

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The dominant influences on F. Scott Fitzgerald were aspiration, literature, Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, and alcohol.

The Early Years

- St. Paul, Minnesota – September 1896
- Cousin of Francis Scott Key (National Anthem)
- Comes from Southern (manners)/Irish (feisty) roots.
- Catholic
- Father failed in furniture business...went to work for P&G in New Jersey

More Early Years

- 1908 (12) – Father dismissed. Returned to St. Paul and lived on Mom's inheritance.
- Went to private Academy. Started to write for school newspaper.
- Academic Probation. Unlikely to graduate. Joined the army in 1917.

The Middle Years

- 1918- Assigned to base in Alabama. Fell in love with Judge's daughter...Zelda Sayre.
- After war...Fitzgerald went to New York to make fortune to marry Zelda. She wouldn't wait...broke off engagement.

Let's keep going

- 1919...F. Scott Quit job...went back to Minnesota
- This made him famous overnight...a week later he married Zelda.
- The two started a jet set lifestyle. They moved to New York to be near

Famous Years

- During his party years...he became an alcoholic...but he wrote sober.
- When the Drinking increased...so did the marital fights.
- Fitzgerald became associated with *The Jazz Age*.
- This period defined him...he, like the era, was concerned with art, excess, and satire.

More Famous Years

- In France he wrote his most famous work... *The Great Gatsby*.
- But his marriage was damaged when Zelda had an affair with a French pilot.

The Beginning of the End

- *The Great Gatsby* got critical acclaim...but had poor sales. Performance rights brought in some money.
- In 1930 Zelda had a breakdown. She went to a Swiss Psychiatric hospital. F. Scott wrote to pay for it.

The Continued Slide

- Zelda spent most of the rest of her life in Sanitariums.
- 1936-1937 – Fitzgerald was sick, drunk, in debt and unable to write.
- Fell in love with movie columnist...Sheila Graham.

The End

- Dec. 1940 - Was working on *The Love of the Last Tycoon* when he died of a heart attack in Graham's apartment.
- Zelda died 8 years later during a fire at her mental hospital.
- Fitzgerald died thinking he was a failure.
- The obituaries were condescending.

The Legacy

- Most thought he was doomed to literary obscurity.
- Between 1945-1950 his work got noticed...and he was again popular.
- By 1960 he was considered an enduring writer.
- In fact, *The Great Gatsby*, a work that seriously examines the theme of aspiration in an American setting, now seems to define the classic American novel.