THE GREAT GATSBY

BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

PRODUCED BY BLACKEYED THEATRE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH SOUTH HILL PARK AND EASTBOURNE THEATRES

EDUCATION PACK

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About this resource

This resource is designed to fully support our touring production of The Great Gatsby, and provide you with additional creative and cross-curricular activities to enhance your visit to the production. It is designed for Key Stages 3 and 4, but activities can be adapted for other ages.

This production fits the AQA Theatre Studies criteria for the style of Creative Adaptation which is defined by the exam board as an adaptation of a well-known novel or poem. Therefore the section on Creative Adaptation will be particularly useful for teachers who are thinking of exploring this style.

In a wider context, this production and education pack provides excellent material for A Level English literature, the AQA Theatre Studies Written Paper Section C: Study of Live Theatre, and the Edexcel BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts Historical Context module.

The resource comprises 3 sections:

1  Pre-production
This is the largest section and contains notes and activities to help your group get to grips with the play before their visit; to think about the story and themes and to consider contemporary dramatic interpretations. This section is divided into 5 areas:
  o  Story (synopsis and characters)
  o  Themes
  o  Historical and social context
  o  Script extracts
  o  Production process

2  Watching the show
This section contains questions and activities that students can engage with during their visit to see the production, to help maximise their understanding and enjoyment.

3  Post-production
This section contains guidance for an evaluation session following the production, based on your students’ critical appreciation.

We have intended to make the layout of the resource as accessible as possible, in order for sections of the pack to be used on their own, or in a different order. The pre-production pages contain these elements:

Notes which provide useful contextual and theoretical information about the focus of the section. This is designed to be supplemented with your own research and background knowledge.

‘Student activity’ which contains practical tasks that you can set for your group to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes about each topic along the way.

‘Stretch’ containing additional questions to stretch and challenge your students.
Blackeyed Theatre is a mid-scale touring theatre company established in 2004 to create exciting opportunities for artists and audiences alike, and to offer challenging, high quality theatre to the mid-scale touring circuit. The company specialises in reviving modern classics and staging established titles in innovative ways, using small ensembles of actor/musicians to create theatre that is audacious, fresh and far bigger than the sum of its parts.

Since 2004, Blackeyed Theatre has embarked on national tours of Teechers (John Godber), Not About Heroes (Stephen MacDonald), Dracula (adapted by John Ginman), Mother Courage And her Children (Bertolt Brecht), The Trial (Steven Berkoff), Oh What A Lovely War (Theatre Workshop), The Madness of George III (Alan Bennett), Alfie (Bill Naughton), The Cherry Orchard (Anton Chekhov), The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Bertolt Brecht), the world premiere of Oedipus (Steven Berkoff) and The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Bertolt Brecht).

In 2009, Blackeyed Theatre became an associate company of South Hill Park Arts Centre. In 2008, the company produced its first Christmas show, A Christmas Carol, and a year later Peter Pan. In 2011, Blackeyed Theatre launched its first new writing scheme, Pulse, with the intention to provide a new writer with the opportunity to see their work produced professionally on stage. The winning play, The Beekeeper, was performed initially at South Hill Park in Bracknell before transferring to Waterloo East Theatre in London for a three week run, where it received three Off West End Theatre Award nominations.

Blackeyed Theatre create innovative, challenging theatre that’s also commercially viable. It achieves this by producing work that audiences want to see but in ways that challenge their expectations, by bringing together artists with a genuine passion for the work they produce, and through an appreciation that works of art with a mass appeal do not have to be presented in a dumbed-down way.

By offering a theatrical experience that’s both artistically excellent and affordable, audiences and theatres are far more sustainable in the long term. And responding to demand ensures that more people see innovative theatre.

Blackeyed Theatre has a growing national reputation for creating dynamic theatre using live music and great performances to tell stories with honesty and passion.

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F Scott Fitzgerald was born in Minnesota, America, in 1896. He attended Princeton University, but left in 1917 to enlist in the army. His first book, *This Side Of Paradise*, was published in 1920. *The Great Gatsby* was published in 1925. It is considered to be one of the greatest American novels, and is known particularly for capturing the era of the Roaring Twenties. It was Fitzgerald himself who coined the term ‘The Jazz Age’ as a way of describing a decade of great social change, when the pursuit of the American Dream became synonymous with the pursuit of wealth.

Fitzgerald wrote a number of books between 1920 and 1940, including the short story ‘The Curious Case of Benjamin Button’ and the novel *Tender Is The Night*, which is considered to be another classic of American literature.

Fitzgerald drew heavily on his personal life in his writing, particularly in his novel *The Great Gatsby*.

He was born into an upper-middle class family, but maintaining his social position proved challenging when his father’s furniture business failed. His father later lost his job as a salesman, leaving the family reliant on inherited money.

In July, 1918, Fitzgerald met a wealthy socialite called Zelda Sayre. He became engaged to her in February 1919, but by June Zelda had broken off the engagement, preferring to wait until Fitzgerald could keep her in the style to which she had become accustomed.

One week after Fitzgerald’s novel *This Side Of Paradise* was published, Zelda married him and they later had a daughter, named Frances.

Fitzgerald continued to write popular short stories in order to maintain his new-found wealth and social status. He also earned a reputation for being a ‘playboy’ and both these factors damaged his status as a serious literary writer.

In the years after the publication of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald’s long-standing drinking problem developed into serious alcoholism, and Zelda suffered with mental health problems.

In 1940, Fitzgerald died of a heart attack. He was 44 years old.

**student activity**

Research more about F Scott Fitzgerald’s life. Map out the links between his life and the characters and plot of ‘The Great Gatsby’.

What might an author be saying about him/herself by writing a novel that reflects their own life?

What other novels or plays can you think of that imitate the life of the writer?
Characters

Blackeyed Theatre’s new production of The Great Gatsby will feature a cast of 7 multi-skilled performers who will each take on a lead role, play musical instruments and work as an ensemble to bring to life the other supporting characters.

NICK CARRAWAY
The narrator of the story, Gatsby’s neighbour and Daisy’s cousin.

TOM BUCHANAN
Daisy’s boisterious, wealthy and unfaithful husband.

DAISY BUCHANAN
From an elite social class and the object of Gatsby’s desires.

JORDAN BAKER
Daisy’s wealthy and much admired friend.

GEORGE WILSON
Myrtle’s unassuming husband who seems trapped by his life.

MYRTLE WILSON
The lover of Tom Buchanan who comes to a tragic end.

JAY GATSBY
The protagonist who is in love with Daisy and on a quest for the American Dream.

MEYER WOLFSHEIM
Gatsby’s questionable business associate.

Other supporting roles:

servants, partygoers, musicians, hangers-on, bootleggers, dancers, rubberneckers, reporters, undertakers, gangsters...
Chapter names
Divide your class into small groups and give them each a chapter description from the plot synopsis (pages 7-8) to read and discuss. Ask each group to come up with a title for their chapter, and explain their decision to the rest of the group.

Plot in pictures
Ask each group to present their chapter through a series of 8 tableaux.
The Great Gatsby plot synopsis

Chapter 1
The narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, describes his move to the East of the country in 1922, to start a new career selling bonds. He is renting a small house in ‘West Egg’, near New York, next door to which is the huge mansion of Mr Jay Gatsby. ‘West Egg’ is a less fashionable area than ‘East Egg’ where Nick’s cousin Daisy, lives. He visits Daisy and her husband, Tom Buchanan, one evening at their Georgian mansion and whilst there, meets Jordan Baker, a professional golfer and friend of Daisy’s. Tom receives a telephone call and Jordan discloses to Nick that the call is from Tom’s ‘other woman’. When Nick returns home he catches his first sight of Gatsby, his neighbour, standing on his lawn and gazing out towards a far away light.

Chapter 2
On his way to New York with Tom Buchanan, Nick meets Myrtle, Tom’s mistress. They are travelling by train and get off in an area referred to as ‘the valley of ashes’ where Myrtle’s husband, George Wilson, runs a garage. Myrtle accompanies Nick and Tom when they resume their journey and she buys a puppy en route to keep at Tom’s New York apartment. Here, she hosts an impromptu party, whose guests include the residents from the apartment below and Myrtle’s sister. During the party they all get drunk, and during an argument about whether or not Myrtle should talk about Daisy, Tom breaks Myrtle’s nose.

Chapter 3
Nick attends his first party at Gatsby’s mansion and meets Jordan Baker again, who is one of the innumerable guests. Searching for the host, Nick encounters much gossip about the great Mr Gatsby, but it is not until much later and whilst caught off guard, that he finds himself talking to the man himself. Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan in private and she later explains to Nick that she is sworn to secrecy as to the nature of the conversation. After the party, Nick meets Jordan again, and he tells the reader details from their developing relationship.

Chapter 4
Gatsby invites Nick to lunch in New York and, during the drive there, shares with him details of his past in what appears to be an attempt to persuade Nick of his good credentials; Nick remains suspicious as to how much of what he is told is true. At lunch, Nick is introduced to Meyer Wolfshiem, a well known gambler, with whom Gatsby appears to have connections.

In the second half of the chapter, Nick recalls having tea with Jordan, and we learn through her that Nick’s cousin, Daisy, has had a past relationship with Gatsby. The nature of the secret conversation between Jordan and Gatsby at the party also comes to light. Using Jordan as a mutual friend, Gatsby wants to engineer a meeting with Daisy and wants Nick to invite her to tea.
Chapter 5
Returning home and finding Gatsby’s mansion ablaze with lights, Nick goes to see him and informs him that he will be inviting Daisy to tea. On the day, Gatsby arrives early in a state of high anxiety and when Daisy arrives the meeting is, at first, awkward. However, once Nick has left them together for a while, the mood changes and Nick returns to find himself being invited to accompany a love struck Gatsby and an over-awed Daisy on a tour of the Gatsby mansion.

Chapter 6
Before moving on with the story, Nick reveals the true identity of Jay Gatsby as being James Gatz from North Dakota, who left home as a boy to seek his fortune. At seventeen, James met a self made millionaire by the name of Dan Cody and took the opportunity to introduce himself as ‘Jay Gatsby’. Gatsby worked for Cody aboard his yacht and would have inherited a substantial sum of money when Cody died five years later, had it not been for Ella Kaye, the woman in Cody’s life at the time of his death, claiming the money as rightfully hers in court. The story then continues with Tom Buchanan attending a party at Gatsby’s, where he flirts and obtains addresses whilst Daisy is un-impressed by the excessive behaviour of the guests. In a conversation between Nick and Gatsby it becomes clear that the latter wants to turn back time and begin life again with Daisy.

Chapter 7
Gatsby stops having parties and dismisses his servants, employing new ones who will not gossip about Daisy’s visits to see him at his mansion. Nick observes with interest how quickly the endless round of parties ceased, once Daisy’s disapproval of them became apparent.

Nick, Gatsby and Jordan have lunch with Tom and Daisy, where Daisy openly flirts with Gatsby. They decide to go to New York, with Tom driving Nick and Jordan in Gatsby’s car. They stop en route for petrol at George Wilson’s garage and learn that Wilson has discovered Myrtle is having an affair. Once in New York, tempers fray and following accusations that Gatsby is a bootlegger, Tom confronts him about his relationship with Daisy. Arguments ensue, with Daisy admitting she loved Gatsby, but also unable to deny that she loved Tom as well.

During the drive back, with Daisy in Gatsby’s car, and Tom, Nick and Jordan following some way behind, there is an accident; Myrtle is hit by Gatsby’s car and killed. Arriving at the scene, to find a distraught George Wilson, Tom soon discovers that it is Gatsby’s car that has been involved in the fatal accident. Initially presuming that Gatsby was at the wheel, Nick discovers that it was, in fact, Daisy and that Gatsby intends to cover for her. Gatsby waits outside the Buchanan’s house all night to check that Daisy is okay before leaving, Nick peers through a window and sees Daisy and Tom talking intently together.
Chapter 8
Nick visits Gatsby, who had kept watch until 4am, and learns about his past relationship with Daisy. Nick leaves him after breakfast to go to work in New York, where Jordan phones him and he makes excuses to avoid seeing her. Nick then tells the reader what happened after Myrtle’s death, describing George Wilson’s grief and his disappearance from the garage and subsequent movements which appear to have lead him to Gatsby’s house.

Gatsby goes down to his pool, at 2pm. When Nick goes to the house, having caught the three-fifty train back from New York, he rushes to the pool with three of Gatsby’s staff to discover him shot dead. The gardener finds Wilson’s body in the grass, where he has shot himself.

Chapter 9
Nick describes the events after Gatsby’s death, including receiving a mysterious phone call whilst at Gatsby’s house, in which the latter’s links to a shady ‘underworld’ are again hinted at. Nick attempts to gather together Gatsby’s friends for his funeral but in the event only a handful of people, including Gatsby’s father, attend. He then meets Jordan to tidy up loose ends regarding the end of their relationship. Later, Nick bumps into Tom and on being asked what he said to Wilson after the accident, Tom admits he told him that Gatsby was driving the car that killed Myrtle.

With Nick packed and ready to leave, to return to the mid-West, he visits Gatsby’s house for one last time before going down to the beach, where he lays on the sand. In the final three short paragraphs, he reflects on the dream that Gatsby was chasing, observing that the latter did not know it was already behind him. The novel ends with the sentence:

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”
One of the key themes of the novel is the concept of ‘The American Dream’. This has at its heart the idea that any individual can achieve success through their own personal endeavour. However, what exactly constitutes this success has changed over time. In the 1920s, when F Scott Fitzgerald was writing *The Great Gatsby*, a person was considered successful if they were extremely wealthy.

In the novel, the pursuit of this dream is chiefly shown through Gatsby. James Gatz is a boy from a poor, working class background, who left home in order to find his fortune. With no wealth of his own, Gatsby has to earn money; in his pursuit of the American Dream he becomes a self-made man.

He re-invents himself as Jay Gatsby and, through his own hard work, becomes a very rich man who owns a huge mansion house and throws lavish parties. There are numerous points in the novel when these means are revealed to be linked to the shady worlds of gambling, bootlegging and the mafia.

Extract from the novel, Chapter 6:
His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people - his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all... so he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.”

**stretch**

As a class come up with your own definition for the modern American Dream. Discuss how capitalism in the USA and UK, the desire to be wealthy, might affect other people. Create a list of positive and negative consequences of this ideology. Reflect on the media’s representation of the modern day American Dream.
Themes
Dream vs. Reality

In the novel, many of the characters live in an illusionary world removed from an honest reality, driven by the pursuit of money and social status at the cost of their moral integrity. Gatsby’s pursuit of money is entirely tied up with his desire for Daisy; he needs money in order to access the world that Daisy lives in and this is where the notion of the American Dream is revealed to be flawed. At various points throughout the story Gatsby lies about his background and identity in order to pursue his dreams, and he becomes increasingly deluded about his status and position.

Despite accumulating considerable wealth, Gatsby cannot add Daisy to his riches. The novel highlights the social divide that exists between ‘old’ and ‘new’ money and when push comes to shove, Daisy is unwilling to leave the society she is part of, in order to be with Gatsby.

East Egg
East Egg is an area of New York in which people who have inherited money live, often called ‘old money’. Daisy and Tom Buchanan are from a wealthy family and have inherited their money. Their social pursuits include playing polo and touring Europe.

West Egg
West Egg is the area of New York where people with new money live: Gatsby has earned his money, not inherited it from family. The lavish parties he throws, the contents of his house, and his fine imported shirts, display this wealth ostentatiously.

Extract from the novel, Chapter 6:
Nick describes Daisy’s reaction to attending a party at Gatsby’s mansion: “She was appalled by West Egg... appalled by its raw vigour that chafed under the old euphemisms...”

stretch
Is it ever ok to lie?
Discuss scenarios that you have been in where you have edited facts about yourself?
What pressures do young people face today when it comes to social status?
What assumptions do you think people from less wealthy continents might make about our lives in the UK?
Where might these assumptions have come from?
Themes
Social Class

All the characters in the novel are tightly bound and defined by their social class.

Myrtle Wilson is a good example, she is married to George Wilson, a poor working class car mechanic who owns a garage in the Valley of Ashes. Myrtle aspires to the lifestyle that Tom Buchanan has and she resents being poor. In her affair with Tom she is pursuing the American Dream in the only way she knows. However, in his descriptions of her, Nick infers that she lacks the class to ever be accepted into Tom’s social circle.

Note Nick Carraway’s use of the word costume in his description of Myrtle:

Extract from the novel, Chapter 2:
“Mrs Wilson had changed her costume sometime before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream coloured chiffon... With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change... Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more affected moment by moment...”

student activity
Party People
Divide your group into characters from West Egg and East Egg, and place them in a 1920s party setting. Consider proxemics, patterns of movement and attitudes, to explore their relationships.

stretch
Discuss with your group and come up with a definition for the term social class. What indicators do we use to assume someone’s class? What stereotypes might these indicators cause? What problems might arise from these stereotypes or assumptions?
A recent article in The Stage quoted that only 10% of British actors in 2015 were from working class backgrounds. Why do you think that might be, and what could the arts industry do to resolve the problem?
The promise of equality through wealth is shown to be a myth, even for Gatsby. In Chapter 6 Tom Buchanan and two friends drop in on Gatsby whilst out riding. Mrs Sloane politely invites Gatsby to accompany them back to a dinner party but, clearly, they move in different social circles:

Extract from the novel, Chapter 6:
“‘I haven’t got a horse’, said Gatsby...I’ll have to follow you in my car... ‘My God, I believe the man’s coming said Tom. ‘Doesn’t he know she doesn’t want him?... ’She’s having a big dinner party and he won’t know a soul there... Suddenly Mr Sloane and the lady walked down the steps and mounted their horses... ‘Tell him we couldn’t wait will you?’ “

Even when attending Gatsby’s parties, the ‘old wealth’ from East Egg does not mix with the ‘new wealth’:

Extract from the novel, Chapter 6:
“Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the countryside - East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.

**Stretch**
Research places around the world where poor and rich communities live as neighbours.
What conflicts have been caused by inequality of wealth.
Why are some people poor? Why do communities stay poor?
What can you do to help other people out of poverty?
Why are the 1920s called the Roaring Twenties?

The word ‘roaring’ is used as an intensifying adjective (think about the phrases ‘doing a roaring trade’ and ‘the party was a roaring success’). This makes the word a perfect adjective for the 1920s when, after the war, there was a lot of intensive change and life was being lived to the full.

Technology was improving at a fast pace and the first colour film was released, along with first audio films such as The Jazz Singer starring Al Jolson. Hollywood stars such as Mary Pickford, Louise Brooks and Rudolph Valentino added glamour to the mix.

Inventions such as the motor car and telephone had spread to the masses and most people were using consumer goods to demonstrate social status. Social norms and freedoms were also changing with the advent of the ‘flapper’. The economy was booming, and with more money to spend, people’s quality of life improved.

Why is this period of history known as the Jazz Age?

This was a phrase coined by F Scott Fitzgerald himself. Jazz was the pre-dominant musical style in the 1920s, with African American artists such as Duke Ellington, Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong being recognisable stars of the genre. Jazz was the music of choice in the speakeasies (illegal bars) and along with jazz music came dances such as the Charleston with its exuberance and fast paced flirtatious movements.

Stretch

Where in the novel do we see the influences of 1920s jazz music?
What were the social changes for African Americans in the 1920s? How did music help or hinder greater equality for black musicians?
What exactly is a Flapper?

It is important to remember that the 1920s followed on two years after the end of WW1. Women had taken on entirely new roles, running businesses, working in factories, being allowed greater responsibility and opportunities to demonstrate physical strength. The men were away fighting in the war and once it was over, simply turning back the clock to how things were before proved difficult for many women.

Some were just as affected by the intensifying effect that the 1920s had and responded by carving out a new identity. This lead to some women seeking a more independent and fun filled life and earned them the title of ‘flapper’ (think of a young bird flapping in a nest, trying to ‘find its wings’ and strike out on its own). In contrast to the previous expectations of how a woman should conduct herself, a flapper challenged the status quo. Some women found greater freedom and expressed it by:

- going out without a chaperone
- smoking
- dancing
- cutting their long hair into a short and stylish bob
- wearing dresses with a dropped waistline and higher hemline
- going to ‘speakeasies’ where alcohol was served illegally (this was the time of prohibition)

Equality for women

The 1920s saw significant steps forward for equality for women. Women won the right to vote for the first time, giving them a voice in society. This freedom was won due to the tireless and often dangerous campaigning of women. The Sex Disqualification Act of 1919 removed the legal block for women in being employed in certain jobs, women were allowed to ask for a divorce on the same grounds as men, and in 1926 women were allowed to own property, even if they weren’t married.

Art and culture, fashion, dance and music followed these tentative steps towards freedom.

What was Prohibition?

The 1920s was also the time of Prohibition; this was a complete ban on producing, transporting, importing, or selling alcohol which lasted until 1933. Whilst an individual could consume alcohol in their own home, they could not legally buy it in a bar. This lead to the rise of the Speakeasy where customers were encouraged to ‘speak easy’ in order to not draw attention to themselves or the illegal bar. Many Speakeasies were run by criminals, with Al Capone being one of the most famous. Bootleggers were the people who transported and supplied the illegal alcohol.

Are there characters in the novel who would be described as fitting the description of a ‘flapper’? Are there characters in the novel who are suspected of being a ‘bootlegger’? Why didn’t women have these basic freedoms before the 1920s. What impact did the war have on the roles of men and women?
Creative Adaptation

The term ‘creative adaptation’ refers to a piece of theatre that has been made by taking a text from a different creative medium, for example, a novel, or a poem that has been turned into a play or musical. Current examples of productions adapted from novels include *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time* which is a straight play, *Matilda*, a musical, and *451* which is an outdoor visual spectacle adaptation of the novel *Fahrenheit 451* by Periplum Theatre.

Blackeyed Theatre themselves have staged adaptations before; their production of *Dracula* was based on the novel of the same name, written by Bram Stoker and adapted into a script by John Ginman.

**Student questions**

In staging the novel ‘The Great Gatsby’ what challenges would the playwright, Stephen Sharkey, have been faced with?

**Prior to seeing the play:**

If you have read the novel, or learnt about it from this education pack, what are your expectations of the play? For example:

- Do you have any expectations regarding casting?
- Do you have any expectations about the style of performance they will use?
- Have you formed opinions about any of the characters?

**After watching the play:**

- Did watching the play differ from your expectations? If so, in what ways?
- If you had you formed opinions about any of the characters, did the actors play them as you expected? If not, how were they different?
- Was the casting as you expected?
- What do you think of the way the company and the designers dealt with the multiple locations?
Staging an adaptation

Stephen Sharkey’s stage adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* refers to numerous locations in the stage directions; below are listed just a few:

- Gatsby’s mansion, after midnight
- A train
- Gatsby’s car
- A restaurant, Forty-second St, Manhattan
- The tea room at the Plaza Hotel
- Wilson’s garage
- The terrace overlooking Gatsby’s garden

**Student questions**

Having read the background information on Blackeyed theatre’s style, discuss in pairs or groups how you think they have coped with the multiple locations in staging their adaptation.

What do you imagine their set design will look like? Can you draw it? Describe it in words?

**Student activity**

Using the script extracts on pages 17-20 explore different ways in which you can transition between the two locations.
Scene four.

The noise peaks, then cuts out as lights come up on GATSBY driving NICK. The purr of his Rolls Royce engine in the background.

NICK
Over the next few weeks I talked with Gatsby perhaps six times, at his parties. And I found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say. Still, I liked him very much. His epic generosity, his decorous if slightly over-deliberate manners, and his golden smile — all of these were pleasing parts and the sum was — Gatsby. Then one morning late in July he invited me to take lunch with him in the city.

GATSBY
What do you think of my car, old sport? Pretty, isn’t it?

NICK
God, yes. It’s beautiful.

pause

Further pleasantries for several miles, back and forth, as the engine sang. I was almost sleepy, when suddenly he broke out —

GATSBY
Look here, old sport. What’s your opinion of me, anyhow?

NICK
My opinion of you? Why, that’s a question to spring on a fellow —

GATSBY
I’m going to tell you something about my life. I don’t want you to get the wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.

NICK
All right —

GATSBY
I’ll tell you God’s truth. I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West — all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at, at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.

NICK
What part of the Middle West?

GATSBY
San Francisco

NICK
I see.

GATSBY
My family all died and I came into a good deal of money. After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe — Paris, Venice, London — collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, and trying to forget something very sad that happened to me long ago.

NICK
I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter. From the moment he fumbled over the Oxford thing his story was ever more ridiculous. I pictured him in a bejewelled turban, hunting tigers in Kensington Gardens.

GATSBY
Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant. In the Argonne I led two machine-gun detachments so far forward that the infantry couldn’t support us. A hundred and thirty men under me with sixteen Lewis guns. Two days and two nights later the infantry finally reached us and among the German dead they found the insignia of three divisions. Well, I was promoted to be a major after that, and every Allied government gave me a decoration.
Scene four cont...

GATSBY pulls a medal and ribbon from his pocket, hands it to NICK
— even little Montenegro, down on the Adriatic Sea!

NICK reads
‘Major Jay Gatsby. For Valour Extraordinary’...

GATSBY
Here’s another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity Quad—

NICK
That’s you, with the cricket bat...

GATSBY
The man on my left is now the Earl of Doncaster.

NICK
Then it was all true? I saw him in his palace on the Grand Canal, staring into a casket of rubies to ease the gnawings of his broken heart...

GATSBY
I’m going to make a big request of you today, so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn’t want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me. You’ll hear about it this afternoon.

NICK
At lunch?

GATSBY
I happened to find out that you’re taking Miss Baker to tea.

NICK
You’re in love with Jordan?

GATSBY
No, old sport, I’m not. But she has kindly consented to speak to you about this matter.

NICK
And with that, he was done. I hadn’t the faintest idea what this ‘matter’ could be but I was rather annoyed than intrigued — I hadn’t asked Jordan to tea to talk about Mr. Jay Gatsby. We sped on past Port Roosevelt, before the valley of ashes opened out on both sides of us, and I saw the giant eyes of Dr. Eckleburg keeping their solemn vigil. I happened to catch a glimpse of Myrtle Wilson, straining at the gasoline pump with panting vitality. Then at last — the great view of the city from the Queensboro Bridge, and its wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world. Anything can happen now, I thought to myself. Anything at all.
Saturday night. One of Gatsby’s parties—and actually, this is to be the last, ever. TOM surveys the scene. GATSBY hands him a cigar.

DAISY
These things excite me so. If you want to kiss me any time during the evening Nick just let me know—

GATSBY
Look around.

DAISY
I am looking around. I’m already having a marvelous—

GATSBY
You must see the faces of many people you’ve heard about.

TOM
We don’t go around very much. I don’t believe I know a soul here.

GATSBY
Perhaps you know that lady, under the tree.

DAISY
Oh! Is it really her?

GATSBY
The man beside her is her director.

NICK
We stood and stared at the famous movie actress—a gorgeous, scarcely human orchid of a woman, sat in state on a high-backed chair. A shiver passed through us—surely she couldn’t be flesh and blood?

Gatsby steered them through the crowd, introducing them to each little group as:

GATSBY
Mrs. Buchanan . . . and Mr. Buchanan—the polo player.

TOM
Oh, no, not me.

GATSBY
This is Mrs. Buchanan— and Mr. Buchanan, the polo player.

DAISY
It’s all true, Tom. I’ve never met so many celebrities.

TOM
I’d a little rather not be the polo player, you know.

DAISY
But you do.

TOM
I’d rather look at all these famous people in oblivion— say, do you mind if I eat with some people over there? A fellow’s getting off some funny stuff.

DAISY
The fellow with the long blonde hair, you mean? Go ahead. And if you want to take down any phone numbers—

NICK
Meanwhile...
Daisy and Gatsby danced.
A fox-trot.

The moon looked down from her cradle, and laughter rose high and drifted toward the ocean, and the party was unfolding as a dozen times before—the same songs, the same stunts, the same profusion of champagne—But there was an unpleasantness in the air, an oppressiveness I hadn’t felt before. And I realised—I was looking at it all through Daisy’s eyes. What before had been amusing to me, even fascinating, was all now rather tawdry.

GUEST to DAISY
Is this your husband?

DAISY
Nick? Why no, he’s my cousin—

GUEST
We’ll play golf together you and I, over at Westchester. Pair up. What’s your handicap?

DAISY
I’m afraid I don’t have one—

A drunk woman called MISS BAEDEKER, comes on screaming and falls on NICK, who catches her

NICK
Whoa there, steady as she goes!

GUEST
Miss Baedeker! Put a sock in it would you?

MISS BAEDEKER
Wha’ you mean, put a sock in it?

GUEST
When she’s had five or six cocktails she starts screaming. You oughta leave it alone, Marie.

MISS BAEDEKER
I do leave it alone. You leave me alone.

GUEST
And you oughta eat something. Come on. Second supper is our hope and our salvation. Excuse us.

The GUEST and MISS BAEDEKER leave

NICK
Daisy was appalled by West Egg, this place that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village. Her eyes scanned the crowd for some sign of her world reflected back to her, and saw none. She saw instead something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand. When Tom emerged from the dark she nearly swooned with relief.

TOM
Who is this Gatsby, anyhow? Some big bootlegger?

NICK
Where’d you hear that?

TOM
A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know.

NICK
Not Gatsby.

TOM
Well, he certainly must have strained himself to get this menagerie together.

DAISY
They’re more interesting than the people we know.

TOM
Interesting! That’s a word for them.
Production Process - Script Writing
by Stephen Sharkey

How do you adapt a novel like The Great Gatsby for the stage?

Do’s and Don’ts.

Do read the book for pleasure, before you start the work of making notes, planning the scene structure and so on. Immerse yourself in its music, its passions, the sensuous and tactile world evoked by the prose.

Do read some secondary literature - but not too much. The brilliant Careless People by Sarah Churchwell was my guide to Gatsby.

Do empathise with F.Scott Fitzgerald, and marvel at his ambition for Gatsby - he said that he wanted to write “something better that I am capable of”.

Do listen to the characters’ nuances as revealed in their speech and in the narrator’s conception of them, their tics and mannerisms, their physicality.

Do remember: Fitzgerald’s novel has been adored and cherished by millions of readers, and is an unimprovable masterpiece. Then try and forget all that before the pressure becomes too much and your typing fingers seize up.

Don’t mess it up. (This was friendly advice from a fellow playwright and Gatsby fan, only he used a different four-letter word.)

Don’t be too faithful - you can’t put the whole novel on stage. Unless you’re the American theatre company named Elevator Repair Service. https://www.elevator.org/shows/gatz/

Don’t watch the films. Apart from the 1974 Robert Redford one, to admire the Oscar-winning couture.

Don’t worry about the idea of Nick Carraway as an ‘unreliable narrator’. All narrators are making their story up as they go along. Especially the parts that are true.

Don’t be objective. Fall in love with the characters, get angry with them, be disgusted by them. Get involved.
1920’s was an era of progression and we see a step forward in fashion for both men and women. Women were no longer nipped in at the waist and a new ‘boyish’ style became popular with straight cut dresses, low waistlines and hemlines rising to just below the knee. Men’s suits and accessories saw a much broader range of colours and varieties. Trousers became wider with a cuff at the hem. It is important that the costumes are correct for the period and encapsulate the frivolity and decadence of the era.

**Tom Buchanan**

Tom is very wealthy, a sportsman, comes from East egg and is considered “old money”. Daisy describes him as “a brute of a man”. He is a direct contrast to Gatsby; conservative dress sense, dark colours, sharp, imposing suits that show his wealth, lack of imagination with accessories.

**Daisy**

Daisy is beautiful, feminine and comes from a wealthy background, however she is also fairly selfish and materialistic. I have designed her to appear the sweet, romantic girl that Gatsby sees and adores.

**Jay Gatsby**

Gatsby, with the sole intend of impressing Daisy, uses material possessions to show off his wealth and status in society. He is considered “new money”, he is mysterious, charming and passionate. He is fashion conscious and in contrast to Tom has a bright colour palette to reflect his personality.
Production Process - Set Design
by Victoria Spearing

Mood boards created for The Great Gatsby by designer Victoria Spearing.
Watching the show

We hope that you are looking forward to your visit to see Blackeyed Theatre’s production of *The Great Gatsby*.

In order to maximise your students understanding of the show we have created a number of questions about the different ‘lenses’ through which your students can watch the show.

Some students may find it helpful to make notes during the show, others may prefer to concentrate fully on the production and make notes afterwards. You can also choose whether to allocate groups to look specifically through different ‘lenses’ during the show, or ask all students to cover all areas.

### Performances

**How would you describe the acting style/s?**
**Is there a particular performer that stands out and why?**
**Identify the vocal techniques used throughout the show.**
**How do the actors physicalise the characters?**
**Are some characters more stylised than others, and why?**
**How has movement been used within the piece?**
**How have the cast created the ‘visual’ images within the piece?**

### Story

**Concentrate on the narrative.**
**Make a note of what happens in each scene**
**Is the story clear?**
**What happens during the transitions?**
**How are the themes drawn out by the company?**
**What are the most obvious themes?**
**What decisions has the director made in the telling of the story?**

### Music and Song

**Where is song used within the show?**
**What effect does this have on your understanding of the story?**
**How would you describe the style of music?**
**Which actors play which instruments?**

### Visual Design

**Set**
**Sketch the main scenic elements**
**How are the different locations created?**
**What are the visual qualities of the set?**
**What moves and what is static?**
**How are the projections being used?**

**Lighting**
**How does the lighting affect the impact of the scenes?**
**How would you describe the quality of the lighting?**
**How is lighting used to help alienate the audience?**

**Costume**
**How have costumes been used to help indicate different characters?**
**Is there an overall design theme?**
**Where and when do the characters change costumes?**
Post production

As soon as possible after you have seen the production encourage your students to sit down and make some detailed notes about the show;

Sketch the scenic elements and the layout for different scenes.
Sketch or write about moments of action that stood out for you.
Consider techniques that you really enjoyed.
Identify moments that challenged you, that you didn’t understand or made you think.
Run through the production elements ‘lenses’ and write as many facts about these areas as you can, consider facts as well as subjective opinions.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Snowball

1. Pair up your students and ask them to discuss their favourite moments from the production
2. Then ask them to pick one of those moments
3. Ask them to come up with a question that they would like to ask the director about that specific moment?
4. Merge pairs with another pair to form groups of four
5. Ask each pair to share their questions, and decide on one of those questions to take forward
6. Merge groups of four together to form groups of 8 and repeat the negotiation exercise
7. Continue to merge groups until one large group is formed and the whole group has decided on one question that they would like to ask the director about the production
8. Set a homework activity where each student has to write their own detailed answer to the question chosen by the group.

Epistolary Evaluation

Give each student, or group of students, one of the following formats, and set them the task of writing a short critical review of the production in an appropriate style to that of their format.

- diary extract
- television news article
- tabloid news article
- letter to the company
- health & safety report
- love letter
- speech
- youtube video
- Twitter status update

Collate the evaluations into one complete document.

Blog

Write a review of Blackeyed Theatre’s production of The Great Gatsby, with emphasis on the use of visual imagery and music.

Upload the file to your school’s website, create your own blogsite and send your reviews to the Director.
Eliot Giuralarocca - Director

Eliot studied English Language and Literature at Christ Church, Oxford before training at the Guildford School of Acting. He is delighted to be renewing his association with Blackeyed Theatre after playing the title role in the company’s production of The Beekeeper at Waterloo East (for which he received a Best Actor nomination in the 2012 Off West End Awards).

He has recently directed Baroque Around the Block for Armonico Consort which is set to tour Nationally in 2013 and prior to this directed their National tour of Monteverdi’s Flying Circus which will be touring to America in 2013. Other directing and devising credits include Three Servants and Voyagers for Jet Theatre/Croydon Warehouse, Sex and Suicide, Sorry Island, and Postcards from Transylvania (Durham Theatre Company), and The Love Letters of Private Blade (Riverside Studios).

Over the last 20 years he has worked extensively in Theatre, Film and TV. Recent work as an Actor includes: The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Liverpool Playhouse/Nottingham Playhouse), Il Turco In Italia (Royal Opera House); Measure for Measure (Thelma Holt Productions); A Small Family Business (Watford Palace Theatre); Don’t Look Now (Lyric Hammersmith); The Comedy of Errors, Titus Andronicus (Shakespeare’s Globe); Twelfth Night (Royal Exchange Manchester); Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Horse and Carriage (West Yorkshire Playhouse); The Black Dahlia, Buried Alive, The Cherry Orchard, Demons and Dybbuks (Method and Madness); A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest (Nuffield Theatre Southampton); The Government Inspector (Salisbury Playhouse); Man for Hire (Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough); The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe (Library Theatre Manchester); Oxygen (Tricycle Theatre).

Television work includes: Mind Games (ITV) and Egypt (S4C) while Film work includes: Nine (Lucamar/ Weinstein Company); Night Swimming (Tri-Star); DIY Hard (British Film Foundation) Cake (Subrosa Films) For further information: www.sainou.com

Ellie Verkerk - Musical Director

Ellie studied at the Royal College of Music. Musical Theatre credits include Keys/BV dep for “Jersey Boys” (Prince Edward Theatre, London). Musical Director credits include “Cabaret At The Cellar Bar” (Golden Ratio, South Hill Park, Berkshire), “Plug In The Lead” and “Mash Up Cabaret” (Paulden Productions, Leicester Square Theatre, West End), Cabaret evenings at the Landor Theatre (various West End artists, Clapham, London), “Beauty and The Beast” and “Oh, What A Lovely War” (Blackeyed Theatre, National UK tours), “West End Unplugged” (Interval Productions, Leicester Square Theatre) and “Journey To The Past” (Helena Blackman from BBC TV’s “How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria”, UK Tour). Recordings / albums include “My Parade” (Stephanie Fearon from BBC TV’s “Over The Rainbow”), “The Sound Of Musicals” (various West End artists), and “Stiched Shoes and An Irish Wristwatch” (Buswell). Video credits include “Let It Go” (Sheridan), and “Straighten Up And Fly Right” (Aaron Delahunty). She works at the Read Dance and Theatre College in Reading, Berkshire, and is an associate MD for the Guildford School of Acting. When she’s not playing musical theatre, you’ll find her playing in bands and festivals on her trumpet!

Website - www.ellieverkerk.com

Victoria Spearing - Designer

Since graduating from Bretton Hall in 2001, Victoria has worked as a freelance theatre designer and maker. Theatre work includes The Queen and I, Bugsy Malone, BFG, Whistle Down the Wind, When We Were Married, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Norfolk’s Rose, The Caretaker, Around the World in 80 days, Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz, Blue Remembered Hills, Summer Holiday, House and Garden, The Adventures of Mr Toad, Henry V, Oliver! Fantastic Mr Fox, Brassed Off, Noughts and Crosses, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and Billy Elliot (all for South Hill Park Arts Centre), Mort the Musical and Loserville the Musical for Youth Music Theatre UK. Touring work includes The Beekeeper (for which she was OFFIE nominated), The Trial, The Caretaker, Art, Misery, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Oedipus, Oh What a Lovely War The Cherry Orchard, Alfie, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle (all for Blackeyed Theatre), See How They Run, Twelfth Night, Dancing at Lughnasad, Shakespeare’s R&J, The Importance of Being Oscar, Mallard and Journey’s End for Original Theatre, The Madness of George III for Wilde Enterprises and The Go! Go! Go! Show for Shows4kids. She has also designed South Hill Park’s hugely successful pantomimes, Dick Whittington, Sleeping Beauty, Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast and Peter Pan. In addition she has designed and made props for use in educational productions in most of the major London museums.
Charlotte McClelland - Lighting Designer
Charlotte trained on an Arts Council bursary at Central School of Speech and Drama. Recent lighting designs include Angels On High for Guildford International Music Festival (vertical dance on Guildford Cathedral), Carmen and the Marriage of Figaro for Longborough Festival Opera, Art, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Oedipus, Oh What A Lovely War and The Trial for Blackeyed Theatre, Plasticine and Butterfly Kiss for Birmingham School of Speech and Drama, Ever the Bull for Demonstrate, Cinderella for South Hill Park Arts Centre and The Baghdad Monologue and Chicos del 21 for Frances M Lynch/Electric Voice Theatre.

Jenny Little - Costume Designer
Jenny graduated BA(Hons) in Costume for the Screen and Stage from the Arts Institute at Bournemouth. During her degree, she was costume maker on Virus for Bournemouth Direct Theatre School and assisted in Wardrobe on Les Miserables at the Queen’s Theatre, London. After her studies, she started as a Wardrobe Assistant on Snow White for Evolution Productions at the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury. Since then she has worked with Evolution as Wardrobe Mistress on their last 3 pantomimes at The Central Theatre, Chatham. She has also worked as a Costumier on The Lands, Dancing on the Waves, Fiesta Latina Nights, Jazz ala Carte and Studio 54 for American company Jean Ann Ryan Productions, who create theatre productions for Silversea Cruises. Other work has included hand painting and dying costumes for West End productions of Lion King, Oliver and Wicked. When Jenny is not working in theatre she works freelance designing and making bespoke costumes and special occasion garments for individuals, including Bridalwear. Previous costume designs for Blackeyed Theatre include Mother Courage And Her Children and Teechers.

Danielle Corbishley – Education Advisor
Danielle trained at Dartington and has a PGCert in Physical Theatre with Jasmin Vardimon Company. She is a performer, director, lecturer and magician who develops and directs performances with Beautiful Creatures Theatre alongside her education and freelance theatre work. Beautiful Creatures produce physical and visual theatres for audiences of all ages and have enjoyed touring their work throughout the UK and producing large scale participatory performances in Berkshire. Beautiful Creatures curate a programme of outdoor arts at Caversham Festival and provide opportunities for young people to gain vocational experience. Danielle is currently touring with Periplum’s 451 as Company Stage Manager and Performer. Previous education packs for Blackeyed include: Mother Courage, Dracula, Not About Heroes and Teechers. www.beautifulcreatures.org.uk

Shelley Upton - Education Pack Writer
Shelley Upton is Head of Performing Arts at Maiden Erlegh School in Berkshire. She has been teaching for 25 years and is a Specialist Leader in Education. She has worked as a freelance educational course provider and drama specialist and this is her first education pack for Blackeyed Theatre.

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