*The Great Gatsby* – Paper 3, Section 1: ‘Reading as a Writer’

A guide to the exam questions.

The exam question for this part of the A level requires you to show your knowledge of the literary and linguistic features, as well as the wider contextual ideas, of *The Great Gatsby* by focussing on a particular **narrative technique**, ensuring that you are exemplifying and accurately naming literary and linguistic features as part of your analysis and making sure you show your knowledge of the text as a whole by selecting your examples from different parts of it.

There are **three** assessment objectives tested, which are all broadly equally weighted but with AO2 slightly more emphasised:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AO2 | Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in texts.  [In other words, what are the effects that the writer is able to generate through choosing particular features, techniques or strategies?] |
| AO1 | Apply concepts and methods from integrated linguistic and literary study as appropriate, using associated terminology and coherent written expression.  [In other words, to accurately describe the features used in the text and to write in an organised and coherent way.] |
| AO3 | Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of contexts in which texts are produced and received.  [In other words, link analysis to broader contextual ideas.] |

Just to show you how the AOs work in practice, we can look at an example. Imagine you are asked to answer a question on the narrative technique of **‘imagery’**. You could quote from the opening of Chapter 3:

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

First of all, you would get credit for AO1 by accurately identifying good examples of imagery. You could then proceed as follows:

The “blue gardens” produce an unusual and striking effect (AO2) by linking the adjective (AO1) “blue” with a noun (AO1) “garden” that it is not normally associated with. This creates a sense of unease and artificiality that foreshadows the tragic misunderstandings at the end of the novel and reinforces the way that the projection Gatsby’s image often seems inauthentic, as with the “incoherent failure” of his mansion, as it is described at the end of the novel. Putting “blue” with “garden” is itself arguably a kind of incoherence.

This analysis will get credit for AO2, not only in analysing the kinds of effects produced by the imagery, but also by showing excellent structural awareness of how the story as a whole is patterned with motifs and recurring ideas.

You could then, if you wanted to, perhaps mention the reference to Daisy, in Chapter 5, having:

“a damp streak of hair [which] lay like a dash of blue paint across her cheek…” In identifying another unlikely use of the adjective “blue”, we can also see how the narrative links an aspect of Daisy (possibly as a way of suggesting her insincerity) with a quality of those parties held by Gatsby in order to attract her (the “blue gardens”).

Here, AO2 analysis is extended and developed. You could, at this point, make a contextual point (AO3) about the way Fitzgerald may have been drawing inspiration from modern artists like Picasso who was known for his experimentation and deliberate divergence from realistic depiction including, famously, his ‘Blue’ paintings.

Alternatively, you could move on to the simile (AO1) “like moths” to describe the party goers, with your AO2 interpretation and AO3 contextual development being like this:

The simile of the moths suggests various ideas to the reader. Firstly there is the way moths destructively drawn to lights in the way that the ambitious party goers are drawn to the wealth and luxury of Gatsby’s parties, only to become involved in drunken brawls and car crashes like at the end of Chapter 3. There is also the association of moths as invasive and destructive, as fragile and ephemeral, and also as nocturnal. All of these associations can be seen as appropriate to a story that ends in tragedy and where Gatsby’s house falls into disrepair and decay when Gatsby stops having his parties and the house is colonised by Wolfsheim’s sinister henchmen (AO2 – both in terms of exploring the imagery and examining the structural implications of foreshadowing). Such is the fate of those who are seduced, like Gatsby himself, by the alluring spectacle of the American Dream. (AO3)

In moving on to the list of images at the end of the sentence (“the whisperings and the champagne and the stars”) you might say that:

each of these images reinforces the sense of the ephemeral of the “moths” image, underpinning the novel’s stress on the ephemerality and fragility of Gatsby and his world. Individually, the “whisperings” evokes the idea of both gossip and haunting that are interwoven in the novel. The “champagne” evokes the luxurious, glamorous allure of the parties but also the sense of how momentary the sparkle of the bubbles is. And the “stars” also suggest the glamour and allure of the party as the sky seems to offer a cosmic backdrop, while also reminding the reader that significant sections of the novel, including the parties, happen at night and that this is a significant setting in a novel that is ultimately so violent and tragic. (AO2) As a critique of the American Dream, such images show how the transient and temporary Gatsby’s superficial world of parties is (AO3).

You might also consider the use of the syndectic list (AO1) to convey, arguably, a sense of awe, mystery and profusion (AO2).

**The structure of the question.**

The question appears like this:

*How does the writer of your text use settings?*

*You should range across the text to explore how settings are presented, the role they play in the novel as a whole, and the broader generic context.*

* The question refers to “the writer of your texts” because the board give a choice of six texts and *Gatsby* is one of them.
* In asking **how** a writer **uses** the text, you are being invited to explore a variety of features and techniques and to accurately exemplify these.
* In being strongly advised to “range across the text”, you must make sure that you select and “explore” examples from more than one part of it (maybe aim for three). You should not just write about the start of the text but this could form part of the answer.
* The “broader generic context” can relate to genre elements like tragedy, romance, satire, crime novels, gothic, the use of a retrospective, unreliable narrator and so on; but it also includes social and historical contexts like inequalities in wealth and status, the American Dream, World War I, the USA as a migrant culture, Prohibition, the influence of Europe and the ‘Old World’, the respective values of ‘East’ and ‘West’, the notions of ‘Old Money’ and ‘New Money’ and so on.

**Some narrative techniques that have come up in past questions and some other areas of focus that could come up:**

Sample Assessment Material (a practice paper provided by the exam board):

1. Settings 2. Suspense

Extra exam board practice paper:

1. Prose style 2. Beginnings and endings

June 2017:

1. Narrative voice 2. Form and structure

June 2018:

1. Moments of crisis 2. Minor characters

June 2019:

1. Time 2. Contrasts

October 2020:

1. Gaps in the story 2. Place

Other aspects in the future could include:

Repetition, Character, Images and symbols, Generic conventions, Dialogue, Motifs, Voice, Confrontation, Climax and anti-climax.

As there are six, quite different, novels that can be studied for this part of the course, the board have to make sure that the narrative approaches are quite generalised and you will see that there have already been two approaches – ‘settings’ and ‘place’ that overlap quite significantly. They are not *quite* the same and illustrate how some questions have a wider range of possible examples and how some require a more specific, focussed response. ‘Settings’ can include ‘Place’ but can also include other elements like the weather and the time (of day, season and so on). You will also notice that there was a question on ‘Form and structure’ but that there are various questions that ask you to focus on more specific structural effects like ‘Contrasts’, ‘Gaps in the story’ and ‘Moments of Crisis’. If the question does have a wider range of possible elements that can be focussed on, the challenge is to plan and select examples effectively. (As you can see in the analysis on ‘imagery’ above, there are always opportunities to refer to the way elements take on a structural significance.)

**Some suggestions for approaching the questions.**

The questions are designed to test your knowledge of the text and if, for example, you are asked about quite a specifically focussed aspect like ‘Suspense’ you do need to select some convincingly suspenseful elements to analyse, rather than picking random moments that you then try and convince the examiner are suspenseful.

Below are some tips and suggestions for each of the past and possible future exam questions listed on the previous page. Often some detailed analysis is included but sometimes there are just pointers and suggestions given. Remember that, in the exam, you must **always** include exemplification from the text as part of your analysis and link to relevant contexts.

**Settings**

There are, of course meaning settings which are specific places which can be linked symbolically to the characters who inhabit them (Gatsby with his “incoherent failure” of a mansion; Tom and Daisy with their “colonial mansion”; George and Myrtle with the “valley of ashes”.)

It is important to focus on a particular aspect of a setting by incorporating and analysing a relevant quotation. For example, you could choose to focus in your AO2 analysis on the description of the valley of ashes as starting point, a place where, in Chapter 2:

“ashes take the form…. of ash-grey men”. Such a powerful metaphor (AO1) reinforces the sense that the inhabitants of this dreadful, degraded place are completely shaped and conditioned by it. Myrtle Wilson experiences brief interludes from her otherwise dreary life in the relative luxury of the small Manhattan apartment where she goes with Tom to conduct their affair and where she is rewarded with opportunities to entertain and play the role of the grand society lady. Here, the setting of the apartment as belonging to a building which is “one slice in in a long white cake of apartment-houses” is another suggestive metaphor (AO1), which could indicate that Myrtle is being offered a meagre portion of what could be seen as a white wedding cake, in contrast to the apparently complete “frosted wedding-cake of a ceiling” that exists in Tom and Daisy’s colonial mansion (the “frosted” typical of the ambiguous style [AO1] of the novel by suggesting both luxurious icing and the ultimately cynical coldness of Tom and Daisy’s marriage). The “slice” of the “cake” is also a sinister prolepsis (AO1) of the violence of Myrtle’s death and her mutilation at the end of Chapter 7. She dies, moreover, in the valley of ashes, the setting in which we first encounter her, and where she “mingled her thick dark blood with the dust.”

This structurally cyclical (AO1) treatment of Myrtle’s relationship to the setting of the valley of ashes reinforces a consistent criticism in the novel of the idea of ‘The American Dream’, which promises social mobility and an end to embedded hierarchies but which is an illusion and which ends in tragedy for the ambitious of humble origins like Gatsby and the Wilsons. (AO3) Myrtle is shown as physically emergent from the dust and ashes and that is the place to which her blood returns.

Don’t forget that setting can also involve time and weather. You might, for example, analyse the opening of Chapter 7 where Nick is on his commuter train and the

“straw seats of the car hovered on the edge of combustion.” Such details help to provide a sense of the summer of 1922 (on which Nick focusses most of the action) becoming unbearably hot in its later stages in the north-eastern United States. It also reinforces a sense of the impending heated confrontation between Tom and Nick later in the chapter. (AO2) As such, the time setting contributes to a sense of the story as a tragedy, with its succession of violent climaxes. (AO3)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the presentation of Gatsby’s mansion in the very final section of Chapter 9.

**Suspense**

This question might appear again as something like ‘moments of tension’.

An early example would be from Chapter 1 where a sense of suspense is developed to underpin the uncomfortable atmosphere generated by cruelty and unhappiness in Tom and Daisy’s marriage. Tom is called on the telephone by his mistress during dinner and is followed by Daisy. In their absence, Jordan informs Nick that “‘Tom’s got some woman in New York.’”. The underlying sense of suspenseful discomfort is underlined by the way Daisy keeps trying to compensate for her inner anguish by filling the silences with oddly random attempts at conversation (“…about the butler’s nose.”, “you look an absolute rose”, “a nightingale come over on the White Star Line…”). Indeed, Nick also refers to Daisy as speaking with “tense gaiety” and the sense Nick feels of trauma and impending danger can be inferred through his choice of words and images. He talks of the “broken fragments of the last five minutes”, of the telephone as a “fifth guest” who intrudes with “a shrill metallic urgency”. He imagines Tom and Jordan stroll into the library for a “vigil” over a “tangible body” and has the urge to “telephone immediately for the police.” Nick will write later in Chapter 9 that Tom and Daisy were “careless people, who smashed up things and people…” with the sense of tense, suspenseful discomfort, as well as the language of death and danger, that describes them in Chapter 1 later involving the violent death of three people. (AO2) Such foreshadowing shows that Nick is narrating his narrative retrospectively and adds to a sense of tragic inevitability. It also reinforces a tendency of the novel to show that technological innovations of the modern world, here the telephone, to be agents of destruction, rather than markers of progress. (AO3)

Later in the novel, the narrative begins to take on some the characteristics of a crime novel (AO3), as the deaths and violence begin to mean the involvement of the police and other judicial procedures like inquests. Suspense is developed structurally at the end of Chapter 8 with time markers showing the gradual coming together of Wilson and Gatsby to create the “holocaust”: (“By six o’clock Michaelis was worn out”; “At two o’clock Gatsby put on his bathing suit”.) The sense of suspense associated with a crime novel is also reinforced with the way the language is filtered retrospectively in the manner of police evidence, as with the use of the passive voice (“His movements… were afterwards traced to…). (AO2)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the ways in which suspense and tension are shown to build before Tom and Gatsby’s argument in Chapter 7.

**Prose Style**

**The Great Gatsby** has a wide variety of different elements in its prose style and you need to be very selective in a one-hour exam so that you choose and analyse examples that can be linked to wider contextual ideas. Here are some examples:

There are numerous **oxymoronic, paradoxical or contradictory phrases** or ideas running through the text. For example, Nick describes himself at the opening as “unusually communicative in a reserved way”. Here, the contradictory elements could be linked to Nick’s unreliability as a narrator – the way in which the reader is continually sensing that everything is being filtered and organised through a partial and subjective viewpoint. (AO2) Such subjectivity is a key feature of the way certain works of art came to be produced at the start of the twentieth century and has come to be known as modernism – a movement that influenced Fitzgerald. (AO3)

In chapter 2, Nick, to give another example, describes Mrs McKee as “shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible.” Such a diverse group of adjectives seem to embody the idea that Nick presents later in the chapter where he describes being “…simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.” (AO2) Ambitious characters like Mrs McKee, who is continually attempting to promote her husband’s photography business, populate the novel. Like Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson, she embodies the spirit of the American Dream which encourages individuals to pursue upward social mobility and the novel is continuously ambivalent about this idea as deceptive and dangerous on the one hand but as seductive and alluring on the other. (AO3)

There are interesting examples of **listing** used in the novel, for example at the start of Chapter 4 where Nick claims to have written “down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby’s house that summer.” Such claims of documentary proof are part of Nick’s attempts to present his account as true. However, on closer inspection, it also seems that Nick is engaging in some creative manipulation, so that one group of names are associated with (conventionally unpleasant or unglamorous) animals (“Leeches”, “Civet”, “Blackbuck”, “Beaver”) while some are grouped as sea creatures (“Whitebait”, “Hammerhead”, “Beluga”.) Nick tells Gatsby at the end of Chapter 7 that “‘You can’t repeat the past.’”, to which Gatsby replies “‘Of course you can, Old Sport.’” Gatsby, as the embodiment of the American Dream, believes absolutely in his right to creatively manipulate the past in order to wipe out the historical privileges of ‘Old Money’ characters like Tom. (AO3) Despite his misgivings to Gatsby, it seems that Gatsby’s attitude could in fact be posthumously influencing Nick in the way that he writes his account, creatively shaping the narrative to present things in a particular light. (AO2)

There is also quite a lot of **syndectic listing**, as explored above in the sample analysis under ‘imagery’.

The prose style of the novel also contains **biblical, mythological and other cultural references**. Nick refers to “Midas, Morgan and Maecenas” in Chapter 1. All three figures represent wealth: Midas is the mythological king whose prayer to be able to turn everything he touch into gold was answered. Maecenas was the famous patron of artists in Ancient Rome, again renowned for his wealth. The positioning of Morgan (of the extraordinarily wealthy and successful American investment bank J.P.Morgan) in between these two figure from the classical world, is a way of suggesting that the American economy of the mid-nineteenth-century onwards, and the way it underpins the idea of the American Dream and the self-made individual, itself has the power to create almost instantly legendary, mythological figures. Morgan himself had only died in 1913. (AO2 and AO3)

In order to reinforce Gatsby’s embodiment of the American Dream and his desire to obscure his real past and create a new one is reinforced with references to Gatsby having “a Platonic conception of himself” (after the Greek philosopher, Plato) and the Biblical echo saying he was “a son of God [who] – must be about His Father’s business.” Like the self-created individual in Plato and like Jesus, who emerges from an immaculate conception without an earthly father, Gatsby, as the embodiment of the American Dream, wants to renounce his humble beginnings and ancestry. (AO2 and AO3).

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the ways the narrative voice uses references to the language of the commercial and of popular culture in the novel.

**Beginnings and Endings**

There could be a question on either just ‘Beginnings’ or just ‘Endings’ in a future exam. It is important to remember that an analysis of the beginning or ending is only a platform to explore the novel more generally, and to say how, for example, elements at the beginning are developed later or how elements at the end have been led up to earlier.

In taking an element from the beginning of *Gatsby*, for example, you might focus on the way the novel opens with Nick Carraway, the narrator, mentioning how “my father gave me some advice.” The reference to the father, and the influence of the father, seems significant and ironic in relation to a story named after Gatsby, who as the embodiment of the American Dream wants to deny his real past, his birth name, his family and the poor, socially lowly father who turns up in Chapter 9 after Gatsby’s death. You might focus on the fact that although Gatsby wants to create himself in the eyes of the world, he actually ends up with multiple fathers: his real father but also the rather shady figures who mentor him, Wolfsheim and Dan Cody. (AO2 and AO3)

Likewise, the novel ends with three extraordinary sentences. First, “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us.” Here a paradox is used (something “recedes before”, or in front of, us.) Next: “It eluded us then, but that’s no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further… And one fine morning – ” Here, punctuation, in the form of hyphens and elliptical dots, is used to deliberately halt the ecstatic optimism of the ideas. Finally: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” Here, a metaphor is used to illustrate the way in which the optimism and drive exemplified by Gatsby is always going to be challenged by stronger forces beyond its control. All three of these final sentences illustrate the tragedy of Gatsby, who tries tirelessly to win Daisy by establishing an image of wealth and popularity, even though he is defeated by larger, more powerful forces in the end. These ideas of the ultimately illusory, tragic qualities of the American Dream and the rigidity of the American class system could then be explored in other parts of the novel too. (AO3) Another idea is that the narrative voice actually does something at the end of the novel that it doesn’t do earlier: it moves from the predominant use of the first-person singular (“I”) to the use of the first-person plural (“we”). Such a move might be read as Nick taking on the mantle of Gatsby at the end, becoming possessed by Gatsby’s spirit of ambition and optimism, just in the way he talks of conversing with the dead Gatsby in Chapter 9. (AO2) It also suggests that Gatsby takes on a certain grandeur through coming to embody not just the American Dream, but a more general human desire for progress and self-betterment. (AO3)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider how references to status and privilege at the start of the novel become significant later in the narrative.

**Narrative Voice**

It’s important to remember that the narrative voice is just those parts of the novel where Nick Carraway is telling the story. It does **not** include any dialogue – of any character, including when Nick himself speaks dialogue to another character.

Some of the effects created by having Nick as a first-person narrative include the fact that it is a **retrospective narrative** (discussing this can count as AO2 because you are discussing literary form but also AO3 because it is a generic feature):

The first section of the novel opens in a narrative present with Nick (we later surmise) back in the Mid-Western city of Minnesota in the United States where he grew up. He uses the present tense at certain points to establish this sense of the narrative present (“I come to the admission”; “I don’t care what it’s founded on”) but this is established as a platform to look back at the previous summer of 1922 and Nick’s time spent in New York and Long Island, a thousand miles to the east. As such, there is a powerful sense all through the novel of the tragic destiny (AO3) of Gatsby, his violent death, and the decay of the spectacle he conjured. Even in this first section, Nick is evoking “the foul dust that floated in the wake of [Gatsby’s] dreams.” (AO2) Gatsby is often presented as having a spectral quality. At the end of Chapter 1, in an “unquiet darkness”, a figure who might be Gatsby “emerged from the shadows”, only to “vanish” again. Near the end of Chapter 3, the figure of Gatsby stands in “complete isolation” and “his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell”, seemingly oblivious to the drunken, chaotic scene over which he is presiding. In describing a “sudden emptiness [that] seemed to flow from the windows” the narrative voice, with its retrospective knowledge, already seems to be imagining Gatsby as a ghost haunting his abandoned mansion. (AO2) (Such unsettling moments of hauntedness link the novel to the genre of the gothic – AO3)

Another effect of the first-person narrative voice is where it conveys a sense that Nick’s viewpoint is necessarily the limited and **subjective** viewpoint of just one individual Nick himself acknowledges this himself in Chapter 2 when he talks about being “within and without.” There was a lot of interest in the workings of the individual mind at the beginning of the twentieth century, stemming out of the work of Sigmund Freud, and which was an influence on the work of modernist artists who in turn influenced Fitzgerald (AO3). Thus, at the end of Chapter 1, from Nick’s perspective, Tom and Daisy “stood in a cheerful square of light” which reinforces their socially elite status and “the rather distinguished secret society Tom belonged.” Later in the novel, the social barriers become fortified (AO3) as Tom and Daisy “retreat into their money” on the death of Myrtle and Nick is now outside their home, forced to bend and peek “through a rift in the sill” below a drawn blind to see “Daisy and Tom… sitting opposite each other.” Nick can now no longer hear them and can only observe their gestures. (AO2)

There are also moments where Nick reveals elements of his character to the reader that he is not necessarily aware that he is revealing (again, Freud’s theory of an ‘unconscious’ part of the mind that is not easily accessible to a person’s ‘conscious’ mind could be an influence here – AO3). In chapter 1, for example, Nick describes how Tom shows him the view from his mansion by “Turning me around by one arm.” It is not clear whether such an act of control on manipulation by Tom upon Nick, who appears almost puppet-like (AO2), is fully recognised by Nick himself. It certainly helps to reinforce Tom’s social, class power. (AO3)

Equally, there are moments when Nick manipulates the narrative to try and obscure the ways he is often ignored or treated disrespectfully. In Chapter 2, he is in Tom and Myrtle’s flat and suddenly says “then there were no cigarettes”. He would rather run an errand than stay in the flat watching Tom and Myrtle prepare for their adulterous lovemaking (“When I cam back they had both disappeared.”). His use of a coded, euphemistic language hides his embarrassment. (AO2) Tom’s social power is again evident earlier. (AO3) Nick reveals to the reader that he “had no desire to meet [Myrtle]” but says nothing to Tom as he is “forced from the [train] car” with the use of the passive voice (where Tom does not have to be named as the agent) perhaps signalling Nick’s embarrassment at Tom’s incessant physical bulling. (AO2)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the presentation of the two very different ways Nick responds Gatsby’s account in Chapter 4 of living “‘young rajah in all the capitals of Europe’”, first by describing a “turbaned ‘character’ leaking sawdust” then as evoking “the skins of tigers flaming in the palace on the Grand Canal…”.

**Form and Structure**

This question covers a large number of possible areas of focus and needs thought and planning to make the essay manageable. You would also need to remember to include exemplification or close referencing of points.

Form tends to be applied to the way a genre is presented in a work of literature whereas structure tends to apply more to the framework and sequencing.

The section above on ‘Beginnings and Endings’ would qualify for inclusion in a question on ‘Form and Structure’, as would the material under ‘Narrative Voice’ on the effects created by the retrospective narrative.

Any discussion and exemplification of flashback (analepsis) or flash-forward (prolepsis) would count, and the way these embody the novel’s central idea of the past always catching up with the present and undermining the promises of the American Dream (and hence causing Gatsby’s downfall and tragedy).

At the same time, you could also focus on the structuring of the novel around the unfolding of one summer in 1922, with some of the symbolic effects created (earlier in the summer linked to the new hope of a rekindled romance, the heat of late summer and the argument between Gatsby and Tom, the movement into autumn to highlight death and decay.)

Any point about cyclical effects (again reinforcing the past coming back to haunt the present), for example as in the analysis of Myrtle emerging from and returning to the valley of ashes in the analysis of ‘imagery’ above.

The use of ‘motifs’ (see below) and the repetition and building sense of violence created through the incorporation of ‘moments of crisis’, ‘moments of climax’, as well as all forms of ‘repetition’ (again see below) would all count in a question on form and structure.

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the reasons why Nick incorporates a section recalling his own childhood near the end of the novel, beginning “One of my most vivid memories…”.

**Moments of Crisis**

A crisis is the culmination of events that may be a crisis for an individual or more than one person. Many of the chapters have a recognisable ‘crisis’ and looking at the way these often seem to grow in magnitude as the novel progresses and can be linked to the tragic structure of the novel (AO3).

In Chapter 1, there is arguably a crisis point in the relationship between Tom and Daisy. It erupts despite the attempts of the couple, especially Daisy, to cover over the tension that exists over Tom’s affair. She suddenly accuses Tom of bruising her little finger: “I know you didn’t mean to, but you *did* do it. That’s what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a –” When Tom objects “crossly” to her using the work “hulking”, she petulantly and provocatively repeats the word. Daisy’s anger comes through in the stresses on “did” which is italicised and on the stressed “brute”, together with the three stressed syllables of “**great**, **big**, **hulk**ing”. Obviously, “brute” and “hulking” are meant to be insulting and to provoke Tom, who tries to compensate for his lack of intellect by quoting from books promoting obnoxious ideas like “*The Rise of the Coloured Empires*”. (AO2)

It is instructive to compare this crisis to the one involving Tom and his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, at the end of Chapter 2. It is a mirror of the earlier argument between Tom and Daisy. Tom and Myrtle are having a drunken argument about Daisy and, just as Tom had objected to Daisy using the word “hulking”, he also questions whether Myrtle has “any right to use Daisy’s name.” Again, just as Daisy defiantly repeats the word back, Myrtle does the same: “‘Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!’, shouted Mrs Wilson. (AO2)

However, Tom’s response is very different with Myrtle and there is the shockingly abrupt description of the “short, deft movement” with which he breaks “her nose with his open hand.” Not only does this establish the way the crises often increase in violence as the novel progress, with its tragic structure, there is also the way such a difference in approach reinforces differences in class and privilege, with the socially lowly Myrtle being treated differently from Tom’s ‘Old Money’ wife. (AO3)

You could also focus on later, violent crises like the car crash at the end of Chapter 3, the death of Myrtle at the end of Chapter 7, or the deaths of Gatsby and Wilson at the end of Chapter 8.

Another area of possible significance is considering how the crisis of Myrtle’s violent death in Chapter 7 contrasts with the crisis Gatsby has in losing his dream of marrying Daisy. Gatsby’s indifference about Myrtle’s awful fate “as if Daisy’s reaction was the only thing that mattered” again highlights the way Daisy’s ‘Old Money’ status protects her from ever having to face the consequences of her actions. (AO3).

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the significance of the car crash near the end of Chapter 3.

**Minor Characters**

There is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes a minor character – Myrtle is a minor character compared to Jordan but not compared to her sister Catherine who appears at Myrtle’s party in Chapter 2 and is reported as being a witness at the inquest into Myrtle’s death. A minor character might be defined be one who only appears once or twice, and relatively briefly, in the novel. In many ways the narrative techniques used to present minor characters are no different from those used to present the major ones.

If we were to focus on Myrtle’s sister, Catherine, we could focus on the way

Nick’s narrative, in describing her appearance, emphasises her falsity and vulgarity. She has a “sticky bob of red hair”. He goes on to say that “Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle, but the efforts of nature towards the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face.” Nick wants to draw attention to the fact that Catherine now looks like she has two sets of eyebrows: a false drawn-on pair and the real ones that have been shaved off but are now growing back. The way Nick’s voice adopts a detached, critical tone (“the restoration of the old alignment”) which is actually mocking Catherine (AO2), adding to the influence of the genre of satire in the novel, especially in Chapter 2. (AO3)

Catherine is, we discover in her dialogue with Nick a little later, has travelled to “‘to Monte Carlo’” in order to follow the rich Americans who were beginning to colonise the French Riviera at the start of the twentieth century(AO3). The fact that Monte Carlo also has the world’s most famous casino could also symbolise (AO2) how much the capitalist basis of the American Dream and how much of it is a gamble in which more people lose than win. (AO3). In addition, Catherine is also one of the nameless hordes of the opportunistic, ambitious and aspirational who attend Gatsby’s parties but who gossip maliciously about him (“‘They say he’s a nephew or cousin of Kaiser’”). She is, then, actually one of several characters in the novel whose function is to illuminate that it is not just Gatsby who is striving to achieve the American Dream (AO3), it’s just that he’s been more successful at making (illicit) money than most.

Catherine has a gaudy and artificial appearance with her “sticky… red hair” and “powdered milky white” complexion, as well being noisily attention-seeking we her cheap “pottery bracelets” and their “incessant clicking”. Again, it is possible to see similarities with Gatsby, who is just vulgar and attention-seeking on a bigger scale (with just a few examples being his “monstrously swollen” car, his chauffeur’s ridiculous “robin’s egg blue” uniform, the parties that are so brightly lit that one night Nick thinks his “house is on fire” and that are sometimes compared to a circus with their “several hundred feet of canvas and coloured lights.”) There is also something about the way Catherine’s natural eyebrows growing back betray the artificiality of the “rakish”, drawn ones that mirrors the transparency of Gatsby’s own performance as ‘Old Money’ (AO3) and which also foreshadow the way Gatsby neglects his house after the loss of Daisy, one of the signs of neglect being the grass on Gatsby’s lawn becomes as long and unkempt as that on Nick’s lawn. It is almost as if the American class system is so entrenched that nature itself will betray those of lower status trying to escape from it. (AO2)

As well as the language and imagery chosen by the narrative voce to describe the behaviours and appearance of characters, dialogue is also a key method of conveying character. An interesting minor character in this regard is Gatsby’s father, who is betrays the lowly status and limited formal education of the family through his use of idiomatic phrases that show a misunderstanding of standard forms: “‘He’d of helped build up the country.’”

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the brief presentations of Klipspringer in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9.

**Time**

Some of the structural ways in which chronological time is manipulated, using a retrospective narrative to create in the narrative an echo of Gatsby’s own tragic delusion that he can control the past, have been discussed above under ‘Beginnings and Endings’ and ‘Narrative Voice’. The way in which time markers are used to create suspense in Chapter 8 have also been discussed in the section headed ‘Suspense’. There is also a comment on the effects of basing the narrative around an unfolding period of time (summer 1922) in the section headed ‘Form and Structure’.

An interesting moment in terms of the presentation of time happens at the end of Chapter 2 when there the narrative makes some significant jumps in time:

“It was nine o’clock – almost immediately afterwards I found it was ten”. Later, after reporting Tom’s assault on Myrtle, he says “Then there were towels on the floor…” as if to reinforce that he cannot remember what happened in between. At the end of the chapter he does the same thing: “Then I was lying on the lower level of Pennsylvania Station…” The narrative voice also uses elliptical dots to create as sense of time fragmenting: “…I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear…”

Such techniques skilfully present Nick’s drunkenness (AO2), evoking the illicit nature of the parties held in an America that was increasingly wealthy and self-indulgent but also in a period of Prohibition. This is another way the novel has of deliberately blurring the lines between wealth and criminality. (AO3) There is also a sense that the jumps help to obscure the real nature of the encounter between Nick and the “effeminate” Mr McKee (AO2), again showing how much Nick, like Gatsby, wants to control his image in this land of billboards, surfaces and images. (AO3) On another level, time seems to run out of control for Nick here, just as it does for Gatsby who, it turns out, can’t “repeat the past”, and who falls tragically into the hands of cruel fate, just as a tragic protagonist does. (AO3)

There is also some deftly incorporated imagery around time. I really like the one in Chapter 5 where an anxious Gatsby is trying to appear composed (“a counterfeit of perfect ease”) in Nick’s sitting room after being reunited with Daisy. His head “leaned against the face of a defunct mantlepiece clock” which then “tilt[s] dangerously” before he “caught it with his trembling hands.”. Such images can only reinforce Gatsby’s tragically doomed attempt to control the past. (AO2, AO3)

There is also some evocative symbolism in the way Nick cites documents connected with time: At the start of Chapter 4 he claims to have recorded the names of some of the guests at Gatsby’s parties on an “old time-table… in effect July 5th, 1922”. We are reminded of the way timetables run our life in the modern world (Nick commutes by train every day), not the other way round, as Gatsby tragically thinks. The mention of the date here also marks a mid-point in the narrative, based around the summer of 1922, again subtly suggesting that the march of time shapes and controls us, not the other way around. The fact that the timetable is also “disintegrating at its folds” also reminds us that what awaits all of us is disintegration, decay and death – like Gatsby everyone with feel the effects of time. It foreshadows the decay and neglect of Gatsby’s mansion and is echoed by Nick who miserably thinks of his life as someone over thirty in Chapter 7 and how they all “drove toward death.” (AO2, AO3)

There is also the young Gatsby’s “schedule” that his father shows Nick in Chapter 9, again reinforcing how Gatsby is tragically blind to everyone’s submission to the demands of time, even though he thinks he can overcome this later.

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the way Gatsby is symbolically connected with “moonlight” in the last paragraph of Chapter 6, and think about other parts of the novel where he is associated, in terms of time, with the night-**time** and why this is.

**Contrasts**

One of the ways a question on ‘Contrasts’ might be approached is to analyse examples that help to illuminate the differences in class and status that Fitzgerald in presenting in order to illuminate his criticism of the promise of the American Dream as a leveller of social hierarchies.

One example would be the ways in which Tom and Daisy’s Georgia Colonial mansion is contrasted with Gatsby’s “imitation” of a “Hôtel de Ville in Normandy”. Even the very descriptions contrast the way Tom and Daisy’s ‘old money’ status is reinforced by the fact that they live in a “Colonial” mansion, one that has been established in the landscape since before American independence, while Gatsby’s mansion betrays his ‘new money’ vulgarity by being an “imitation”, an attempt to impersonate ‘old money’ values by importing the style of old Europe but which actually ends up by looking utterly inappropriate to the environment. (AO2 and AO3)

The contrast between the authentically old, traditional and established on the one hand and the brash, new and vulgar on the other is developed in the reference to the “bright vines” that “drift[…] up the side” of the house in a way that naturally seems to flow from the “lawn” and the “beach” with a “momentum” that reinforces the sense of the house’s long-established integration into the natural environment. Gatsby’s mansion, however, merely has a “thin beard of raw ivy” to show how recently the house has been built and how ineffectual and threadbare is the attempt to create an ivy-clad building, reminiscent, maybe, of the centuries-old Oxford colleges that Gatsby continually evokes as part of his attempt to perform an ‘old money’ character. (AO2 and AO3)

Other elements of contrast between Tom and Daisy’s ability to project an image of authenticity failure to do so can be seen in the way their garden contains such well-aged items such as “sundials and brick walls” whereas Gatsby’s mansion has a “marble swimming pool”. (AO2)

Alternatively, it is also possible to contrast elements from earlier in the narrative with the way they are presented later in the narrative. For example:

There is the pristine and immaculate condition in which Gatsby keeps his grounds, as the site of his parties, at the start of Chapter 3. A pictorial scene of glamour, luxury and wealth is evoked as the guests dive “from the tower on his raft” and “aquaplanes [form] cataracts of foam” across the water, the “pulpless halves” of “oranges and lemons” are cleared away and “servants… toil” to keep everything looking in good repair, while the food is a “glistening” array of “harlequin designs” and “turkeys bewitched to a dark gold.” However, during Chapter 6 Gatsby realises that Daisy “didn’t like” his party and from that moment on he loses all interest in them so that he begins “to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favours and crushed flowers.” Later, at the start of Chapter 7, it is learned that Gatsby “had dismissed every servant in the house” and that, apparently, “the kitchen looked like a pigsty.” (AO2) Such a fall into decay, neglect and disintegration is symbolic of the tragic end to Gatsby’s dream, foreshadowing his own death and mirroring the ways in which a “foul dust floated in the wake of [Gatsby’s] dreams”, as Nick says at the start of the novel. (AO3)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the ways in which Daisy and Myrtle are contrasted.

**Gaps in the story**

These could include some of the ‘gaps’ that are analysed under the ‘Time’ section, above. Other ‘gaps’ can be related to the fact that Nick’s first-person narrative is always partial and subjective, that he is always “simultaneously inside and outside” or that Nick himself isn’t aware of some of his behaviours and that the reader is able to fill in these ‘gaps’, as discussed under the section entitled ‘Narrative Voice’ above.

It is also possible to identify other significant ‘gaps’ to illustrate that Nick does not want to reveal himself or certain situations he is involved in and so manipulate the reader’s response, Again showing that Fitzgerald is employing the highly subjective perspective that was so typical of the more experimental **modernist** style of narrative at the start of the twentieth century (AO3).

For example, at the end of Chapter 1, Tom and Daisy ask Nick about a “rumoured” engagement to “a girl out West”. He remarks that he “knew what they were referring to” but refuses to divulge any more, saying that “gossip had published the banns.” This ironic, bitterly humorous use of the idea of publishing the “banns”, (AO2) in the way that a church does before a wedding, is arguably the novel drawing on the style and features of the genre of satire (AO3), especially as the traditional ‘holiness’ of the church and its traditional rites and rituals is so at odds with the morally bankrupt hedonism of the modern world. The ‘gap’ in Nick’s explanation and his refusal to participate in the gossip is part of the way he is partly “repelled” by the world (as he says in Chapter 2), although of course he is also “enchanted” the same world. (AO2)

There is another interesting ‘gap’ that generates a satirical tone by invoking the idea of a traditional, more morally certain age and institution and by placing this in proximity to the moral decay of the modern world. This is at the start of Chapter 4 where Nick sets the scene of “Sunday morning where the church bells rang in the villages alongshore.” At the same time “the world and it’s mistress returned to Gatsby’s house.” The wholesome regularity of the church bells on a Sunday morning is substantially at odds with the world of Gatsby’s chaotic, nocturnal parties, where respect for marriage, sanctified by the church, is abandoned in favour of self-indulgence and promiscuity with a “mistress” in the ‘Roaring Twenties’ (AO3). The ‘gap’ comes the way the narrative leaves the reader to *infer* the moral difference between the churches and the wildness of the parties, making its satirical point that way rather than including an explicit comment. (AO2)

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the dialogue that Nick and Jordan have with Owl Eyes in Gatsby’s library in Chapter 3. Why do you think Nick leaves gaps by not always attributing the speaker of each line of the dialogue? Who do you actually think is speaking (based on previous characterisation) and why do you think Nick wants to manipulate the impression of the reader so that we are not completely sure who is speaking? What does this reveal or reinforce about Nick?

**Place**

As already explained at the bottom of page 4 above, most (although not all) of the elements that come under the section ‘Setting’ (see above) would also count as ‘Place’.

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the presentation of the “cellar” where Nick, Gatsby and Wolfsheim have lunch in Chapter 4.

**Repetition**

Repetition is, arguably, a central theme of the novel. Gatsby wants to repeat the past by manipulating an outcome that matches his (American) “dream” of complete social mobility and transformation. So, when Nick tells him in Chapter 6 “‘You can’t repeat the past’”, Gatsby replies “‘Why of course you can!’”, with Gatsby wanting “nothing less of Daisy” than she go to Tom to say she never loved him and that Gatsby and Daisy then be married from Daisy’s family home in Louisville “just as if it were five years ago.”

Gatsby’s tragedy, however, is that while the past is often repeated by coming back to haunt the present, it is in ways that can’t be controlled or predicted. For all his wealth, ostentation and dazzling parties, Gatsby carries his humble origins with him in ways that are often perfectly apparent to those who have been born into wealth and privilege:

A characteristic, often repeated element of Gatsby’s dialogue is the affectation of using the vocative ‘Old Sport’ to present the impression that he is somehow connected with English aristocratic circles. When Tom, in the confrontation with Gatsby in Chapter 7, accuses Gatsby of being “Mr Nobody from Nowhere” and speaks sneeringly about “‘All this “Old Sport” business.’” (AO2 and AO3)

Motifs (see the separate section on this as a possible future question below), the use of repeated symbols, are used frequently in the novel. The motif of ashes and dust, for example, and the way it is used to reinforce the tragic elements of the novel (AO3) – see the analysis of Myrtle and the valley of ashes above in the section on ‘Settings’.

The novel is structured to give the impression of repeated cycles and symmetrical patterning, again to reinforce the sense that the past comes back in cycles and repeated patterns to haunt the present.

Such a repetition can be seen in the ways Daisy and Jordan are twice in the novel described together in the same setting, a grand room in the Georgian Colonial mansion. In Chapter 1, the two women are described as “buoyed up” and as “wearing dresses that were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back after a short flight around the house.” The magical quality of this description and their resemblance to angels helps to reinforce the sense Nick feels of the utter charm and ease that emanates from the Buchanan’s ‘old money’ wealth as he visits their home for the first time. In Chapter 7, on the other hand, the heat of summer means that the two women, in the same room, are “like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses.” The difference in tone, from angelic “fluttering” to pagan “idols” and the change of emphasis from that of lightness to heaviness suggests not only the increasingly hellish heat of the summer but also Nick’s growing sense of disillusion with the Buchanans who are “careless”, destructive and spoilt (AO2 and AO3).

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the way the repetition of Gatsby’s parties in the novel is used to indicate gradual decay and disillusion.

**Character (or characterisation)**

As has already been described above in relation to ‘Minor Characters’, the sense of a character can emerge through the narrative description of clothes, behaviour and so on.

Dialogue can also be used to betray origins, attitudes and the way in which a character relates to others:

Myrtle, in Chapter 2, wants to appear like a grand society lady. In order to reinforce this impression, she says things like: “‘ I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you’d of thought she had my appendicitus out.’” The changed spelling of ‘appendicitis’ to reflect accent, the use of ‘of’ instead of ‘have’ to indicate a pronunciation based on hearing rather than reading and so betraying a lack of literacy (Mr Gatz does the same thing in Chapter 9) and the mistaking of the medical condition for the organ, all betray Myrtle’s lowly class origins (AO2 and AO3) and make her a more exaggerated version of Gatsby, a target for satire in a way that ultimately mocks the illusory quality of the American Dream (AO3).

Dialogue can also be used to convey the attitude of one character about another (see the analysis of Daisy and Myrtle under ‘Moments of Crisis’ and Catherine’s comments on Gatsby under ‘Minor Characters’.)

With major characters, of course, a sense of characterisation in more likely to emerge through the symbolism of setting (see the way Tom and Gatsby are linked symbolically to their respective homes under ‘Contrasts’).

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the ways in which names and naming are used to develop a sense of characterisation. (There is a possibility that ‘Names and Naming’ may be selected as question in the exam.)

**Images and Symbols**

This has already been discussed at length on pages 1 and 2.

**Activity**

Incorporating appropriate examples from the text and linking to relevant contextual points, consider the symbolic function of technological innovations like the telephone, the car, films and photography in the narrative.

**Generic Conventions**

Some of the generic conventions you could discuss come from the following genres (I don’t always support with quotations here, but you need to in essays and in the exam – any detailed discussion of genre influences is rewarded under AO2 and AO3):

Tragedy. This is arguably the most significant genre in the novel. It is possible to identify ways that Fitzgerald incorporates elements that originate in Greek tragedy in the 5th century BC. It has a *protagonist* who is a ‘great’ figure and whose name provides the *eponymous* title (hence *The* ***Great*** *Gatsby*; tragedies, like Fitzgerald’s novel, are often eponymous, meaning the titles are the names of the protagonists, like *Medea* or *Othello*). The tragedy shows the *fall* from former greatness of the protagonist. This fall traditionally has three interconnected causes in Greek tragedy: a *flaw* in the tragic hero (in *Gatsby* this is arguably his stubborn, deluded belief in the American Dream as enabling a complete social transformation that allows Gatsby to literally turn back time); the malicious intervention of the gods (in the novel this takes the form of socially powerful and untouchable Tom Buchannan’s investigations and humiliation of Gatsby; and the actions of *fate* (the decision to swap cars which causes Myrtle to run out into Tom’s blue coupé, even though Gatsby is driving and how this then causes George Wilson to think that Gatsby was Myrtle’s lover.)

Also, tragedies (this applies more directly to Shakespearian tragedies) traditionally end in the death of the protagonist and end in other violent deaths – which the novel also does.

Romance. The novel is full of romantic imagery, often connected with Gatsby’s pursuit of Daisy. Flowers are mentioned at various points in the novel, sometimes symbolically (Daisy and Myrtle’s names, Daisy calling Nick “an absolute rose”) and sometimes in a way that suggests a romantic gesture like when Gatsby sends a “greenhouse” of flowers to Nick’s house to mark Daisy’s visit.) The rapturously romantic end of Chapter 6 with its image of Daisy’s “white face” coming up to be “kissed” by Gatsby who listens for “a tuning fork that had been struck upon a star.” And again, returning to the flower imagery, Daisy “blossomed for him like a flower.”

The romance, of course, is set up to be subverted and so actually increase the sense of tragic loss. In conventional romances (like Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*) the two lovers overcome personal and social objections to their union to marry happily at the end. Fitzgerald’s critique of the American Dream (AO3) is sharpened through the way Gatsby is not able to overcome snobbery and hierarchies in a society that presents itself as the epitome of social mobility.

Crime. The Great Gatsby is a novel that is not only very violent but is also one where characters are continually referring to or engaging in criminal activity (not least in the way that there is continual drinking of alcohol under Prohibition – AO3). It ends in a violent accidental death, a murder and a suicide and there is Wolfsheim’s account of the gangland killing of ‘Rosy’ Rosenthal in Chapter 4. These elements and many more add to an atmosphere of danger and corruption that pervades the novel. Towards the end, the novel seems to take on the more gripping plotting of a crime novel (see the analysis under ‘Suspense’ on the coming together of Wilson and Gatsby at the end of Chapter 8.) Also relevant are the references in the final chapters to the police, police investigations, judicial procedures like inquests and sensational newspaper reports which also occur in the final chapters. Such generic conventions reinforce the sense that American economic power and personal wealth is often based on corruption or at least corrupt beginnings (as Nick hints at the opening with his admission that the Carraway family’s wealth was established during the Civil War, with wartime commerce always being associated with illicit activities.) – AO3

The Gothic or the Supernatural Tale.

As a retrospective narrative where the story is told from the outset with the knowledge of Gatsby’s violent death at the end, many of the descriptions of Gatsby incorporate a ghostly quality that consistently foreshadows his death. His first (apparent) appearance at the end of Chapter 1 is deliberately constructed to evoke the idea of a spectre who “emerged from the shadows” forever haunting the edge of the bay with his arms “stretched out in a curious way” towards the “green light” of Daisy’s dock” and then who suddenly “vanished” into the “unquiet darkness.” The addition of the “silhouette of a cat” that “wavered across the moonlight” adds to the sense of a supernatural scene. (AO2 and AO3). Equally spectral is the description of Gatsby at the end of the party in Chapter 3 who stands in “isolation” under the “wafer of a moon”, his “hand in a formal gesture of farewell” and without any recognition of the “caterwauling horns” nearby. He already seems to be the ghost haunting the soon to be deserted mansion where there is a premonition of “the emptiness that seemed to flow now from the windows.” Gatsby will disappear almost magically, like when Tom arrives in the cellar restaurant in Chapter 4 (“I turned toward Gatsby, but he was no longer there.”) (AO2) At the end of Chapter 7 he again appears like a ghost haunting the place of Daisy’s presence and Nick leaves him “standing in the moonlight, watching over nothing.”

It can be argued that these supernatural elements add to a sense of tragic melancholy. But it’s always good to remember that Nick is “simultaneously enchanted and repelled” by what he experiences and that he also evokes a ghostly Gatsby which also suggests Nick is virtually possessed by Gatsby’s spirit and the his “book” is an attempt to pass on the spirit of Gatsby with all his endless drive and ambition. As such, Nick describes in Chapter 9 how he inhabits Gatsby’s mansion after Gatsby’s death, sharing the place with Gatsby’s dead body and seeming to communicate with Gatsby’s spirit. “‘I’ll get someone for you’” he tells the dead Gatsby when searching for people to attend the funeral and “‘I can’t go through this alone’” is how he reports the voice of Gatsby’s spirit talking to him. (AO2)

**Activity**

Find some examples from the text to support the ideas above about tragedy.

**Dialogue**

There are already lots of examples cited and analysed above of dialogue in which speech represented in the text spoken between characters. Dialogue is an important means of developing characterisation and the relationships between characters.

Analysing dialogue is an excellent way of showing some technical knowledge of spoken features in language as good novelists need to be able to represent speech authentically in order to make their dialogue and speech believable.

In Chapter 1, Nick characterises his “aunts and uncles” discussing his decision to study in the East by using hyphens to suggest the “grave hesitancy” of their reply: “‘Why – ye-es’”. In representing the way spoken language is full of hesitations, Nick satirises his affluent family’s conservatism and reveals the extent to which the involvement of his family shows he is protected and cossetted in a way that Gatsby most definitely is not. (AO2 and AO3)

Later in the chapter, Tom says to Nick after the latter’s arrival at the Georgian Colonial mansion: “‘I’ve got a nice place here.’” Fitzgerald is fully aware that his audience will know that in conventionally polite conversation it is the first-time guest, not the host, who says this. Thus Tom’s arrogance, sense of utter social superiority and disregard for Nick’s opinion is highlighted. (AO2 and AO3)

The use of imperatives or interrogatives can often be highly revealing or when they are not used but it would be expected they might be. Again in Chapter 1, Jordan “remarked contemptuously” to Nick “‘You live in West Egg.’” The fact that she doesn’t frame this as an interrogative reinforces our sense of her social confidence and her refusal to depend on a response; the ‘old money’ figure looking down “contemptuously” on ‘new money’ West Egg. When Nick responds “‘I don’t know a single- ’” the way the dialogue conveys her interruption of him only galvanises our sense of Jordan’s dominating character. (AO2 and AO3)

Don’t forget, the **way** something is said can be important in the analysis of the overall effect of dialogue, so if a character asks a question and they “demanded impetuously” this is not the same as the narrator simply stating that they “asked”.

**Activity**

Go through the above sections again and find where dialogue has been analysed. Find some other examples in the text look at the way spoken features are incorporated (interrogatives, imperatives, vocatives, pronouns, interruption, hesitation, politeness or lack of politeness, accent or non-standard and colloquial spoken features and so on), linking to a broader discussion about social attitudes in the novel.