

WHO GETS IN?

A pre-reading simulation about money, status, and belonging

PRE-READING SIMULATION

WHO GETS IN?

Money, Status & Belonging

A pre-reading activity for F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

Students start with different advantages and see which doors open — and which do not.

6 PROFILES 5 ROUNDS 25-35 MIN

MONEY • FAMILY NAME • CONNECTIONS • EDUCATION • REPUTATION

PROFILE CARDS

Social Profiles 1-3

Cut apart or assign one profile to each group.

THE HEIR

You grew up with money, a recognizable family name, and people who can make introductions for you.

What helps: people already know the name.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

THE NEW MILLIONAIRE

You became very rich very quickly. People notice the money, established families still treat you as an outsider.

Money helps. It does not automatically make you an insider.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

THE SOCIAL INSIDER

Your personal fortune is comfortable, not enormous. Your family has status, connections, and a strong public reputation.

What helps: people assume you belong.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

STUDENT

Simulation Record

Predict first. Then record how much access your profile actually received.

Profile: _____ Upgrade: _____

ROUND	MY PREDICTION	WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD MATTER	ACTUAL RESULT	POINTS	ONE THING I NOTICED
1	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	_____
2	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	_____
3	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	_____
4	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	_____
5	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	☐ Full ☐ Limited ☐ None	_____	_____

ACCESS TOTAL: _____ /10

This is not a competition. Use the total to compare patterns across the six profiles.

Students enter the simulation with different levels of money, family name, connections, education, and reputation. They make one upgrade, move through five social doors, and see which advantages actually open them.

6 PROFILES

5 ROUNDS

22 PAGES

25-35 MIN

Actual resource pages shown throughout this preview.

PREDICT • REVEAL • COMPARE

Students make a call before they know what each gatekeeper values.

STUDENT / TEACHER

How It Works

Every group plays the same five rounds. They do not start with the same advantages.

- 1 READ YOUR PROFILE**
Look at your five ratings. A 5 is a strong social advantage in this fictional world; a 1 is a weak one.
- 2 MAKE ONE UPGRADE**
Raise one rating by one point before Round 1. You cannot change it later.
- 3 PREDICT FIRST**
For each round, predict FULL ACCESS, LIMITED ACCESS, or NO ACCESS. Explain which rating you think will matter.
- 4 SEE THE RULE**
The reveal shows what the gatekeeper values. Record 2 points for FULL ACCESS, 1 for LIMITED ACCESS, and 0 for NO ACCESS.
- 5 COMPARE AT THE END**
Compare the access totals. Do not name a winner. Ask why some profiles had a much easier path than others.

FULL ACCESS = 2 • LIMITED ACCESS = 1 • NO ACCESS = 0

Plotting Something • Gatsby Collection HOW THE GAME WORKS 3

STUDENT

Simulation Record

Predict first. Then record how much access your profile actually received.

Profile: _____ Upgrade: _____

ROUND	MY PREDICTION	WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD MATTER	ACTUAL RESULT	POINTS	ONE THING I NOTICED
1	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	_____	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	—	_____
2	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	_____	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	—	_____
3	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	_____	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	—	_____
4	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	_____	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	—	_____
5	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	_____	☐ full ☐ limited ☐ none	—	_____

ACCESS TOTAL: _____ / 10

This is not a competition. Use the total to compare patterns across the six profiles.

Plotting Something • Gatsby Collection STUDENT PAGE • SIMULATION RECORD 6

Every group plays the same five rounds, but the profiles do not start with the same advantages. The record page keeps prediction and outcome side by side so the debrief has something concrete to work with.

SIX FICTIONAL SOCIAL PROFILES

Students are not asked to invent race, gender, or ethnicity for the profiles.

PROFILE CARDS

Social Profiles 1–3

Cut apart or assign one profile to each group.

THE HEIR

You grew up with money, a recognizable family name, and people who can make introductions for you.

What helps: people already know the name.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

THE NEW MILLIONAIRE

You became very rich very quickly. People notice the money; established families still treat you as an outsider.

Money helps. It does not automatically make you an insider.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

THE SOCIAL INSIDER

Your personal fortune is comfortable, not enormous. Your family has status, connections, and a strong public reputation.

What helps: people assume you belong.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

PROFILE CARDS

Social Profiles 4–6

Cut apart or assign one profile to each group.

THE PROFESSIONAL

You have an excellent education and a respected career. You are comfortable, but you are not part of the old social circle.

What helps: credentials and a solid public record.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

THE ENTREPRENEUR

Your business is successful and visible. You have money and useful contacts, but your family name carries little weight.

What helps: money and useful contacts.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

THE STRIVER

You are talented and well-educated, but you have little money and almost no established connections.

What helps: education. The problem is getting noticed.

UPGRADE +1 TO: _____ NEW RATING: _____

Money	
Family Name	
Connections	
Education	
Reputation	

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PROFILE CARDS

4

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PROFILE CARDS

5

Each profile has its own mix of advantages. Before Round 1, students may raise one rating by a single point. Sometimes that upgrade changes an outcome. Sometimes it does not.

THE FIVE ROUNDS

A SOCIAL DOOR, THEN THE RULE

The class predicts before seeing which ratings matter.

ROUND CARD

Round 1: THE CLUB LIST

Make your prediction before the rule is revealed.

A private waterfront club is accepting a small number of new members. The dues are expensive, but money is not the only thing the membership committee cares about.

YOUR PREDICTION

☐ FULL ACCESS ☐ LIMITED ACCESS ☐ NO ACCESS

Before you see the rule, predict how much access your profile will receive.

Which rating on your profile are you relying on? _____

Do not look ahead. Make the call first.

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ROUND 1 • PREDICT

ROUND RESULT

Round 1: Reveal

THE CLUB LIST

WHAT THE GATEKEEPER VALUES

FULL ACCESS if Family Name is 4-5 OR Connections is 5.

LIMITED ACCESS if Connections is 4, OR Reputation is 4-5 and Connections is at least 3.

Otherwise, there is NO ACCESS.

For this club, having money is not the same as belonging.

Record 2 points for FULL ACCESS, 1 for LIMITED ACCESS, and 0 for NO ACCESS.

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ROUND 1 • REVEAL

ROUND CARD

Round 5: THE NEXT INVITATION

Make your prediction before the rule is revealed.

A newspaper prints a damaging story about an ugly incident at a party. The facts are murky, but the story spreads quickly. A week later, invitations go out for another high-profile event.

YOUR PREDICTION

☐ FULL ACCESS ☐ LIMITED ACCESS ☐ NO ACCESS

Predict your result. Will your profile still be welcomed, partly welcomed, or shut out after the bad press?

Which rating on your profile are you relying on? _____

Do not look ahead. Make the call first.

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ROUND 5 • PREDICT

The Club List

A Reveal

The Next Invitation

The other rounds are The House on the Water, The Dinner Table, and The Position. Access shifts because each gatekeeper values a different mix of money, reputation, connections, education, and family name.

FULL = 2

LIMITED = 1

NO ACCESS = 0

COMPARE THE PATTERNS

The point is not who “won.” The point is which advantages the system kept rewarding.

STUDENT / DISCUSSION

What Happened?

Put the six access totals on the board. Then ask what produced the gaps.

Class access totals

Heir	New Millionaire	Social Insider	Professional	Entrepreneur	Striver
___ / 10	___ / 10	___ / 10	___ / 10	___ / 10	___ / 10

- 1 Which profile had the easiest path? Which ratings kept opening doors for that group?
- 2 Which rating mattered in the most rounds? Which rating mattered in the fewest?
- 3 What could money buy in this game? What could it not buy?
- 4 Whose one-point upgrade changed an outcome? Whose upgrade barely mattered?
- 5 Which advantages could a person build over time? Which still depended on other people accepting them?

Before reading: Which seems harder to change — your resources, your reputation, or whether a group sees you as someone who belongs?

AFTER READING

After Reading: Return to the Game

Now that you know the novel, return to the model. Where did it fit Fitzgerald's social world, and where was it too simple?

- 1 Which profile comes closest to Gatsby? Where does the comparison break down?
- 2 Which characters are protected by family name or inherited status even when their behavior should have consequences?
- 3 Where does money give Gatsby access? Where does it still fail to give him belonging?
- 4 How do Nick, Myrtle, Daisy, and Tom show that class is about more than money?
- 5 What did our game leave out that matters in the novel — race, gender, ethnicity, geography, relationships, personality, or something else?

One sentence to revise from before reading:

I used to think _____. Now I think _____.

Students first debrief the simulation itself. After reading the novel, they return to the model and decide where it fits Fitzgerald's social world—and where it was too simple.

TWO PACING OPTIONS

Use the 25-minute version or the full 35-minute simulation.

TEACHER

Teacher Outcome Matrix

Base-profile results before the one-point upgrade.

	Full	One-Point Upgrade	Two-Point Upgrade	Three-Point Upgrade	Four-Point Upgrade	Five-Point Upgrade
1. CLUB LIST	FULL	NONE	FULL	LIMITED	LIMITED	NONE
2. HOUSE ON THE WATER	FULL	FULL	LIMITED	NONE	FULL	NONE
3. DINNER TABLE	FULL	NONE	FULL	LIMITED	LIMITED	NONE
4. POSITION	FULL	NONE	FULL	FULL	LIMITED	LIMITED
5. NEXT INVITATION	FULL	LIMITED	FULL	FULL	LIMITED	NONE

UPGRADE NOTE
A one-point upgrade changes some outcomes but not others. Leave that imbalance in place. Ask whose upgrade changed something, whose did not, and why. Do not name a winning group.

FULL = 2 pts • LIMITED = 1 pt • NONE = 0 pts

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TEACHER

Discussion Prompts

Choose the questions that fit your class. You do not need to use all eight.

- Does having money and having status mean the same thing?
- Which is harder to change: your resources, your reputation, or other people's assumptions about you?
- Which round showed the clearest difference between getting access and actually being accepted?
- When is it reasonable for a group to care about trust or reputation? When does that become just a way to keep people out?
- What can a person reinvent on their own? What still depends on how other people see them?
- Why might someone who has already "made it" still feel excluded?
- Who has more power: the person trying to get in, or the people who decide what counts as belonging?
- What might happen when someone builds a dream around being accepted by a group that may never fully accept them?

If discussion stalls: "Which result felt most unfair — and what exactly made it feel unfair?"

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TEACHER PACING

25-Minute Version

Use this when you want the idea without running all five rounds.

3 min Profiles + upgrade Assign profiles. Groups read their card and choose the one-point upgrade.

12 min Three rounds Use Rounds 1, 2, and 5: Club List, House on the Water, and Next Invitation.

6 min Compare totals Put the six access totals on the board. Ask what money brought — and what it did not.

4 min Close Use the final question on Page 17. Save the Simulation Record for after reading.

This version gives students one status round, one money round, and one round about how social standing can protect a person after bad press.

— Putting Something • Gatsby Collection — TEACHER PACING • 25 MINUTES — 21

Includes

- 22-page complete resource
- 16-page student materials file
- 5-page teacher guide
- Editable PowerPoint + PDFs

TEACHER PACING

Full 35-Minute Version

Built for a class period with about 35 usable minutes.

4 min Profiles + upgrade Assign profiles, read the cards, and make the one-point upgrade.

18 min Five rounds Move quickly: predict, reveal, record. About 3–4 minutes per round.

8 min Compare results Post the six access totals. Ask students to explain the pattern before you add your own interpretation.

5 min Debrief Use two or three questions from Page 20 and the final pre-reading question on Page 17.

Do not turn the debrief into a Gatsby lecture. Leave students with the question: Can money buy access without buying acceptance?

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Suggested Grade Range: 9–12

**25-MINUTE OPTION
3 ROUNDS**