

Extract: THE GREAT GATSBY (a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald)

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been **turning over in my mind**¹ ever since. "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way ... In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran **bores**². The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was **privy to**³ the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought - frequently I have **feigned**⁴ sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and **marred by**⁵ obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit ... When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever ... Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction - Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected **scorn**⁶. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life ... This responsiveness had ... to do with ... an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again.

¹ To turn something over in one's mind: (phrasal verb) to think about something a lot in order to understand it

² Bore: (noun) someone who talks too much about boring topics

³ To be privy to: (idiomatic phrase) to have access to information only known to a few

⁴ Feign: to pretend to have a particular feeling or problem

⁵ To be marred by something: (collocation) to spoil or make less good

⁶ Scorn: (noun) a very strong feeling of contempt or no respect for something of little value

Questions

1. Which of the following is true?
 - a) The narrator's policy of reserving judgement on people has been a wholly positive experience.
 - b) The advice his father gave him has proved to be useful for the narrator.
 - c) The narrator sees himself as a politician.

2. According to the narrator, the "intimate revelations of young men" could best be described as ...
 - a) fundamentally dishonest
 - b) open and honest
 - c) not completely sincere

3. The narrator admits that sometimes what he says is ...
 - a) honest but boastful.
 - b) hopeful but fearful
 - c) tolerant but condescending.

4. The narrator's positive reaction to Gatsby was ...
 - a) surprising, given what the narrator usually thought about people like Gatsby.
 - b) unsurprising, given the narrator's tolerance.
 - c) inspired by their shared sense of hope for the future

SEE ANSWERS OVERLEAF

COMPREHENSION B2: 3



Answers

1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a