The Great Gatsby

Ch. 2 – Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Pd: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chapter 2 - Summary

Halfway between West Egg and New York City sprawls a desolate plain, a gray valley where New York’s ashes are dumped. The men who live here work at shoveling up the ashes. Overhead, two huge, blue, spectacle-rimmed eyes—the last vestige of an advertising gimmick by a long-vanished eye doctor—stare down from an enormous sign. These unblinking eyes, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, watch over everything that happens in the valley of ashes.

The commuter train that runs between West Egg and New York passes through the valley, making several stops along the way. One day, as Nick and Tom are riding the train into the city, Tom forces Nick to follow him out of the train at one of these stops. Tom leads Nick to George Wilson’s garage, which sits on the edge of the valley of ashes. Tom’s lover Myrtle is Wilson’s wife. Wilson is a lifeless yet handsome man, colored gray by the ashes in the air. In contrast, Myrtle has a kind of desperate vitality; she strikes Nick as sensuous despite her stocky figure. Tom taunts Wilson and then orders Myrtle to follow him to the train. Tom takes Nick and Myrtle to New York City, to the Morningside Heights apartment he keeps for his affair. Here they have an impromptu party with Myrtle’s sister, Catherine, and a couple named McKee. Catherine has bright red hair, wears a great deal of makeup, and tells Nick that she has heard that Jay Gatsby is the nephew or cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm, the ruler of Germany during World War I. The McKees, who live downstairs, are a horrid couple: Mr. McKee is pale and feminine, and Mrs. McKee is shrill. The group proceeds to drink excessively. Nick claims that he got drunk for only the second time in his life at this party.

The ostentatious behavior and conversation of the others at the party repulse Nick, and he tries to leave. At the same time, he finds himself fascinated by the lurid spectacle of the group. Myrtle grows louder and more obnoxious the more she drinks, and shortly after Tom gives her a new puppy as a gift, she begins to talk about Daisy. Tom sternly warns her never to mention his wife. Myrtle angrily says that she will talk about whatever she chooses and begins chanting Daisy’s name. Tom responds by breaking her nose, bringing the party to an abrupt halt. Nick leaves, drunkenly, with Mr. McKee, and ends up taking the 4 a.m. train back to Long Island.

Questions:

1. When Nick is out with Tom, who does Tom introduce him to? What does that tell you about Tom’s character?
2. What does Catherine say is the only reason that Tom and Myrtle are not together?
3. Describe the incident that happened at the party with Tom’s mistress. (at least 2 sentences)

Quotes: Respond to the meaning of each quote in at least three sentences.

1. Why don’t they get a divorce? Do you think Tom really wants to be with Myrtle? Do you think they would cheat on each other if they got together?

“Neither of them can stand the person they are married to.” -Catherine

1. Think about the type of relationship Tom and Myrtle have. How is Tom’s demeanor in this relationship?

“I want to see you, get on the next train.” –Tom Buchannan

Follow-up:

Things get very heated in chapter 2. Based on the first two chapters, explain a little bit about what kind of man you think Tom Buchanan is. Make sure to you at least 2 pieces of textual evidence.