

Socratic Seminar Discussion Questions

The Great Gatsby – Post-reading

Note: To prepare for this discussion, write up notes regarding your position--prepare questions for your classmates that might further the discussion, pull in textual examples. Be sure to come to class with notes, as this will reflect how much you have considered these questions, and the only measurable indication of your preparation.

1. Is there one pivotal moment that shapes one's life or is life a series of unbroken events that are equally important? Can one mistake change a person's whole life?
 - A. What are the most important, defining moments in the lives of the characters in *The Great Gatsby*?
 - B. Is a person always a victim of his circumstances? Is a person ever not a victim of his circumstances?
 - C. What are the characteristics in a person that enables him to rise above his circumstances while some others cannot?
2. What role does trust play in a relationship? Is it more important to trust in others or trust in one's self?
 - A. What role does trust play in *The Great Gatsby*?
 - B. What kinds of words or actions have you seen damage or destroy relationships? How might trust and forgiveness be linked?
 - C. What other things are important in a relationship? Can a relationship, whether it be romantic, friendship, or family, be successful if it lacks trust?
 - D. Can a person re-earn another's trust once it is lost?
3. What does Fitzgerald mean when he says, "The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg sprang from the platonic conception of himself... 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" (98)?
 - A. What identity does Gatsby build for himself? Why does he invent this alternative identity? What is Fitzgerald suggesting about people who do this?
 - B. What kind of identity would a high school student create for himself? Why would a person invent an alternative identity?
 - C. What examples have you seen in literature, film, or life?
 - D. If a man creates a reality for himself that isn't true for anyone else, does it really matter as long as he believes it to be true?
4. What is the American Dream?
 - A. After reading *The Great Gatsby*, how does the novel portray the American Dream? How do the time periods of each novel affect how the American Dream is portrayed in the text?
 - B. Do you think the American Dream has changed in recent decades? How might the American Dream be different today than it was in these texts, if you believe it exists at all?
 - C. How is the American Dream different from a regular dream or goal?
 - D. What kind of dreams will be part of the American Dream for your generation?