

Beautiful Little Fools

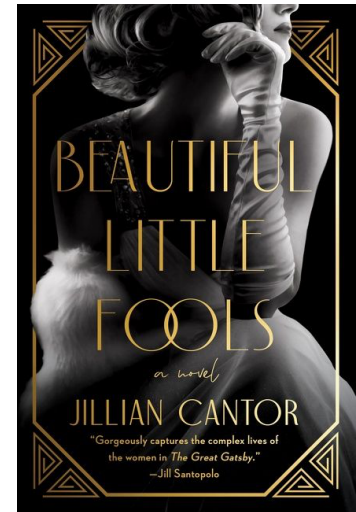
Harper Perennial

By Jillian Cantor

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Introduction

USA Today bestselling author Jillian Cantor reimagines and expands on the literary classic *The Great Gatsby* in this atmospheric historical novel with echoes of *Big Little Lies*, told in three women's alternating voices.



On a sultry August day in 1922, Jay Gatsby is shot dead in his West Egg swimming pool. To the police, it appears to be an open-and-shut case of murder/suicide when the body of George Wilson, a local mechanic, is found in the woods nearby.

Then a diamond hairpin is discovered in the bushes by the pool, and three women fall under suspicion. Each holds a key that can unlock the truth to the mysterious life and death of this enigmatic millionaire.

Daisy Buchanan once thought she might marry Gatsby—before her family was torn apart by an unspeakable tragedy that sent her into the arms of the philandering Tom Buchanan.

Jordan Baker, Daisy's best friend, guards a secret that derailed her promising golf career and threatens to ruin her friendship with Daisy as well.

Catherine McCoy, a suffragette, fights for women's freedom and independence, and especially for her sister, Myrtle Wilson, who's trapped in a terrible marriage.

Jillian Cantor revisits the glittering Jazz Age world of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, retelling this timeless American classic from the women's perspective. *Beautiful Little Fools* is a quintessential tale of money and power, marriage and friendship, love and desire, and ultimately the murder of a man tormented by the past and driven by a destructive longing that can never be fulfilled.

Questions for Discussion

1. How is *Beautiful Little Fools* a reimagining of *The Great Gatsby*, or a murder mystery in its own right, or both? Whose story is this: Daisy's, Jordan's, Catherine's, or the great Jay Gatsby's?
2. Discuss the role point of view plays in the novel. How do Daisy, Jordan, and Catherine each narrate their story differently? What insights does each woman give to the plot and the reader? The original *Gatsby* is told through only Nick Carraway's point of view. What is his role in this novel?

3. Daisy begins with this thought: “Sometimes I think if I’d met Jay Gatsby later, say, after Daddy and Rose’s accident, I wouldn’t have even noticed him at all. I think how everything, how the whole entire course of my life, and his, might have turned out differently.” Do you agree or disagree? How does timing play a role in Jay and Daisy’s relationship, in Daisy’s life, and ultimately in Jay’s death?
4. Sister relationships play a big role in the novel. Compare and contrast Daisy and Rose’s relationship with Catherine and Myrtle’s. How does Rose influence Daisy’s decisions? How does Myrtle influence Catherine’s? How does the death of a sister impact both women in different and similar ways?
5. Catherine and her roommate, Helen, are suffragettes, fighting for women’s rights to vote, and in the end Catherine works to help abused women. Discuss Catherine’s role as an early-1920s feminist. How do her ideas both reflect and conflict with those of Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle?
6. Nick calls Jordan “an incurable liar.” How does that description define her character? Is Nick right about Jordan? What do you see as Jordan’s defining characteristic?
7. Mary Margaret tells Jordan that grief is “an endless, winding river,” a refrain that comes back throughout the novel. Discuss how this applies not only to Jordan and Mary Margaret’s relationship but also to the other characters in the novel. How does grief work as a recurring theme?
8. Is this novel a love story? If so, whose love story is it? Compare and contrast the romantic relationships in the novel. Consider Daisy and Jay, Daisy and Tom, Jordan and Nick, Jordan and Mary Margaret, Catherine and Jay, and Tom and Myrtle.
9. The title of the novel comes from the quote Daisy says in *The Great Gatsby* when her daughter is born: “I hope she’ll be a fool—that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.” Why is it fitting for the title of this particular book? Are any of the women in the novel *beautiful little fools*?
10. Detective Frank Charles was not a character in *The Great Gatsby*. Discuss the role he plays in *Beautiful Little Fools*. What do his chapters add to the novel? Compare and contrast his relationship with Dolores to the other romantic relationships in the novel.
11. *Beautiful Little Fools* revolves around unraveling who killed Jay Gatsby. But, in the end, there is more than one killer. Who would you consider guilty in the novel and why? Do you believe any of the characters are ultimately justified in their actions?
12. Reread *The Great Gatsby* and see how many references from the original you can spot in *Beautiful Little Fools*! Pay particular attention to the Plaza scene near the end of the book.

How does the dialogue take on a different meaning in *Beautiful Little Fools* than in the original novel?