

## Discussion Questions for Chapter Two of *The Great Gatsby*

What is half way between East Egg and New York? (23)

- The Valley of Ashes.

What might ashes symbolize?

- Answers will vary, but may include: death, the phoenix, which is the bird that dies and is reborn out of its ashes, or just the desperate hopelessness of the place.

What appears out of nowhere in the Valley of Ashes? (23-24)

- The eyes of Dr. T.J Eckleburg (on a billboard for an optometrist by that name).

Why does Nick meet Tom's mistress even though he has no desire to meet her? (24)

- Tom pretty much forces Nick to meet her.

What three shops are located on the Main Street of the Valley of Ashes? (24-25)

- A place for rent, an all night restaurant and a garage repair place owned by George B. Wilson, who repairs and buys and sells cars.

What is George B. Wilson's occupation? (25)

- George Wilson is a car salesman and mechanic.

What are several descriptions Nick gives of George Wilson? (25-26)

- Blond, spiritless, anemic and faintly handsome.

What springs into George Wilson's eyes when he sees Tom and Nick? (25)

- A damp gleam of hope.

What does Wilson want from Tom? (25)

- Tom's car (which he wants to buy).

How does Wilson's wife treat him? (26)

- She treats him horribly, speaking to him in commands, and treating him almost as if he were not there, as if he didn't exist.

What might the white ash dust on Wilson's suit symbolically convey about his relationship with his wife?

- Their relationship is fading and/or dead and musty.

What instructions does Tom give Myrtle Wilson? (26)

- Tom instructs her to get on the next train so they can meet on the lower level to have some time together.

What does Wilson think about his wife's visits to the city? (26)

- He thinks she goes to visit her sister.

What does Myrtle want for the apartment, and why? (27)

- She wants a puppy because it would 'go well' with the apartment, like a decoration.

What kind of glance does Myrtle give the neighborhood of her apartment? What does this tell you about how she feels toward the apartment and Tom? (28)

- A regal homecoming glance. This tells you that she believes that this is where she belongs, with Tom.

What does it tell us about the values of Myrtle, and the time period in which she is living, that she tells Nick that her sister Catherine is "said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know?" (28)

- Answers may vary, but may include that all anyone cares about is what others think, and don't have any original opinions of their own; also, that they are shallow and care about surface appearances.

With what—ironically—does Myrtle seem to believe men are mainly concerned? (31)

- Money.

What does Myrtle say about the woman podiatrist (foot doctor) who came to examine her feet that reveals Myrtle's lack of education? (31)

- Myrtle says that based on what the woman charged her, you'd think she'd taken out her appendicitis, rather than taken out her appendix. Myrtle doesn't know the difference between the organ and the medical condition associated with the organ.

What is ironic about the way that Myrtle speaks of the lower-class servants such as the boy she had told to bring the ice? (31)

- She looks down on those of the 'lower orders' (like servants), yet she herself is actually poor.

Catherine tells Nick that she had attended one of Gatsby's parties. What does this seem to imply about Gatsby and his popularity?

- He is extremely popular and everyone goes to his parties.

Where does Myrtle believe Gatsby gets his money? (32)

- From his uncle or cousin Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany.

Catherine confides to Nick, “Neither of them [Tom or Myrtle] can stand the person they’re married to.” At this point in the novel, do you believe this is true or false, and why do you believe what you do? (33)

Why would Tom lie to Myrtle about Daisy’s being Catholic and that preventing their divorce? (33)

- Catholics are not supposed to divorce (it’s forbidden by the church), and Tom doesn’t want to leave Daisy for Myrtle, who happens to be just a side fling. It’s his excuse to not leave Daisy.

Why did Myrtle marry George Wilson? (34)

- She thought he was a gentleman, that is, that he was financially well-to-do.

What seemed to be a great disappointment for Myrtle concerning her marriage to George? What does her reaction to the episode tell you about what she values and what her priorities are? (35)

- When they got married Mr. Wilson borrowed a suit from a friend to get married in. Myrtle doesn’t value the old, she values the new, she values money and riches and being at the top. When she found out he’d borrowed the suit (when the friend who loaned it to him showed up to get it back) she lay down and cried all afternoon. She’s highly materialistic: a gold-digger.

How long have Myrtle and George been married? (35)

- Eleven years.

What seems to attract Myrtle to Tom the first time they meet? (36)

- His appearance; the way he dresses in his nice dress suit and leather shoes.

Myrtle lists several things she must write down so she’ll remember to do them. One of her to-do list items is to buy a wreath for her mother’s grave that will last all summer long. What does this tell us about Myrtle as a person? (36)

- Answers will vary, but may include that Myrtle doesn’t want to be bothered with having to visit her mother’s grave more than once a season; she lacks compassion or thoughtfulness; she’s lazy and/or cheap.

What causes Tom and Myrtle to fight around midnight? (37)

- Myrtle shouting out Daisy’s name; Tom says she has no right to say Daisy’s name.

What does Tom do to Myrtle? (37)

- Swings his hand in a deft movement and breaks her nose.

At the end of the chapter, why does the writing style change so drastically from what it was before, to suddenly giving just brief visual descriptions and using lots of ellipses? (37-38)

- Nick doesn't remember much except lying half asleep in the lower level of the Pennsylvania Station. His memories are confused, hazy, and have 'blackout' periods (missing time) because he was drunk.