

Great Gatsby: Historical and Cultural Allusions

Chapter 1 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

The Great War - World War I

Georgian colonial mansion – 18th century architectural style; recalls both old money and the revolutionary spirit of the United States

Midas and Morgan and Maecenas - Midas, in Greek Myth, the king of Phrygia granted the power of turning everything that he touches into gold; J.P. Morgan (1837–1913), U.S. financier; Gaius Maecenas (70–8 BC), Roman statesman, friend of Emperor Augustus, and patron of the arts.

Cunard or White Star Line – exclusive cruise lines

Goddard's *The Rise of the Colored Empires* - an allusion to Theodore Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* (1920).

New Haven - City in southern Connecticut; home to Yale University.

Westchester – wealthy suburb of New York City

Lake Forest – wealthy suburb of Chicago

Louisville – Kentucky's largest city, home of the Kentucky Derby, associated with the mint julep and Southern gentility

Asheville, Hot Springs, Palm Beach – exclusive American resorts

Chapter 2 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

J.D. Rockefeller - (1839–1937); U.S. industrialist, oil tycoon, and philanthropist.

Kaiser Wilhelm - ruler of Germany, 1871–1918, and enemy of the Allies during WWI

Simon Called Peter - Robert Keable's best-selling fiction work from 1922 about a young clergyman whose war-time experiences result in a loss of faith.

Queens/the valley of ashes – the swamp at Flushing Meadows, used as a disposal site for ashes from domestic heating during the 1920s; now home of the Billie Jean King Tennis Center and the U.S. Open

kike – a vulgar term for a Jew, shows hostility and contempt.**HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS**

Chapter 3 NOTES:

Belasco - David Belasco (1853-1931); American theatrical producer, known for the realism of his sets.

Stoddard lectures - travel series of books

prodigality – think “prodigal son;” suggests wastefulness or extreme lavishness.

The Follies - popular revue started by Florenz Ziegfeld in 1907.

Gilda Gray – Polish immigrant, changed her name from Marianne Michalski, became highly paid star of the 1922 Ziegfeld Follies

coupe - a closed, two-door automobile with a body smaller than that of a sedan.

Yale Club – social club in New York City for Yale alum.

Chapter 4 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

Argonne Forest – in 1918, American troops fought in this region of northeast France, near the Belgian border.

1919 World Series – players from the Chicago White Sox accepted a bribe to lose a game, allowing the Cincinnati Reds to win the World Series.

Bootlegger – a manufacturer & distributor of alcohol, during Prohibition

Von Hindenburg – (1847-1934) soldier and second president of Germany

Little Montenegro – small kingdom which was annexed by Yugoslavia in 1918

Blackwells Island – small island which lies in the East River beneath the Queensboro Bridge

“old Metropole” – hotel at Broadway and 43rd in Manhattan

Sauterne - a sweet white wine served with dessert.

Rosy Rosenthal – Herman Rosenthal, gangster, notorious for his role in political and police corruption, murdered by members of police department.

Camp Taylor – military base near Louisville, Kentucky.

Chapter 5 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

“the secret of *Castle Rackrent*” - *Castle Rackrent* is a novel, published in 1800, which traces the downfall of a family of Irish landowners who live beyond their means, written by Maria Edgeworth

“like Kant at his church steeple” – German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was often found staring at the town’s steeple to help him organize his thoughts.

“the Merton College Library” – library at Oxford University

“Adam study” – in the style of British neoclassical architect Robert Adam (1728-92)

chartreuse – a green liquor

Dan Cody – allusion to Buffalo Bill Cody, frontiersman and showman, who made money with popular Wild West shows

“The Love Nest” – popular song of the 1920s

Chapter 6 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

Madame de Maintenon - (1635–1719); second wife of Louis XIV of France, often depicted as ambitious, greedy, evil, and narrow-minded.

“underground pipeline to Canada” – a pipeline that was used to transport alcohol into the United States during Prohibition.

Tuolumee – a gold-mining area of northern California

Platonic conception – Greek philosopher Plato (427-348 BCE) argued that the material world was illusory and true reality existed in an ideal realm beyond human senses.

“he must be about His Father’s Business” – ironic reference to words of Jesus, in Luke 2:49

Chapter 7 NOTES

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

Trimalchio – wealthy & extravagant character in Petronius' *Satyricon*, a satire on Roman life in the first century A.D.

blessed isles – in classical mythology, where eternal peace can be found

mint julep – classic drink of the American South, made with bourbon, sugar, and mint.

Chapter 8 NOTES:

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

Beale Street Blues – jazz song written in 1917

Hempstead...South Hampton – Long Island shore towns.

Chapter 9 NOTES

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL ALLUSIONS

pasquinade - a satirical piece of writing that holds its object up to ridicule, formerly one posted in a public place; lampoon.

James J. Hill - (1838–1916) wealthy financier, built of the Great Northern Railway, peer of J.P. Morgan, rose from humble origins.

Hopalong Cassidy - cowboy hero of western books by Clarence E. Milford

El Greco - (about 1541–1614); Spanish painter of religious scenes, which were usually elongated and distorted.

Gatsby's boyhood schedule – refers to Benjamin Franklin's schedule in his *Autobiography*, which exemplifies the American ideal of advancement through discipline and hard work.