

Nick Carraway

Quote 1

I called up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them.

"Left no address?"

"No."

"Say when they'd be back?"

"No."

"Any idea where they are? How I could reach them?"

"I don't know. Can't say." (9.4-10)

Money can't buy you love, but it can buy you a lot—like the ability to have other people clean up your messes, whether we're talking about toilets or a string of murder/suicides. (Personally, we'd be satisfied with someone coming to clean up our toilets.)

Jordan Baker > Daisy Buchanan

Quote 2

"Nevertheless you did throw me over," said Jordan suddenly. "You threw me over on the telephone. I don't give a damn about you now, but it was a new experience for me, and I felt a little dizzy for a while." (9.129)

You know how text messaging and online dating have supposedly **changed dating**? Well, new technologies like cars and telephones were doing the same thing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Can you imagine if Daisy had had Snapchat?

Nick Carraway

Quote 3

One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at six o'clock of a December evening, with a few Chicago friends, already caught up into their own holiday gayeties, to bid them a hasty good-by.

I remember the fur coats of the girls returning from Miss This-or-That's and the chatter of frozen breath and the hands waving overhead as we caught sight of old acquaintances, and the matchings of invitations: "Are you going to the Ordways'? the Herseys'? the Schultzes'?" and the long green tickets clasped tight in our gloved hands. And last the murky yellow cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad looking cheerful as Christmas itself on the tracks beside the gate. (9.120)

Nick may be from Chicago, but it sounds like all the rich people send their kids off East to prep school. What is it about the East in comparison to the West? Are the two regions really that different?

Nick Carraway

Quote 4

That's my Middle West – not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow. I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name. (9.121-122)

This is one of the few times we see anything rural in *The Great Gatsby*—Nick dismissing the "wheat" and "prairies" of what we'd call the mid-west. But the wheat and prairies he's dismissing are partly the basis of American wealth. All that money they spend on the East Coast has to come from somewhere.

Nick Carraway

Quote 5

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (9.182)

Now this is a passage to linger over. Before any big houses or valleys of ashes or even lost Swede towns, America in the "Dutch sailors' eyes" was a green, empty land. (They'd apparently never read [1491](#).) This vision of possibility is the same vision that Gatsby has—but it's no longer possible.

Nick Carraway

Quote 6

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night. Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther...and one fine morning– (9.149)

If there's anything more American than apple pie, it's the belief in self-improvement: that we're all capable of achieving our dreams, if we just hope and work hard enough. Unfortunately for Gatsby, that dream ends in tragedy.

Nick Carraway

Quote 7

I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together and let other people clean up the mess they had made [...]. (9.136-145)

There's a reason they call it white-collar crime: rich people's crimes just don't seem to count as much as poor people's crimes.

Nick Carraway

Quote 8

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (9.149-153)

As a wise man once said, the term "**Future Perfect**" will be abandoned "**[when it is discovered not to be.**" In other words? The future never lives up to our expectations—and, in fact, having expectations of it just binds us to the past.

Jordan Baker > Nick Carraway

Quote 9

"You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride."

"I'm thirty," I said. "I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor." (9.134-35)

(1) What is Nick lying to himself about? Loving Jordan? Having honest intentions toward her? Or something else? (2) Why do you have to stop lying to yourself at 25? And, if 30 is the new 20, does that mean we get an extra decade of deceit?

Tom Buchanan > Nick Carraway

Quote 10

He broke off defiantly. "What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car."

There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true. (9.142-43)

Sometimes honesty isn't the best policy. Gatsby's dead, and Nick has to protect Daisy; he has to lie to keep her safe. Busted! Guess Nick isn't so honest after all. Or, is this actually the more honest and moral choice? Tricky.

Nick Carraway

Quote 11

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Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made [...]. (9.145)

Nick may understand Tom, but he's not happy about it: he's dissatisfied with the way Tom and Daisy are dealing with this tragedy, and it's enough to send him scurrying back West in search of something *e/*se to be dissatisfied about.

Nick Carraway

Quote 12

Next morning I sent the butler to New York with a letter to Wolfsheim, which asked for information and urged him to come out on the next train. That request seemed superfluous when I wrote it. I was sure he'd start when he saw the newspapers, just as I was sure a there'd be a wire from Daisy before noon—but neither a wire nor Mr. Wolfsheim arrived; no one arrived except more police and photographers and newspaper men. When the butler brought back Wolfsheim's answer I began to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all. (9.20)

After Gatsby's death, Nick realizes just how alone Gatsby is. What's weird is he begins to identify with Gatsby, as though they're suddenly BFFs. We bet Gatsby would have appreciated that; too bad it's too late now.

Nick Carraway

Quote 13

After a little while Mr. Gatz opened the door and came out, his mouth ajar, his face flushed slightly, his eyes leaking isolated and unpunctual tears. He had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise, and when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms, his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride. (9.40)

How weird is this description of Gatsby's dad? He's "leaking isolated" tears, as if he can't quite process that his son is dead—or that this mansion belonged to his kid.

Nick Carraway

Quote 14

Most of those reports were a nightmare – grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue. When Michaelis's testimony at the inquest brought to light Wilson's suspicions of his wife I thought the whole tale would shortly be served up in racy pasquinade – but Catherine, who might have said anything, didn't say a word. She showed a surprising amount of character about it too – looked at the coroner with determined eyes under that corrected brow of hers, and swore that her sister had never seen Gatsby, that her sister was completely happy with her husband, that her sister had been into no mischief whatever. She convinced herself of it, and cried into her handkerchief, as if the very suggestion was more than she could endure. So Wilson was reduced to a man "deranged by grief," in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there. (9.2)

The whole sordid story almost blows up in everyone's face, but Myrtle's sister saves it. George Wilson gets a kind of dignity in death that he didn't have in life: instead of a cuckold, he's a grieving husband.

Owl Eyes and Klipspringer > Nick Carraway

Quote 15

We straggled down quickly through the rain to the cars. Owl-eyes spoke to me by the gate.

"I couldn't get to the house," he remarked.

"Neither could anybody else."

"Go on!" He started. "Why, my God! They used to go there by the hundreds." He took off his glasses and wiped them again, outside and in.

"The poor son-of-a-bitch," he said. (9.114-122)

Owl-eyes is the one person who seems to feel sorry for Gatsby, besides his father and Nick. Why? What does he see that everyone else doesn't?

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Quote 16

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning –

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (9.152-153)

The problem with chasing the future is that you just end up chasing your own death. Andrew Marvell even wrote [a poem](#) about it.