

F. scott fitzgerald jazz age author of nyc

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Born on September 24, 1896, F. Scott Fitzgerald is widely regarded as one of the greatest authors in American history. His novels and collections of short stories all highlight the flamboyance and fervor of the American Jazz Age during the 1920s.

While he is famous for his extended stays in Europe, where he wrote prolifically and made friends with many other American writers, Fitzgerald also spent a great deal of time in New York City. His experience with the opportunities and decadence of the city shaped his literary views in a significant way. Fitzgerald's years in New York were his first exposure to the Jazz Age; they inspired many of his most influential works, most notably *The Great Gatsby*.

Fitzgerald's years before New York City were no less important, as they actually influenced his future as both a writer and a New Yorker. He was originally born in St. Paul, Minnesota, to an upper-middle-class family (Trumbull 32). Fitzgerald wrote his first major work when he was 13 years old; it was a detective story which was eventually published in his school's newspaper (*Famous Authors*). A turning point in Fitzgerald's life was when he decided to settle rather permanently in the Northeast and attend university at Princeton. There, he further developed his writing skills and explored his talents as an author. Shortly before graduating in 1917, Fitzgerald dropped out of university to join the Army to fight in World War I (Trumbull 63).

Although he was never deployed overseas, joining the Army also proved to be a significant event in his life. While being stationed in Camp Sheridan near Montgomery, Alabama, Fitzgerald fell in love with Zelda Sayre, the daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court justice and a wealthy debutante with

strong ties to New York City. Determined to wed Zelda, Fitzgerald moved to New York in 1919 after his discharge to work in a Manhattan advertising agency, which he hoped would provide him with a sizable income that would win over the socialite and her family. It is clear that Fitzgerald's formative years led him to become an author who would eventually live in New York City his early affinity for writing encouraged him to further explore his skills in college; his chance relationship with Zelda Sayre sealed his fate as a New Yorker, as Fitzgerald was compelled to make his fortune in the city.

Although the advertising job was not well-paying in the slightest, Fitzgerald was blown away by the changes in New York City during the Jazz Age. Post-World War I America was defined by the Prohibition era, as well as the speakeasies, flapper women, and general carefree attitude associated with this time (F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Iridescent City of 1919*). In his memoir, Fitzgerald reminisces, " New York had all the iridescence of the beginning of the world. The returning troops marched up Fifth Avenue and girls were instinctively drawn east and north towards them—this was the greatest nation and there was gala in the air" (*My Lost City* 3). Fitzgerald also wrote about his struggles in the city " As I hovered ghost-like in the Plaza Red Room of a Saturday afternoon, or went to lush and liquid garden parties in the East Sixties or tippled with Princetonians in the Biltmore Bar, I was haunted always by my other life—my drab room in the Bronx, my square foot of the subway, my fixation upon the day's letter from Alabama—would it come and what would it say? One by one my great dreams of New York became tainted" (*My Lost City* 4).

Aside from sympathizing with his woes, readers of Fitzgerald's memoir can also experience his powerful writing, his concept of the American Dream, and his profound observations about the vitality of the city during the Roaring Twenties. To supplement his job, Fitzgerald also wrote and sold short stories to magazines in the city. This was impactful on his literary career, as it is the first time Fitzgerald could actually support himself financially through his work. Nevertheless, his relationship with Zelda seemed to be at its end, until Fitzgerald published his debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*, which became an instant success. This quick turn of luck provided a steady income suitable to the needs of an upper-class lady such as Zelda, and the two were married in 1920 (Trumbull 86). Fitzgerald's marriage to Zelda also elevated his own social status; he now was able to enjoy the decadence of the city like the rest of the New York elite. For the first time, Fitzgerald was able to participate in the lifestyle he had only written about in his stories.

Fitzgerald's years in New York shaped him as a writer not only did he get first-hand experience writing published works to support himself, his rags-to-riches success story exposed him to both the poverty and opulence of New York during the Jazz Age; for the rest of his life, he would write about the people who lived during this time.

Fitzgerald often incorporated his personal experience in New York City into his literary works, most notably in *The Great Gatsby*. On the surface, the novel tells the story of an idealistic millionaire's failed attempts to woo the love of his past, which ends in terrible tragedy. However, *The Great Gatsby* also addresses many universal themes, such as social class mobility, idealism, and the "decadent downside of the American Dream" (Churchwell

1). There are many similarities between Fitzgerald's life story and the story of *The Great Gatsby*. For starters, the novel itself is set in Long Island, where Fitzgerald often visited and even resided at one point (Trumbull 142). After gaining literary success, Fitzgerald was welcomed to the wealthy socialites, who hosted parties similar to those of Gatsby's. Nick Carraway, the narrator of the novel, was originally from the Midwest but came to New York to seek his fortune. Most importantly, Fitzgerald bears a striking resemblance to Gatsby, a self-made wealthy man who pursues the love of a beautiful, effervescent socialite with an impressive pedigree. The conflict between "new money" and "old money" in *The Great Gatsby* mirrors Fitzgerald's own doubts about his place in his wife's social circle. It is clear that Fitzgerald wrote himself and even the people around him into this book. Without his experience living in New York City, it undoubtedly would have been a challenge to portray the characters, the setting, and the conflicts in such a realistic and profound manner.

Although Fitzgerald was not born in New York City and did not even live there until he was already a young man, his time in the city greatly impacted his literary career as well as the rest of his life. Rising to fame after living as a struggling writer placed Fitzgerald in two worlds one where the everyman fights for survival and one where the rich live in utter decadence. As such, Fitzgerald was sympathetic to the plights of both groups, and this is what makes his later works, such as *The Great Gatsby*, so relevant and relatable, even to this day.