

Chapter 8 Summary:

- After sleepless night, Nick visits Gatsby as dawn approaches. Gatsby talks of his past, and of his love for Daisy, described as ‘the following of a grail’.
- Gatsby’s gardener postpones draining the swimming pool, as Gatsby wants to use it.
- At noon, at work, Nick receives a call from Jordan Baker.
- George Wilson, grief-stricken at Myrtle’s death, mistakes the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg on an advertising hoarding for the eyes of an all-seeing God.
- Wilson searches for the owner of the yellow car that killed his wife. He is directed to Gatsby, finds him floating in his swimming pool, and kills him. He then shoots himself.

[illegible]

Analysis:

Inside Gatsby's mansion Nick notices that now 'there was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere'. The word 'dust' should remind us of the description in Chapter 2 of George Wilson's home, in the valley of ashes, where a white ashen dust' covers everything. Nick, Gatsby's neighbour, keeps Gatsby company at this difficult time; and Michaelis tries to look after his neighbour, George Wilson. Gatsby and Wilson are otherwise friendless men. At the end of this chapter, their separate lives converge, both men die.

Note that in Chapter 1 Nick writes of the ‘foul dust’ that floated in the wake of Gatsby’s dreams.

Note also that in Chapter 9 Tom, talking to Nick about Gatsby, says ‘He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy’s, but he was a tough one’. Tom is alluding to the magic dust found in various legends and old stories which, when sprinkled in the eyes, induces sleep or dreams. But by this point in the novel, the association of dust and ashes with death has been firmly implanted in our minds.

Do you think that Gatsby is tragic hero?

One of the definition of tragic literature is that it portrays 'the worthy encompassed by the inevitable'. In this definition, tragedy occurs when an individual whose virtue or merit is obvious suffers because they have no control over a course of events that unfolds with a kind of mechanical inevitability, indifferent to the fate of an individual. Is Jay Gatsby worthy? Is his death inevitable?

Arthur Miller defines the tragic hero as an ordinary person struggling to maintain human dignity. Jay Gatsby has raised his social status, but is his rise to wealth a dignified process? Is 'The Great Gatsby' a tragic hero or merely a deluded egotist who lacks dignity and throws his life away.