

The Great Gatsby

by F. Scott Fitzgerald



ABOUT THE READING F. Scott Fitzgerald was a famous writer during the Roaring Twenties. His classic novel, *The Great Gatsby*, was known for its vivid description of life in the 1920s. The novel follows the wealthy Jay Gatsby and his life. Fitzgerald used Gatsby to portray the wealthy American socialites he observed in society. *The Great Gatsby* is often considered Fitzgerald's masterpiece.

VOCABULARY

staid serious

hilarity gaiety

tenor the highest natural adult male voice

contralto the lowest adult female voice

vacuous lacking intelligence; devoid of substance or meaning



As you read the passage below, think about how F. Scott Fitzgerald described life during the Roaring Twenties in his writing.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer: the honor would be entirely Gatsby's, it said, if I would attend his "little party" that night. He had seen me several times, and had intended to call on me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it—signed Jay Gatsby, in a majestic hand. . .

The first supper—there would be another one after midnight—was now being served, and Jordan invited me to join her own party, who were spread around a table on the other side of the garden. There were three married couples and Jordan's escort . . . representing the staid nobility of the country-side—East Egg condescending to West Egg . . .

. . . There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden . . . superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and keeping in the

The writer describes an invitation from Jay Gatsby to a party at his mansion on Long Island, New York.

East Egg and West Egg refer to areas of Long Island that Fitzgerald uses to represent social status. Those who had "old money," passed on for generations, lived in East Egg, named for its egg-like shape. West Egg is where those, like Gatsby, who had "new money" lived and were not considered equal by East Egg residents.

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corners—and a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo . . . By midnight the **hilarity** had increased. A celebrated **tenor** had sung in Italian, and a notorious **contralto** had sung in jazz . . . while happy, **vacuous** bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky. A pair of stage twins—who turned out to be the girls in yellow—did a baby act in costume . . . The moon had risen higher, and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjos on the lawn.

Notice the words Fitzgerald uses to describe the people at the party.

Gatsby's property was on the shore of Long Island Sound.

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea What do you think the purpose of Jay Gatsby's party might have been?

2. Draw Conclusions After reading this passage, what could you conclude about parties during the Roaring Twenties? Explain your answer.

3. Opinion Do you think music was important during this time period? Support your answer with details from the reading.

ACTIVITY

4. Write a poem using some of the imagery found in this passage. Think of a scene or event from your life that you would like to describe. On a separate sheet of paper, write your poem. Circle or highlight key descriptive words that express important details.