

some important literary concepts

As you read *The Great Gatsby*, keep these literary elements in mind:

- **CHARACTERIZATION** is the way or ways in which a writer reveals information about his or her characters. Using **direct characterization**, the writer makes direct statements about a character's personality. In **indirect characterization**, the writer *suggests* characteristics by describing what the character says and does or how other characters respond to him or her. Notice how Fitzgerald uses both these techniques to create a vivid impression of the mysterious Jay Gatsby. Also, Fitzgerald creates **foils** for the main characters. **Character foils** are characters who contrast, and the ways they contrast serve to highlight or accentuate traits that are important in the main characters.
- **POINT OF VIEW** is the perspective from which a story is told. In **first-person point of view**, the narrator is one of the characters in the story. Notice how the reader's view of the story is shaped by its narrator, Nick Carraway.
- **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE** refers to how a work of fiction is organized. Notice how Fitzgerald uses **flashbacks** to fill in the reader's knowledge of Jay Gatsby's past.
- A **SYMBOL** is a person, place, or thing that stands for something other than itself. Notice references to “the green light” and “the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg.” Look for their symbolic meanings.
- A novel's **plot** centers on the escalation and drive toward the resolution of **CONFLICTS**: **external conflicts**, in which characters confront other people or outside forces, and **internal conflicts**, which occur within the characters' minds. As you read, ask yourself what each character wants most—and who or what is stopping that character from achieving those goals.
- A **THEME** is an insight about life conveyed in a work of literature. Ask yourself what ideas *The Great Gatsby* conveys about the American Dream, the importance of money, and the difference between reality and illusion.