

The Great Gatsby

Number crunching the punctuation

The table below shows you the number of exclamation marks and question marks in each chapter of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. (The bracketed numbers in italics indicate the number of words per question/ exclamation marks in each chapter so that you are comparing equivalences.)

1. What do you notice about the use of question marks and exclamation marks across the novel?
2. Which chapters leap out at you as unusual or potentially interesting? On your own or in pairs, take one of these chapters and look back at the text. What insights might the punctuation give you the chapter (for example, plot events, tone, significance to the novel as a whole)? Come up with a hypothesis to use as a focus for your exploration of the text, then go back to the text and put your ideas to the test.
3. Feed back your discoveries.

Chapter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Total	5929	4307	5761	5468	4253	4066	8833	4549	5328
? marks	28 <i>(1:212)</i>	30 <i>(1:144)</i>	34 <i>(1: 169)</i>	36 <i>(1:152)</i>	34 <i>(1:125)</i>	24 <i>(1:169)</i>	89 <i>(1:99)</i>	22 <i>(1:207)</i>	30 <i>(1:178)</i>
! marks	9 <i>(1:659)</i>	10 <i>(1:431)</i>	15 <i>(1:384)</i>	12 <i>(1:456)</i>	9 <i>(1:473)</i>	5 <i>(1:813)</i>	51 <i>(1:173)</i>	4 <i>(1:1137)</i>	9 <i>(1:592)</i>

Exploring the whole text – an example

Included here are some words and phrases from *The Great Gatsby*.

1. Read down the list and talk about your response to discovering, for example, that the phrase ‘As if’ is used 50 times.
2. How might you use this information to develop your interpretation of the novel? You might think about what it tells you about Fitzgerald’s characterisation of Nick and the creation of his narrative voice, the themes of the novel and so on.

As if	50
As though	21
Guess	9
He seemed to say	1
Heard it said	1
I always had the impression that	3
I have an idea that	1
I suppose	12
I suspect	2
I think	32
Imagine	4
Perhaps	19
Possibly	3
Probably	6
There must have been	3

Chapter by chapter analysis – an example

The table on the next page illustrates the way you might analyse Fitzgerald's use of particular words across the novel, chapter-by-chapter.

NB: all forms of a word have been included (e.g. for the verb 'to see': see, seeing, saw). For some clusters it might be interesting to distinguish past and present forms of the verb.

Chapter (with total words)	1 (5929)	2 (4307)	3 (5761)	4 (5468)	5 (4253)	6 (4066)	7 (8833)	8 (4549)	9 (5328)
Lexical cluster to do with movement/ stillness	Still: 1 Stay: 2 Stationary: 1 Stop: 0 Restless: 4	Still: 0 Stay: 1 Stationary: 0 Stop: 0 Restless: 0	Still: 2 Stay: 1 Stationary: 0 Stop: 3 Restless: 1	Still: 3 Stay: 1 Stationary: 0 Stop: 0 Restless: 1	Still: 4 Stay: 0 Stationary: 0 Stop: 5 Restless: 0	Still: 2 Stay: 3 Stationary: 0 Stop: 1 Restless: 0	Still: 6 Stay: 5 Stationary: 0 Stop: 11 Restless: 1	Still: 8 Stay: 2 Stationary: 0 Stop: 6 Restless: 0	Still: 5 Stay: 1 Stationary: 0 Stop: 6 Restless: 1
Lexical cluster to do with seeing/looking	Eyes: 12 Glance: 5 Look: 16 See/saw/sight: 17 Watch: 4 Windows: 5	Eyes: 8 Glance: 2 Look: 22 See/saw/sight: 9 Watch: 2 Windows: 3	Eyes: 7 Glance: 2 Look: 18 See/saw/sight: 9 Watch: 1 Windows: 2	Eyes: 8 Glance: 2 Look: 21 See/saw/sight: 13 Watch: 1 Windows: 0	Eyes: 10 Glance: 4 Look: 23 See/saw/sight: 9 Watch: 2 Windows: 6	Eyes: 6 Glance: 2 Look: 11 See/saw/sight: 4 Watch: 3 Windows: 0	Eyes: 23 Glance: 7 Look: 33 See/saw/sight: 41 Watch: 4 Windows: 8	Eyes: 6 Glance: 1 Look: 9 See/saw/sight: 12 Watch: 1 Windows: 10	Eyes: 14 Glance: 1 Look: 18 See/saw/sight: 15 Watch: 1 Windows: 4
Lexical cluster to do with time	After: 13 Always: 6 Back: 14 Before: 4 Begin: 5 Ever: 5 Forever: 2 Forget: 4 Hour: 2 Minute: 6 Moment (momentary):10 Never: 7 Sometimes: 1 Time: 4 Times: 0	After: 8 Always: 2 Back: 14 Before: 4 Begin: 0 Ever: 2 Forever: 2 Forget: 2 Hour: 1 Minute: 1 Moment: 7 Never: 3 Sometimes:1 Time: 10 Times: 1	After: 7 Always: 2 Back: 8 Before: 12 Begin: 0 Ever: 2 Forever: 2 Forget: 2 Hour: 1 Minute: 6 Moment (momentary):12 Never: 3 Sometimes: 1 Time: 11 Times: 3	After: 11 Always: 5 Back: 6 Before: 14 Begin: 9 Ever: 6 Forever: 1 Forget: 6 Hour: 6 Minute: 3 Moment: 3 Never: 11 Sometimes: 2 Time: 10 Times: 3	After: 7 Always: 3 Back: 12 Before: 10 Begin: 11 Ever: 1 Forever: 1 Forget: 2 Hour: 8 Minute: 5 Moment (momentary):13 Never: 2 Sometimes: 1 Time: 7 Times: 0	After: 7 Always: 1 Back: 5 Before: 8 Begin: 4 Ever: 0 Forever: 2 Forget: 0 Hour: 4 Minute: 4 Moment: 6 Never: 9 Sometimes: 2 Time: 7 Times:2	After: 17 Always: 3 Back: 27 Before: 15 Begin: 8 Ever: 4 Forever: 2 Forget: 4 Hour: 7 Minute: 10 Moment: 10 Never: 13 Sometimes: 3 Time: 11 Times: 3	After: 0 Always: 6 Back: 0 Before: 12 Begin: 8 Ever: 7 Forever: 1 Forget: 1 Hour: 5 Minute: 8 Moment: 4 Never: 5 Sometimes: 1 Time: 14 Times: 2	After: 14 Always: 6 Back: 16 Before: 10 Begin: 10 Ever: 1 Forever: 1 Forget: 1 Hour: 7 Minute: 6 Moment: 7 Never: 7 Sometimes: 0 Time: 9 Times: 3
Colour words	White: 8 Yellow: 1 Green: 1 Gold: 2 Silver: 3	White: 7 Yellow: 3 Green: 0 Gold: 0 Silver: 0	White: 2 Yellow: 7 Green: 0 Gold: 1 Silver: 1	White: 9 Yellow: 0 Green: 1 Gold: 0 Silver: 0	White: 1 Yellow: 0 Green: 2 Gold: 4 Silver: 0	White: 5 Yellow: 0 Green: 3 Gold: 1 Silver: 1	White: 0 Yellow: 7 Green: 5 Gold: 0 Silver: 2	White: 2 Yellow: 5 Green: 1 Gold: 2 Silver: 3	White: 2 Yellow: 1 Green: 3 Gold: 0 Silver: 0
Names	I: 181 Gatsby: 12 Daisy: 30	I: 132 Gatsby: 1 Daisy: 6	I: 157 Gatsby: 28 Daisy: 1	I: 165 Gatsby: 38 Daisy: 15	I: 155 Gatsby: 36 Daisy: 26	I: 87 Gatsby: 37 (+ Gatz: 5) Daisy: 19	I: 241 Gatsby: 63 Daisy: 61	I: 96 Gatsby: 21 Daisy: 19	I: 199 Gatsby: 27 (+ Gatz: 6) Daisy: 9

