

THE GREAT GATSBY

Key Moment
Myrtle's Party

scoilnet

Myrtle

- Described as 'not beautiful' but with a 'vitality' (sexy rather than beautiful?).
- Very obviously disrespects her husband - walks through him as if he were a ghost - orders him to get some chairs.
- Both herself and Tom seem to enjoy the sneaking around - part of the thrill.
- Enjoys spending money foolishly - magazines and makeup - even a dog which she overpays for.
- She puts on airs and graces - allows the first few taxis to go by before picking one that suits her - when she reaches the apartment she gives a 'regal homecoming glance' and 'went haughtily in'
- Despite her sense of superiority the apartment is actually vulgar and cheaply furnished - very different from the mansion that Tom and Daisy live in.



Myrtle

- Like Gatsby she likes to throw parties and invite ‘interesting people’ - very small in comparison - she likes to play the hostess - three changes of outfit - her guests are there for the free booze and hope to get business from her.
- Looks down on her husband - ‘I married him because I thought he was a gentleman....he wasn’t fit to lick my shoe’ .
- Tells Nick how she met Tom - tries to make it seem like a romantic encounter but in reality she was impressed by his wealth and appearance and he ‘picks her up’.
- Although she likes to act the lady a combination of jealousy and too much drink makes her enter into a noisy quarrel with Tom as she defiantly shouts ‘Daisy, Daisy, Daisy’.
- ‘Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.’



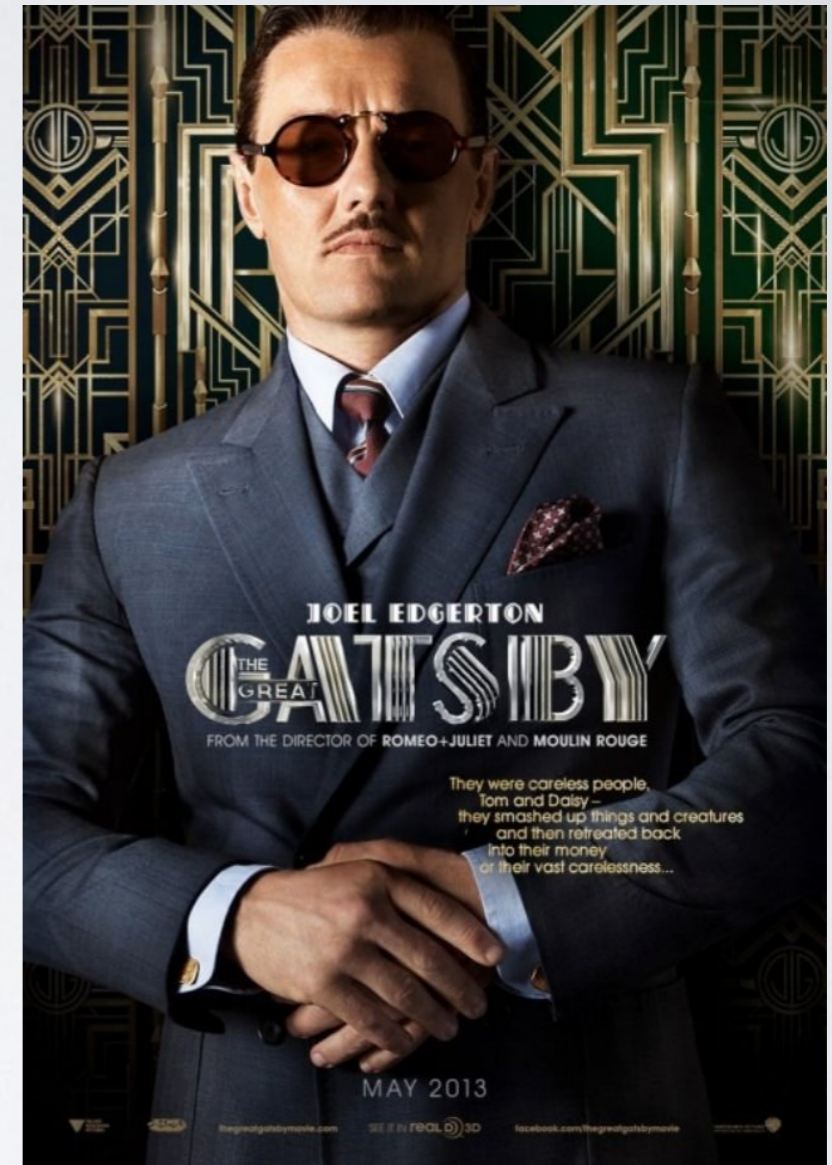
Myrtle

- Overall she is a rather pathetic character. Although she is vulgar, a bit of a snob and is cheating on her husband she is also deeply unhappy, stuck in a loveless marriage, with no real friends or opportunity.
- Tom is easily able to impress her with his money and bravado but he is using her, has lied to her about Daisy being Catholic so he can't divorce her and publicly hits her without anyone defending her.
- Although it is hard to like Myrtle it is easy to feel sorry for her.



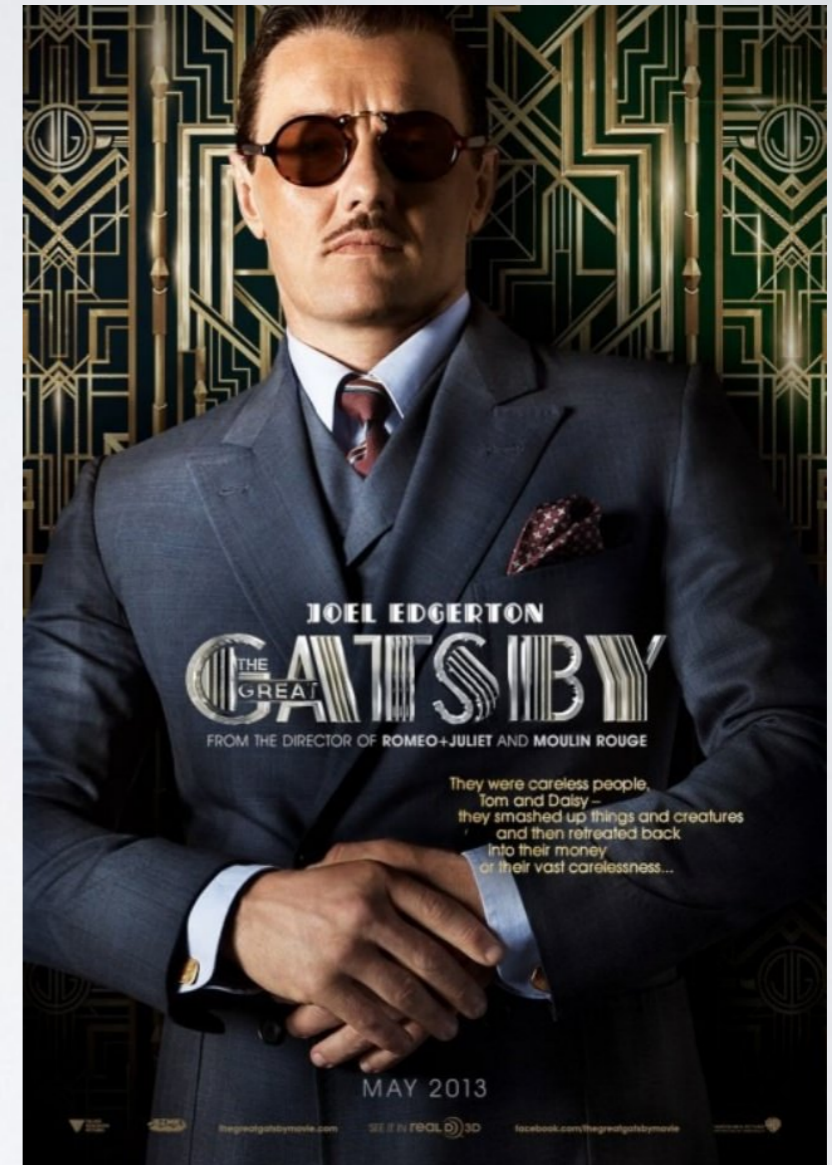
Tom

- Tom suddenly decides to introduce Nick to Myrtle and won't take no for an answer. Again asserts his dominance over Nick - he 'literally forced me from the car' - 'his desire for my company bordered on violence.'
- Is superficially friendly to Wilson calling him 'Old Man' and slapping him on the shoulder but is quick to turn off the charm when Wilson asks about a car Tom was supposed to be selling
- Tom is obviously using the car as an excuse to call into the garage
- Wilson needs to buy the car more than Tom needs to sell it so again Tom is able to dominate him
- Seems to enjoy the fact that he is sleeping with another man's wife and calls Wilson an idiot for not guessing - 'He's so dumb he doesn't know that he's alive' yet later will play the wronged husband when Daisy cheats on him with Gatsby



Tom

- He realises that Myrtle is foolish eg buying a puppy for ten dollars but is willing to indulge her to get what he wants
- Plays very little part in the party, shows no interest in Myrtle's friends
- Hypocritically orders Myrtle not to say Daisy's name and then hits her when she persists
- 'Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.'
- This moment is so shocking because it seems so disproportionate
 - Tom has no problem cheating on Daisy with Myrtle but she can't say his wife's name.
- It comes out of nowhere, what had been a drunken but friendly party suddenly erupts into violence. Nick describes it in a very matter of fact way - very short sentence.
- Tom - bully, hypocrite, forceful, double standards, domineering, dominating, cheating, snob, violent,



Nick

- Throughout Nick seems to be passive, an observer rather than a participant.
- Although annoyed at Tom assuming he had nothing better to do with his time he still gets off the train and follow him.
- Although he feels sympathy for Myrtle's husband he does nothing about it.
- When at the apartment he runs errands for Tom and Myrtle and then waits for them in a somewhat voyeuristic manner.
- Regards himself as an observer at the party rather than a participant - "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."
- When Tom assaults Myrtle Nick reacts by getting his hat and leaving the party. He is repulsed by Tom's behaviour but lacks the moral courage to do anything about it.

