

THE GREAT GATSBY

What do I need to know before I start reading?

WHO IS F. SCOTT FITZGERALD?

What does this video clip tell you about life for Fitzgerald and Zelda?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXxw6tpM970>

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PL05VV040Ls>

- Childhood – poor, but his parents had social status
- Education financed by a wealthy aunt – attended Princeton
- 1918 – Meets Zelda Sayre – local debutante, the youngest daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court Judge
- Embodied 1920s lifestyle – alcohol, parties, travel

THE ROARING 20S

"It was an age of miracles," Fitzgerald wrote of the Jazz Age. "It was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire."



What do you know about the 1920s?

- Flappers
- Booming economy
- Prohibition
- Organized crime

WHAT IS A MOTIF?

Motif: A unifying element in an artistic work, especially any recurrent image, symbol, theme, character type, subject, or narrative detail.

A given motif may be unique to a work or it may appear in numerous works by the same author or different authors.

(Source: Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, pg. 277)

WHAT IS A MOTIF?

Recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes

A motif may be:

- a literary element used repeatedly in one text
- A recurring image or symbol
- An element present across a single piece of literature or across various genres of literature

MOTIF = RECURRING SYMBOLS, THEMES, DEVICES

MOTIF

An object, idea or structure that occurs again, and again, and again in a piece of literature.

SYMBOL

An abstract idea which represents a deeper meaning.

Examples:

Rabbits— *Of Mice and Men*

Mockingbirds — *To Kill a Mockingbird*

THEME

The unifying general idea about life conveyed by a piece of literature.

Examples:

The predatory nature of human existence— *Of Mice and Men*

The importance of moral education — *To Kill a Mockingbird*

DEVICES

The use of a literary device such as imagery, repetition, juxtaposition, etc.

Examples:

Juxtaposition of Lenny and George — *Of Mice and Men*

The use of gothic details — *To Kill a Mockingbird*

MOTIF AND GATSBY -

COLOR SYMBOLISM

Green – Optimism, hope, vitality, the future

Gold – Wealth, opulence, “old money”

Yellow – Falsehood, corruption, moral decay (faded gold)

White – Innocence, purity, childhood (notice the irony at the end of the book)

Grey – despair, lack of emotion, dismal (The Valley of the Ashes)

MOTIF AND GATSBY

Green Light

- Light at the end of Daisy's dock. The light can be viewed from Gatsby's mansion across the bay.
- Think about what the green light symbolizes and how Fitzgerald uses it in the novel.



MOTIF AND GATSBY

Weather/Seasons

- Summer, fall, rain, heat, clouds
- Look at how Fitzgerald uses weather to foreshadow events and create mood.



MOTIF AND GATSBY



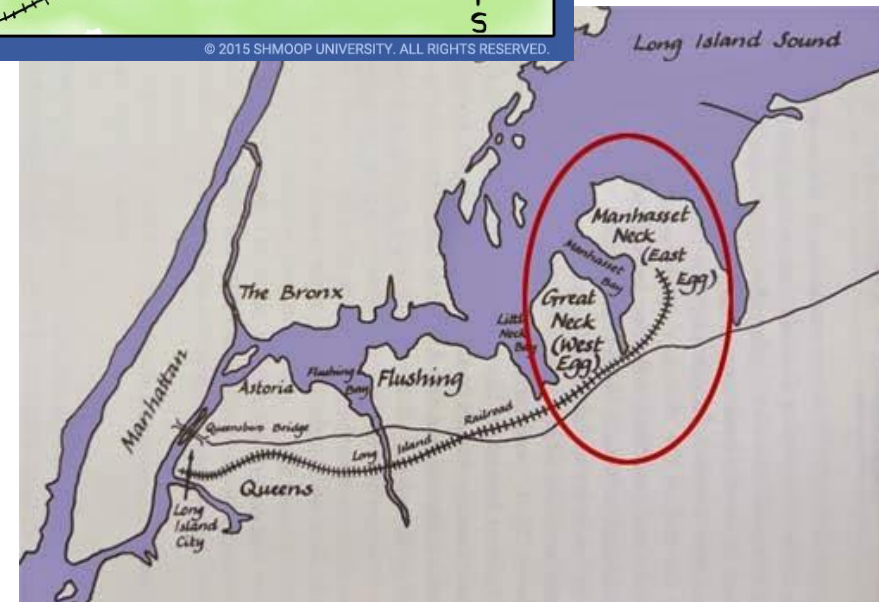
Eyes

- The eyes of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg
- Owl Eyes in the library
- Look at how Fitzgerald uses eyes in certain locations/scenes throughout the novel. Think about what these eyes symbolize.

MOTIFS AND GATSBY

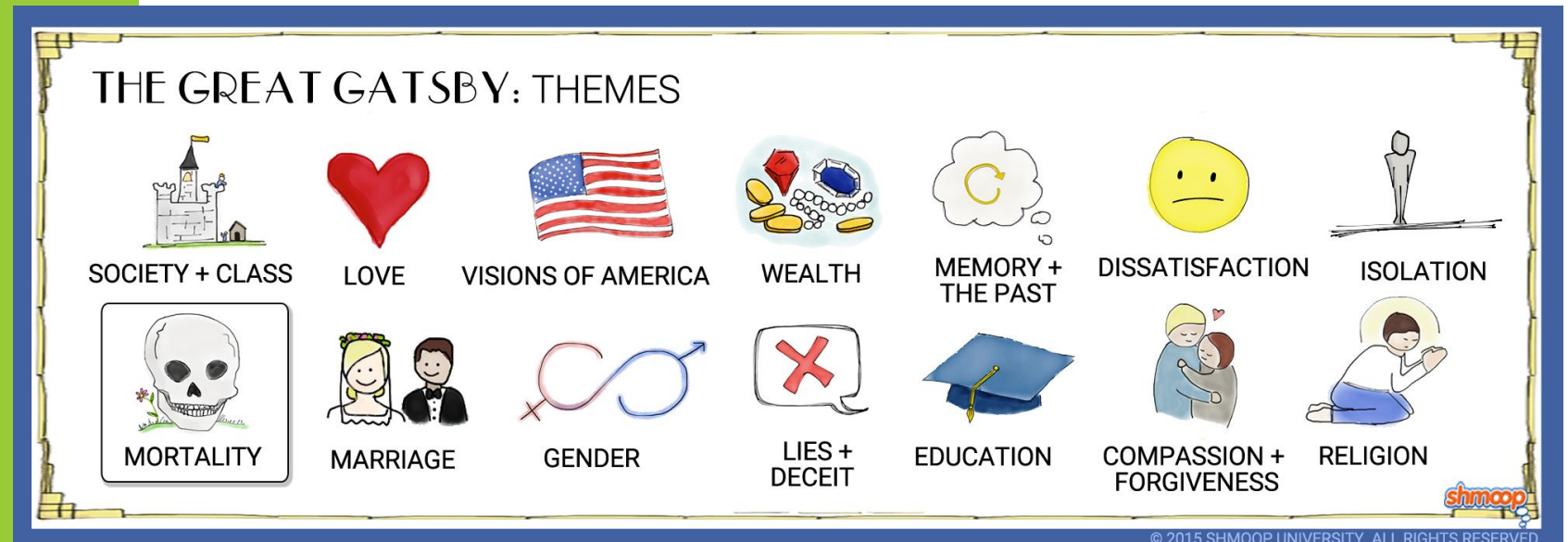
East/West and Geography

- East – established, tradition
- West – New frontier, “nouveau riche”
- Think about how Fitzgerald uses these locations to characterize the people who live there.



- The disillusionment of the American Dream
- Wealth breeds carelessness and corruption
- Attempts to relive the past are doomed to fail


THEMES



CHARACTERS IN GATSBY

NICK

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Narrator "Old money" family Small house Daisy's cousin Went to Yale with Tom Crush on Jordan Gatsby's neighbor + friend	Observant High standards Dazzled by wealthy "new money" lifestyle of neighbors Judgmental Self-deprecating Honest (mostly)




I work with Bonds.
Jay's bonds.

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GATSBY

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
"New money" wealth Obsessed with Daisy Has mansion on West Egg Fought in WWI Throws crazy parties Originally James Gatz from a poor North Dakota family	Resourceful Restless Delusional Dreamer Innocent Mysterious



"The Swaggy Gatsby" didn't catch on.
I'm still bummed.


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CHARACTERS IN GATSBY

TOM

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Daisy's husband	Dominant
Myrtle's (abusive) lover	Unfaithful
Yale football star	Aggressive
Filthy rich, "old money"	Supercilious
Owens mansion on East Egg	Arrogant
	Hulking
	Eugenicist (read: racist)




If you meet a guy like me in real life, RUN.

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DAISY

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Tom's wife	Careless
Gatsby's lover	Indecisive
"Old money" wealth	Thrilling voice
One daughter	Southern belle
Unhappy marriage	"Golden girl"
	Delicate
	Nostalgic
	Lover



Darling, I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream.


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CHARACTERS IN GATSBY

GEORGE

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Myrtle's husband	Submissive
Mechanic	Beaten-down
Working class	Faithful
Poor	God-fearing
Lives in "Valley of Ashes"	




I'm like a rubber band: very flexible, until I snap.

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MYRTLE

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Tom's mistress	Smoldering vitality
George Wilson's wife	Not very bright
In her mid-30's	Snobby
Not beautiful	Attracted to dominant men
Lives in "Valley of Ashes"	
Lower-class	
In abusive relationship(s)	
Social aspirations	

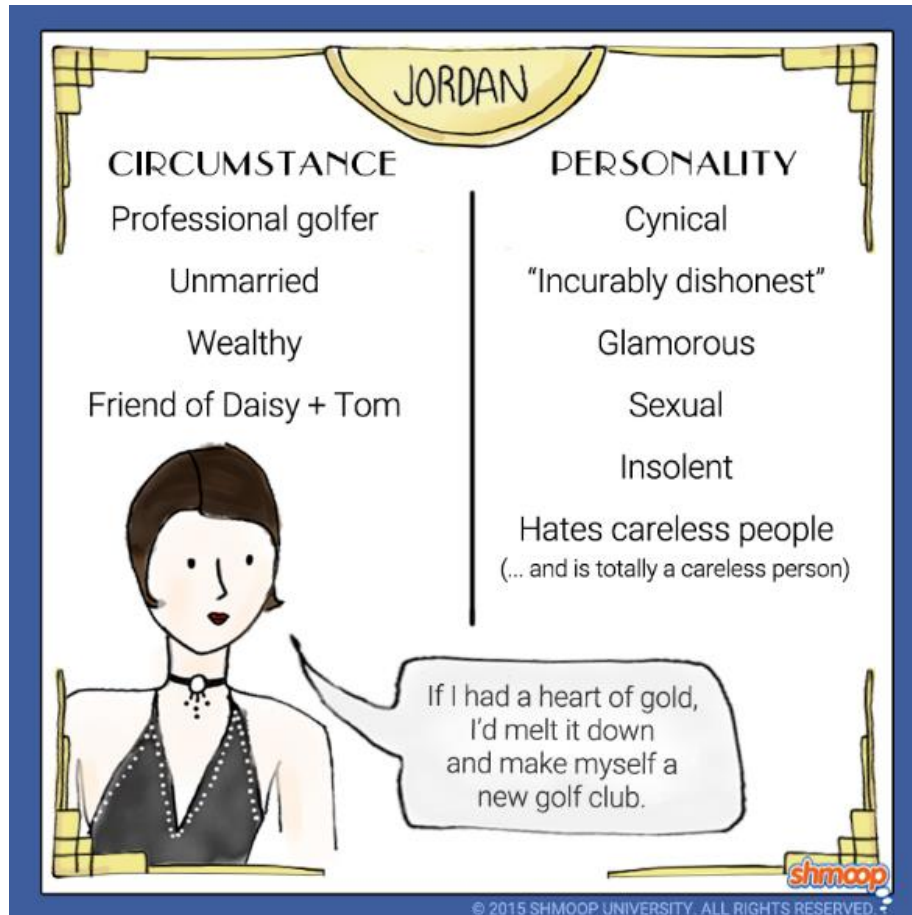


My type? I go for the tall, dark, and brutish guys.

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CHARACTERS IN GATSBY



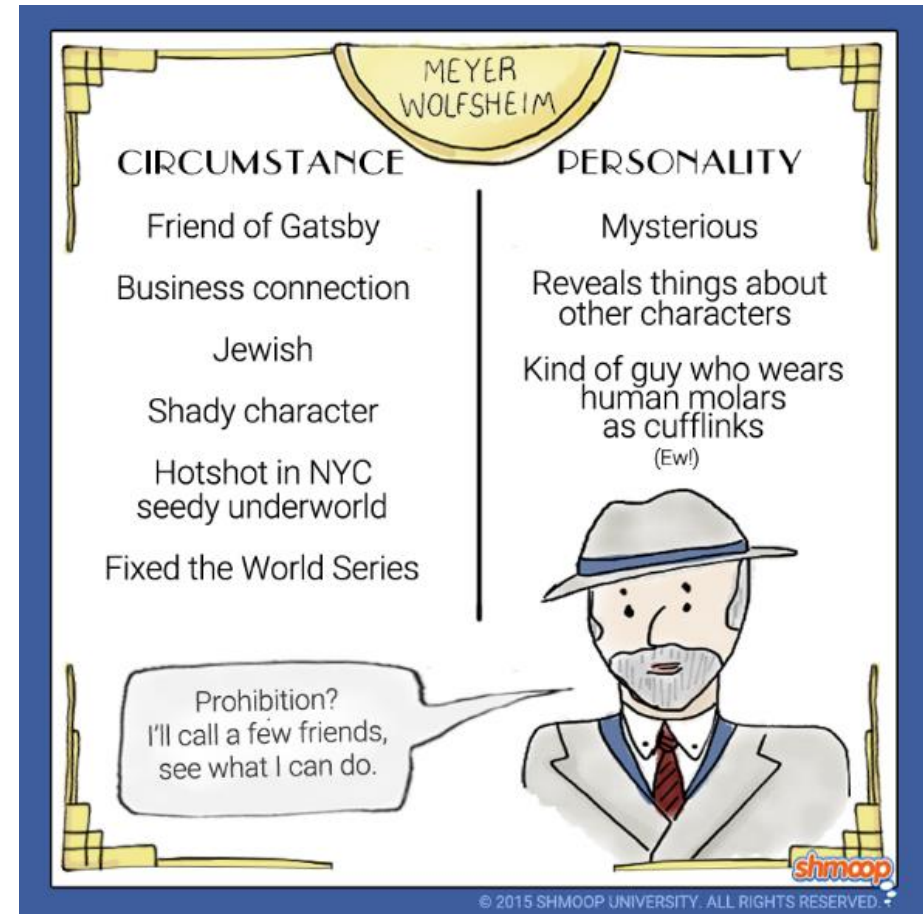
A character card for Jordan Baker, featuring a yellow banner at the top with the name "JORDAN". The card is divided into two columns: "CIRCUMSTANCE" and "PERSONALITY". A cartoon illustration of Jordan is on the left, with a speech bubble. The "shmoop" logo is at the bottom right.

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Professional golfer	Cynical
Unmarried	"Incurably dishonest"
Wealthy	Glamorous
Friend of Daisy + Tom	Sexual
	Insolent
	Hates careless people (... and is totally a careless person)

If I had a heart of gold, I'd melt it down and make myself a new golf club.

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A character card for Meyer Wolfsheimer, featuring a yellow banner at the top with the name "MEYER WOLFSHEIM". The card is divided into two columns: "CIRCUMSTANCE" and "PERSONALITY". A cartoon illustration of Meyer is on the right, with a speech bubble. The "shmoop" logo is at the bottom right.

CIRCUMSTANCE	PERSONALITY
Friend of Gatsby	Mysterious
Business connection	Reveals things about other characters
Jewish	Kind of guy who wears human molars as cufflinks (Ew!)
Shady character	
Hotshot in NYC seedy underworld	
Fixed the World Series	

Prohibition?
I'll call a few friends, see what I can do.

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