

QUEENSLAND
THEATRE CO.

SHAKE
& STIR
THEATRE CO

F. Scott Fitzgerald's

THE GREAT GATSBY

Adapted by Daniel Evans and Nelle Lee
Directed by Daniel Evans and Nick Skubij

EDUCATORS RESOURCE KIT

In association with

THE EMPIRE



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

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Page numbers reference 'The Great Gatsby', Penguin Books 2008 Edition.

THE GREAT GATSBY is a Queensland Theatre Company and Shake & Stir Theatre Co co-production, presented in association with The Empire.

ABOUT QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY

For more than 50 years, Queensland Theatre Company has created collective experiences that change lives by presenting an annual season of the best classic, contemporary, international and Australian performance works. We are committed to championing new voices on Australian stages including supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop and share their stories, and encouraging a love of theatre through the participation of young people as makers and audiences across Queensland.

ABOUT SHAKE & STIR THEATRE CO

Shake & Stir is one of the country's leading contemporary theatre companies touring Australia and New Zealand since 2006. Shake & Stir produce an annual season of Mainstage and in-school productions. Mainstage work has included: GRIMM, Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap, Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach, Frankenstein, Tae Tae in the Land of Yaaas!, Roald Dahl's The Twits, 2:22 - A Ghost Story, Fourteen, Roald Dahl's Fantastic Mr Fox, Jane Eyre, A Christmas Carol, Fourthcoming, The Australian premiere of Green Day's American Idiot, George's Marvellous Medicine, Endgame, Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes & Dirty Beasts, Dracula, Wuthering Heights, 1984, Tequila Mockingbird, Out Damn Snot, Animal Farm and Statespeare.

Queensland Theatre Company and Shake & Stir Theatre Company acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and their unique relationship with the lands, seas and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



ABOUT THE SHOW

F. Scott Fitzgerald's

THE GREAT GATSBY

Adapted by Daniel Evans and Nelle Lee
Directed by Daniel Evans and Nick Skubij

CAN YOU REPEAT THE PAST? OF COURSE YOU CAN, OLD SPORT.

Welcome to The Jazz Age: a fever dream of dizzying excess where love, lies and liquor are in hot supply. Late to this glittering party arrives Nick Carraway, a blow-in from the mid-West, who's immediately drawn to the enigmatic playboy next door: Jay Gatsby.

Every Saturday night New York's Flappers, Freeloaders and Pleasure Seekers swill from Gatsby's generosity while rumours swirl about their mysterious host. Is he a racketeer? A mobster? A bootlegger? A saint? Nick soon discovers the forlorn Gatsby is a man who has everything he wants - except the only woman he's ever loved ... Daisy.

Considered one of the greatest novels ever written, F. Scott Fitzgerald's literary masterpiece comes roaring to the stage in a stylish and scintillating adaptation where dreams shimmer then shatter, hearts beat achingly out of time and everyone's chasing their own green light.

Queensland Theatre Company and our nationally-acclaimed homegrown heroes **Shake & Stir Theatre Co** spirit you away to that elusive gin-soaked Summer of 1922, where love and longing is served on the rocks. From the creative teams that brought you *Pride & Prejudice*, *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol* and *GRIMM*, alongside a cast of rising stars, this Gatsby is shaken, not stirred.

DURATION

2 hours 30 minutes including interval, subject to change without notice

WARNING

This production contains mature themes, sexual references, depictions of racism, domestic violence, strong language, and the simulated use of drugs, alcohol and smoking. It also includes depictions of suicide, the use of imitation firearms, theatrical smoke and haze, dynamic sound effects, black outs and flashing lights. Recommended for audiences aged 14 years and over.

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AT A GLANCE

A LITERARY CLASSIC

THEMES

Dreaming & Aspirations
Loyalty & Betrayal
Appearances & Reality
Prejudice
Gender Roles & Sexual Identity
Hedonism

LITERARY DEVICES

Foreshadowing
1st Person Recount
Varied Chronology
Unreliable Narrator
Dramatic Irony
Motif - use of symbols
Imagery
Allusion

DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS

Non-linear Narrative
Narration + Direct Address
Fluid Characterisation
Viewpoints
Hybridity – Magical Realism, Physical & Visual Theatre
Ensemble and Chorus
Surreal Transformations
Minimalism
Symbolic Use of Props
Music and Song
Visible Stage Mechanics

DRAMATIC FORMS & STYLES

Satire - Social Commentary
Magical Realism
Ensemble Theatre
Physical Theatre
Visual Theatre
Contemporary Performance
Text transformation



Photo: Georgia Haupt

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Ethical Understanding, Literacy, Critical & Creative Thinking, Personal & Social Capability.

Year 10 - ENGLISH (V9)

- Understand how language can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people - AC9E10LA01
- understand that language used to evaluate, implicitly or explicitly reveals an individual's values - AC9E10LA02
- analyse representations of individuals, groups and places and evaluate how they reflect their context in literary texts by world authors - AC9E10LA07
- reflect on and extend others' interpretations of and responses to literature - AC9E10LE02
- analyse how the aesthetic qualities associated with text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features, and the context in which these texts are experienced, influence audience response - AC9E10LE03
- evaluate the social, moral or ethical positions represented in literature - AC9E10LE04
- analyse how text structure, language features, literary devices and intertextual connections shape interpretations of texts - AC9E10LE05
- compare and evaluate how "voice" as a literary device is used in different types of texts, such as poetry, novels and film, to evoke emotional responses - AC9E10LE06
- analyse and evaluate the aesthetic qualities of texts - AC9E10LE07
- analyse and evaluate how people, places, events and concepts are represented in texts and reflect contexts - AC9E10LY01
- analyse and evaluate how language features are used to implicitly or explicitly represent values, beliefs and attitudes - AC9E10LY03

Year 9 and 10 - DRAMA (V9)

- Investigate use of elements of drama, performance skills and/or conventions to communicate and/or challenge ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in drama across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts - AC9ADR10E01
- develop performance skills and/or techniques to manipulate elements of drama and/or use conventions to communicate the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions - AC9ADR10D01
- reflect on their own and others' drama or practices to refine and inform their use of elements of drama, conventions and/or approaches to shape and sustain dramatic action - AC9ADR10D02

SENIOR QLD CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA GENERAL SENIOR SYLLABUS 2025 V1.3

UNIT 2: REFLECT-

Provides students with an example of contemporary dramatic styles associated with the realist style, such as Magical Realism.

UNIT 3: CHALLENGE

The production demonstrates how drama can be used as a form of social commentary, using Satire to critique wealth, excess, and the hollow pursuit of the American Dream.

UNIT 4: TRANSFORM

This production provides an example of manipulating and shaping the dramatic languages to reframe text, purpose, context and meaning, drawing on conventions and philosophies of Contemporary Performance.

DRAMA IN PRACTICE 2024

UNIT OPTION A: Collaboration

This production demonstrates how collaboration between performers, designers, and directors shaped a unified satirical critique of society.

UNIT OPTION C: Contemporary

This production shows how a classic text can be reimagined through contemporary theatrical styles to comment on modern issues of wealth and identity

UNIT OPTION D: Commentary

This production utilises satire to provide sharp social commentary on excess, privilege, and the fragility of the American Dream.

English General SENIOR SYLLABUS 2025 v1.3

Prescribed Text List- Novels and Prose 2026-2029

Unit 1: Perspectives and texts

Students could analyse the perspectives and representations of concepts, identities and/or groups in Gatsby and how these shape their own and others' ideas and perspectives.

Unit 2: Texts and culture

Students could use this production to respond to and create imaginative and analytical texts of their own. In responding to texts, students analyse the relationship between language, representation, identity and cultural context, uncovering cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs that underpin texts.

UNIT 3: TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

TOPIC 1: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISSUES IN TEXTS

Students will analyse different perspectives by examining representations of the same issue in different texts. Students will explore how texts position readers and viewers, and develop their capacity to analyse and contest complex and challenging ideas and the assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpinning them.

TOPIC 2: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CONCEPTS IN TEXTS

This production is an adaptation that could be paired with another version of Gatsby. In responding to two texts, students explore and discuss the personal, philosophical, social, political and/or cultural significance of representations in different texts and the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpinning them. Students are given opportunities to add to ongoing, informed and public 'conversations' about literary texts.

CAST & CREATIVES

CREATIVES

Co-Director and Co-Adaptor **Daniel Evans**

Co-Adaptor **Nelle Lee**

Co-Director **Nick Skubij**

Set and Costume Designer **Christina Smith**

Lighting Designer **Trent Suidgeest**

Composer and Sound Designer **Guy Webster**

Movement Director, Choreographer
and Intimacy Coordinator **Nerida Matthaei**

Dramaturg **Saffron Benner**

Associate Costume Designer **Nat Ryner**

Voice and Dialect Coach **Gabrielle Rogers**

Assistant Dialect Coach **Siege Campbell**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Creative Producer **Ross Balbuziente**

Stage Manager **Yanni Dubler**

Deputy Stage Manager **Maddison Penglis**

Assistant Stage Manager **Georgia Gould**

CAST

Nick Carraway **Ryan Hodson**

Catherine / Mint Julep / Ensemble **Loren Hunter**

Myrtle Wilson / Ensemble **Nelle Lee**

George Wilson / Klipspringer / Ensemble **Ethan Lwin**

Jordan Baker / Ensemble **Libby Munro**

Meyer 'Wolfy' Wolfsheim / Ensemble **Donné Ngabo**

Lucille McKee / Owl Eyes / Ensemble **Rachel Nutchey**

Jay Gatsby / Ensemble **Shiv Palekar**

Daisy Buchanan / Ensemble **Jess Vickers**

Tom Buchanan / Ensemble **Jeremiah Wray**

Onstage Cover / Ensemble **Brigitte Freeme**

Onstage Cover / Ensemble **Sean Sinclair**



Daniel Evans
Co-Director and Co-Adaptor



Nick Skubij
Co-Director



Ryan Hodson
Nick Carraway



Loren Hunter
Catherine / Mint Julep / Ensemble



Nelle Lee
Co-Adaptor
Myrtle Wilson / Ensemble



Ethan Lwin
George Wilson / Klipspringer / Ensemble



Libby Munro
Jordan Baker / Ensemble



Donné Ngabo
Meyer 'Wolfy' Wolfsheim / Ensemble



Rachel Nutchey
Lucille McKee / Owl Eyes / Ensemble



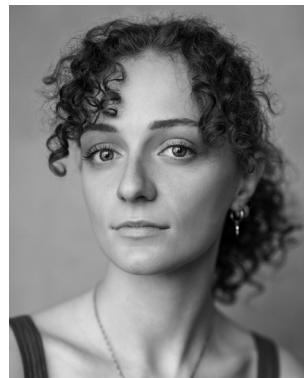
Shiv Palekar
Jay Gatsby / Ensemble



Jess Vickers
Daisy Buchanan / Ensemble



Jeremiah Wray
Tom Buchanan / Ensemble



Brigitte Freeme
Onstage Cover / Ensemble



Sean Sinclair
Onstage Cover / Ensemble

FACTS ABOUT FITZGERALD

Learn about the man who embodied the Jazz Age!

*Collated from Tony Tanner's introduction to **The Great Gatsby** (February 1990).*

- Born in 1896, in Saint Paul, Minnesota
- Died at 44 years of age, in Los Angeles, California
- Married to Zelda Sayre in 1920, a writer and artist in her own right. Many consider their tumultuous relationship to have inspired the complicated love stories in his work. **The Great Gatsby** is dedicated to her. Fitzgerald met Zelda, and her wealthy family, while stationed in Montgomery, Alabama as a second lieutenant, paralleling Daisy and Gatsby's circumstances of meeting.
- His first novel **This Side of Paradise** was a huge success bringing him fame and fortune that he desperately sought to impress Zelda. The Fitzgerald's dwindled through their wealth enjoying parties and all the 'jazz age' had to offer.
- **The Great Gatsby** was a notable financial failure initially, until it was distributed to soldiers in WWII, later becoming a literary classic defining the Jazz Age and the American Dream in glitzy melancholy. Fitzgerald never knew the acclaim he later was given for his skilful writing.
- Fitzgerald suffered with alcoholism for much of his adult life, declaring it to have led to his ruin.
- Although he was enrolled at Princeton for university, Fitzgerald was not much of a scholar and enlisted as a soldier in 1917, close to the end of the war, never to actually be 'shipped out'. This didn't stop him from writing extensively about the impact of the Great War on America's national psyche.
- With his declining literary career, he tried his hand at screenwriting.
- Fitzgerald and Zelda had one daughter, Frances Scott "Scottie" Fitzgerald, who later also became a writer and was critical of the negative portrayal of her parents' marriage.
- Fitzgerald died (possibly due to his excessive smoking and drinking) before completing his final work **The Last Tycoon**, following the life and career of a Hollywood studio manager. His friend, Edmund Wilson, finished and edited it for publication after his death.
- In a tragic turn of events, very few people attended Fitzgerald's death, much like Gatsby.



Image Source: Princeton Library Archives
Author: Motor magazine (publisher),
April 1924 (published)

AN AGE OF MIRACLES – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Fitzgerald’s work and the Jazz Age have become somewhat synonymous (mainly thanks to an essay he wrote in 1931). Reflecting on the 1920s he said, “It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.” But as Shakespeare would say, not all that glistens is gold!

Invite students to build a digital visual collage of New York during the summer of 1922, considering the following categories and key terminology:

- Clothing of the time
- Industry (jobs + wealth) – old and new money
- Women’s Rights Movement
- Civil Rights Movement
- Prohibition (& Bootlegging)
- The Great War/World War I
- Advertising & Media
- The rise of the automobile
- ‘The Jazz Age’



Photo: Georgia Haupt

Further reading:

Primary sources from the time can be found here:

Library of Congress - <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/great-gatsby-primary-sources-from-the-roaring-twenties/>

Read Fitzgerald’s ‘Echoes of the Jazz Age’ - <https://pdcrodas.webs.ull.es/anglo/ScottFitzgeraldEchoesOfTheJazzAge.pdf>

Take a deeper look at historical context in Gatsby –

JSTOR - <https://daily.jstor.org/what-the-great-gatsby-reveals-about-the-jazz-age/>

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

Created by Ari Palani (QTC Producer)

The Decaying American Dream

F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel presents the flawed reality beneath the glittering illusion of The American Dream – a world where anyone, regardless of background could achieve prosperity and upward mobility through hard work. In truth this is built upon class, politics, race, gender and systemic exclusion. This adaptation goes further by recasting typically white characters with people of colour, emphasising societal decay through the historic fear of 'Otherness,' and situates moral ugliness alongside lovelorn innocence. As relevant in 1920's as it is in 2020's, this scintillating party betrays the harsh realities of life on the edge of societal upheaval.

Review the questions below after viewing the production.

If appropriate to your class context, consider splitting the class into small groups to discuss each question one at a time. Students could reflect on which question they found most significant to this adaptation of the novel. These were created for creatives & cast members to consider the sensitive content within the production throughout the rehearsal period.

- Which characters is this American Dream designed for? How does each character survive – or not survive – within it? What does success cost in this world? What barriers does wealth not overcome?
- What forms of violence operate politely in this world, perhaps at times without being named? Who benefits from this silence, and what behaviours perpetuate this? How does one resist it?
- The character of Gatsby's wealth grants him proximity to this "American Dream", but not acceptance into it. What elements of this narrative function as survival? How does visibility or proximity draw scrutiny or praise differently from/for someone like Tom? Daisy? Nick?
- Does the death of the character Gatsby feel accidental, personal or systemic?
- What can an audience understand about the legacy of the American Dream through this production, and what is the cost of not addressing systemic classism, racism and sexism?



Jess Vickers and Shiv Palekar
Photo: Joel Devereux

BUILDING THE DREAM - DESIGN-LED DEVELOPMENT

Adapting classics can take all different shapes and forms. As Gatsby is such a well-known story, with prominent adaptations in film and the theatrical world already existing, the visual story telling was always going to be just as important as the dialogue spoken in this adaptation. Even before the script was finalised or rehearsals had started, the design of this production was shaping the way this story would be told in a new way!

Spend time discussing the costume designs by Christina Smith. Space has been provided to add your own annotations to the designs.

- Consider the dramatic meaning and character information evident in these designs.
- Look for contrast between designs.
- Consider what symbolism the colours, shape and textures may have?
- How is status communicated through these renders?
- What differences stand out to you between these historical pieces (inspired by the 1920s) and modern use of clothing?



BUILDING THE DREAM - DESIGN-LED DEVELOPMENT



Daisy Buchanan - Plaza
The Great Gatsby



Jay Gatsby
The Great Gatsby



Apartment Party
The Great Gatsby



The Bright Party
The Great Gatsby

Items sparkly, colour palette of gold, pinks, purples, oranges, movement

REPEATING THE PAST - A MEMORY PLAY

Memory is a wonderful, interesting and untrustworthy thing. In the opening passages of the novel, it is established that we are being taken on a journey, back two summers, to Nick Carraway's bittersweet recollections of the summer he met Gatsby. As much as Nick is the narrator of the story, writing about Gatsby and his contemporaries, with each sentence we are also learning more about Nick, through the way he presents the narrative.

Throughout the text Nick is constantly using caveats – “I suppose” “I suspect” “I think” “Possibly” “Perhaps” “Possibly it had occurred to him...” as he shapes his fractured version of events.

Daniel Evans and Nelle Lee have capitalised on Nick's POV in their adaptation, creating a memory play. The audience witness the action, with moments slipping in and out before their eyes. Tennessee Williams used the term ‘Memory Play’ to describe his most recognisable work, *The Glass Menagerie*, believing that this form creates “a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are,” despite the fact the audience realises they are watching a curated and constructed version of events.

After viewing the play – document how each of the key characteristics of a memory play were utilised by Evans and Skubij in their direction of the staged action.

	Dramatic action – (<i>plot events, transitions, characters, dialogue</i>)	Dramatic meaning for the audience – (<i>consider the literary significance</i>)
Through the Narrator's Lens – <i>Nick is both inside and outside the action – how does this play out on the stage?</i>		
Non-Linear Storytelling - <i>Flashback, Flashforward, parallel action, bookends</i>		
Interruption of realistic action – <i>Blurring the lines of memory, direct address, dream sequence, transitions</i>		

CREATE A MEMORY MOMENT

Keep this activity moving quickly so students don't have time to overthink their answers!

On a sticky note – have each student record a memory related to one of these prompts:

- A childhood game
- A family trip
- A surprising encounter with wildlife

It can simply be a dot point – but should include: where, who, what!

Have students move around the space with their sticky note and then pair up. Allow them 60 secs to tell the memory in some detail – at the end handing the sticky note to the other student. Again, have the students find a new partner and recount the memory they heard to their new partner. Students pick from the two memories they were told as stimulus for their memory scene.

Allow students 5 mins to create a scene following the characteristics of a memory play.

Rules:

- You must have a narrator – but they must also be a character in the scene.
- You cannot tell the memory in a linear way – there must be at least one flashback, replaying of the moment in different ways, a rewind or a bookend of the action.
- There must be at least one interruption to the realism of the moment – a transformation or transition, a heightened portrayal, direct address to the audience, dream sequence, soundscape

After rehearsing – have the students perform for the class. Prior to their scene, have them identify the memory they are creating and allow the initial student to tell their version of the memory, prior to seeing the scene.

After viewing the scene, allow the original memory holder to critique the scene - how realistic was it, how did it make them feel seeing it played back, what would they have done differently if they were directing the scene.



Ryan Hodson and Libby Munro
Photo: Joel Devereux

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

Before viewing the show (or turning the page for a sneak peek of the stage design images) have students research and decide how they could present these locations from the novel on the stage:

- The Valley of Ashes/Wilson's garage
- The Room at the Plaza
- West Egg vs East Egg
- Gatsby's pool

Discuss the challenges these locations pose from a theatrical standpoint.

Document all the action that occurs in these locations and how a director might choose to 'cheat' these moments.

Have students work with their own planning, or swap with another – devise a 1 minute physical theatre scene depicting one of these locations and a key plot point, using only things available within the classroom. Improvise the lines, or use quotes from the novel to build the action in the scene

Encourage students to think about their control of space, scale, movement and focus to build a clear sense of place and the tension which occurs within that place from the novel.

Discuss what themes the students' portrayals highlighted.

Once you have completed this activity – or in a following lesson - consider the initial set design, annotating the dramatic meaning communicated through the visual choices of the designer.

After you have viewed the production discuss the differences between your ideas and the choices made by the directors, Daniel Evans and Nick Skubij, when these locations were brought to life!



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

STAGING LOCATIONS FROM THE NOVEL

Chosen Location: (circle)

- The Valley of Ashes/Wilson's garage
- The Room at the Plaza
- West Egg vs East Egg
- Gatsby's pool

Challenges this location poses:

Key plot points which occur here:

List any action that occurs in and around this location.

Ideas for staging this location:

How could you represent this location on the stage? How could you 'cheat' this moment? What stagecraft could you use to pull this off? Draw images to represent your ideas.



Jeremiah Wray,
Ryan Hodson and
Loren Hunter
Photo: Joel Devereux

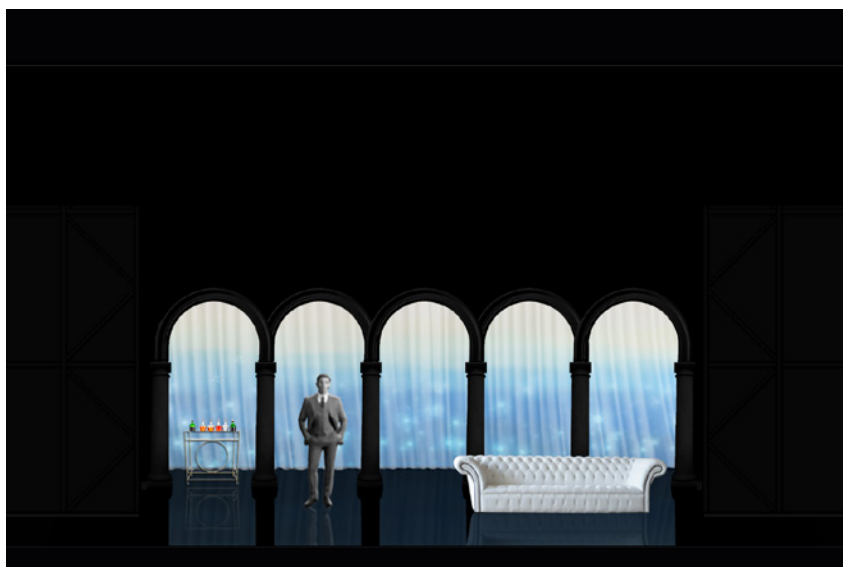
A COLOSSAL AFFAIR

Stage Designs by Christina Smith - THE GREAT GATSBY

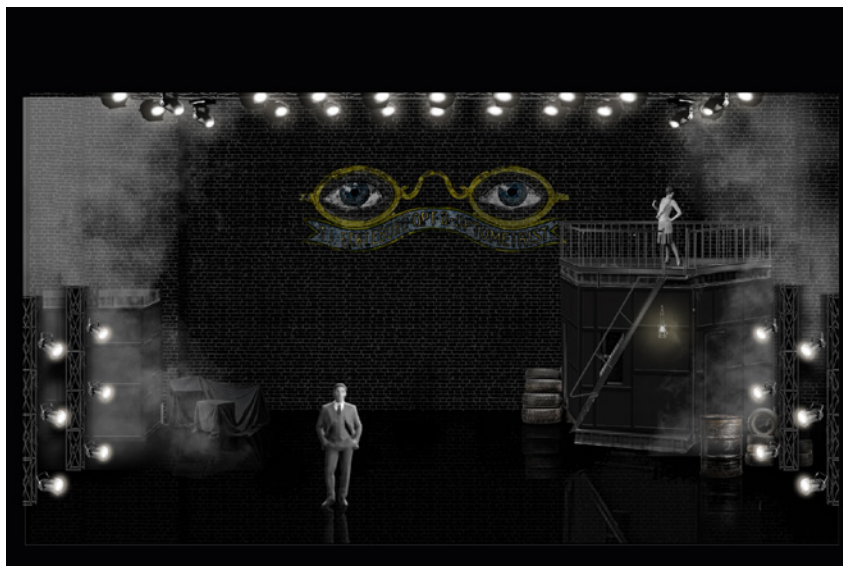
PRELUDE



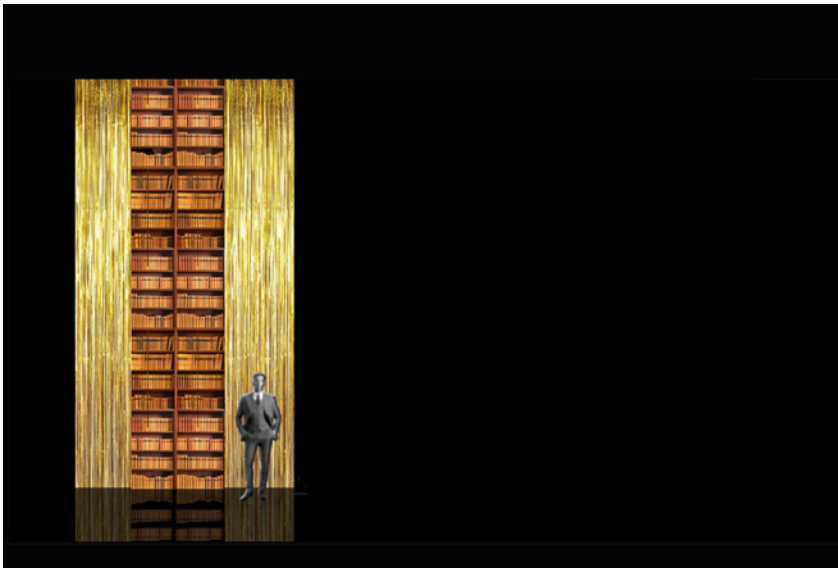
THE BUCHANAN'S HOUSE



THE VALLEY OF THE ASHES



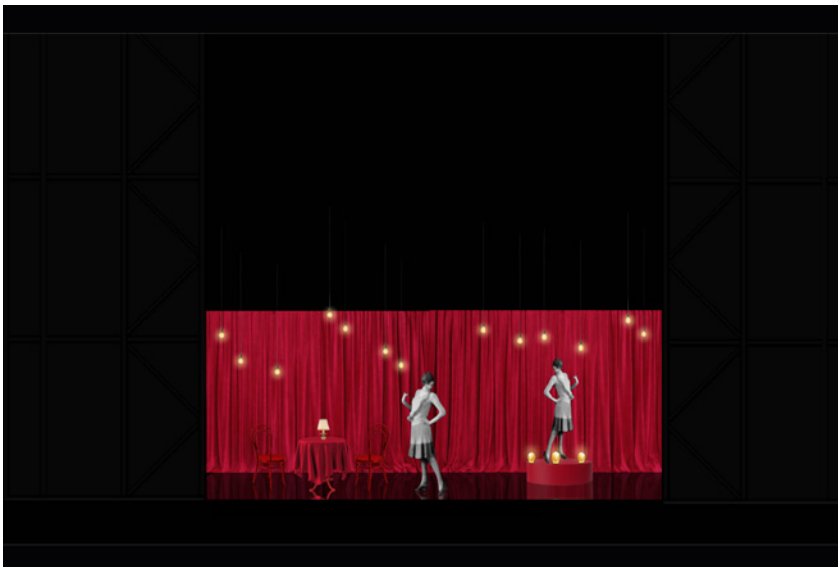
GATSBY'S MANSION



HIT AND RUN



SPEAKEASY



Discuss:

- What stands out to you about these designs?
- What aspects of the novel do you feel are the focus?
- Which elements of drama can you identify being manipulated in these designs?

RESERVING JUDGEMENT - EXPLORING CHOICES

On the very first page of the novel, Nick says of himself that he has been “inclined to reserve all judgements”, and as a result this has subjected him to both ‘curious natures’ and making him a victim to ‘veteran bores’. Despite this claim, we proceed to read a novel where Nick actually makes quite a lot of judgements about others and perhaps fails to critique his own behaviours as much!

- Write an exposé on the not-so-great Nick Carraway for the ‘Town Tattle’ (the fictional gossip magazine Myrtle was an avid subscriber to).

Consider all the dubious activities he witnessed/was linked to across the summer.

In light of the historical setting, try to integrate the attitudes, values and beliefs of the time, as you unpack which of his choices would be seen favourably or not! Consider including quotes from characters in the novel.

Be sure to include an eye-catching title and lean into the scandal of it all!

- Write a script for a police interview between an officer and Nick Carraway shortly after Gatsby’s funeral. Follow on from the starter script provided.

Consider all the evidence that might point to Nick being complicit in the various morally-objectionable going-ons – (e.g. knowledge of Tom’s affair, facilitating a meeting point for Daisy and Gatsby, organising a funeral for a suspected criminal, insight into Myrtle’s murder.) Although some of these are not criminal offences, consider why he may be a person of interest to the police. Try to capture Nick’s voice from the novel – how would he go under scrutiny! What are the events that he has not reflected on his own actions, that may come under fire?

Really have fun being creative here – Fitzgerald himself stated during the drafting process of the novel, “Strange to say, my notion of Gatsby’s vagueness was ok ... I myself didn’t know what Gatsby looked like or was engaged in ...” (Fitzgerald 1924), so we are at liberties to dream up the unknown of Gatsby and other characters.



Jess Vickers
Photo: Joel Devereux

SAMPLE STARTER SCRIPT:

Police Station – two chairs sit either side of a table.
Nick Carraway waits nervously. Enter Police Officer.

OFFICER: Mr Carraway, we wish to ask you some questions.

CARRAWAY: Me? What about?

OFFICER: How did you know Mr Gatz?

CARRAWAY: Gatsby? Why, he was my neighbour.

OFFICER: Only your neighbour?

CARRAWAY: Surely there are others who know him - I believe the Commissioner knew him, he did a favour once...

OFFICER: MR CARRAWAY, we are here to ask YOU some questions about what YOU knew of Mr Gatz.

CARRAWAY: Gatsby – please, I'd really prefer it if I could just call him Gatsby ...

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Other possible titles for *The Great Gatsby* that Fitzgerald considered:

- Among the Ash Heaps and Millionaires
- Under the Red, White and Blue
- On the Road to West Egg
- Trimalchio in West Egg
(*Inspired by a very rich and hedonistic Roman literary figure*)
- Gatsby (no 'the' or 'great'!)

Allocate groups of students (2-3) one of these alternative titles. Allow them 10 minutes to develop an argument as to why this is a better title for the book. They must include three references from the novel (either quote, plot points, characters, themes).

Conduct a speed debate – moving from group to group as they present their arguments. Once each group has presented their three pieces of evidence, they are permitted one final closing argument refuting all the other names, including the final published title (*The Great Gatsby*).

Decide on a winning group and be sure to have a tasty prize to motivate dedication to their cause.

THE LOADED SENTENCE - MINING FOR LITERARY GOLD

Fitzgerald is a skilled user of imagery and figurative language, selecting his words carefully to build mental pictures and philosophical ideas about mundane moments.

Stopping to unpack the specifics in the text can help build a deeper understanding of the values and attitudes at play as well as offer theatrical inspiration.

For each of the quotes provided:

- Circle any unfamiliar words or words you want to research.
- Make a list of any similes or connotations that come to mind for specific words
- Underline words that seem unusual. Guess at what their use could indicate - e.g. 'men and girls' rather than 'men and women' pointing gender inequality of the time..
- Simplify - write dot points, or a TLDR simple translation of what Nick/ Fitzgerald are saying through the quote.

EXPANDING THE IDEA:

Draw a visual inspired by the quote. This could be how you could represent it on stage, a zoomed in focus on a specific phrase, a literal interpretation of the quote, or even showing a different perspective of the moment.

For Drama students - build a scene inspired by only your chosen quote. Aim to represent a specific theme from the novel through a link to the quote. Use your own annotations to decide on the action in the scene. Really try to challenge yourself creatively - what's the most surreal, dramatic, magical, extreme way you could perform this moment?

You may choose to include the quote in the scene, or develop totally different dialogue - whatever makes the most creative sense!

Consider how this process could be used for developing your own dramatic work, concept or directorial vision!

“I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Mæcenas knew.”

Nick – talking about joining the Bonds business (Chapter 1, p. 4)

“In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.”

Nick – referencing Gatsby’s parties (Chapter 3, p. 41)

“When I came back from the East last Autumn, I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.”

Nick – reflecting on the summer that had been. (Chapter 1, p. 8)

“I couldn’t forgive him or like him but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. . . .”

Nick – in response to Tom Buchanan (Chapter 9, p. 170)

“Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.”

Nick – riding into New York with Gatsby (Chapter 4, p. 67)

THEN CAME THE WAR

Littered throughout the tale of parties, the yearning and the heartache of *The Great Gatsby* are references to another poorly named event of magnitude: The Great War.

“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.” (p. 40) *Gatsby*

Later to be known as World War I, society optimistically thought the war to be the last of its kind, with the staggering military and civilian death toll hard to fathom. If you didn't stop to notice it throughout the pages of the novel, you might miss how much this global conflict sits as a backdrop for this American story.

We know Nick fought and returned 'restless' and *Gatsby* alleges the war was a turning point for him, but we also know Tom Buchanan was busy getting married and collecting his 'string of polo ponies' during that time. The war was both a great equaliser and divider all at the same time.

Daisy remarks to Nick on his visit, “We don't know each other very well, Nick. Even if we are cousins. You didn't come to my wedding.”

“I wasn't back from the war.”

“That's true.” She hesitated. “Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything.” Her failure to remember the war in light of her own experiences reveals Daisy's privileged oblivion. But it was a war no one wanted to talk about.

This adaptation brings the subtle hints at Nick's trauma to the forefront, explicitly dramatising moments of triggered flashbacks.

Read through the rehearsal script excerpt provided. **Act 2: The Vigil**
(Warning: contains spoilers).

Compare this scene with the same moments in the novel: Chapter 7 (pages 135-139) and Chapter 8 (pages 141-146)



Photo: Joel Devereux

Annotate:

- Additional stage directions to make this moment include the flashbacks meeting Dan Cody and Gatsby and Daisy's past.
- Key symbolism in the scene
- Draw a stage layout including props and actor positions
- Suggest ways to heighten the Magical Realism and Social Commentary in this scene.

Rehearse:

- Read through the script
- Allocate roles, considering the use of fluid characterisation
- Block out the movement and use of stage space
- Ensure the subtext within the script is evident in your portrayal

Discuss:

- What do we learn about the characters in this scene?
- What themes are made explicit during this part of the play?
- What portions from other parts of the novel have been integrated into this scene? What impact do they have being included here?
- Why do you think Gatsby only reveals this information to Nick now?
- What social commentary exists in this scene? (Consider the tragedy that has just occurred on the road, the context of the war, Daisy & Tom's reactions, Nick's compliment to Gatsby).

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

Outside The Buchanans.

NICK By the time we got back to The Buchanans, I was feeling a little sick.
I wanted to be alone.
I'd had enough of all of them for one day. Even Jordan.
I had a taxi called for but when I walked down the drive away from the house to
wait by their gate -

GATSBY steps out of the shadows. NICK looks at him in the soft light. He looks otherworldly somehow.

GATSBY Nick?

NICK What are you doing out here?

GATSBY I'm just standing here Old Sport.

NICK You cannot be here, not now. Tom's back.

It isn't right! None of this is right!! Go home Gatsby.

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

GATSBY Did you see any trouble on the road?

NICK ‘Trouble’? Yeah, I saw some “trouble” on the road.

GATSBY Was she killed?

NICK Yes!

GATSBY I thought so.
I told Daisy I thought so too.
As soon as I thought it: I said it aloud - it’s better that the shock should come all at once.

NICK For who?

GATSBY For Daisy, of course, who else?
[He hasn’t understood NICK’S inference:]
I dropped her home safe and sound then took the the side roads back ‘round to West Egg and left my car in the garage. I don’t think anybody saw us but I can’t be sure.

Beat.

NICK A woman is dead.

GATSBY Did you know her?

NICK Yes -

GATSBY Who was she?

NICK Myrtle Wilson.
Her husband owns the Garage out in the Valley of Ashes.
How the hell did it happen?

GATSBY Well, I tried to swing the wheel.

NICK What do you mean? [*Beat.*] Was Daisy driving?

GASTBY Yes. But of course I’ll say it was me. When we left New York, she was all worked up - She thought it would steady her to drive - And this woman, this - /

NICK /Mrs Wilson -

GATSBY - she rushed out onto the road as if she wanted to speak to us, as though we were somebody she knew. There was a car coming the other way. First Daisy turned away from the woman toward the other car, but then she lost her nerve and swung back. The second my hand reached the wheel I felt the shock: it must have killed her instantly.

NICK It ripped her open -

GATSBY Don’t tell me that Old Sport.

NICK She was laying there in the dirt in pieces.

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

GATSBY I tried to make her stop.

NICK She'd come apart in three places.

GATSBY I said 'Daisy pull over.' But she kept driving.

So I pulled on the emergency brake, and she fell into my lap and -

NICK You drove on.

GATSBY We drove on, yes.

Pause.

NICK I've called for a taxi. You should go too.

GATSBY I'll wait.

NICK [*Exasperated:*] For what?

GATSBY I'm just going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon. See the pink light. That's her room. She's locked herself in there and if he tries anything - anything at all! - she's going to turn that light on and off three times.

NICK He won't touch her. He's not thinking of her tonight.

GATSBY All the same.

NICK How long are you going to wait?

GATSBY All night if necessary.

Till they go to bed.

I don't trust him, Old Sport

Beat.

NICK Wait here. I'll go see if there's any sign of a commotion.

I walked back along the border of the lawn and tiptoed up the veranda steps. I came to a small rectangle of light - the pantry window. Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table.

A plate of cold fried chicken between them, and two bottles of ale.

Anybody would have said they were conspiring together.

GATSBY Is it all quiet up there?

NICK Yes, it's all quiet.

Silence.

GATSBY Listen, Old Sport. It's true I'm not perfect -

NICK None of us are.

GATSBY You're allowed to be. But I am a good man.

NICK I want to believe that, I do.

I just don't know who you are, Gatsby?

GATSBY Gatz.

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

GATSBY Just plain old James Gatz actually.
The son of two failed potato farmers from North Dakota. They couldn't even grow dirt successfully.

NICK They're alive then?

GATSBY Yes.

NICK There's no shame in where you come from.

GATSBY There's nothing but shame, Old Sport.
The shame's enough to choke on.
And no matter what you do, or where you go - it's there, buried within you.

NICK **The way he spoke reminded me of the war - of the quiet confidences men made on cold, wet nights, huddled in ditches at the front.**

A squad of heavy-set SOLDIERS - covered in mud - come to sit between the pair. One of them lights a cigarette and it's passed along the line. One of them might sing; a low hymn.

GATSBY I want more than soil and sweat.
Ever look at an ocean and thought:
I want to drink the whole thing.

NICK I've never been that thirsty.

GATSBY I have. My whole life. All of it. Every drop. I can't remember a day I didn't wake up wanting to swallow life whole.

DAN CODY joins the memory.

DAN CODY **Lesson Number One:**

GATSBY I had to invent myself.

DAN CODY All you need is a history, not a biography.

GATSBY I left home and spent a Summer out on Lake Superior.

DAN CODY **Lesson Number Two:**

GATSBY ...digging clams, fishing for salmon, whatever got me food and board.

DAN CODY Nobody cares about the truth, all anyone wants is happiness.

GATSBY One day I'm pulling up a cray pot when into the inlet comes a yacht:

DAN CODY A six foot schooner ...

GATSBY ... about to run aground when I rowed out to warn the man, he looked at me on the sandbar and said:

DAN CODY What's your name, Old Sport?

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

GATSBY "Jay Gatsby" it rolled off my tongue with such ease and from that moment James Gatz ceased to exist.

DAN CODY Climb aboard Old Sport!

GATSBY That was Dan Cody.

NICK The picture in your library.

GATSBY He and I sailed together for five years after that.
He taught me how a man might pull himself up by his bootstraps:

DAN CODY How to talk.

GATSBY How to dress.

DAN CODY The difference between a good deal and a bad one.

GATSBY The airs and the graces

DAN CODY The prides / and the pitfalls of men.

GATSBY and the pitfalls of men.

DAN CODY **Lesson Number Three:**

GATSBY He was my best friend.

DAN CODY For what it's worth: it's never too late to be whoever you wanna be Old Sport.

NICK And then came the war.
All of those stories were? -

GATSBY True.
Turns out if you're born in the dirt, you fare okay in the mud.

NICK .

GATSBY Cut you up pretty bad didn't it Old Sport?

NICK .

GATSBY Your hands.
They shake sometimes when nobody's looking.

NICK I thought no-one noticed.

GATSBY Friends do Old Sport.

NICK Truth is: most days I'm inside and outside of myself.
Have been all my life.
And then more-again since the war.
All of it comes back to me when I least expect.
Makes it hard to let myself be part of anything, or anyone.
For fear of it all happening. Again.

GATSBY Sometimes it is harder to deprive oneself of a pain than of a pleasure.

SCRIPT EXCERPT: THE VIGIL

NICK Now you sound like a writer.

GATSBY Keep it.

NICK **Sitting there in the dark we must've been quite a sight. Two soldiers still at war, waiting. Gatsby for a light to click three times off and on. And me for a cab.**

NICK You really should go.

GATSBY Go now, Old Sport?

NICK Get out of here. Atlantic City. Montreal.

GATSBY I can't leave her, not now - Not now that we're so close -

SOLDIER Fix bayonets!

GATSBY I might do one more lap of the place.

Don't worry - I'll be discreet.

See you tomorrow, Old Sport, come round for a swim. I'll call you.

NICK Do.

GATSBY It'll be my first of the summer.

A tin-whistle. A green flare.

The SOLDIERS rise, ready themselves and begin to climb over the trench.

NICK Jay.

GATSBY .

NICK They're a rotten crowd.

You're worth more than all of them put together.

A gunshot. Blackout.

THE MAN IN THE PINK SUIT – POWER IN THE GREAT GATSBY

To help students explore status and power within novel, have students participate in this card game. This is useful to engage with once students have some idea of the characters, but they do not need to have read the whole novel/seen the play to engage with this activity.

Print one set – 21 cards plus the instructions for each group of 4.
If your class doesn't split evenly – you can have students play in a group of 3.

Students will take approx. 15 minutes the first time playing the game, and 10 or less for subsequent rounds. Allow them to read the instructions and self-referee the game, rather than spending time explaining it to them. Permit them time to play a few times to allow them to use strategy.

Please note: the categories have been created inspired by 1920's attitudes and values – especially in regard to GENDER, FREEDOM and WEALTH . Identifying this before you play could lead to some in-depth discussions around societal differences between now and then.

Allow students to debrief in small groups or as a whole class. Exploring power in the novel could be a natural segue to discussing prejudice.

“America’s greatest promise is that something is going to happen, and after a while you get tired of waiting because nothing happens to people expect they grow old, and nothing happens to American art because America is the story of the moon that never rose.”

Fitzgerald writing to Marya Mannes, October 1925



The Ensemble / Photo:Joel Devereux

Further reading:

Exploring Prejudice and Race – Princeton Alumni Weekly
<https://paw.princeton.edu/article/how-great-gatsby-explores-prejudice>
Exploring Power and Wealth – National Library of Medicine
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7467143/>

POWER PLAY IN 1920S AMERICA

Aim: collect one of each of the five categories - Gender, Wealth, Virtue, Status, Freedom and gain the most Power Points.

Players: 4

1. To begin - deal each person 2 cards. Put the remainder of the cards in the middle, face down, as a draw pile.

2. Each go you can:

Claim a card - you do this by placing it in front of you (this cannot be withdrawn or moved) and then drawing a new card. You can only 'play' one of each category in your hand.

OR

Swap a card from your hand with the top card on the draw pile - placing your discarded card at the bottom of the pile.

Once the draw pile is empty and you cannot play a card, you must 'wait for opportunity to knock' by adding to the pile and waiting for the card you need to be available.

3. Once one person has one of each category, they cease playing - but continue to play till everyone has a full set. There will be one remaining card at the end of the game.

4. Add up each of your points to declare the winner, ensure the appropriate deductions are made!

5. Play a few more times to refine your strategy - but remember luck and privilege always has the final say!

POST-GAME DEBRIEF:

- Which combination was most likely to make you win?
- Which characters related to each of the cards? Note: multiple characters relate to each card.
- If you were to add a category or a card to the game, what would it be and how many Power Points would it award? Which other categories would it interact with?
- What set of cards would exist for a game set in your context - how would this differ from 1920s America?



POWER PLAY IN
**THE GREAT
 GATSBY**

WEALTH

YOU HAVE NEW
 MONEY

7 Power Points

WEALTH

YOU ARE HAVING
 AN AFFAIR WITH
 SOMEONE RICH

4 Power Points
 Deduct 3 from any
 Virtue Power Points collected

WEALTH

YOU HAVE OLD
 MONEY

10 Power Points

WEALTH

YOU WORK HARD
 FOR YOUR
 MONEY

2 Power Points

GENDER

YOU ARE A
 MAN

10 Power Points

GENDER

YOU ARE A
 WOMAN

4 Power Points

GENDER

YOU ARE A
 MAN

10 Power Points

GENDER

**YOU ARE A
WOMAN**

4 Power Points

FREEDOM

**YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS
ARE GENUINE**

6 Power Points

FREEDOM

**YOU HAVE
DEPENDANTS**

-2 Power Points

FREEDOM

**YOU ARE ABLE TO
SAY NO TO
OTHERS**

6 Power Points
(If you are a woman
4 Power Points)

FREEDOM

**YOU CAN CHANGE
YOUR
DESTINY/LIFE**

5 Power Points

VIRTUE

**YOU ARE
HONEST**

5 Power Points

VIRTUE

**YOU PARTICIPATE
IN CRIMINAL
ACTIVITY**

-4 Power Points

VIRTUE

**YOU ARE
UNFAITHFUL**

-5 Power Points



VIRTUE

YOU ARE OPTIMISTIC

4 Power Points

VIRTUE

YOU RESERVE JUDGEMENT ON OTHERS

5 Power Points

STATUS

YOU ARE UNMARRIED

5 Power Points
(If you are a woman
3 Power Points)

STATUS

YOU ARE MARRIED

10 Power Points
(Deduct 2 from any
Freedom Power Points
collected)

STATUS

YOU ARE AN ESTABLISHED ATHLETE

4 Power Points

STATUS

YOU WERE EDUCATED ABROAD/SERVED IN THE MILITARY

5 Power Points
(If you are a man)



Photo: Georgia Haupt



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