

## Introduction

F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby*, is thought by many to be the definitive novel of the 1920s. This fascinating era, known also as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age, was a time of great social, economic, and cultural change in America, all of which is reflected throughout the novel through a number of parties, both large and small. You can tell much about people by their parties: their tastes, their social status, their friends, their lifestyles. And besides, who doesn't love a party?

## The Process

You will plan a Jazz Age party that will include appropriate entertainment, guests, attire, food and libations. In a group, you will research the historical, cultural and social background for information which will lead you to make your choices for your party plan. Each individual will be responsible for helping to research background information with the group, gathering information regarding his/her role as well as the success of the group in planning the party.

1. Read or review the description of Jay Gatsby's party in chapter 3 of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Pay particular attention to the description of the food, the drinks, the entertainment, the dress and the guests.
2. Next with your group members divide up the research on Fitzgerald and the 1920s.
3. After your group members have conducted your research, meet and share what you have found. The goal of this step is to "debrief" the information you've found so that you all have some common knowledge about the time period and what the lives of people like Zelda and Scott were like. Although your discussions will be informal, there should be much dialogue about what you have learned about this era. This background will also help you, individually, to make an informed choice about your role in the next step.
4. Next, among yourselves, divide the labor (members can share roles):
  - a. **Caterer:** You are responsible for the food and beverages. It is up to you to plan the menu. Do not merely replicate the one given in the novel but give some care and consideration to what to serve the large and diverse cadre of people who will be coming to your party. You are also planning for a time before microwaves and "fast" foods, so keep that in mind (no chips or nachos!) Your more difficult task, however, will be to stock the beverages. Remember this is during Prohibition, so you will be required to research just how and where you're going to be able to find the kind of beverages described in the novel.
  - b. **Entertainment Coordinator:** You are responsible for the entertainment for the party. What was popular in music and dance during the time? What other forms of entertainment were popular during the twenties (games, activities, etc.) that people at your party might engage in? What performers, artists, composers, etc. might you want to invite and/or hire to entertain at your party?
  - c. **Fashion Consultant:** You are responsible for assisting the guests in choosing appropriate dress for the event. Since this is a formal affair, how, specifically, would you suggest they dress. Don't forget the accessories: hats, shoes, purses, gloves, ties, etc. Pay attention to the details (just like you do when you go to the prom!). Of equal importance, the fashion consultant must alert the guests on what not to wear; you don't want any of the guests showing up in anything out-of-date,

unfashionable, or inappropriate!

- d. Guest Coordinator: You are responsible for setting the guest list. You want a representative guest list of as many walks of life of the twenties as possible; it would not have been unusual for a known bootlegger to "hob nob" with the police commissioner, for example. You will choose at least three people living in the twenties from each of the following areas to invite: government/politics; the arts (i.e. painting, sculpture, classical music); popular entertainment (movies, Broadway theater, radio, sports); business community; the "mob." [minimum of 20 invited guests -- most of the people at Gatsby's parties just show up anyway!]
5. After you have done your initial research, your group should meet to share its findings. You should, at this time, discuss among yourselves what you have found and, more importantly, how you can use what you have found to plan your party. Your group should collaborate on putting together the actual party plan and structuring it for presentation to the class. You will have some latitude in how you present the information, however, there are some requirements that you must meet. Your presentation must include at least one visual component, one auditory component, and one live physical demonstration of something that your group thinks will help to clarify, elaborate, or explain your party choices. For example, your group could come dressed in the fashion of the twenties, play some music from the twenties, show video clips of movies of the twenties, teach the class the latest (twenties) dance craze, or provide a sampling of the food to be served. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination. Let me know of any special accommodations that you will need for your presentation in advance.
6. Present your party plan to the class. Remember that your audience should be aware and understand the choices your group has made as they relate to the cultural, social and historical background of the twenties. Your presentation should include all required elements and roles and endeavor to inform and to capture the spirit of Fitzgerald's 1920s America. At the end of the presentation, the group will turn in all of its research to the teacher.