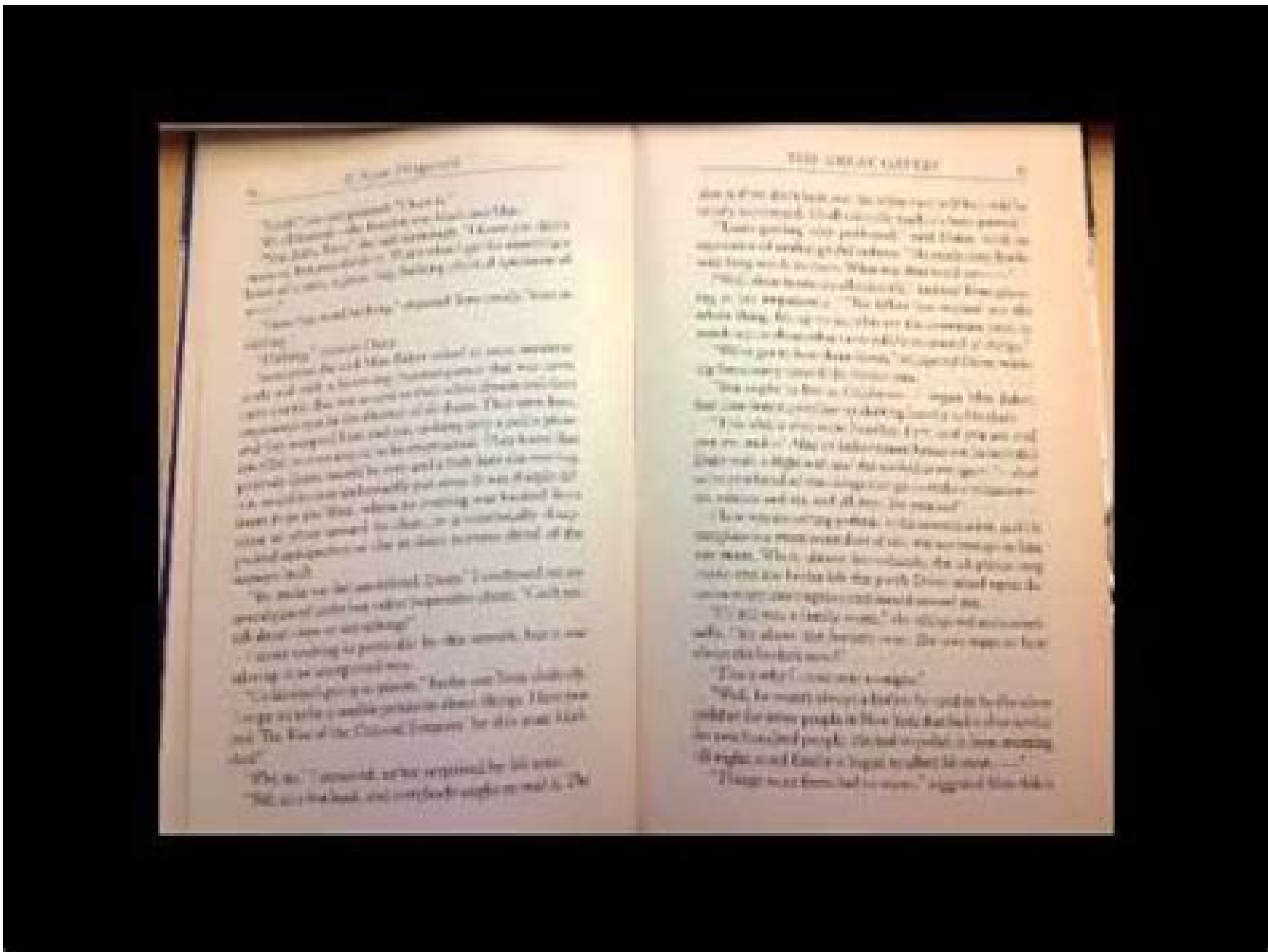


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Maybe you've just finished *The Great Gatsby* and need some guidance for unpacking its complex themes and symbols. Or maybe it's been awhile since you last read this novel, so you need a refresher on its plot and characters. Or maybe you're in the middle of reading it and want to double check that you're not missing the important stuff. Whatever you need - we've got you covered with this comprehensive summary of one of the great American novels of all time! Not only does this complete *The Great Gatsby* summary provide a detailed synopsis of the plot, but it'll also give you: capsule descriptions for the book's major characters, short explanations of most important themes, as well as links to in-depth articles about these and other topics. (Image: Molasz / Wikimedia Commons) 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 eReader version of the text. **The Great Gatsby Summary: The Full Plot** Our narrator, Nick Carraway, moves to the East Coast to work as a bond trader in Manhattan. He rents a small house in West Egg, a nouveau riche town in Long Island. In East Egg, the next town over, where old money people live, Nick reconnects with his cousin Daisy Buchanan, her husband Tom, and meets their friend Jordan Baker. Tom takes Nick to meet his mistress, Myrtle Wilson. Myrtle is married to George Wilson, who runs a gas station in a gross and dirty neighborhood in Queens. Tom, Nick, and Myrtle go to Manhattan, where she hosts a small party that ends with Tom punching her in the face. Nick meets his next-door neighbor, Jay Gatsby, a very rich man who lives in a giant mansion and throws wildly extravagant parties every weekend, and who is a mysterious person no one knows much about. Gatsby takes Nick to lunch and introduces him to his business partner - a gangster named Meyer Wolfsheim. Nick starts a relationship with Jordan. Through her, Nick finds out that Gatsby and Daisy were in love five years ago, and that Gatsby would like to see her again. Nick arranges for Daisy to come over to his house so that Gatsby can "accidentally" drop by. Daisy and Gatsby start having an affair. Tom and Daisy come to one of Gatsby's parties. Daisy is disgusted by the ostentatiously vulgar display of wealth, and Tom immediately sees that Gatsby's money most likely comes from crime. We learn that Gatsby was born into a poor farming family as James Gatz. He has always been extremely ambitious, creating the Jay Gatsby persona as a way of transforming himself into a successful self-made man—the ideal of the American Dream. Nick, Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and Jordan get together for lunch. At this lunch, Daisy and Gatsby are planning to tell Tom that she is leaving him. Gatsby suddenly feels uncomfortable doing this in Tom's house, and Daisy suggests going to Manhattan instead. In Manhattan, the five of them get a suite at the Plaza Hotel where many secrets come out. Gatsby reveals that Daisy is in love with him. Tom in turn reveals that Gatsby is a bootlegger, and is probably engaged in other criminal activities as well. Gatsby demands that Daisy renounce Tom entirely, and say that she has never loved him. Daisy can't bring herself to say this because it isn't true, crushing Gatsby's dream and obsession. It's clear that their relationship is over and that Daisy has chosen to stay with Tom. That evening, Daisy and Gatsby drive home in his car, with Daisy behind the wheel. When they drive by the Wilson gas station, Myrtle runs out to the car because she thinks it's Tom driving by. Daisy hits and kills her, driving off without stopping. Nick, Jordan, and Tom investigate the accident. Tom tells George Wilson that the car that struck Myrtle belongs to Gatsby, and George decides that Gatsby must also be Myrtle's lover. That night, Gatsby decides to take the blame for the accident. He is still waiting for Daisy to change her mind and come back to him, but she and Tom skip town the next day. Nick breaks up with Jordan because she is completely unconcerned about Myrtle's death. Gatsby tells Nick some more of his story. As an officer in the army, he met and fell in love with Daisy, but after a month had to ship out to fight in WWI. Two years later, before he could get home, she married Tom. Gatsby has been obsessed with getting Daisy back since he shipped out to fight five years earlier. The next day, George Wilson shoots and kills Gatsby, and then himself. The police leave the Buchanans and Myrtle's affair out of the report on the murder-suicide. Nick tries to find people to come to Gatsby's funeral, but everyone who pretended to be Gatsby's friend and came to his parties now refuses to come. Even Gatsby's partner Wolfsheim doesn't want to go to the funeral. Wolfsheim explains that he first gave Gatsby a job after WWI and that they have been partners in many illegal activities together. Gatsby's father comes to the funeral from Minnesota. He shows Nick a self-improvement plan that Gatsby had written for himself as a boy. Disillusioned with his time on the East coast, Nick decides to return to his home in the Midwest. Other Ways to Study the Plot of *The Great Gatsby* See what happens when in actual chronological order and without flashbacks in our *Great Gatsby* timeline. Read our individual *The Great Gatsby* chapter summaries for more in-depth details about plot, important quotes and character beats, and how the novel's major themes get reflected: Learn the significance behind the novel's title, its beginning, and its ending. List of the Major Characters in *The Great Gatsby* Click on each character's name to read an in-depth article analyzing their place in the novel. Nick Carraway—our narrator, but not the book's main character. Coming East from the Midwest to learn the bond business, Nick is horrified by the materialism and superficiality he finds in Manhattan and Long Island. He ends up admiring Gatsby as a hopeful dreamer and despising the rest of the people he encounters. Jay Gatsby—a self-made man who is driven by his love for, and obsession with, Daisy Buchanan. Born a poor farmer, Gatsby becomes materially successful through crime and spends the novel trying to recreate the perfect love he and Daisy had five years before. When she cannot renounce her marriage, Gatsby's dream is crushed. Daisy Buchanan—a very rich young woman who is trapped in a dysfunctional marriage and oppressed by her meaningless life. Daisy has an affair with Gatsby, but is ultimately unwilling to say that she has been as obsessed with him as he has with her, and goes back to her unsatisfying, but also less demanding, relationship with her husband, Tom. Tom Buchanan—Daisy's very rich, adulterous, bullying, racist husband. Tom is having a physically abusive affair with Myrtle Wilson. He investigates Gatsby and reveals some measure of his criminal involvement, demonstrating to Daisy that Gatsby isn't someone she should run off with. After Daisy runs over Myrtle Wilson, Tom makes up with Daisy and they skip town together. Jordan Baker—a professional golfer who has a relationship with Nick. At first, Jordan is attractive because of her jaded, cynical attitude, but then Nick slowly sees that her inveterate lying and her complete lack of concern for other people are deal breakers. Myrtle Wilson—the somewhat vulgar wife of a car mechanic who is unhappy in her marriage. Myrtle is having an affair with Tom, whom she likes for his rugged and brutal masculinity and for his money. Daisy runs Myrtle over, killing her in a gruesome and shocking way. George Wilson—Myrtle's browbeaten, weak, and working class husband. George is enraged when he finds out about Myrtle's affair, and then that rage is transformed into unbinged madness when Myrtle is killed. George kills Gatsby and himself in the murder-suicide that seems to erase Gatsby and his lasting impact on the world entirely. Other Ways to Study *Great Gatsby* Characters Need a refresher on all the other people in this book? Check out our overview of the characters or dive deeper with our detailed character analyses. Get some help for tackling the common assignment of comparing and contrasting the novel's characters. Start gathering relevant character quotes to beef up your essay assignments with evidence from the text. List of the Major Themes in *The Great Gatsby* Get a broad overview of the novel's themes, or click on each theme to read a detailed individual analysis. Money and Materialism—the novel is fascinated by how people make their money, what they can and can't buy with it, and how the pursuit of wealth shapes the decisions people make and the paths their lives follow. In the novel, is it possible to be happy without a lot of money? Is it possible to be happy with it? Society and Class—the novel can also be read as a clash between the old money set and the nouveau riche strivers and wannabes that are trying to either become them or replace them. If the novel ends with the strivers and the poor being killed off and the old money literally getting away with murder, who wins this class battle? The American Dream—does the novel endorse or mock the dream of the rags-to-riches success story, the ideal of the self-made man? Is Gatsby a successful example of what's possible through hard work and dedication, or a sham whose crime and death demonstrate that the American Dream is a work of fiction? Love, Desire, and Relationships—most of the major characters are driven by either love or sexual desire, but none of these connections prove lasting or stable. Is the novel saying that these are destructive forces, or is just that these characters use and feel them in the wrong way? Death and Failure—a tone of sadness and elegy (an elegy is a song of sadness for the dead) suffuses the book, as Nick looks back at a summer that ended with three violent deaths and the defeat of one man's delusional dream. Are ambition and overreach doomed to this level of epic failure, or are they examples of the way we sweep the past under the rug when looking to the future? Morality and Ethics—despite the fact that most of the characters in this novel cheat on their significant others, one is an accidental killer, one is an actual criminal, and one a murderer, at the end of the novel no one is punished either by the law or by public censure. Is there a way to fix the lawless, amoral, Wild East that this book describes, or does the replacement of God with a figure from a billboard mean that this is a permanent state of affairs? The Mutability of Identity—the key to answering the title's implied questions (What makes Gatsby great? Is Gatsby great?) is whether it is possible to change oneself for good, or whether past history and experiences leave their marks forever. Gatsby wants to have it both ways: to change himself from James Gatz into a glamorous figure, but also to recapitulate and preserve in amber a moment from his past with Daisy. Does he fail because it's impossible to change? Because it's impossible to repeat the past? Or both? Other Ways to Study *Great Gatsby* Themes Often, themes are represented by a the novel's symbols. Check out our overview of the main symbols motifs Use our analysis, gathered quotations, and description for help with homework assignments, tests, and essays on this novel. What's Next? More *Great Gatsby* Analysis and Study Guides! Understand how the book is put together by looking at its genre, narrator, and setting. Learn the background of and context for the novel in our explanations of the history of the book and the biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald. Get a sense of how the novel has been adapted by reading about its many film versions. Read an overview of how to write analytical essays about the characters in *The Great Gatsby* before diving into the nitty-gritty for each main character (including the question of if Jay Gatsby really is great). 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:

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