About half way between West Egg and New York the motor-road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud which screens their obscure operations from your sight.

But above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a nonexistent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens and then sank down himself into eternal blindness or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many paintless days under sun and rain, brood over the solemn dumping ground.

The valley of ashes is bounded on one side by a small foul river, and when the drawbridge is up to let barges through, the passengers on waiting trains can stare at the dismal scene for as long as half an hour. There is always a halt there of at least a minute and it was because of this that I first met Tom Buchanan's mistress.

1. How are personification and hyperbole used in this passage to describe the valley of ashes? What is the effect?
2. Why is it only "with a transcendent effort" that the ashes take the form of men?
3. Why does the narrator address the reader in the second person when describing the valley of ashes?
4. Why is the billboard not introduced as such, but as "the eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg"?
5. Highlight or underline the words in this passage that emphasize the desolation of the valley of ashes.
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 the 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 two motor boats slit 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 scampers 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.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour, if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o’clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five piece affair but a whole pit full of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors and hair shorn in strange new ways and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. 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.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun and now the
orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music and the opera of voices pitches a key
higher. Laughter is easier, minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out
at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dis-
solve and form in the same breath—already there are wanderers, confident girls
who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a
sharp, joyous moment the center of a group and then excited with triumph glide
on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly
changing light.

Suddenly one of these gypsies in trembling opal seizes a cocktail out of the
air, dumps it down for courage and moving her hands like Frisco dances out
alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his
rhythm obligingly for her and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news
goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the "Follies." The party has
begun.

1. Why does Fitzgerald shift tense when describing the preparations and first
   arrivals for one of Gatsby's parties?

2. What is the effect of cataloguing the ingredients of a Gatsby party?

3. What literary technique is Fitzgerald using with the phrase "yellow cocktail
   music"? What effect does it have on this passage?

4. What do Gatsby's party and its music have in common?
Gatsby Chapter 3 - "I am one of the few honest people"

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.

“You’re a rotten driver,” I protested. “Either you ought to be more careful or you oughtn’t to drive at all.”

“I am careful.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Well, other people are,” she said lightly.

“What’s that got to do with it?”

“They’ll keep out of my way,” she insisted. “It takes two to make an accident.”

“Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.”

“I hope I never will,” she answered. “I hate careless people. That’s why I like you.”

Her grey 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.

Everyone 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.

1. What is the larger significance of Nick and Jordan’s conversation about driving, and what details in the passage make this evident?
2. What literary technique is Fitzgerald employing when Nick speaks of “interior rules that act as brakes on my desires”?
3. Why does Nick believe that his conversation with Jordan had “shifted [their] relations”?
4. What is the connotation of the word suspects as the narrator uses it in “Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues”?
5. Can Nick as an arrator be objective about himself? Do you trust him? Is he reliable? Why or why not?
Gatsby Chapter 5: Gatsby and Daisy Meet Again

Outside the wind was loud and there was a faint flow of thunder along the Sound. All the lights were going on in West Egg now; the electric trains, men-carrying, were plunging home through the rain from New York. It was the hour of a profound human change and excitement was generating on the air.

One thing's sure and nothing's surer
The rich get richer and the poor get—children.
In the meantime,
In between time—

As I went over to say goodbye I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little, visibly. His hand took hold of hers and as she said something low in his ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. I think that voice held him most with its fluctuating, feverish warmth because it couldn't be over-dreamed—that voice was a deathless song.

They had forgotten me but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand; Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.

1. What is the "profound human change" to which Nick is referring?
2. What is Nick's attitude toward "the colossal vitality of his [Gatsby's] illusion"? How does the language that Nick uses reveal this attitude? Please highlight or underline the diction that helped you answer this question.
3. What does Nick's characterization of Daisy's voice as "a deathless song" suggest about his understanding of Gatsby and Daisy's relationship?
4. What is the effect of setting this scene indoors while it is dark and stormy outside?
5. How do the lyrics Fitzgerald quotes affect the scene's emotional tone?
James Gatz – that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career – when he saw Dan Cody’s yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the *Tuolomee*, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he’s had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang for his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God – a phase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. 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.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed. His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce, half-lazy work of the bracing days. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock trickled on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy’s wings.

An instinct toward his future glory had led him, some months before, to the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf in southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor’s work with which he was to pay his way through. Then he drifted back to Lake Superior and he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody’s yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore.

Cody was fifty years old then, a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five. The transactions in Montana copper that made him many times a millionaire found him physically robust but on the verge of soft-mindedness, and, suspecting this, an infinite number of women tried to separate him from his money. The none too savory ramifications by which Ella Kaye, the newspaper woman, played Madame de Maintenon to his weakness and sent
him to sea in a yacht, were common knowledge to the turgid sub-journalism of 1902. He had been coasting along all too hospitable shores for five years when he turned up as James Gatz’s destiny in Little Girl Bay.

To young Gatz, resting on his oars and looking up at the railed deck, that yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world. I suppose he smiled at Cody—he had probably discovered that people liked him when he smiled. At any rate Cody asked him a few questions (one of them elicited the brand new name) and found that he was quick and extravagantly ambitious. A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him a blue coat, six pairs of white duck trousers, and a yacht cap. And when the **Tuolomee** left for the West Indies and the Barbary Coast Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity—while he remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary, and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about, and he provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more trust in Gatsby. The arrangement lasted five years, during which the boat went three times around the Continent. It might have lasted indefinably except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died.

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby’s bedroom, a gray, florid man with a hard, empty face—the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of America life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon. It was indirectly due to Cody that Gatsby drank so little. Sometimes in the course of gay parties women used to rub champagne into his hair; for himself he formed the habit of letting liquor alone.

And it was from Cody that he inherited money—a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars. He didn’t get it. He never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye. He was left with his singularity appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.

1. What difference does Nick imply between "really" and "legally" when he says that James Gatz was "really, or at least legally" Gatsby's name?
2. What does it mean for Jay Gatsby to have "sprung from his Platonic conception of himself" and to be "a son of God"?
3. What is Nick's tone when he calls Gatsby a "son of God" and says that Gatsby "must be about His Father's Business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty"?
4. What is meant by "the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was found securely on a fairy's wing"? How are Gatsby's dreams initially a "satisfactory hint" of this?
5. How do the connotations of the language in this passage express a contrast between the world in which Gatsby lives and the one he imagines? Highlight or underline the diction that helped you answer this question.
Gatsby Chapter 8: Gatsby and Daisy's history (again)

She was the first “nice” girl he had ever known. In various unrevealed capacities he had come in contact with such people but always with indiscernible barbed wire between. He found her excitingly desirable. He went to her house, at first with other officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed him—he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there—it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year’s shining motor cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. It excited him too that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions.

But he knew that he was in Daisy’s house by a colossal accident. However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously—eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.

He might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken her under false pretenses. I don’t mean that he had traded on his phantom millions, but he had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security; he let her believe that he was a person from much the same strata as herself—that he was fully able to take care of her. As a matter of fact he had no such facilities—he had no comfortable family standing behind him and he was liable at the whim of an impersonal government to be blown anywhere about the world.

But he didn’t despise himself and it didn’t turn out as he had imagined. He had intended, probably, to take what he could and go—but now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail. He knew that Daisy was extraordinary but he didn’t realize just how extraordinary a “nice” girl could be. She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby—nothing. He felt married to her, that was all.
When they met again two days later it was Gatsby who was breathless, who was somehow betrayed. Her porch was bright with the bought luxury of star-shine; the wicker of the settee squeaked fashionably as she turned toward him and he kissed her curious and lovely mouth. She had caught a cold and it made her voice huskier and more charming than ever and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.

1. How do the length and syntax of the sentence beginning “There was a ripe mystery about it” emphasize what Gatsby feels about Daisy’s house?

2. What literary technique is Fitzgerald using with the words “the invisible cloak” of Gatsby’s uniform? In what sense is his uniform such a cloak?

3. What does Fitzgerald imply when he says that “Gatsby took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously—eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand”?

4. What does Fitzgerald mean by the “following of a grail”? What is the literal and figurative meaning of Daisy as a grail?

5. How does adding the words “that was all” affect our understanding of “He felt married to her”? 
No telephone message arrived but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock—until long after there was anyone to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about . . . like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

The chauffeur—he was one of Wolfshiem's protégés—heard the shots—afterward he could only say that he hadn't thought anything much about them. I drove from the station directly to Gatsby's house and my rushing anxiously up the front steps was the first thing that alarmed anyone. But they knew then, I firmly believe. With scarcely a word said, four of us, the chauffeur, butler, gardener and I, hurried down to the pool.

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. With little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves, the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolted it slowly, tracing, like the leg of a compass, a thin red circle in the water.

It was after we started with Gatsby toward the house that the gardener saw Wilson's body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete.

1. How does Fitzgerald develop an elegaic tone in this passage?
2. What two points of view are we given in the first paragraph, and where does the shift between them occur? (Label these on your reading.) What effect does the shift create?
3. Why is the world Gatsby has lost described as "old" and "warm"?
4. When Daisy doesn't call, why might the sky look "unfamiliar," the leaves "frightening," and a rose "grotesque" to Gatsby?
5. What does it mean for Gatsby's new world to be "material without being real"?
6. Why does Fitzgerald write "started with Gatsby toward the house" rather than "started with Gatsby's body" toward the house?
1. What literary technique is Fitzgerald using when he sets the funeral on a gray, drizzly day? What emotions does the scene arouse?
2. In what way are the "owl-eyed glasses" related to a larger symbolic pattern in the novel?
3. Nick remarks about Owl Eyes, "I don't know how he knew about the funeral or even his name." How does this statement contribute to the symbolic significance of Owl Eyes?
4. What ironies do you observe in the circumstances of Gatsby's funeral?
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.

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—tomorrow 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.

1. In what sense are the houses "inessential"?
2. What group of related symbols culminates with "a fresh, green breast of the new world"? Label them.
3. How is it that the trees could have "pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams"?
4. How in these last four paragraphs is Gatsby's story transformed into the story of "man... face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder"?
5. What does it mean for people to be "boats against the current"?

6. In the last two paragraphs, Gatsby's dream is presented as
   (a) inexcusably unrealistic
   (b) doomed to fail because it focused on Daisy
   (c) representative of the dreams of mankind
   (d) incompatible with the dreams of the "Dutch sailors"
   (e) unique in its persistence