

Nick Carraway

Quote 1

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and he champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his motor-boats slid the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before. (3.1)

Okay, so the parties sound fabulous. These people are definitely partying like it's 1999, or whatever. But what we're really into is that Nick actually notices the servants—the people who end up cleaning up the mess. Remember that Nick has to clean up after Daisy and Tom. Maybe he identifies a little bit with the servants.

Nick Carraway

Quote 2

[Jordan's] gray, sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires, and I knew that first I had to get myself definitely out of that tangle back home. I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them: "Love, Nick," and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played tennis, a faint mustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding that had to be tactfully broken off before I was free. (3.169)

Nick takes things pretty seriously: he won't even flirt with Jordan before breaking things off with his girl in Chicago. We have serious beef with this, though, because Nick's major problem seems to be that his ladyfriend is, well, real: she sweats. Pro tip: it's a lot better to fall in love with a real woman, sweat and all, than some hard golden statue. Ahem, Jordan.

Nick Carraway

Quote 3

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All that wealth can't fill the hole in Gatsby's heart—but it probably makes it a little easier to bear. Also, notice the insect imagery? The men and girls like "moths"; the station wagon like a "brisk yellow bug"? What's up with that?

Jay Gatsby

Quote 4

"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too - didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?" (3.49-50)

Gatsby can buy the things that rich people have, but he can't buy the education or experience. But from what the owl-eyed man says, it doesn't sound like anyone else is reading them, either. (See "[Gatsby's Books](#)" for an explanation.)

Jordan Baker

Quote 5

"I like to come," Lucille said. "I never care what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown on a chair, and he asked me my name and address – inside of a week I got a package from Croirier's with a new evening gown in it."

"Did you keep it?" asked Jordan.

"Sure I did. I was going to wear it tonight, but it was too big in the bust and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars." (3.23-25)

Lucille seems more impressed with the price of the gown than the gown itself. And notice how she says "I never care what I do": just one more example of the careless wealthy. Why would you care, when you know that your host will just replace whatever you break? (Unless, of course, it's your heart.)

Quote 6

"Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once."

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly.

"I don't think it's so much that," argued Lucille sceptically; "it's more that he was a German spy during the war."

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

"I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany," he assured us positively.

"Oh, no," said the first girl, "it couldn't be that, because he was in the American army during the war." As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. "You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet he killed a man." (3.30-35)

The funny thing about this exchange is that Gatsby doesn't spend too much time weaving elaborate lies. Yeah, he deceives, but not in the same way that someone like Tom does. You get the sense that he doesn't really care if anyone believes him—and that leads to speculation much wilder than anything he's said.

Nick Carraway

Quote 7

"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too – didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?" (3.41-49)

Even the books are a lie. They're real, but they've never been read. (See "[Gatsby's Books](#)" for an explanation.) At the same time, maybe we can see this as *honesty*. He's not actually trying to pretend that he's read them; if he were, he'd have cut the pages—you know, the way you crack the binding to make it look like you've read your copy of *The Great Gatsby*? (We kid, we kid.) In the end, Gatsby actually comes across as pretty honest.

Nick Carraway

Quote 8

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply – I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. It was on that same house party that we had a curious conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat. (3.159)

Whew. Ladies, breathe a sigh of relief. There are different standards: you don't have to be as honest as men. Of course, you also don't get to hold the same jobs or make the same wages or have the same freedoms, so, you know. It's a trade-off.

Nick Carraway

Quote 9

Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known. (3.170)

Well, don't strain anything trying to pat yourself on the back, Nick.

Nick Carraway

Quote 10

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply – I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. It was on that same house party that we had a curious conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat. (3.159)

Women. Just remember to lower your expectations and you'll never be disappointed, right?

Nick Carraway

Quote 11

The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names. (3.4)

Talk about isolation. These parties are full of people who instantly forget each other, or never even knew each other to begin with. Trying to meet someone at one of Gatsby's parties would be like trying to have a meaningful conversation at a rave: no one's there to make connections. Well, not the meaningful kind, anyway.

Nick Carraway

Quote 12

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table – the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone. (3.10)

Actually, this is good advice: if you head to a party without knowing anyone, head for the snacks.

Nick Carraway

Quote 13

At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others – poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner – young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life. (3.156)

You know all those clichés about big cities being lonely places? Fitzgerald thought so, too. He sees New York as being like one of Gatsby's parties, only less glamorous: full of people, and full of loneliness.