

Vocabulary for *The Great Gatsby*: LIST 1

Activity 1: Words In Context

Directions: Use context clues to determine the meaning of each of your new vocabulary words. Write your best guess at the definition in the right-hand column.



Word	In Context from <i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Possible Definition
Ambiguous	<p>"I knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: 'Lucille, that man's way below you!' But if I hadn't met Chester, he'd of got me sure."</p> <p>"Yes, but listen," said Myrtle Wilson, nodding her head up and down, "at least you didn't marry him."</p> <p>"I know I didn't."</p> <p>"Well, I married him," said Myrtle, ambiguously. "And that's the difference between your case and mine."</p>	
Apathetic	<p>Mrs. Wilson was first concerned with the dog. A reluctant elevator boy went for a box full of straw and some milk, to which he added on his own initiative a tin of large, hard dog biscuits — one of which decomposed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon.</p>	
Coherence	<p>A subdued impassioned murmur was audible in the room beyond, and Miss Baker leaned forward unashamed, trying to hear. The murmur trembled on the verge of coherence, sank down, mounted excitedly, and then ceased altogether.</p>	
Condescend	<p>Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the countryside — East Egg condescending to West Egg and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.</p>	
Contemptuous	<p>"And you found he was an Oxford man," said Jordan helpfully.</p> <p>"An Oxford man!" He was incredulous. "Like hell he is!...Oxford, New Mexico," snorted Tom contemptuously, "or something like that."</p>	

Cynical	<p>“We don’t know each other very well, Nick,” she said suddenly. “Even if we are cousins. You didn’t come to my wedding.”</p> <p>“I wasn’t back from the war.”</p> <p>“That’s true.” She hesitated. “Well, I’ve had a very bad time, Nick, and I’m pretty cynical about everything.”</p>	
Homogeneity	<p>Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the countryside — East Egg condescending to West Egg and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.</p>	
Poignant	<p>At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others — poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner — young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.</p>	
Notoriety	<p>Gatsby’s notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends such as the “underground pipeline to Canada” attached themselves to him.</p>	
Vehement	<p>As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table—the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.</p>	

Activity 2: Use Your Resources

Directions: Use one or more dictionaries to determine the definition of each word that best matches its use in the text (as seen in Activity 1). Write the definitions in the right-hand column.



Word	Dictionary Definition
Ambiguous	
Apathetic	
Coherence	
Condescend	
Contemptuous	
Cynical	
Homogeneity	
Poignant	
Notoriety	
Vehement	

Activity 3: Application of Vocabulary

Directions: With a partner, discuss each question for 1-2 minutes.



1. Describe to your partner a character from a movie or television show whose identity or intentions are ambiguous when they're first introduced. How did this affect your opinion of the character?
2. Do you think it's acceptable for a person to be apathetic towards local and national politics? Why or why not?
3. Do you find it easier to speak coherently or write coherently? Why do you think that might be?
4. Do you feel that adults sometimes condescend to people your age? Give an example.
5. Name a public figure for whom you have contempt and explain why.
6. Would you describe yourself as more cynical or believing? Why?
7. Would you describe your hometown as homogenous? Explain.
8. Do you enjoy poignant movies? Why or why not?
9. Who do you think is the most notorious celebrity today? Explain your choice.
10. Do you find it more impressive when a person making a speech is vehement or composed? Why?

Activity 5: Shades of Meaning

Directions: Each of your vocabulary words is listed below with a word that is similar — but not exactly the same! — in meaning. Determine how the meanings of the two words differ, and write your answer in the right-hand column. An example answer has been provided in the first row.



Vocabulary Word	Synonym	How the Meanings Differ
Repulsive	Unappealing	<i>Both words describe something negative or unwanted, but <u>repulsive</u> is a much stronger word; it implies that something is really disgusting.</i>
Ambiguous	Misleading	
Apathetic	Unresponsive	
Coherence	Unity	
Condescend	Be Kind	
Contemptuous	Disrespectful	

Cynical	Doubtful	
Homogeneous	Similar	
Poignant	Disappointing	
Notoriety	Fame	
Vehement	Urgent	