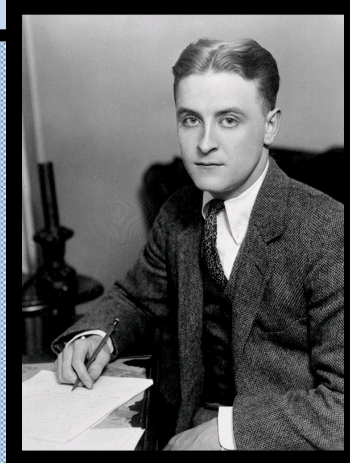


# A Novel Study: *The Great Gatsby*

## F. Scott Fitzgerald



Instructor: Donna Macurdy  
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# Agenda

## F415 – Great Gatsby – Fall 2012

### 1. Admin Stuff

#### Format for class:

Day 1 & Day 2: Lecture/Video – Background Info.

Days 3-8: Discussion – Small Groups

Questions – Hold 'til end of Lecture today

### 2. HANDOUTS: Reading Schedule; Notes View of Lecture.

### 3. LECTURE : Notes on:

- Author – F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Novel – The Great Gatsby
  - Characters; Setting; Literary Terms; Critical Response

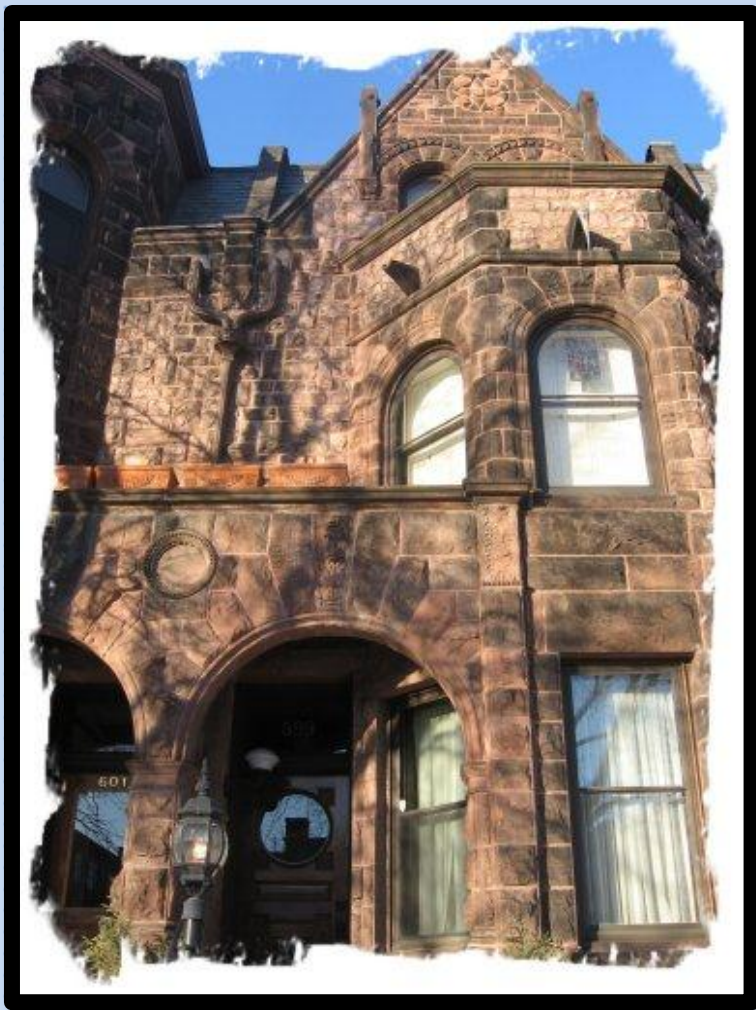
### 4. VIEWING: PREVIEW – GATSBY MOVIE (Summer 2013)

# Fitzgerald: Early Years

- Born September 24, 1896 in St. Paul Minnesota to:
  - Mary McQuillan the daughter of a self-made Irish immigrant millionaire - P.F. McQuillan (Wholesale Grocer)
  - Edward Fitzgerald who can only be described as a “Ne’re-do-well salesman”
- From his mother Fitzgerald inherited the American Dream:
  - The promise that, through hard work, a young man could be anything he chose to be
- From his father Fitzgerald inherited:
  - “A Propensity for Failure”

“This antithesis pervaded Fitzgerald’s fiction and his life; Fitzgerald was overcome with the glamour of New York and Long Island. To him it was the “stuff of old romance” – and the “source of infinite possibilities.” (Masterpieces of World Literature 349)

Summit Avenue  
St. Paul Minnesota



Fitzgerald's House



# Fitzgerald: Early Years

- **1896** - Family moved to Buffalo/Syracuse New York where Fitzgerald's father was:
  - employed as salesman for Procter/Gamble
- **1909** – Age 13: Fitzgerald published detective story in the school newspaper
- **1911** – Age 15: Fitzgerald met Father Sigourney Fay, at Newman School – Fr. Fay encouraged Fitzgerald to pursue a literary career as he recognized the boy's inherent talent
- **1912** Fitzgerald's father fired and family moved back to St. Paul, Minnesota where:
  - Family lived off mother's inheritance

# Fitzgerald: Early Years

- ACCORDING TO FITZGERALD THE FAMILILIES' SOCIAL POSITION WAS AMBIGUOUS AT BEST:

**“THEY WERE NEITHER INSIDERS OR OUTSIDERS BUT LIVED, IN A HOUSE BELOW THE AVERAGE ON A STREET ABOVE THE AVERAGE” (FITZGERALD).**

- AS A RESULT FITZGERALD SPENT A LIFETIME TRYING TO:

**“BELONG TO THE SOCIETY HE WAS BORN INTO WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, QUESTIONING THE 'HIGH PRICE' OF MEMBERSHIP” (FITZGERALD)**



# Fitzgerald: Youth

- **1913** ENTERED PRINCETON UNIVERSITY WHERE FITZGERALD SAYS HE "CAME IN CONTACT WITH MANY GILDED YOUTH OF THE TRULY WEALTHY"
  - FITZGERALD WAS AT ONCE ATTRACTED TO AND REVOLTED BY THE WEALTH OF HIS CLASSMATES.
- **MARY NORTH**, A CHARACTER IN FITZGERALD'S NOVEL, *TENDER IS THE NIGHT* SUMMED UP FITZGERALD'S FEELINGS IN THESE WORDS:
  - "YOU'RE ALL SO DULL... BUT WE'RE ALL THERE IS! ALL PEOPLE WANT IS TO HAVE A GOOD TIME AND IF YOU MAKE THEM UNHAPPY YOU CUT YOURSELVES OFF FROM NOURISHMENT."

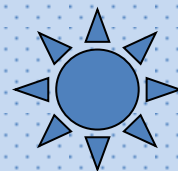
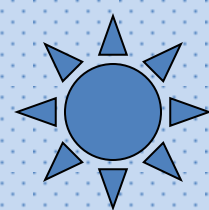
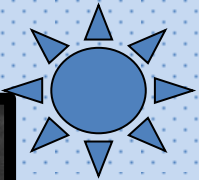
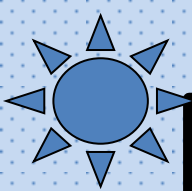
# Fitzgerald: Youth

- AT **PRINCETON** FITZGERALD POLISHED HIS WRITING SKILLS BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE LITERARY MAGAZINE EDITED BY **EDMOND WILSON**
- WILSON, A NOTED LITERARY CRITIC, LATER BECAME AN EDITOR OF TWO OF FITZGERALD'S NOVELS (**Published after Fitzgerald's death**)
  - (1941) THE LAST TYCOON
  - (1945) THE CRACK-UP (Originally published in Esquire)
- FITZGERALD'S WRITING WOULD BECOME HIS TICKET INTO THE WORLD OF THE WEALTHY.
- **1917** LEFT PRINCETON WITHOUT A DEGREE FOR AN ARMY COMMISSION AS A 2ND LIEUTENANT



# Fitzgerald: Young Adult

- **1917** MET AND FELL IN LOVE WITH ZELDA SAYRE DAUGHTER OF A JUDGE
- **1918** (MAY) PROPOSED TO ZELDA
- **1920** (MARCH 26) PUBLISHED 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEL THIS SIDE OF PARADISE WHICH:
  - SOLD 40,000 COPIES IN 1<sup>ST</sup> PRINTING
  - MADE FITZGERALD INSTANTLY FAMOUS
- **1920** (April 3<sup>rd</sup>) MARRIED ZELDA



# Critical Response

## *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE*

- Burton Roscoe (Chicago Tribune)

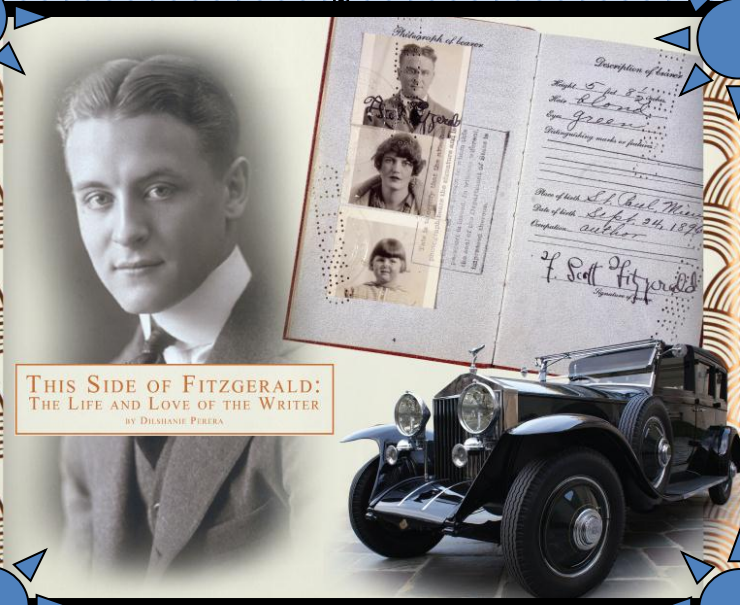
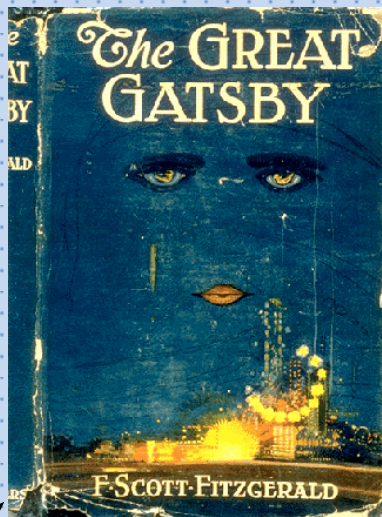
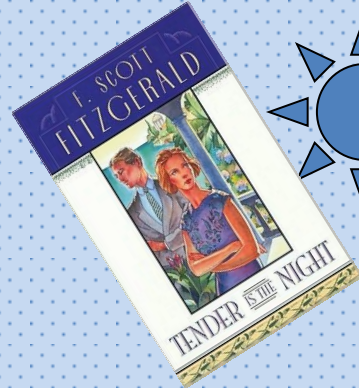
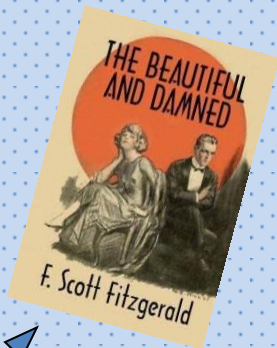
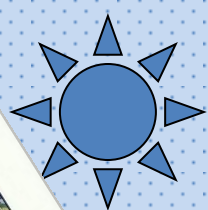
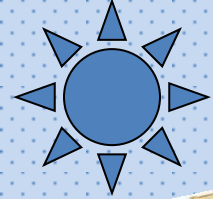
“It bears the impress, it seems to me, of genius. It is the only adequate study that we have had of the contemporary American in adolescence and young manhood.”

- H. L. Mencken wrote that This Side of Paradise was:  
“The "best American novel that I have seen of late.”

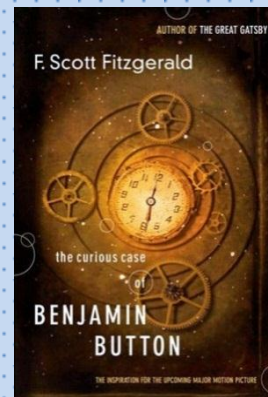
# Fitzgerald: The Expatriate

- **AFTER W. W. I** FITZGERALDS FOLLOWED EXODUS OF WRITERS TO PARIS
- CALLED THE **LOST GENERATION** BY GERTRUDE STEIN
  - STEIN'S HOME ATTRACTED MANY MAJOR AUTHORS AMONG THEM: HEMINGWAY, FITZGERALD, AND SHERWOOD ANDERSON
- THE WEALTHY SOON FOLLOWED THE ARTISTS CORRUPTING THEM IN AN ENDLESS ROUND OF PARTIES, ALCOHOL, AND LOOSE MORALS.
  - THE FITZGERALDS WERE FREQUENT HOUSE GUESTS OF THE WEALTHY.





THIS SIDE OF FITZGERALD:  
THE LIFE AND LOVE OF THE WRITER  
BY DIANE PERERA



# Fitzgerald: ***THE GREAT GATSBY***

- 1922 FITZGERALD AND ZELDA MOVED TO GREAT NECK LONG ISLAND WHERE FITZGERALD BEGAN THE GREAT GATSBY.
  - 1925 THE GREAT GATSBY PUBLISHED WITH DISSAPPOINTING SALES.
- DISCOURAGED FITZGERALD PUBLISHED NO OTHER NOVEL UNTIL 1934 (TENDER IS THE NIGHT)
- 1930 ZELDA SUFFERED BREAKDOWN IN EUROPE - FOLLOWING YEAR DIAGNOSED AS SCHIZOPHRENIC
  - SPENT REMAINING YEARS IN AND OUT OF HOSPITALS
  - AT THIS POINT FITZGERALD LOST NOT ONLY HIS WIFE BUT HIS CHILD WHO WAS RAISED BY OTHERS.

# Critical Response to Gatsby

- **H. L. Mencken** attacked the novel which he characterized as
  - "no more than a glorified anecdote"
- **Mencken** also attacked the novel's chief character, Gatsby, as
  - "vague" a sort of disembodied shadow of a literary protagonist"
- **Mencken** also concluded however that the story
  - " for all its basic triviality, has a fine texture, a careful and brilliant finish" (Mencken 157).



# Critical Response to Gatsby

- GATSBY WAS PRAISED BY Other CRITICS AS:
    - “A profound definition of the loss of American Values; the loss therefore of the Dream.”
  - **Wm. Rose Benet** (Saturday Evening Post) wrote:
    - “For the first time Fitzgerald surveys the Babylonian captivity of this era unblinded by the bright lights.”
- \*Fitzgerald himself was concerned that the immorality and sexuality inherent in the novel would prevent a positive reception of the work.

# Fitzgerald: Later Years

- **1937- 1939** FITZGERALD SPENT IN HOLLYWOOD WHERE HE MADE A LIVING WRITING FILMSCRIPTS WHILE CONTINUING WORK ON HIS FINAL NOVEL THE LAST TYCOON
- **1940** SCOTT FITZGERALD DIED OF A HEART ATTACK
- **1948** (MARCH) ZELDA BURNED TO DEATH IN A SANATORIUM
- **“FITZGERALD'S WERE VICTIMS OF A SCHIZOID SOCIETY MOTIVATED BY MATERIALISM WITH ALL THE PHYSICAL COMFORTS ONE WOULD EVER WANT, ALL THE WHILE EMPTY OF VALUES”**



**Photo of  
Zelda  
Fitzgerald as a  
Flapper -  
1924**

Zelda is buried in the same grave as her estranged husband F. Scott Fitzgerald.

They share an epitaph that quotes the end of his novel, *The Great Gatsby*:

*So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.*

Zelda herself said:

*Nobody has ever measured, not even poets, how much a heart can hold.*



# NOTES ON THE NOVEL

- THE GREAT GATSBY CONSIDERED A PERIOD PIECE ABOUT THE TWENTIES I.E., ERA FROM
  - 1918 (END OF WORLD WAR I)
  - 1929 (GREAT STOCK MARKET CRASH)



Fitzgerald termed the era the “Jazz Age” for the uniquely American music that made it’s way up from New Orleans and was popularized by the big bands of the day.

# The Novel Setting: Summer 1922

- TWO WEALTHY FICTIONAL SUBURBS ON EASTERN TIP OF LONG ISLAND

SUBURBS ARE:

EAST EGG - HOME OF 'OLD' MONEY

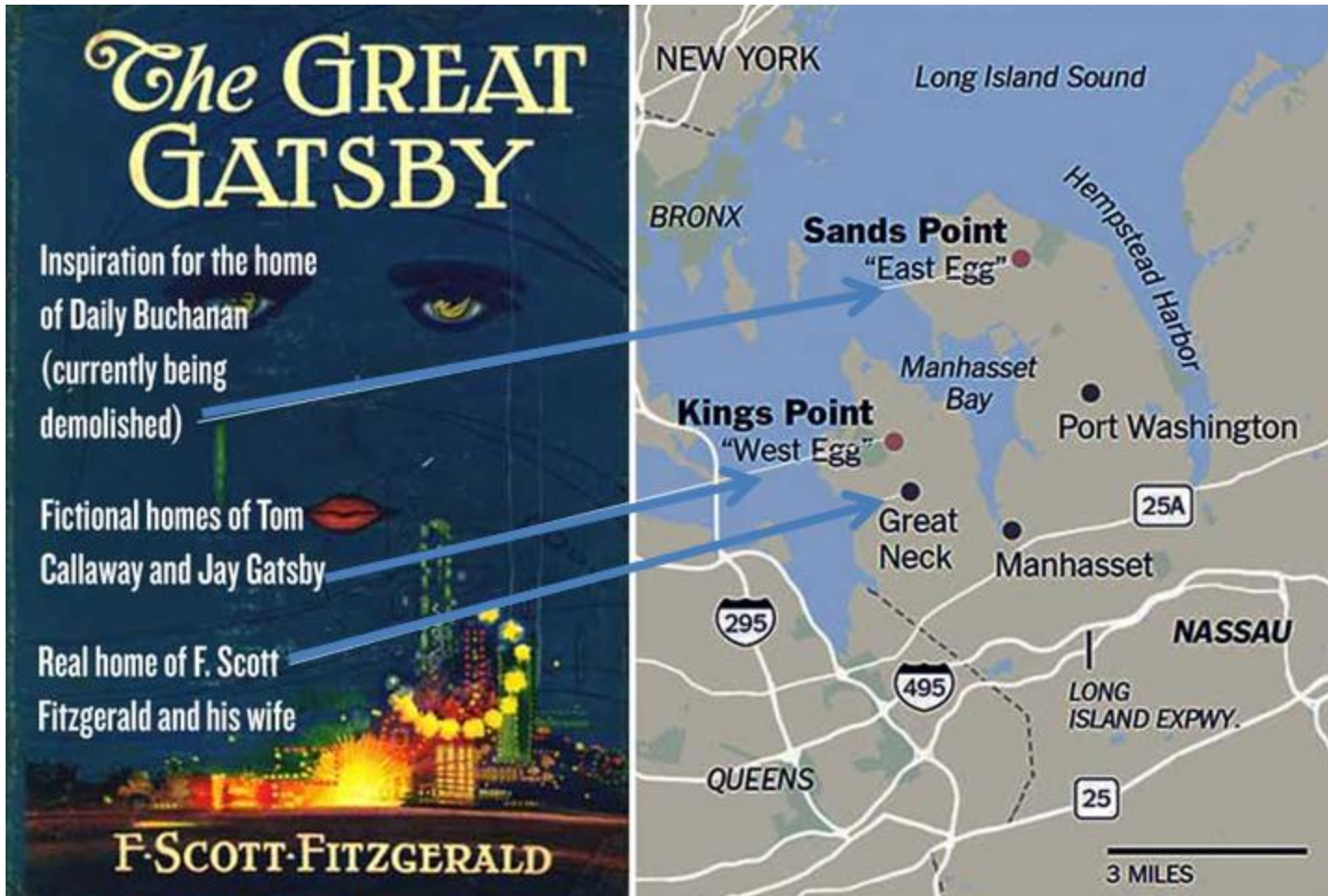
WEST EGG - HOME OF NEWLY RICH

- MANHATTAN 'PINNACLE OF MATERIALISM (SETTING KEY SCENES)

- VALLEY OF ASHES – LONG STRETCH OF LAND BETWEEN EAST AND WEST EGG; WORKING MAN'S AREA WHERE INDUSTRIAL ASHES LAY IN PILES A REFLECTION OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE.



# The Novel Setting: Location



# Main Characters

- **NICK CARRAWAY - NARRATOR**
  - Young midwesterner; educated at Yale; dissatisfied w/life at home goes to New York as bond salesman
- **JAY GATSBY - NICK'S MYSTERIOUS NEIGHBOR**
  - Fabulously wealthy young man lives in a Gothic mansion in West Egg; famous for throwing lavish parties
- **DAISY BUCHANNON - NICK'S SECOND COUSIN**
  - Unhappily married to Tom Buchannon; constantly referred to as “a poor little rich girl.”
- **TOM BUCHANNON - DAISY'S HUSBAND**
  - Son of rich midwestern parents; reached heights of his career as a college football player; once a member of Nick’s social club at Yale



# Main Characters

- **JORDAN BAKER - CHILDHOOD FRIEND OF DAISY BUCHANNON**
  - A professional golfer with few scruples; represents “one of the “new women” of the 1920s—cynical, boyish, and self-centered” (Spark Notes.com).
- **MYRTLE WILSON - WIFE OF GEORGE WILSON**
  - unpleasant woman who cheats on her husband; willing to suffer any degradation for her rich lover
- **GEORGE WILSON - GARAGE OWNER**
  - Myrtle’s husband Wilson runs an auto repair shop

# Minor Characters

- **MEYER WOLFSHIEM – ASSOCIATE OF GATSBY**
  - A man of suspect character and dealings
- **CATHERINE – MYRTLE WILSON’S SISTER**
  - Proud of her sister’s connections and unconcerned about the immorality involved
- **MR. AND MRS. MCKEE – A PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS WIFE**
  - Looking to make connections with the rich
- **MR. GATZ – JAY GATSBY’S FATHER**
  - UNAWARE OF THE FACTS OF JAY’S LIFE

# Minor Characters

- **OWL EYES**
  - ‘bespectacled’ drunk whom Nick meets at the first party he attends at Gatsby’s mansion
- **KLIPSPRINGER – The Boarder**
  - Frequent guest at Gatsby’s parties; plays piano
- **Michaelis – Friend of George Wilson**
- **Dan Cody – Gatsby’s Mentor**
  - Employs Gatsby; never appears physically in the novel; only referenced in conversation

# Literary Terms

**POINT OF VIEW** – PERSPECTIVE FROM WHICH THE STORY IS TOLD; CAN BE:

**FIRST PERSON:** NARRATOR IS A CHARACTER IN THE STORY AND REFERS TO HIMSELF OR HERSELF WITH THE FIRST PERSON PRONOUN I.

EXAMPLE: THE GREAT GATSBY – NARRATOR NICK CARROWAY TELLS THE STORY THROUGHOUT.

**DISADVANTAGE:**

CARROWAY LEARNS SOME OF THE KEY FACTS BIT BY BIT THUS GIVING THE READER:

- A NARROW VIEW OF CHARACTERS & EVENTS

# Literary Terms

- **Juxtaposition** – place side by side for purpose of contrast and or comparison

Fitzgerald juxtaposes:

- Characters
  - Setting
  - Events/Incidents
- Fitzgerald use of juxtaposition in text leaves the reader to:
    - make connections and or
    - distill meaning from the items juxtaposed

# Literary Terms

- **Irony** contrast between what is:
  - Stated and what is meant (**Verbal**)
  - Expected to happen/what happens (**Situational**)
  - Known by the reader as opposed to what the characters in the story know to be true (**Dramatic**)

Examples:

Dramatic Irony: Romeo & Juliet

Readers know that Juliet has taken a sleeping potion; Romeo does not & acts on what he thinks to be true & takes his life

Situational Irony : Reader doesn't expect two lovers deaths

# Literary Terms

## Symbol

– Anything that stands for or represents something else

**1. Conventional Symbol** is one: accepted by all i.e., universal in nature.

Example: Voyage = Life's Journey

**2. Personal Symbol** is one: developed for a particular work by a particular author.

Example: Melville's White Whale; Faulkner's Bear.



# Motif VS Theme

- **Motif**

- Recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes

Example: Richard Wright's Novel – Black Boy

Motifs: Hunger; Violence; Language.

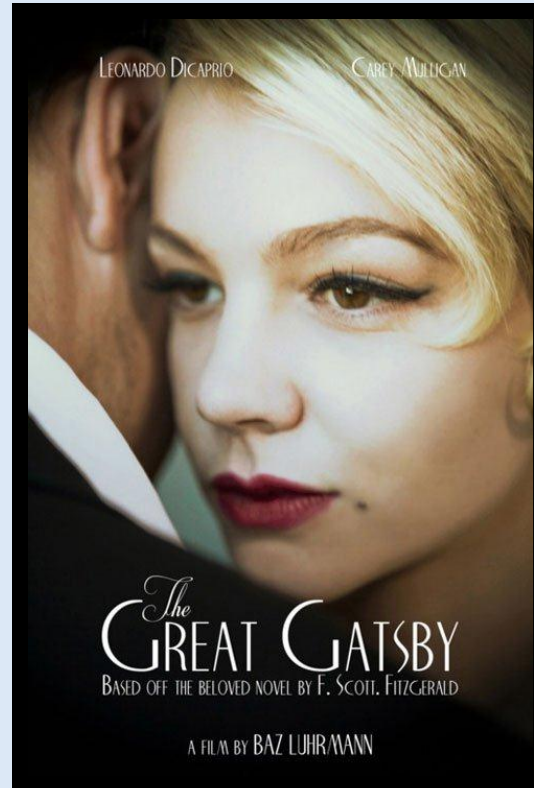
- **Theme**

- Central idea in a work of literature most often universal; often directly stated however can be implied.

Example: Richard Wright's Novel – Black Boy

Themes: Racism; Death, etc.

# GATSBY FILM: SUMMER 2013



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rARN6agiW7o>