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'Want to go with me, old sport45? Just near the shore along the Sound.'

'What time?'

'Any time that suits you best46.'

It was on the tip of my tongue<sup>47</sup> to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled. 'Having a gay time now?' she inquired.

'Much better.' I turned again to my new acquaintance. 'This is an unusual party for me. I haven't even seen the host. I live over there —' I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, 'and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur<sup>45</sup> with an invitation.' For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

'I'm Gatsby,' he said suddenly.

'What!' I exclaimed. 'Oh, I beg your pardon.'

'I thought you knew, old sport. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host.'

He smiled understandingly – much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across<sup>49</sup> four or five times in life. It faced – or seemed to face – the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey<sup>50</sup>. Precisely at that point it vanished – and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck<sup>51</sup>, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd<sup>52</sup>. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking<sup>51</sup> his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr Gatsby identified himself, a butler<sup>54</sup> hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire<sup>55</sup>. He excused himself with a small bow<sup>56</sup> that included each of us in turn.

'If you want anything just ask for it, old sport,' he urged me. 'Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.'

- 45 old sport. Vecchio mio.
- 46 that suits you best. Che preferisci.
- 47 tip of my tongue. Punta della lingua.
- 48 chauffeur. Autista.
- 49 come across. Incontrare.
- 50 to convey. Di
- trasmettere.
  51 rough-neck. Lett.:
  teppista; qui: tipo
  manierato.
- 52 formality ... absurd. Ricercatezza nel parlare rasentava l'assurdo.
- 53 he was picking. Scegliesse.
- 54 butler. Maggiordomo
- 55 wire. Telefono.
- 56 bow. Inchino.

## COMPREHENSION

2 READ the text and point out: the setting in time and place, the people involved, the main situation.



## YOUR TURN

8 DISCUSS in what sense The Great Gatsby can be regarded as the quintessential novel of the 'Jazz Age'.



## ANALYSIS



FOCUS on Nick's character and make notes about his appearance and his feelings. How does he compare to the other people at the party?



GATHER information about Jordan Baker and say what impression you get of her character.



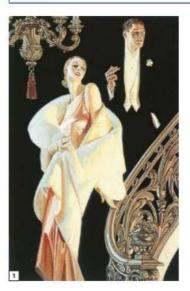
5 EXPLAIN how Gatsby is introduced throughout the text. What sort of man is he? What does Nick think of him?



FIND references to the moon and say what it symbolises.



DESCRIBE the topics of conversation and the type of behaviour at Gatsby's party that convey the mood of the society of the 1920s in America (⊕15.1).



 J.C. Leyendecker, Couple descending a staircase (advertisement for Arrow Shirt Company), ca 1930. Private Collection. Courtesy of Illustration House. New York.