

**Class: English 2130**

**Assignment: Questions for Homework/Class Discussion/*The Great Gatsby***

1. Look up some historical information on the “roaring twenties” in America. What kind of social sensibilities were there during this time (i.e., regarding the American dream of success and opportunity)? Is there a sense of optimism during this time about the individual’s ability to achieve wealth and success? How does this time period become an important framework for Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*?
2. In Chapter 1 of the novel, Nick Carraway, the narrator, gives us our first glimpse into his personality as a narrator. Describe him as he sees himself. What is his background? What are his values? Is he a reliable or trustworthy narrator—or, do you consider him a “neutral” observer? Why, if this novel is about the “great” Gatsby, is the story narrated through Nick’s point of view?
3. What is the reader’s first impression of Daisy Buchanan? How *specifically* is she described and characterized? Why does Daisy say that being a “fool” is “the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool” (21)—is she right? She then seems to contradict herself by stating she is “sophisticated” on page 22. Is Daisy a fool, as she says, or is she more sophisticated than she initially appears—if so, in what sense?
4. Describe Daisy’s husband, Tom—his appearance and demeanor. How does he relate to his wife? In what ways is this couple mismatched?—give examples. How, to the contrary, are they matched? (think in terms of class and status and the way that, as Nick recalls, the couple seems to belong to a “rather distinguished secret society” (22)—what “secret society” is he referring to)?
5. Focusing on Chapter 2, describe the difference between the comfortable lifestyle of the East Egg where Tom Buchanan lives and the “valley of the ashes” where his lover, Myrtle Wilson, lives. How do these settings highlight their class distinctions? Do we believe Myrtle’s sister who claims that Tom and Myrtle will eventually marry—why or why not? Consider this in light of another question—is Tom more matched with Myrtle or Daisy—explain your answer thoroughly.
6. Much can be gleaned from the novel’s preface. Review this section of the novel—what can we learn from it?—comment specifically on how it deals with *The Great Gatsby* in terms of its historical context, dominant themes, and relationality to the works that have come before it, specifically Franklin’s *Autobiography*.