The Great Gatsby

Responses to Preparing for the Film

1. The 1920s, The Jazz Age, were punctuated by lively music, private clubs (speakeasies) and parties that featured liquor despite the Prohibition Era (1920-1933), a prosperous stock market and business environment where young men knew they could get jobs and make money. There was an energy in earning money and spending it. Unlike the earlier millionaires in the country, these economically successful young men spent more than their fathers ever did. Settings in the film reflect this conspicuous consumption and spending of the time. Homes are filled with elaborate, decorative items. Women's costumes are rich with spangles, sequins, and feathers which adorn silk dresses. The women wear head adornments of bands, jewels, and feathers. The plot reflects the time period in that we learn within minutes of the opening that too much liquor is being consumed; the film shows the result of prohibition--wild, profligate drinking. The film suggests that Jay Gatsby has become wealthy as a bootlegger, an occupation shrouded in secrecy, with urgent interruptions, hushed whispering, and constant messages and mysteries, an essential element of the plot. Throughout the film, and from its first screen images during the credits, we see Art Deco design motifs, with their characteristic rich colors, elaborate ornamentation, and geometric shapes.

2. Students will be familiar with elements of the America Dream, the belief that anyone, regardless of social class, can achieve success and prosperity by working hard. Components of the myth include individualism, determination and discovery, a relentless work ethic, steady improvements, and the pursuit of happiness. In reality, the American Dream often disintegrated as easy money, prosperity, and greed led to a corruption of values, conspicuous consumerism, and an exploitation of others for personal and material gains.

3. Most students will understand how frustrating it is to have a relationship end prematurely because of family disapproval even if they have not experienced this personally. It is easy to imagine the sense of disappointment, anger, and longing, whenever a loved one is denied. Moreover, unrequited love, for any reason, can prompt an idealization of and obsession with the loved one as well as a determination to win approval or to over-compensate for any perceived shortcomings that caused the initial rejection.

4. If students have read the novel, they will have no problem identifying a director's challenges to adapt this novel to the screen. They typically recognize how difficult it is to cast the ideal actors to play Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, and Nick Carraway because they are so iconic, so critical to the work, and so familiar to readers and viewers. The roles of Gatsby and Daisy could easily become caricatures because they both seem mythical and larger than life. In addition, this novel has become such a classic of American literature and is taught so frequently that it is nearly impossible for a director and cast to fulfill everyone's expectations for the film. Other challenges include how to:

- handle Nick's first-person narration--use just a voice-over? create a framing device? rely on key flashbacks?
- stage the wild, decadent parties at Gatsby's mansion
- reveal the extent of Gatsby and Daisy's relationship--flashbacks? letters?
- incorporate, visually, the objects and images that function symbolically in Fitzgerald's novel
- delete any unnecessary details and distracting or insignificant characters
- dramatize the death scenes so they are effective on the big screen
- select music that will represent the time period but also appeal to a contemporary audience
- capture the mystery and myths surrounding Gatsby while providing a sense of closure

Responses to Reflecting on the Film

1. Nick is a Midwesterner, from well-to-do people who have lived in the same place for three generations. He has graduated from Yale, as did his father, served in the Great War (WWI), and then arrived home restless, deciding to depart for the East and go into the bond business. Unlike the novel, the film uses a framing device, opening with Nick in a sanitarium for treatment of "morbid alcoholism, insomnia, fits of anger, and anxiety." Played by Tobey Maguire, Nick admits that everyone he knew in the East drank too much, and the film dramatizes Nick's own excessive drinking. An additional departure from the novel shows Nick's doctor recommending that Nick write about Jay Gatsby's life and death because Nick has revealed that writing brings him some "solace." Throughout the film, Nick is seen sharing his manuscript with his doctor, who comments on particular details while Nick is typing and writing about Gatsby, played by Leonardo DiCaprio. In the film, if not the novel, Nick clearly seems a stand-in for Fitzgerald, who was not only a writer but an alcoholic.

   When Nick first arrives in New York, he is eager to meet his beautiful and wealthy cousin Daisy Buchanan (played by Carey Mulligan), and he shows how helpful and discreet he is in keeping the Buchanan-family secret, that Tom Buchanan has a mistress. Nick is willing to go along with Tom when Tom meets his girlfriend for a tryst in their city apartment, and he will later help Gatsby connect with Daisy when Nick invites both of them to tea at his cottage. He tries to be non-judgmental, but he ultimately realizes that these people are too rich, too careless, and too indifferent to conventional morality. Even though Fitzgerald has Nick not approving of Gatsby "from beginning to end" (154), both Fitzgerald and Luhrmann have Nick convinced that Gatsby was better than the others--the Buchanans, Jordan, and the free-loaders who attended Gatsby's parties. After Nick can't get anyone else to attend Gatsby's funeral, Nick returns to the Midwest. At the end of the film, he removes his cover page entitled "Gatsby" from the typewriter and handwrites "The Great" in front of the name, underscoring Nick's initial claim to his doctor that "only one man is exempt from my disgust--Gatsby." Luhrmann's use of this framing device--having Nick at a sanitarium talking to his doctor about Gatsby and writing this recollection--provides a motive for the first-person narrative and a unifying thread throughout the film.

2. Jay Gatsby's visual absence from the screen creates anticipation in the audience. Even in the scene where he first appears, Nick just sees a shadowy figure on the dock and assumes that it is Gatsby. Later, the audience sees Gatsby, but again from afar, looking down at Nick from behind a curtained window. Nick explains to his doctor how he discovered that Gatsby was "always watching me," and the film cuts to a shot of the back of Gatsby's head, with a cigarette and holder in one hand and a large pinky ring on his other hand. Nick seems pleased to be the only one to ever receive an invitation to Gatsby's party--everyone else came uninvited. When Nick arrives at the party, no one seems to know Gatsby, but the audience can identify him by his ringed pinky finger as he moves glasses among guests who have never seen him and thus don't recognize him. Rumors of who he is and what he has done in his life punctuate scenes before he appears: that he is related to the German Kaiser, that he does business with unsavory people, that he owns drugstores where liquor is sold, that he killed a man once, that he is a war hero and an Oxford man. The effect of postponing Jay Gatsby's presence in the film perpetuates questions about him that will, only through Gatsby's friendship and confidence in Nick, be revealed.

3. "Jay Gatsby" was the name that James Gatz took at the age of seventeen when he legally changed it. He informed a prospector millionaire that he would help save his yacht if a storm came up on Lake Superior, where the young man had been walking, and the yachtsman Dan Cody took him aboard and made him a fashionable steward, skipper, and secretary before the *Tuolomee* set sail for distant lands. Jay Gatsby left behind the boy James Gatz as he had already left behind his parents, unsuccessful farmers. Gatsby's goal was to make money and live well. He should have inherited the $25,000 that Cody intended him to have, but a clever woman inherited all of Dan Cody's money when he died.

   Gatsby's apparent ease in changing parts of his own history convinces him that Daisy, too, could and finally would alter her life to deny the five years that she has lived with her husband, deny that she has ever loved him, and run off with Gatsby as they had once intended. Reinvention of self—a new name, a new and successful father figure, a new post-war career, new money, and new estate--was an achievable dreams for Jay Gatsby, and he was certain that regaining Daisy was part of that achievable dream.

4. Tom Buchanan dominates the screen as he thunders up to his mansion and dismounts from his horse. His servants hand him towels and a drink as he commands dominance over his space. He hustles Nick into his home where his trophies immediately boast his accomplishments. He queries Nick on his job, gets ready to propel a football at him, pushes him through a door, and moves about his home, indifferent to the lounging Daisy or her languid friend Jordan. Cheating on Daisy throughout their marriage,Tom refers to each of his affairs as "a spree." Jordan reveals that shortly after Tom and Daisy married, Daisy appeared to be so in love with him, but a week later Tom was with a chambermaid in his car when he crashed it and so he and Daisy moved east to escape the rumors. Tom's

current mistress Myrtle calls him at home even during the dinner hour. Tom's physical dominance over his environment—his powerful size, his muscular body, his assertive voice—will all be manifested in the film when he brutally slaps Myrtle, bellows his racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic views, physically manipulates Daisy and Nick, recklessly drives his car, and urges George Wilson to make Gatsby pay for Myrtle's death.

What Tom does not control with his physical presence, he manipulates with his money, as he does George Wilson who waits to get a car Tom owns to repair and sell, or Myrtle, who has a city apartment and trinkets and jewelry Tom has bought her. At Gatsby's party, Tom resents being called "the polo player" by Gatsby, and threatens to discover Gatsby's secrets and expose him. After Myrtle's death, Tom tells her husband George that the owner of the car was "a fella named Gatsby. He's a crook. " When a traumatized George says, "Maybe he was the one fooling around with Myrtle; maybe that's why he killed her," Tom encourages such false accusations and reiterates, "Gatsby--something ought to be done about a fellow like that." Tom Buchanan is a thoroughly unlikeable man who fails to engage in a single admirable action in the film.

5. The various settings for the film contrast and reflect distinctly different socio-economic backgrounds and values of the residents.

The **Buchanan mansion** has stately white columns and is airy and light, with fresh breezes blowing gossamer curtains that hang in front of French doors. The grassy expanse before the entrance to the home is manicured and classic, the architecture of the estate a reflection of restrained spending of old money. If the Buchanans collect art or objects from their travels, it is not apparent in their décor. Their home is elegant and anonymous, quietly refined. Its whiteness suggests a purity that masks the disorder of their lives. As Jordan informs Nick, Tom has a mistress he keeps in the city, who calls during their dinner, and the Buchanans' abrupt departure from Santa Barbara was motivated by a car accident that injured a chamber maid who was riding with Tom when he crashed the car.

In contrast, **Jay Gatsby's "castle"** is filled with a custom-designed organ, curved staircases, crystal chandeliers, framed photos, luxurious furniture, and expensive objects that a poor man might imagine a wealthy person might own. When he has guests for a party, the excesses of lavish entertainment abound—costumed show girls, impresarios, musicians playing the latest dance numbers, bartenders, trays with beverages, champagne bottles, fireworks, streamers and confetti. All of the signs of conspicuous consumption are centered around Jay Gatsby's swimming pool and are evident in his home.

Nick Carraway's rented cottage is modestly furnished and charming, with attractive wood trim and shelves. It has plenty of windows and is understated, except for the improbable numbers of lavish flower arrangements that Jay Gatsby has installed in the cottage in anticipation of the afternoon tea to which Nick has invited Daisy as well as Gatsby.

The audience does not see much of the **Wilsons' apartment**, but the film shows the squalor of the **valley of the ashes**, with its disintegrating billboard and fading eyes of the optician Dr. T.J. Eckleburg, the shadowy figures of working men, the grime of George Wilson's garage. The audience can imagine the contrast of Myrtle's home environment with the home of the Buchanans. Furthermore, when George suspects that Myrtle is having an affair, he locks her in their upstairs apartment, making it even more of a prison for her.

The film does capture the interior of **Myrtle's city apartment.** It is as red and as packed with furnishings as the Buchanan home is white and uncluttered. The door is scarlet, the wallpaper is patterned red, the lampshades have decorative fringe, Myrtle's new dog sits in a chair eating from a saucer, and a piano waits to be played. It is a lively world filled with color and material belongings, a place where people come to get drunk, dance, and play with dangerous abandon.

The **Plaza Hotel room**, with windows looking out on New York City, is elegantly appointed in deep tones of burgundy with functional objects like ice buckets and fans. As the scene opens, the camera zooms in on a hotel attendant pounding an ice pick into a huge block of ice. The pounding foreshadows the brutal verbal jabs of the coming scene--heated charges from Tom, explosive rage from Gatsby, desperate pleas from Daisy, and finally a rapid departure for the destructive drive through the valley of the ashes. Even the cool and expensive room at the Plaza can't calm these destructive people or save Myrtle from their careless, frantic haste.

6. The film features these objects or images repeatedly in important scenes to suggest multiple meanings; hence, they function symbolically:

    - The **flashing green light** at the end of Daisy's dock aptly opens and closes this film since it represents Gatsby's dream of being reunited with Daisy, a dream that inspired everything he did in order to win her back. The green light seems a symbol of hope and promise for Gatsby, signifying that he can go ahead and keep moving in the direction toward Daisy. Because the green light is on a dock, it promises freedom to leave the shore and strike out for a new world of possibilities. However, it is flashing rather than solid green, perhaps to suggest impermanence or the temporary nature of hope. Also, the green light is far off in the distance, across the bay, and often it is clouded by mist, just as Gatsby's goal frequently seems impossible to envision or achieve. The green color also suggests the color of money, the ultimate mandate for Gatsby to enter Daisy's world, and the color of envy, which Gatsby must have felt for years when he couldn't be with Daisy. In the film, when Daisy visits Gatsby's home and the green light is covered up by the mist, Nick comments to the doctor, "Possibly it occurred to Gatsby that the colossal significance of that light had vanished forever." Nick later adds, "Now it was once again just a green light on a dock, and his count of enchanted objects had diminished by one." Near the end of the film, as in the novel, Nick thinks of "Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. . . . Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us."

- The **valley of ashes** represents the neglected underbelly of big-city growth. Fitzgerald describes it as "a desolate area of land" halfway between West Egg and Manhattan--"a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke, and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air" (23). Luhrmann captures this "ghastly" gray area with its industrial ash and laboring classes when Tom and Nick get off the train so Tom can introduce Nick to his mistress Myrtle Wilson. In her bold red print dress and sexy legwear, she seems incongruous in this drab and dreary setting. Myrtle's disgust for her mechanic husband George is evident as she walks past him, his face and skin smeared with oil and grease, to give her attention to Tom. In his stained sleeveless t-shirt, tools in hand, George Wilson, "faintly handsome," seems trapped in his repair business, struggling to buy and sell cars. Living in the "ashheaps" that the wealthy pass through, George and Myrtle Wilson are people that the wealthy overlook or exploit. They are so disposable that when Daisy races through and hits Myrtle, Daisy doesn't feel obligated to stop.

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- The **eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg** are "faded" and bespectacled as they appear on a gigantic billboard, abandoned in the valley of ashes. Luhrmann depicts this haunting fixture, just as Fitzgerald describes it: "But above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg . . . blue and gigantic--their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose" (23). Luhrmann cuts to this billboard repeatedly, as these eyes seem to "brood on over the solemn dumping ground" (23). In a novel that focuses on misperceptions and distortions of reality and the truth, it is fitting that the eyes need spectacles and that the oculist who "set them there to fatten his practice" probably "sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away" (23). Yet, for residents in the area, they may have a meaning far beyond their original intention.

  Fitzgerald's most telling and ironic use of this symbol occurs when George Wilson, distraught after the death of his wife, tells his neighbor Michaelis that he spoke to Myrtle about his suspicions of her cheating on him: "I told her she might fool me but she couldn't fool God . . . God sees everything" (160). Michaelis "saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg" and Michaelis tells George, "That's an advertisement" (160). The irony that this epitome of commercialism should be seen by George as a symbol of God shows how people in need of answers and solutions can give power and meaning to empty icons. In the film, Luhrmann cuts to the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckelburg right after Nick explains that "Gatsby and Daisy drove on in the cooling twilight towards death." Luhrmann retains George's line that Myrtle can't fool God. But he has George point outside at the billboard and then direct this line to Myrtle, prompting her to push him away. She then runs down to the yellow car, believing that Tom is again at the wheel and will stop for her. Luhrmann reduces Michaelis's role and has him just assisting Tom immediately after Myrtle's death

when George accuses Tom of owning the yellow car. Tom attempts to calm George down and deflect the blame onto Gatsby. Tom orders Michaelis to get George a drink, and then Tom repeats Gatsby's name and urges George to seek revenge.Throughout this scene, the billboard featuring the need for corrective vision is prominent and haunting.

- **Windows** are used repeatedly and deliberately by Luhrmann to suggest that characters can look out and be seen but often feel trapped inside, watching rather than doing. When Nick first begins telling his doctor about Gatsby, he looks out the sanitarium window as snow is falling and landing on the grids of the windows. Several times Luhrmann cuts back to Nick at the windows, as if Nick is trying to see everything that he is describing but feels strangely distant from. One of our first glimpses of Gatsby is when he is watching Nick from an upstairs window, with the curtain pulled back, and Nick is very aware of him. Repeatedly, Gatsby is watching from behind his huge windows, but his windows typically have grids, giving a sense of bars, as if Gatsby feels somehow imprisoned or restricted, despite his money and power. Later, Gatsby is looking out of an upstairs window as Daisy and Tom drive away from Gatsby's after his party, and Gatsby can see Daisy and Tom through a small oval window in the back of their car. Also, as Nick leaves his first party at Gatsby's house, Nick is asking Jordan what Gatsby wanted but she won't tell him. Instead, Nick sees Gatsby watching him from his window and they wave at each other, but there is an obvious separation between them.

  The most striking development of this window imagery is at Tom and Myrtle's Manhattan apartment when they are all getting drunk, nearly naked, dancing with abandon, and having sex. Nick looks out the window and sees a young teenage girl come to a nearby window, looking hopeful. We see a sax player on a terrace outside another window and then suddenly the camera pans to a number of the apartment windows as a disheveled Nick mentions that "over the city, our yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrets." Luhmann zooms back to capture numerous windows on the screen, each depicting suggestive sexual encounters or forbidden behaviors.

  Nick then refers to "the casual watcher on the street," looking up and wondering , and he says, "I was him, too." We see a shot of Nick on the street below in a suit, bowtie, and hat, looking up at the windows: **"I was within and without, enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."** A new shot features Nick in the center with all the windows around him, surreal and kaleidoscopic. When Nick looks back inside the apartment, he hears Myrtle taunting Tom by repeating, "Daisy, Daisy, Daisy," and Tom coming after her, claiming, "You have no right to speak her name." We see Myrtle yelling back, "I'll speak what I . . ." right before Tom strikes her hard across her face with the back of his hand and sends her falling backwards. Now there's another surreal shot of Nick escaping through a window onto the balcony but still feeling trapped there. The camera rapidly zoom s out, culminating in a shot of hundreds of such apartment buildings, each presumably with such secrets. Then Nick wakes up

outside his home, uncertain how he got there, but certain that Gatsby is watching him from a window in his mansion.

Later, when Nick invites Daisy and Gatsby for tea, Nick leaves his home for a while to give them privacy and remarks: **"I'm reminded that for the second time that summer, I was guarding other people's secrets. Once again I was within and without."** One of the most striking uses of the window motif occurs when we see Myrtle at home at her window, desperately wanting to get outside, as she sees Tom at their garage, buying gas, yet she is locked inside her home by her jealous husband. The upstairs window is torment for her because she can see what she is missing outdoors but can't escape.

- **Staircases** with characters looking up or down at each other are used throughout the film to represent the distance or separation between individuals due to class status, family backgrounds, societal expectations, educational levels, career goals, and values. These different levels emphasize the isolation characters feel or the difficulty being on the same level at the same time. Differences in class status, family backgrounds, education levels, career goals, values, and work ethics cause characters to judge others and often reject them. When Gatsby visits Daisy's home when they are first dating, she and her mother are on the stairs, looking down at Gatsby, even though his uniform masks how "penniless" he really is. During this flashback, Gatsby is explaining to Nick that he knew he could climb "but I could only climb if I climbed alone," and we see him go upstairs after Daisy.

- The **strings of pearls** that Daisy receives from Tom for their wedding were worth $350,000, Jordan informs Nick; they represent not only conspicuous consumption, high fashion, and tradition but Tom's purchase of Daisy's love. In fact, Jordan tells Nick that while Gatsby was away from Daisy, Tom Buchanan swept in and "stole her away." Luhrmann includes an image of several mannequin busts with strands of pearls around their necks, showing one set being lifted from the mannequin. Next we see the pearls wrapped around Daisy's neck, with Tom's hand grasping the pearls like a leash as they kiss. On Daisy's wedding day, she is wearing the pearls when she receives a letter, presumably from Gatsby, and then tears off the necklace and the pearls go rolling everywhere, as Daisy is crying hysterically. In the film, we see Daisy's mother and Jordan restringing them, and Daisy later disregards the letter and marries Tom, wearing the pearls, as seen in their wedding photograph.

  The white color of traditional pearls suggests purity, innocence, and faith. The pearl necklace also may represent an effort to stifle someone like a choker does or to own and control them like a leash signifies. In addition to buying one's love, giving expensive jewelry may make the receiver feel indebted or obligated to the giver. In a later scene, right before Myrtle's death, she is wearing several strands of pearls. She is belligerent as George screams at her, "Don't you lie to me. Where did you get these from?" as he pulls one of the strands of pearls from her neck. When Myrtle is hit and killed by the car, she is wearing only one strand of pearls and her husband has another strand in his hand. Luhrmann suggests that Tom has used pearls to purchase affection from at least two women in his life.

- **Daisy's name** clearly alludes to the simple flower, traditionally used by lovers who pull off a petal, each time saying "she loves me" or "she loves me not." Tom and Gatsby's battle over Daisy, as well as the uncertainty whether she loves them or not, underscore the symbolism here. In both the novel and Luhrmann's film, when Gatsby kissed Daisy for the first time, "she blossomed like a flower and the incarnation was complete" (112). In both works, this "incarnation" signifies Gatsby's complete devotion to Daisy. In both the novel and film, Gatsby also sends hundreds of flowers to Nick's cottage to prepare for Daisy's arrival for tea. Daisy certainly seems a lot like a flower--beautiful, delicate, and desired--but also fragile and unable to endure. In the film, Nick tells his doctor that after Gatsby's death, he "rang, wrote, and implored" Daisy to come to Gatsby's funeral, but he received "not even a single flower" from her.

- **Ringing telephones** represent often unwanted interruptions that contribute to the mystery and drama because we can't hear the caller or message but only the speaker on camera. When we first meet Tom and he is welcoming Nick to his home, his servants hand him a phone and we overhear him whisper that the caller is not to call him at home. Later at dinner, Tom is called to the phone again and Daisy goes after him, while Jordan instructs Nick to keep quiet so she can hear what they say. Revealing to Nick that Tom has a mistress, Jordan remarks, "She might have the decency not to phone at dinner time." Gatsby is constantly on the phone and being called to the phone, even at parties, during business lunches, and during special visits from Daisy, as if Gatsby's work is so important that these urgent messages demand his immediate attention. Gatsby sometimes seems annoyed or angry on the calls, is often evasive, and typically gives orders, all contributing to the mystery surrounding his work and character. Frequently, we hear Gatsby say, "Can't talk right now, old sport," but sometimes we get ominous bits of angry responses, causing more intrigue and suspense.

  Telephones function prominently on the day of Gatsby's death, as he is waiting all day for Daisy's call. He even has the phone brought down to the pool so he won't miss her call. When he dives into the pool, he finally hears the phone ring. As he gets out and answers it, we hear him say her name as he is shot by George. However, instead of Daisy on the phone, we hear a frightened Nick calling out, "Hello? Hello? Is everything all right?" Later, Nick tries to call Daisy about Gatsby's funeral arrangements, convinced that she would want to be there, but he can't get beyond her servant to actually speak to Daisy although she is there. The servant lies to Nick and claims that the Buchanans have left, but we see them very aware of Nick's call and signaling to the servant that they don't want to talk to Nick. Ultimately, phones also allow for avoidance and manipulation because while they promise communication, they can also intensify the distance and separation between people.

- **Gatsby's yellow roadster** is a flashy, expensive status symbol that is custom-designed, one-of- a- kind, emphasizing speed and control. His car definitely is hard to miss and draws attention to the driver and passengers. It causes envy in Tom who refers to it as a "circus wagon" in the film and wants to drive everyone

in it. When Myrtle sees Tom driving it to Manhattan, she mistakenly thinks that he will be driving it on the return trip, too, and she runs out to get him to stop. The roadster now becomes a vehicle of death with Daisy at the wheel since she is distressed and has been drinking all day. Moreover, by the end, Gatsby is identified as its owner and therefore is wrongly accused of Myrtle's death.

- **Gatsby's swimming pool** represents luxury and decadence because it is so enormous and is the center of Gatsby's riotous parties. Guests dance, drink, and perform around it, using it as an entertainment center. At the end of the film, Gatsby realizes he hasn't been in the pool all summer and decides to swim to relax and unwind as he is waiting for Daisy's call. It is ironic that this serene place should be the scene of Gatsby's death when it has been so lively and inviting.

- **Nick's clock** seems to be ticking inexorably at the tea party, until Gatsby accidentally knocks it off the mantle. This may represent Gatsby's desire to stop time and return to the past. Nick later tells Jay, "You can't repeat the past," but Jay retorts, "Of course you can. I'm going to fix things." Gatsby is convinced that he can return to where he and Daisy left off five years ago, but he is unable to realize how people change and how time can't be frozen.

- **Gatsby's scrap album of Daisy's life** also represents his attempt to preserve the past. Gatsby has saved all of Daisy's letters and any clippings about her earlier years, hoping to return to where they left off five years ago.

7. The heat is definitely on at the Plaza Hotel as hostilities erupt and confrontations become most intense. Just prior to arriving at the Plaza, Tom stops for gas at Wilson's garage and discovers that Wilson suspects that his wife is having an affair and he plans to move out west with her. Tom has also just discovered that his wife Daisy is in love with Gatsby. Nick comments, "His mistress and wife, an hour ago, both so secure, were slipping from his control." During the drive, both Tom and Gatsby, recklessly driving each other's car, race to beat each other across the bridge. In the stifling hot room at the Plaza Hotel, Tom continues to attack Gatsby for wearing a pink suit, for not really being an "Oxford man," and for being beneath Daisy's class, claiming Gatsby could have only "brought groceries to the back door." Gatsby explains to Tom that he only stayed at Oxford for five months so he doesn't consider himself "an Oxford man," and Nick is so proud of Gatsby's defense of himself that he "wanted to slap Gatsby on the back." Then Gatsby pressures Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him, and she says it half-heartedly. But when Tom questions her about intimate times in their marriage, Daisy admits, "There, Jay you want too much. I loved him once, but I loved you, too." Gatsby is clearly upset that Daisy has acknowledged loving Tom. When Gatsby says, "She's leaving you," Tom answers, "Nonsense" in his typically dismissive way. Tom continues to mock and laugh at Gatsby and finally asks Daisy, "Can't you see who this guy is? He's just a front for gangsters like Wolfsheim." As Tom tells Gatsby, close to his face, "We were born different," Gatsby finally loses his typical composure and we see his facial muscles contracting uncontrollably as he starts to yell and to punch Tom. Clearly, Tom has hit Gatsby in a vulnerable spot: Gatsby can cover up but cannot change his humble birth. Even though

Gatsby quickly gains control of himself, Nick perceives that at this moment Gatsby looked as if he could have killed a man, and Nick observes Daisy drawing further into herself and away from Gatsby. Tom laughs brutally at Gatsby and at his stilted attempt to apologize:"My sincerest apologies--I seem to have lost my temper." Gatsby has now frightened Daisy who turns to Tom for support. Tom senses he has won control and suggests that she and Gatsby drive home in Gatsby's car, perhaps to show that he no longer feels threatened by Gatsby and that the more Daisy sees of Gatsby in this light, the more she will want Tom again. After Daisy and Gatsby leave the room, Nick reveals, "I just remembered, today's my birthday," and Tom mutters a cynical "happy birthday."

8. The camera emphasizes Myrtle's desperate attempt to flag down the yellow car that she thinks Tom is driving and to escape with him. As she runs to the car, she is calling out his name and expecting him to stop. Viewers see Gatsby struggling to take hold of the wheel and avoid her, but she is hit hard, cracking the windshield, and her body is propelled upward by the force of the car. She is bloodied and cut, but we also see a strand of pearls around her neck, Luhrmann's suggestion that they may have been given to her by Tom. When Tom stops to see the accident, he is never expecting to see her, and he even jokes that this accident will bring Wilson some business. As Tom sees George crying inconsolably, he pulls back the sheet to discover Myrtle dead. When the police officer asks if he knew her, he lies and answers, "Not really."

9. In the film, George Wilson learns from Tom that the yellow car that killed Myrtle and didn't stop is owned by Gatsby. At first, George thought that the owner was Tom because Tom had driven it into George's station earlier that day to get gas. However, Tom manages to calm George and convince him that it was not Tom's car. Tom claims that the car "belongs to a fella named Gatsby--he's a crook." When George says, "Maybe he was the one fooling around with Myrtle; maybe that why he killed her," Tom repeats Gatsby's name and encourages George's suspicion, adding, "Gatsby--Something ought to be done about a fellow like that."

10. Nick has always been glad that he told Gatsby, "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together" because Nick believes that Gatsby has a personal integrity that Daisy, Tom, and Jorday lack. Telling Gatsby his worth was the only compliment Nick ever paid him, so Nick seems glad that he said it when Gatsby most needed support, shortly before he died. Nick values the fact that Jay loves Daisy and is willing to defend her, to take the blame for her, and to protect her, no matter what. Furthermore, Nick is appalled that Daisy didn't return Nick's calls or show at Gatsby's funeral. In addition, Nick is disgusted that all those who enjoyed Gatsby's hospitality every weekend and took advantage of his generosity and hospitality wouldn't even pay their respects at Gatsby's funeral. The film emphasizes Nick's new respect for Gatsby when Nick tells his doctor, "Only one man was exempt from my disgust--Gatsby. He was the single most hopeful person I ever met."

11. With Jay-Z as an executive producer on the film, the film features a blend of music from traditional jazz, to hip-hop, and other musical styles. The soundtrack includes original songs from Fergie, Lana Del Rey, Florence and the Machine, Jay-Z, The xx and will.i.am as well as covers by Beyonce and Andre 3000, Gotye, Jack White, and others.The eclectic music selections will undoubtedly appeal to a younger audience because the

music is compelling and lively, each piece reflecting the scene, regardless of the era of the music. Therefore, listeners will catch jazz classics such as "Rhapsody in Blue" and "Let's Misbehave" as well as a variety of hip-hop music that students will certainly evaluate for themselves.