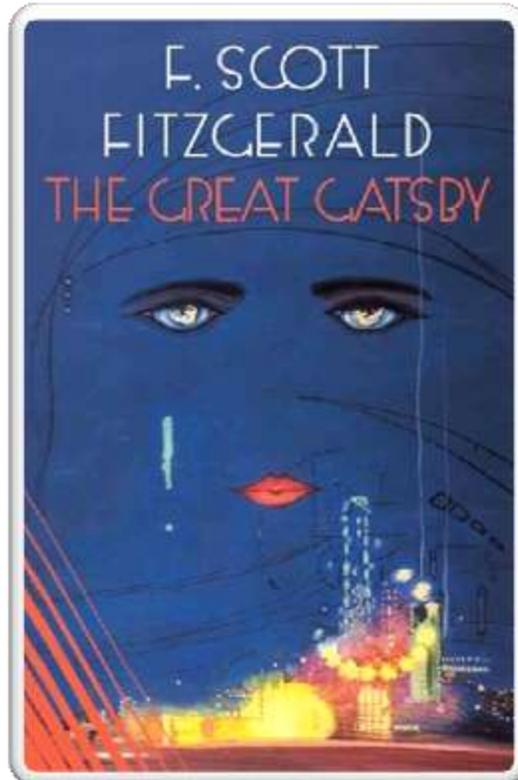




## ***STUDY GUIDE***



# ***The Great Gatsby***

Based on the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Adapted for the stage by Simon Levy

2013/2014 Season  
February 27 - March 16, 2014

Georgia Ensemble Theatre is the Resident Theatre Company at The Roswell Cultural Arts Center. 950 Forrest Street, Roswell, GA, 30075  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 607, Roswell, GA, 30077-0607

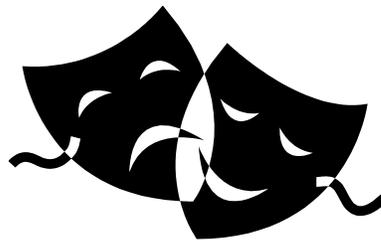
## ABOUT GEORGIA ENSEMBLE THEATRE

The Georgia Ensemble Theatre (GET) in Roswell is a professional theatre company founded in 1992 under the direction of Artistic Director Robert J. Farley. Bob came to Atlanta with experience that spanned from Alaska to Broadway. He was first introduced to Atlanta theatre through the Alliance Theatre Company. While at the Alliance, Bob became very interested in taking theatre to outlying communities. GET's first full season of plays began in 1993 and the 2010-11 Season includes a 5 play series and three Theatre for Young Audiences productions: *Ramona Quimby*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year, *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank*. The Conservatory also provides theatrical training to adults and youth in the areas of acting, movement, vocal technique, and more.

## ABOUT THEATRE ETIQUETTE

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students.

- Please stay seated during the performance.
- Show respect to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.
- Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- Use of cell phones (including text messaging) and cameras are not allowed during the performance at any time! Please turn them off.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**F. Scott Fitzgerald**, regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was born Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald on September 24, 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota to an upper-middle-class family. He spent his childhood primarily in upstate New York, moving back and forth between Buffalo and Syracuse, and then moved back to Minnesota with his family after his father lost his job. He displayed a keen interest in literature at a young age and at 13 saw his first piece of writing, a detective story, published in his school's newspaper. At age 15, he began attending the Newman School, a prestigious Catholic prep school in New Jersey. It was there that he met Father Sigourney Fay, an influential figure in his

is the Resident Theatre Company at The Roswell Cultural Arts Center, 950 Forrest Street, Roswell, GA, 30075

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 607, Roswell, GA, 30077-0607

life, who encouraged him to pursue his literary ambitions. After graduating in 1913, Fitzgerald then began attending Princeton University, where he focused on honing his writing. However, he dropped out and joined the U.S. Army in 1917, after being placed on academic probation. It was during this time that he wrote his first novel, *The Romantic Egotist* and submitted it to the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons. Although it was initially rejected, he was encouraged to submit more work in the future. Sometime after the war, Fitzgerald revised and resubmitted his novel to Charles Scribner's Sons. Bearing the new title *This Side of Paradise*, it was published in 1920 to great acclaim, and Fitzgerald was soon recognized as "one of the country's most promising young writers." He married Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald and they had a daughter the following year. The Fitzgeralds embraced their status as New York celebrities and embarked on an extravagant lifestyle, traveling overseas to Europe and befriending other literary luminaries such as Ernest Hemingway. Fitzgerald additionally supplemented his income by writing short stories for magazines. His second novel, *The Beautiful and the Damned* was published in 1922. A portrait of elite society, this novel was believed to be based on Fitzgerald's own troubled marriage. His third novel, *The Great Gatsby*, was published in 1925. Although it was well received by critics upon its release, it did not sell well. After its release, Fitzgerald became an alcoholic. His wife began suffering mental health issues and was eventually committed to a mental hospital. Fitzgerald's fourth novel, *Tender is the Night* was published in 1934, garnering mixed reviews. Like his previous novel, it did not sell well. He later moved to Hollywood, intent on reviving his career, this time as a screenwriter and freelance storywriter, achieving some financial success. In 1939, Fitzgerald began work on his final novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, but he died the following year (December 21, 1940) of a heart attack at age of 44. It wasn't until well after Fitzgerald's death that *The Great Gatsby*, his best-known work, came to be recognized as the definitive portrait of the "Jazz Age" (a term Fitzgerald himself coined) and a quintessential American novel.

## **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

**Simon Levy** is an award-winning playwright, theatre director and producer. His stage adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* is the only adaptation of the novel granted exclusive rights and authorized by the Fitzgerald estate. Levy has also adapted F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* and *The Last Tycoon* for the stage. In 2011, he was the recipient of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle's Milton Katselas Career Achievement Award in Directing. He has been Producing Director/Dramaturg for the Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles since 1993.

## **THE SETTING**

The story is set in Long Island, New York during the summer of 1922. Scenes take place in various locations such as the Buchanan home in "East Egg," Nick's cottage and Gatsby's mansion in "West Egg," George Wilson's garage and Tom and Myrtle's apartment in the city.

## **THE STORY**

*The Great Gatsby* is a stage adaptation of the renowned novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Set in the summer of 1922, the story is told through the eyes of Nick Carraway, a young man who moves to New York from the Midwest to learn about the bond business. The story primarily

Georgia Ensemble Theatre is the Resident Theatre Company at The Roswell Cultural Arts Center. 950 Forrest Street, Roswell, GA, 30075

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 607, Roswell, GA, 30077-0607

revolves around his neighbor, the mysterious Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire who throws lavish parties, and his quest to reunite with a woman from his past, Daisy Buchanan (now a wealthy socialite who happens to be Nick's cousin). Along the way, we are introduced to Tom, Daisy's philandering husband, her friend Jordan, and Myrtle, Tom's mistress, as well as Myrtle's husband, George. With the help of Nick, Gatsby reunites with Daisy, after which, tragic events are set in motion. A definitive portrait of the so-called "Roaring Twenties," *The Great Gatsby* is more than a tragic love story. It is essentially a meditation about the moral decay in society and disintegration of the "American Dream" in an era that saw economic prosperity (in large part due to the demand for bootleg liquor during Prohibition) and material excess.

## THEMES/BIG IDEAS

- Decadence/Moral decline
- Material Excess
- Idealism
- Clash between "Old Money" and "New Money"



## MEET THE CHARACTERS

**Nick Carraway:** The narrator; a young man from the Midwest who moves to New York to learn about the bond business. He is Daisy's cousin and Gatsby's neighbor. He often serves as the confidant for the other characters and helps reunite Gatsby and Daisy.

**Jay Gatsby:** Protagonist of the story. He is a very wealthy young man who throws lavish parties at his mansion in West Egg. He is in love with Daisy, an old flame from his younger days. How he made his fortune is a mystery to many.

**Daisy Buchanan:** Nick's cousin, now a wealthy socialite. She was once courted by Gatsby in her younger days in Louisville, KY. She lives with her husband Tom and daughter Pammy in the fashionable East Egg district, across the bay from Gatsby.



**Tom Buchanan:** Daisy's husband and former classmate of Nick's at Yale. He comes from a wealthy family and is described as powerfully built. He is quite arrogant, a bully and is having an affair with Myrtle Wilson.

**Jordan Baker:** Daisy's friend, a competitive golfer. Over the course of the story, she becomes romantically involved with Nick. She represents the "new woman" of the 1920s.

Georgia Ensemble Theatre is the Resident Theatre Company at The Roswell Cultural Arts Center. 950 Forrest Street, Roswell, GA, 30075  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 607, Roswell, GA, 30077-0607

**Myrtle Wilson:** Tom's mistress. She lives with her husband George in the valley of ashes, but shares a secret apartment in the city with Tom.

**George Wilson:** Myrtle's spiritless husband who owns a run-down auto shop in the valley of ashes.

**Meyer Wolfsheim:** Prominent figure in organized crime and Gatsby's friend. It is suggested that he helped Gatsby make his fortune by bootlegging illegal liquor and still does business with him.



## **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

### **Day One – Critical Thinking, Introduction to playwriting, Social Studies**

1. The teaching artist will introduce drama by leading the class through a warm-up game and talk about the adaptation of the novel into a play. Examples of warm-ups the teaching artist may use are:
  - a. Variations of the game, “Garden Statues” in which the students embody characters from the novel using character traits, or embody symbols/themes from the novel, i.e. poverty, wealth, excess, etc.
  - b. A game of “Dinner Party” in which the students use their imagination to embody different characters from the novel.
2. The teaching artist will then lead a brief discussion about the popularity of the novel as well as its film/play adaptations. Initial questions may be:
  - a. Why *The Great Gatsby*?
  - b. What makes this story timeless?
  - c. What was happening in the country at this time in American History?
  - d. What was Fitzgerald trying to say?
3. In order to delve further into discussion, here are a few options for in-class activities that the teaching artist may use:
  - a. Have students volunteer to perform sides from the play that correspond to descriptive passages from the novel.
  - b. In groups of two or more, have the students create tableaux embodying symbols/themes or moments from the novel.
  - c. Using a fishbowl with character names, have the students draw the name of a character and conduct improvised interviews, with the students as characters from the novel.
  - d. Have the students cast *Gatsby* with current celebrities of their choice and have them justify their answers in class.
4. The teaching artist will then discuss literary devices used in playwriting such as monologue, dialogue, etc. before ending the session.

Georgia Ensemble Theatre is the Resident Theatre Company at The Roswell Cultural Arts Center. 950 Forrest Street, Roswell, GA, 30075  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 607, Roswell, GA, 30077-0607

**Meets the following standards:**

2. 11.RL.2, 11.RL.3, 11.RL.7, 11.W.9(a), 11.SL.3, 11.RH.6
3. 11.RL.2, 11.RL.3, 11.RL.7, 11.W.3(a-e), 11.W.9(a), 11.SL.3, 11.RH.5, 11.RH.9
4. 11.RL.3, 11.W.3

**Day Two – Writing, Presenting, Speaking and Listening**

1. The teaching artist will begin with a warm-up of their choice, such as “Garden Statues” or “Dinner Party.”
2. The teaching artist will review the previous day’s activities and discussion.
3. **Possible activities in the classroom:**  
Have the students draw the name of a character from a fishbowl and:
  - a. Ask the students to pick a climactic moment and write a monologue from the character’s point of view
  - b. Ask the students to write a monologue describing how a character feels about: Prohibition, the “Roaring 20’s,” the “New Girl” of the 1920s, Clash between “Old Money” and “New Money,” Decline of the “American Dream” etc.
  - c. Another option is to have the students pair up and write a brief scene (can be “one word” scenes if desired) between two “unrelated” characters/symbolic inanimate objects in the story, i.e. Daisy and the ghost of Myrtle
4. At the end of the session, there will be a wrap up and review of the day’s activities.

**Meets the following standards:**

2. 11.RL.2, 11.RL.3, 11.RL.7, 11.RH.6
3. 11.RL.2, 11.RL.3, 11.W.3(a-e), 11.W.4, 11.W.9(a), 11.W.10, 11.SL.3, 11.RH.5, 11.RH.6, 11.RH.9
4. 11.RL.3, 11.RL.7, 11.RH.6

For more information about Georgia Ensemble Theatre and Conservatory’s programming, please visit our website at [www.get.org](http://www.get.org) or call GET Education Director at (770) 641-1260 ext. 232.