APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Our narrator, Nick Carraway, begins the book by giving us some advice of his father’s about not criticizing others. Through Nick’s eyes, we meet his second cousin, Daisy Buchanan, her large and aggressive husband, Tom Buchanan, and Jordan Baker, who quickly becomes a romantic interest for our narrator (probably because she’s the only girl around who isn’t his cousin). While the Buchanans live on the fashionable East Egg (we’re talking Long Island, NY in the 1920’s, by the way), Nick lives on the less-elite but not-too-shabby West Egg, which sits across the bay from its twin town. We are soon fascinated by a certain Mr. Jay Gatsby, a wealthy and mysterious man who owns a huge mansion next door to Nick and spends a good chunk of his evenings standing on his lawn and looking at an equally mysterious green light across the bay.

Tom takes Nick to the city to show off his mistress, a woman named Myrtle Wilson who is, of course, married. (Fidelity is a rare bird in this novel.) Myrtle’s husband, George, is a passive, working class man who owns an auto garage and is oblivious to his wife’s extramarital activities. Nick is none too impressed by Tom.

Back on West Egg, this Gatsby fellow has been throwing absolutely killer parties, where everyone and his mother can come and get wasted and try to figure
out how Gatsby got so rich. Nick meets and warily befriends the mystery man at one of his huge Saturday night affairs. He also begins spending time with Jordan, who turns out to be loveable in all her cynical practicality.

Moving along, Gatsby introduces Nick to his "business partner," Meyer Wolfsheim. Everyone (that is, Nick and readers everywhere) can tell there’s something fishy about Gatsby’s work, his supposed Oxford education, and his questionable place among society’s elite. Next, Gatsby reveals to Nick (via Jordan, in the middle school phone-tag kind of way) that he and Daisy had a love thing before he went away to the war and she married Tom (after a serious episode of cold feet that involved whisky and a bath tub). Gatsby wants Daisy back. The plan is for Nick to invite her over to tea and have her casually bump into Gatsby.

Nick executes the plan; Gatsby and Daisy are reunited and start an affair. Everything continues swimmingly until Tom meets Gatsby, doesn’t like him, and begins investigating into his affairs. Nick, meanwhile, has revealed Gatsby’s true past to us: he grew up in a poor, uneducated family, and would in all likelihood have stayed that way had he not met the wealthy and elderly Dan Cody, who took him in as a companion and taught him what he needed to know. Yet it wasn’t Dan that left Gatsby his oodles of money – that part of his life is still suspicious.

The big scene goes down in the city, when Tom has it out with Gatsby over who gets to be with Daisy; in short, Gatsby is outed for being a bootlegger.
and Daisy is unable to leave her husband for her lover. As the party drives home to Long Island, Tom’s mistress, Myrtle, is struck and killed by Gatsby’s car (in which Gatsby and Daisy are riding). Gatsby tells Nick that Daisy was driving, but that he’s going to take the blame for it. Tom, meanwhile, feeds Gatsby to the wolves by telling George where to find the man that killed his wife, Myrtle. George Wilson shoots and kills Gatsby before taking his own life.

Daisy and Tom take off, leaving their mess behind. Nick, who by now is fed up with ALL of these people, breaks things off with Jordan in a rather brusque way. He is the only one left to take care of Gatsby’s affairs and arrange for his funeral, which, save one peculiar former guest, none of Gatsby’s party-goers attend. Nick does meet Gatsby’s father, who fills in the picture we have of Gatsby’s youth. Standing on Gatsby’s lawn and looking at the green light (which, not accidentally, turned out to be the light in front of Daisy’s house across the bay), Nick concludes that our nostalgia, our desire to replicate the past, forces us constantly back into it.
Appendix 2: BIOGRAPHY OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896, and named after his ancestor Francis Scott Key, the author of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Fitzgerald was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. Though an intelligent child, he did poorly in school and was sent to a New Jersey boarding school in 1911. Despite being a mediocre student there, he managed to enroll at Princeton in 1913. Academic troubles and apathy plagued him throughout his time at college, and he never graduated, instead enlisting in the army in 1917, as World War I neared its end.

Fitzgerald became a second lieutenant, and was stationed at Camp Sheridan, in Montgomery, Alabama. There he met and fell in love with a wild seventeen-year-old beauty named Zelda Sayre. Zelda finally agreed to marry him, but her overpowering desire for wealth, fun, and leisure led her to delay their wedding until he could prove a success. With the publication of This Side of Paradise in 1920, Fitzgerald became a literary sensation, earning enough money and fame to convince Zelda to marry him.

Many of these events from Fitzgerald’s early life appear in his most famous novel, The Great Gatsby, published in 1925. Like Fitzgerald, Nick Carraway is a thoughtful young man from Minnesota, educated at an Ivy League school (in Nick’s case, Yale), who moves to New York after the war. Also similar to Fitzgerald is Jay Gatsby, a sensitive young man who idolizes wealth and luxury
and who falls in love with a beautiful young woman while stationed at a military camp in the South.

Having become a celebrity, Fitzgerald fell into a wild, reckless life-style of parties and decadence, while desperately trying to please Zelda by writing to earn money. Similarly, Gatsby amasses a great deal of wealth at a relatively young age, and devotes himself to acquiring possessions and throwing parties that he believes will enable him to win Daisy’s love. As the giddiness of the Roaring Twenties dissolved into the bleakness of the Great Depression, however, Zelda suffered a nervous breakdown and Fitzgerald battled alcoholism, which hampered his writing. He published *Tender Is the Night* in 1934, and sold short stories to *The Saturday Evening Post* to support his lavish lifestyle. In 1937, he left for Hollywood to write screenplays, and in 1940, while working on his novel *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, died of a heart attack at the age of forty-four.

Fitzgerald was the most famous chronicler of 1920s America, an era that he dubbed “the Jazz Age.” Written in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the greatest literary documents of this period, in which the American economy soared, bringing unprecedented levels of prosperity to the nation. Prohibition, the ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1919), made millionaires out of bootleggers, and an underground culture of revelry sprang up. Sprawling private parties managed to elude police notice, and “speakeasies”—secret clubs that sold liquor—thrived. The chaos and violence of World War I left America in a state of shock, and the generation that fought the war turned to wild and extravagant living to compensate. The staid
conservatism and timeworn values of the previous decade were turned on their ear, as money, opulence, and exuberance became the order of the day.

Like Nick in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald found this new lifestyle seductive and exciting, and, like Gatsby, he had always idolized the very rich. Now he found himself in an era in which unrestrained materialism set the tone of society, particularly in the large cities of the East. Even so, like Nick, Fitzgerald saw through the glitter of the Jazz Age to the moral emptiness and hypocrisy beneath, and part of him longed for this absent moral center. In many ways, *The Great Gatsby* represents Fitzgerald’s attempt to confront his conflicting feelings about the Jazz Age. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald was driven by his love for a woman who symbolized everything he wanted, even as she led him toward everything he despised.