



AMERICAN  
LITERATURE

# Gatsby: Then and now

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for American Literature

Target audience – American literature learners

Time required – 15 minutes

## Activity

Among the ash heaps and millionaires, explore the geographic and demographic context of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

## Standards

**CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1.** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.  
**CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5.** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (for example, parallel plots), and manipulate time (for example, pacing and flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, and surprise.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will explain how suburbs grew as the railroads expanded into rural areas.
- Students will explain the importance of the geographic setting in the novel and describe how closely the author adhered to the actual geography.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/litGeoInquiry8>

## ? Ask

### Where did F. Scott Fitzgerald and the fictional characters live?

- Click the URL above to launch the map.
- Click each of the Great Gatsby Landmarks (points and areas) on the map to read and become familiar with the geography of the novel. (*Hint: Fictional landmarks are identified in the title of the landmark. Click on the small arrow on the upper-right corner of the popup window for more information.*)
- ? What are the names of the two peninsulas of Long Island that F. Scott Fitzgerald and the fictional characters lived on? [*Great Neck and Manhasset Neck*]
- ? What names does the author give the peninsulas? [*East Egg and West Egg*]

## ! Acquire

### Where did many wealthy New York City families live?

- In the 1920s, the wealthy could afford to live on Long Island and commute to work in Manhattan.
- ? Why did the wealthy want to live outside city? [*More space and privacy; less pollution*]
- ? How did the wealthy commute? [*By rail or automobile*]
- Starting at the Manhasset Neck RR station, follow the Long Island RR tracks to Lower Manhattan.
- (Optional) Using the **Measure** tool set to miles, measure this distance. [*See the Measure Tool tip on page 2 for details.*] [20 miles]
- Describe the location of the “Valley of Ashes.” [*About halfway to Manhattan*]

## 🔍 Explore

### How has the landscape changed since 1900?

- Click **Bookmarks** and choose **Manhasset Neck**. [*See the Bookmarks tip on page 2 for details.*]
- The black dots on the historical topo map are buildings.
- Describe the density and distribution of houses on Manhasset Neck in 1900. [*Few homes, most along roads and coastlines*]
- With the **Details** button depressed, click the **Content** button.
- Turn off the layer **USA Historical Topo Maps**.
- Zoom in and out, and then describe the density and distribution of houses today. [*Many more buildings filling the interior of the peninsula.*]

more ►

## Analyze

### What happened to all the mansions?

- In the heyday of the North Shore of Long Island, there were 1,200 grand country homes; today, only 400 survive.
- ? What historical and personal factors may have contributed to this decline? [*Family wealth lost, the Great Depression, expensive maintenance*]
- Turn off all layers.
- Turn on the layer **USA Median House Value**.
- Click **Bookmarks** and choose **Long Island**.
- Examine the median house values (MHV) of Long Island. Do the house values indicate continuing wealth within the two peninsulas? [*Great Neck MHV: \$1 million; Manhasset Neck (Port Washington) MHV: \$704,000*]

## Act

### How has the landscape of wealth changed?

- Turn off the layer **USA Median House Value**.
- Turn on the layer **Tapestry Segmentation**.
- Click **Bookmarks** and choose **Gatsby Landmarks**.
- Click the blue blocks on each peninsula.
- ? What is the name of the dominant Tapestry Segment in purple? [*Top Rung*]
- ? What is the median income? [*~ \$182k*]
- Within the pop-up, click the link “See full description” to read more about this group.
- Explore your community with Tapestry Segmentation.
- ? What is the dominant segmentation? [*Answers will vary.*]

## MEASURE TOOL

- Click **Measure**, select the **Distance** button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

## BOOKMARKS

- At the top of the map, click **Bookmarks**.
- Choose a bookmark; the map will take you there.

## Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

THEN TRY THIS...

- Explore historical aerial photos of West Long Island in 1924. The “Valley of Ashes” is visible now as Flushing Meadows Corona Park. <http://gis.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap>
- Learn more about your neighborhood by exploring the Tapestry Segmentation layer at <http://esriurl.com/Geo41401>.

## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in the following novel.

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald