

Jazz Age Style Hits Rosenberg Library this Fall 2013

Rosenberg Library will re-live the Jazz Age during the Fall 2013 Museum Book Club series. *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald has been named the club's latest book selection. The novel explores the decadence of the Roaring Twenties and the idealism behind the American Dream. First published in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* has since become a classic and is considered one of the greatest works of American literature.

Born in St. Paul Minnesota in 1896, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald attended Princeton University before joining the U.S. Army. When stationed in Alabama, he began a romantic relationship with Zelda Sayre, a debutante from a prominent Southern family who subsequently became his literary muse. Fitzgerald enjoyed critical and financial success after the 1920 publication of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, and he and Zelda married the same year. The couple's marriage was troubled and often volatile, though it continued to serve as the source of inspiration for much of Fitzgerald's writing.

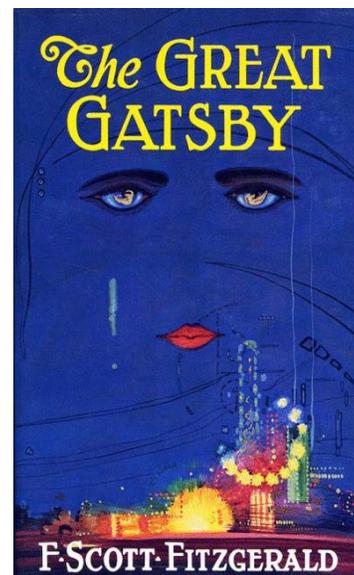
When *The Great Gatsby* was published, it was met with mixed critical reviews and low sales. Only 20,000 copies were purchased in 1925. However, the novel became popular during World War II when it was made available to American soldiers deployed overseas. In the decades following the War, it was placed on required reading lists for American high school students. Fitzgerald died in 1940, never realizing the posthumous recognition of the novel.

The Great Gatsby has been adapted for film numerous times, most recently by director Baz Luhrman in 2013.

THE ROARING TWENTIES

The 1920s was a period of economic prosperity for Americans following World War I. The decade was marked by the emergence of jazz music, socially liberated women, and Art Deco design. Advancements in technology led to the mass production of automobiles, telephones, radios, and motion pictures. Consumerism reached an all-time high as these goods became affordable to the middle class.

A number of well-known writers—including F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway—resented the rampant materialism in America during this period and lived abroad as expatriates during the 1920s.



Original 1925 cover image of *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.



Set of 6 art deco wine glasses by
Rene Lalique, ca. 1926
[gift of the Estate of Victor H. Neal]

FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Participants in the Fall Museum Book Club will view examples of vintage 1920s clothing and decorative arts objects from the library's permanent collection. Among these are rarely exhibited Jazz Age fashions including cocktail dresses, shoes, hats, and more.

A new generation of women called "flappers" emerged in the 1920s. The term referred to liberated young ladies who wore short skirts, listened to jazz music, drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, wore makeup, and drove cars. The female characters in *The Great Gatsby*

are representative of this flapper culture.

Flappers were known for their distinctive sense of style which was heavily influenced by French fashion designer Coco Chanel. Chanel's designs were loose-fitting and featured above-the-knee hemlines with straight waists. This youthful and boyish silhouette was a dramatic departure from earlier women's fashions which required tight corsets to create an hourglass shape.

High-heeled shoes and fitted hats became popular as did layers of beaded necklaces, pins, brooches, and rings in the streamlined, geometric art-deco style. The short, chin-length "bob" hairstyle was favored by these women, especially when shaped into Marcel waves with heated curling irons.



Great Gatsby era women's fashion: Ca. 1925 women's high-heeled silk brocade evening shoes [gift of Elsa Reymershoffer]; Ca. 1918 velvet and lame cocktail dress with rhinestone and pearl buckle detail [gift of Margaret Biehl]; Ladies' hats from the 1920s [gifts of Elsa Reymershoffer and Mrs. Boyer Gonzales]

ABOUT THE BOOK CLUB

Museum Book Club offers participants the chance to experience art and literature in a more interactive way. Members will have the opportunity to view rarely seen art and historical artifacts from the Rosenberg Library Museum collection as they discuss related books. The book club will focus on a single book and related museum objects on a quarterly basis.

The first meeting of the Summer 2013 Rosenberg Library Museum Book Club will be a brown bag lunch meeting, Wednesday, June 19th from 12 noon – 1 pm. A second brown bag lunch club will be held on Thursday, July 25th from 12 noon – 1 pm. On Saturday August 24th, the book discussion and art presentation will take place from 11 am-12 pm. Refreshments will be provided at each session.

Registration is required for all Museum Book Club meetings. Established book clubs are encouraged to participate. Groups of over 10 people are asked to call the Reference Desk so that we may arrange to accommodate your entire group.

The Great Gatsby is available for [check out at the Rosenberg Library](#) and is available for checkout as an e-book through [The Houston Area Digital Media Catalog](#) (Overdrive).