

Excerpt from Chapter 9 of *The Great Gatsby*

F. Scott Fitzgerald

(1) I spent my Saturday nights in New York because those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I could still hear the music and the laughter faint and incessant from his garden and the cars going up and down his drive. One night I did hear a material car there and saw its lights stop at his front steps. But I didn't investigate. Probably it was some final guest who had been away at the ends of the earth and didn't know that the party was over.

Summary: The narrator is sad about a neighbor who is no longer living there. This neighbor appeared to have large parties.

(2) On the last night, with my trunk packed and my car sold to the grocer, I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more. On the white steps an obscene word, scrawled by some boy with a piece of brick, stood out clearly in the moonlight and I erased it, drawing my shoe raspily along the stone. Then I wandered down to the beach and sprawled out on the sand.

Summary: The narrator is moving away and goes to the abandoned house next door to sit on the sand.

(3) Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher, the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes--a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for [his] house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic

Summary: As he sits on the shore, the narrator thinks about the wonder of Dutch settlers upon first arriving in America.

Dreams and goals: The metaphor of a flower is used here to show the promise of this new life for the Dutch sailors. This reveals how dreams and goals come from hope.

Dreams and goals: This passage discusses the power that dreams have over people.

contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

(4) And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of [his] wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of [her] dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

(5) [He] believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter--tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning----

(6) So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

Seeing the new world is described as a kind of magical moment that transfixes the dreamer.

Summary: The narrator thinks again about his neighbor who seemed to want something, using a metaphor of a green light.

Dreams and goals: The narrator uses the metaphor of the green light here to symbolize the dream that the narrator's neighbor continuously worked toward, getting so close that he almost grasped it.

The second passage discusses how a dream or goal can be "behind" you even as you are striving toward it. This represents the way in which dreams and goals push us forward on our journey.

Summary: The narrator talks about how his neighbor had a goal (green light) that he tried to reach even though it eluded him, like our dreams elude us.

Dreams and goals: Again, the narrator refers to dreams and goals being both in front and behind us, again referencing the power that dreams have to control our lives. It also uses the metaphor of a runner in a race to reveal how people strive to reach the goals in their lives.

Summary: The narrator uses a metaphor here to say that Americans keep striving for goals though they may never reach them.

****Yellow highlight denotes connections to dreams or goals.**

