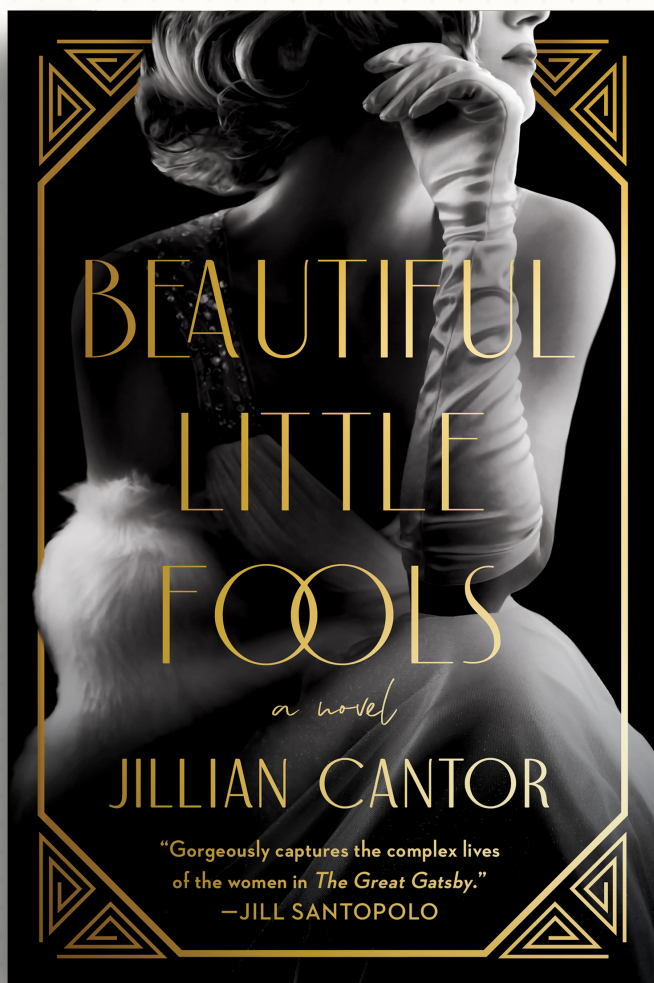


BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS

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"I hope she'll be a fool—
that's the best thing a girl
can be in this world, a
beautiful little fool."

—**Daisy Buchanan,**
The Great Gatsby

A LETTER TO BOOK CLUBS

INSPIRATION FOR *BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS*

Dear Readers,

I've long been a fan of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but as a reader, I've always wanted to know more about the women in the novel, certain they had their own stories to tell, too. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy Buchanan says that the best thing a woman can be is a "beautiful little fool," but I always felt sure that neither she, nor her friend, Jordan Baker, were fools. In my novel, *Beautiful Little Fools*, I set out to explore just that, as I reimagine the world F. Scott Fitzgerald first created, but this time, from the women's points of view.



My novel is narrated by Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson's sister, Catherine, as well as a detective hired to investigate Jay Gatsby's death, who is certain one of these women were involved. *Beautiful Little Fools* unfolds as part mystery, part retelling, and part historical novel detailing the lives of women at the time. Though it could be read as a companion to *The Great Gatsby*, it can also be read alone, because ultimately, it's an exploration of the interior lives of women, their struggles, their triumphs, and most of all, their secrets.

I hope you will enjoy reading about the women of *The Great Gatsby* as much I enjoyed writing about them!

All my best,

Jillian Cantor

BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 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?

BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS

COCKTAIL RECIPES

DAISY'S MINT JULEP

2 ounces (Kentucky) bourbon
8 mint leaves
¼ ounce simple syrup
Crushed ice
Serve in a julep cup or rocks glass;
garnish with a mint sprig

JORDAN'S PINK GIN AND TONIC

1 ½ ounces gin
½ ounce lime juice, freshly squeezed
5 dashes Angostura bitters
Tonic water, chilled, to top
Serve in a highball glass with ice

CATHERINE'S GIN RICKEY

2 ounces gin
½ ounce fresh lime juice
4 ounces club soda
Serve in a highball glass with ice;
garnish with lime wedge

MYRTLE'S MARY PICKFORD

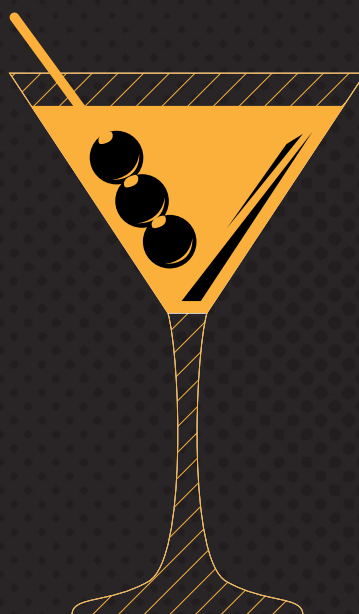
2 ounces light rum
2 ounces pineapple juice
1 teaspoon grenadine
Add into a cocktail shaker with ice
and shake, strain into a chilled
cocktail glass
Garnish with maraschino cherry

TOM'S HANKY PANKY

1 ½ ounce dry gin
1 ½ ounce sweet vermouth
2 dashes Fernet-Branca
Add into a mixing glass and stir; strain
into a chilled cocktail glass
Garnish with an orange wedge

DETECTIVE FRANK CHARLES' OLD FASHIONED

2 ounces bourbon
2 dashes Angostura bitters
1 sugar cube (or ¼ ounce of simple syrup)
Club soda
Add to a rocks glass over ice; garnish with
orange peel or cherry



QUOTES FROM THE GREAT GATSBY THAT INSPIRED *BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS*

EVERY MOMENT OF THE ORIGINAL THE GREAT GATSBY INSPIRED BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS, BUT HERE ARE FEW KEY QUOTES THAT INSPIRED SOME PLOT POINTS! SEE IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHERE THEY LED JORDAN, DAISY, AND CATHERINE IN MY NOVEL.

1. His [Tom's] family were enormously wealthy . . . for instance he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest . . . Why they came east I don't know. They had spent a year in France, for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This [East Egg] was a permanent move, said Daisy . . .
(CHAPTER 1)
2. Daisy speaking: "Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said. 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.'" (CHAPTER 1)
3. Daisy speaking: "Her [Jordan's] family is one aunt, about a thousand years old."
(CHAPTER 1)
4. The [Myrtle's] sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty with a solid sticky bob of red hair and a complexion powdered milky white.
(CHAPTER 2)
5. "Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!" shouted Mrs. Wilson. "I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai—" Making a short deft movement Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand. Then there were bloody towels . . . Catherine scolding and consoling . . .
(CHAPTER 2)
6. Jordan Baker . . . was incurably dishonest.
(CHAPTER 3)
7. At her first big golf tournament there was a row. . . a suggestion that she had moved her ball. . . The thing approached the proportions of a scandal—then died away.
(CHAPTER 3)
8. Jordan speaking: "The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen, two years older than me, and by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville. . . excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her. . ." (CHAPTER 4)
9. Jordan speaking: "... before the wedding he [Tom] gave her [Daisy] a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars." (CHAPTER 4)
10. Jordan speaking: "A week after I left Santa Barbara Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one night . . . The girl who was with him got into the papers too because her arm was broken – she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel. The next April Daisy had her little girl and they went to France for a year. I saw them one spring in Cannes . . . and then they came back to Chicago . . ." (CHAPTER 4)
11. "... I was married in the middle of June," Daisy remembered. "Louisville in June! Somebody fainted . . . A man named Biloxi, 'Blocks Biloxi' and he made boxes . . ."
(CHAPTER 7)

QUOTES FROM THE GREAT GATSBY THAT INSPIRED *BEAUTIFUL LITTLE FOOLS*

12. "They carried him into my house," appended Jordan, "because we lived just two doors down from the church. And he stayed three weeks, until Daddy told him he had to get out. The day after he left Daddy died." After a moment she added as if she might have sounded irreverent, "There wasn't any connection." (CHAPTER 7)
13. Daisy: "Do you know why we left Chicago? I'm surprised that they didn't treat you to the story of that little spree." (CHAPTER 7)
14. "I never loved him," she [Daisy] said with perceptible reluctance. "Not at Kapiolani?" demanded Tom suddenly. (CHAPTER 7)
15. . . . the inquest brought to light Wilson's suspicions of his wife . . . but Catherine, who might have said anything didn't say a word. She showed a surprising amount of character about it too—looked at the coroner with determined eyes . . . and swore that her sister had never seen Gatsby, that her sister was completely happy with her husband . . . She convinced herself of it and cried into her handkerchief as if the very suggestion was more than she could endure. So Wilson was reduced to a man "deranged by grief" in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there. (CHAPTER 9)

JILLIAN CANTOR'S BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

THE GREAT GATSBY BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

This would make a great companion read with *Beautiful Little Fools*! The women have only small roles in the original classic, which is narrated by Nick Carraway. So you can see how his point of view of events are much different, and which scenes overlap with *Beautiful Little Fools* too.

CARELESS PEOPLE: MURDER, MAYHEM AND THE INVENTION OF THE GREAT GATSBY BY SARAH CHURCHWELL

A non-fiction book – this takes a look at the world in which F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* as well as the real murder that may have inspired him.

THE SUN ALSO RISES AND A FAREWELL TO ARMS BY ERNEST HEMINGWAY

If you're looking for other classic novels from the same era as *The Great Gatsby*, these are two of my favorites.

WHEN SHE WOKE BY HILLARY JORDAN

Another book inspired by a classic novel (this one, *The Scarlet Letter*), this novel is set in the future, and is a beautifully written exploration and commentary on women's rights.

BIG LITTLE LIES AND THE HUSBAND'S SECRET BY LIANE MORIARTY

If you're looking for more stories with women and secrets, Liane Moriarty does this so well, and the structure of *Big Little Lies* especially inspired me as I was writing *Beautiful Little Fools*.