

Preparing for the Film

1. What historical facts about the 1920s might lead to the audience's expectations for the settings, costumes, and even the plot of this film set in that time period?
2. What does the term "The American Dream" mean to you? What are the various components of the dream?
3. In a romantic relationship thwarted by family disapproval or unrequited affection, what are some of the feelings and hopes that might develop in the person who was rejected?
4. If you have read F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, what are some challenges that a director might encounter adapting it for a film version for viewers today?

Reflecting on the Film

1. Focusing on the opening scene, what can we infer about the narrator and his motive for this recollection of Jay Gatsby? Explain and evaluate the effectiveness of this narrative framing device, unique to Luhrmann's production.
2. Jay Gatsby does not appear in the film for some time. What is the effect of postponing his presence on the screen?
3. As the film continues, Nick and the audience learn more about Jay Gatsby's background. How does his history help viewers understand the man we see in the mansion on West Egg?
4. Earlier than Gatsby, the audience meets Tom Buchanan and his wife Daisy. What does the director want viewers to see about Tom?
5. The film is rich with images of Long Island and New York City life. Six distinct areas provide important physical and thematic settings for the action of the film: The Buchanan home, Jay Gatsby's estate, Nick Carraway's rented cottage, the Wilsons' apartment above the gas station in the Valley of the Ashes, Tom's city apartment for his trysts with Myrtle, and the Plaza Hotel room in the city, rented for one afternoon. What are the features of each place? How does each contribute to the plot and themes of the film?
6. As in the novel, the film features objects and images that work symbolically to suggest themes. (The following question would be ideal for small group work, where each group can be assigned one or two of the symbols.) What are possible meanings of each symbol and explain their significance in all relevant scenes:

- **flashing green light** at the end of Daisy's dock
- **valley of ashes**
- **eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg**
- **windows**
- **staircases**

- strings of pearls
 - Daisy's name
 - ringing telephones
 - Gatsby's yellow roadster
 - Gatsby's swimming pool
 - Nick's clock
 - Gatsby's scrap album of Daisy's life
7. Describe the most important disclosures and discoveries that occur in the room at the Plaza Hotel right before the tragic accident.
 8. What features of Myrtle's death does the camera emphasize?
 9. In the film, how does George Wilson learn that the yellow car is owned by Gatsby?
 10. Nick's last conversation with Gatsby concludes with Nick saying, "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together." Why has Nick "always been glad [he] said that"?
 11. How does the film's music soundtrack attempt to appeal to a contemporary audience. Evaluate its success.

Writing about the Film

1. Considering Luhrmann's narrative framing device, write an essay analyzing how Nick feels both "within and without" throughout this film. Focus particularly on the window scenes at Tom and Myrtle's Manhattan apartment, the tea at Nick's and subsequent visit to Jay's, the room at the Plaza, and the final scenes right before and after Gatsby's death.
2. Focusing on the two men whom Daisy has loved, write a comparison-contrast of Tom Buchanan and Jay Gatsby in terms of their backgrounds, values, love for and treatment of Daisy. Analyze details from particular scenes for support.
3. Write an essay analyzing the key components of the American Dream, as Luhrmann depicts them, as well as the inevitable shortcomings and frustrations as the Dream disintegrates. Include specific scenes and details from the film to explain what Fitzgerald and Luhrmann are suggesting about the American Dream.
4. If you have read F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, write an essay analyzing how effectively Baz Luhrmann dramatizes the main themes, character development, and key scenes in the novel and give quotes and film details for support.

Works Cited

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. 1925. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.

The Great Gatsby. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Tobey Maguire, Joel Edgerton, Carey Mulligan, Isla Fisher, Jason Clarke, Elizabeth Debicki, and Amitabh Bachchan. Warner Brothers, 2013. Film.

Select Film Reviews and Critical Analyses of Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/movies/the-great-gatsby-interpreted-by-baz-luhrmann.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/may/16/baz-luhrmann-great-gatsby-fitzgerald>

<http://www.thenation.com/print/article/174469/flappers-and-philosophers>

<http://entertainment.time.com/2013/05/09/luhrmanns-the-great-gatsby-from-jazz-age-to-baz-age/>

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/cinema/2013/05/13/130513rci_cinema_denby?printable=true¤tPage=all

<http://lifeandtimes.com/director-baz-luhrmann-speaks-on-directing-the-great-gatsby>