

Jaggers himself lives in Soho, a mile to the west of Newgate; his clerk, Wemmick, lives in Walworth. In the early nineteenth century this was a disorganized northern suburb of London. His small wooden house is built like a miniature castle, with a moat and drawbridge round it, symbolizing his attempts to cut himself off from the sordid legal activities he is engaged in. His aging father lives with him, and they celebrate Sunday, their day off, by raising the Union Jack on a flagstaff.

Another site of pretentiousness is Pip's own dining club, the **Finches of the Grove**, which meets at Covent Garden, an area of central London famous for its great flower and vegetable market, as well as London's main opera house. Thus, low-life and fashionable society share the same space, though pretending not to, just as Jaggers's office is situated near Smithfield, the London meat market.

***Barnard's Inn.** Apartment block to which Pip is assigned when he first comes to London to live up to his expectations of a fortune, and which he shares with his friend Herbert Pocket. Confusingly, the term *inn* in London has a legal significance, often being the place where a group of lawyers may have or may have had their offices (or chambers). Barnard's Inn, though not presently being used by lawyers, does lie in the legal district round Holborn Hill. Pip's first impression of it is its dinginess, rottenness, and dilapidation, again symbolizing the quality of life he is destined to live there. Later on, he and Herbert move to the Temple, another inn.

—David Barratt

The Great Gatsby

Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940)

First published: 1925; critical edition, 1991

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Social realism

Time of plot: 1922

Both the theme and much of this novel's symbolism can be found in F. Scott Fitzgerald's use of setting and place. Fictional and real places are combined not only in order to illuminate character, provide realism, and focus on the specific time period (aptly termed by Fitzgerald the "Jazz Age") but also to imaginatively create physical contrasts that highlight the author's examination of the corruption and disintegration of the so-called American Dream.

Gatsby's mansion. Garish, multilevel home located on "West Egg." The narrator Nick Carraway describes it as

colossal, as ostentatious as it is roomy. Situated on forty acres, the mansion is the site of numerous glitzy and riotous parties thrown by Gatsby, hoping to pique Daisy Buchanan's interest. The mansion, however, is much more than a lure for Gatsby's long lost love; it is a symbol of the man himself and his dream of materialism as a vehicle to success both literally and romantically. Gatsby's home parallels his persona—grand, mysterious, and richly adorned. It is the emblem of a successful businessman and the symbol of what he hopes to recover in Daisy and her love. The mansion is also a representation of a shortsighted American Dream: that material success, in and of itself, will bring one status and happiness. Unfortunately, the dream is based on hollow underpinnings, on the vacuous Daisy and the misguided concept that large amounts of money can be made and used without responsibility. Conversely, the mansion serves also as a symbol of Gatsby's vision, aspiration, idealism, and belief in the American Dream of the self-made man. Thus, it is simultaneously a symbolic representation of the "great" Gatsby and of the flawed one. Ultimately, Nick Carraway describes the mansion as "that huge incoherent failure of a house." The mansion exists as both a vision and failure of such a vision.

East Egg and West Egg. Fictionalized opposing peninsulas of Long Island Sound described as resembling a giant pair of eggs. They are contrasted in terms of fashionableness, color, and type of wealth. The East Egg mansions glitter along the water; they are more chic and are representative of older, Eastern, inherited wealth. The West Egg residences are more derivative and imitative, representative of the nouveau riche, affluent newcomers not yet accepted into the highest echelons of wealth. It is Gatsby's habitation in West Egg that denotes his aspiration to a social status that seems unattainable. The Buchanans, who reside on East Egg, represent the arrogance of an exclusive clique who attend Gatsby's parties and share in the fruits of his wealth but who essentially despise him. Tom Buchanan, who has inherited his fortune, does not value it in terms of the traditional American ethics of hard work, integrity, fairness, and success coupled with responsibility. The two Eggs also represent the larger framework of an East symbolic of European antiquity, old money, and corruption, and a West symbolic of independence, new money, and the pioneering spirit. Certainly Nick Carraway values Western ideals over Eastern, and at the conclusion of the novel he returns, in a westerly direction, to the traditional and conservative Midwest whence he came.

Valley of Ashes. Generally considered to be Flushing in New York City's borough of Queens, this place exists as a gray, dead, powdery area—even the homes seem to be composed of ashes—passed by motorcars on their way to New York.

Here Myrtle and George Wilson live and operate a garage and gasoline station. The valley is a metaphoric representation of the wasteland the American Dream becomes when ethics and morals are disassociated from it. The valley is also the locus of those, such as George and Myrtle, who are victimized by the arrogant wealthy who base their lives on pleasure, avoidance of boredom, and dishonesty. If East and West Egg are two renditions of attainment of the American Dream, the Valley of Ashes is its demise. Literally it is the site where Daisy kills Myrtle, without compunction, and George decides to murder Gatsby. Finally, overlooking the valley are the giant blue eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, who stares down on the ashes from a billboard. A central symbol of guilt, judgment, and God, it invests the valley with a moral intensity that allies the novel with existential themes and statements about the moral bankruptcy of the modern world, a vast gray, ashen wasteland.

***New York City.** Certain integral scenes take place in this city and often entail irresponsibility, adultery, violence, and drunkenness. New York is where Tom Buchanan takes his mistress, where Nick witnesses Tom brutalizing her, where Gatsby reveals his illicit love affair with Daisy, and where a lot of alcohol is consumed. Symbolically, the city represents careless consumption and irresponsible immorality. New York in the 1920's was a glittering den of writers, socialites, wealthy entrepreneurs, and other moneyed persons who were known for their extravagance and excesses.

—Sherry Morton-Mollo

Green Grow the Lilacs

Author: Lynn Riggs (1899–1954)

First published: 1931

First produced: 1931

Type of work: Drama

Type of plot: Regional

Time of plot: 1900

In his preface to this play, Lynn Riggs states his purpose as seeking to create a nostalgic glow emanating from the memories of his childhood. He also states his wish to explore the ways in which his characters relate themselves to the earth, as well as to one another. Few dramatic works are more grounded in place than Green Grow the Lilacs.

Williams farmhouse. Well-kept farmhouse in Indian Territory (later Oklahoma), occupied by young Laurey Williams and fifty-year-old Aunt Eller Murphy. The stage directions introducing the first scene of the six-scene play describe a

radiant summer morning and a landscape dotted with men, cattle in a meadow, blades of young corn, and streams. Much of the play centers on the Williams farm.

***Indian Territory.** Federal territory in which the play is set, before it merged with Oklahoma Territory to become the state of Oklahoma in 1912. Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers, who adapted the play to create the musical *Oklahoma!* (1943), stated that Riggs's opening stage directions inspired the magical atmosphere of "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," the song that opens *Oklahoma!* In a sense, *Green Grow the Lilacs* is itself a musical play, throughout which Riggs intersperses traditional folk songs and ballads. The first scene opens with Curly McClain, a brash young cowboy who is Laurey's suitor, approaching the Williams farmhouse singing "Chisholm Trail," immediately establishing the play's frontier setting. Later, Curly sings an old ballad containing the lyrics that give the play its title.

Riggs further reinforces the sense of place through dialogue. He attempts to render the characters' speech on the page just as he remembers that of his own Oklahoma boyhood. One stage direction describes their speech as lazy and drawling, but warns against use of a generalized southern or "hick" dialect. He wants his characters' dialect to be true to that of Indian Territory in 1900.

After the murderously jealous farmhand Jeeter dies while trying to burn Curly and Laurey alive, Curly is taken to the territorial capital, Claremore, for an inquiry. However, he escapes and returns to the Williams farmhouse. Much of the sixth scene of the play reflects the primitive state of law and order in Indian Territory in 1900.

Old Man Peck's house. Backyard of a place across Dog Creek, where a party is in progress in the play's fourth scene. Riggs devotes almost two pages of stage directions to dozens of period details. The revelers square dance outside and pull candy in the kitchen. Here also Curly and Jeeter become enemies in their pursuit of Laurey.

—Patrick Adcock

Green Henry

Author: Gottfried Keller (1819–1890)

First published: *Der grüne Heinrich*, 1854–1855; revised, 1879–1880 (English translation, 1960)

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Autobiographical

Time of plot: Mid-nineteenth century

**Asterisk denotes entries on real places.*

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