

## **F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up**



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**Lesson Developer: Priyadarshini Bhattacharyya**  
**College/ Department: Sri Aurobindo College**

# F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

## The Crack-Up

Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

### Author's Life History

Francis Scott Fitzgerald was born on 24 September 1896 in St Paul, Minnesota to Mollie and Edward Fitzgerald. He belonged to an upper middle class family. For the first ten years of his childhood, Fitzgerald stayed in Buffalo, New York. Later the family moved to Minnesota, where Fitzgerald attended St Paul's school from 1908 to 1911. His first writing was published when he was only thirteen years old. This was a detective story that was published in his school magazine. In 1911 Fitzgerald was shifted to Newman School which was a Catholic prep school in New Jersey and he graduated from there in 1915. After his graduation he decided to remain in New Jersey and continue his further studies at the Princeton University. At Princeton University he nurtured his skills as a writer and made friends like Edmund Wilson - a future author/critic - who would later play a very important role in his career as an author.



Img 1. Source- [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).

In 1917 he dropped out of the University to join the US Army. While commissioned as a second lieutenant in Montgomery, Alabama, Fitzgerald met Zelda Sayre and fell in love with her. After the initial acceptance Zelda rejected Fitzgerald's proposal as she doubted his capability to support her. However she came back to him after he reworked one of his earlier writings and published it as his first novel *This Side of Paradise* in 1920. The book was instantly accepted by the readers and became one of the most popular novels of that year. Zelda and Fitzgerald were soon married. It is this novel that primarily supported the grand celebrity-like lifestyle of Zelda and Fitzgerald and later provided for the medical bills that Zelda's mental illness – not to forget his own weak physical condition and alcoholism – caused them.

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

Fitzgerald named the roaring decade of the twenties - “The Jazz Age”. In his writings he reflected the trends and conventions of his contemporary times and his works came to symbolize



Img 2. Source- [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

the Jazz Age. A fine description of this era can be seen in his *Echoes of the Jazz Age* when he wrote, “It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire”. He was also considered a member of the “Lost Generation” of 1920s.

Fitzgerald’s works include four finished novels, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender is the Night* (1934). A fifth one *The Love of the Last Tycoon* (1941) was left unfinished and was published posthumously. Being a professional writer, Fitzgerald, like several of his contemporaries, published many short stories in newspapers and magazines like, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier’s Weekly* and *Esquire*. He also sold his stories

and novels to Hollywood Studios. His most popular work in the present times is *The Great Gatsby* which was published in `1925.

Fitzgerald began his career as a writer of stories for popular magazines in 1919. *The Saturday Daily Post* became the most popular site for his stories and he came to be known as a ‘Post Writer’. In his early stories which were commercially successful, one witnessed the emergence of an independent, American woman who was determined and confident. This figure featured in stories like “The Off-shore Pirate” and “Bernice Bobs her Hair”.<sup>1</sup>

The author who became famous overnight with his first work, *This Side of the Paradise* (1920) ironically suffered a life of personal conflicts and commercial defeats. His novel *The Great Gatsby* received high appreciations and reviews but sold very few copies. However, the stage and movie rights brought in some money. On the personal front Fitzgerald was battling with his troubled marriage, the deteriorating mental health of his wife Zelda Sayre, his alcoholism, scanty income,

<sup>1</sup> Reference taken from [www.library.sc.edu](http://www.library.sc.edu).

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

increasing debts and a growing sense of defeat as a writer. Fitzgerald's most ambitious novel, *Tender is the Night*, which was published in 1934, failed to make any significant commercial mark. This plunged Fitzgerald deeper into the gloom and obscurity of his current condition. His income was sinking during the decade of thirties and as was the case, "during his career he was relying on loans from those who believed in him – editor Perkins and Agent Harold Ober" (Donaldson. 2002.146)

It is this that forms a potent background for the three essays – "The Crack-Up", "Pasting It Together" and "Handle with Care" - that were published in *Esquire* magazine in 1936 under the title "The Crack-Up". The essays that clearly gave a detailed insight into authors mind while he was going through a phase of acute depression and hopelessness were poorly received by the critics and contemporary authors. Fitzgerald was accused "for revealing himself too naked in public" (Bannerjee 47). Ernest Hemingway, who was a friend of Fitzgerald's, called the essays "miserable" and viewed them as an unnecessary 'public whining.' Don Passos, who shared Hemingway's opinion, felt that if Fitzgerald was broken and shattered he should have written a novel about it not, "spilling it in little pieces for "Arnold Gingrich"<sup>2</sup>" (Passos qtd in Bannerjee. 47). Hemingway even went on to write "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" a story about a failed author for the August 1936 issue of the same magazine *Esquire*. Nevertheless, when the Crack-Up essays were read and studied retrospectively, then were perceived as narratives that revealed, "much about the declining values of American Society as about Fitzgerald's own decline" (Donaldson. 2002.156)

Fitzgerald died in 1940. His last novel, *The Love of the Last Tycoon* was left unfinished and was published posthumously in 1941. The first phase of reviving the true worth of his work that depicted the American sensibilities of the 'Roaring Twenties' as well as the phase that followed the 'Great Depression' began in the latter half of the Forties and by the 1960s Fitzgerald was well recognized as one of the most important authors of the Twenties and even Thirties who chronicled several contrasting aspects of the decades.

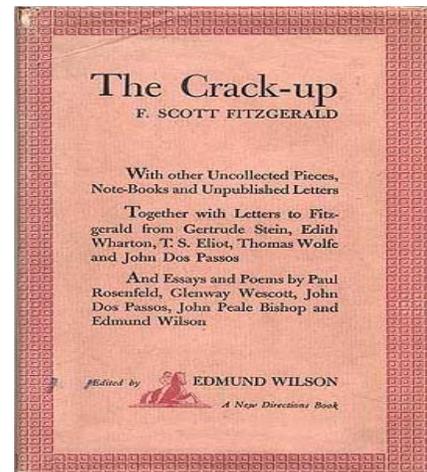
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<sup>2</sup> Arnold Gingrich was the editor of *Esquire* the magazine which published the 'Crack-Up' essays in 1936.

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

### A Study of Fitzgerald's "The Crack-Up"

The Crack-Up is a title that is used to refer to the three essays—"The Crack-Up", "Pasting it Together" and "Handle with Care". These were published in *Esquire* magazine over a period of three months – February, March and April in 1936. Later in 1945, Edmund Wilson published a collection of essays by Francis Scott Fitzgerald which included the three works mentioned above, along with his other essays, notes and letters which were previously unpublished. This collection too was named as *The Crack-up*.



Img 3. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

In Fitzgerald's own words the 'Crack-Up' essays – as the three essays are collectively called – are "trilogy of depression" (Fitzgerald qtd in Bannerjee) that do not just manifest a mental breakdown but, a reaction towards, "the spiritual change of life – and a most unwilling one" (Fitzgerald qtd in Donaldson. 185). With his first book being published in 1920, Fitzgerald flourished as a successful author in this decade of Twenties which was marked with unprecedented and mostly unequal growth and prosperity. The 'Crack-Up' essays that were written and published in 1930s have often been seen as autobiographical texts of self confession. Interestingly, an in-depth analysis of the three texts tends to reveal that their relevance is far beyond the individual crisis of the author.

These essays were written in the 1930s by an individual who lived and earned success during the booming years of the 'Roaring' twenties. Thus, before assessing the essays it is pertinent to understand the historical matrix in which these essays, and by extension Fitzgerald himself, was caught in.

The decade of the Twenties often referred to as the 'Roaring Twenties' was an era of urban growth and prosperity. There was a 'post-war' optimism that compelled people to move out of villages and proceed towards cities in search of better jobs and prosperity. For the first time, more people lived in the cities than in villages. The decade of the Twenties also witnessed an unprecedented growth of

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

national economy. Mass production made goods cheap and easily available in the market. Increased purchasing power and easy credits allowed people to afford those products. Owning a car before the wars was a luxury but in 1920s the mass production of the automobile industry made cars a household product. Among the other products that were being rapidly consumed were radios and electrical appliances like refrigerators. The entertainment industry boomed with the popularity of radio and films. Nearly everyone in the American cities listened to the radio programs and went to theatres to watch films. Accessibility of cars and radios further accelerated the popularity of the Jazz music – a fusion of African and European music - as the youth could listen and enjoy it either by going to several clubs where the music was played or by possessing radios or phonograph records. Jazz music and dance created a cultural change in the society. For the youth of the time, Jazz was a way to rebel against the prior set rules and values. It is interesting to note that the influence this form of music had on society compelled Fitzgerald to term the entire age as 'Jazz Age'. Another popular symbol of the age was the 'Flapper'. A flapper was a specific image of a woman who rebelled against the conventional definitions of femininity and the feminine. She had bob cut hair, wore short skirts, drank and smoked in public, treated sex casually and listened to jazz music. The 1920s was an era that saw women getting independent. They now had the right to vote, with women getting recruited for several white collar jobs they were financially independent, and with the easy availability of birth control methods like the diaphragm they could be sexually confident. The term flapper, to refer to the new emerging woman of the Twenties was first used by authors like Fitzgerald himself and artists like John Held Jr. Interestingly the first collection of short stories that Fitzgerald published in 1920s was called *Flappers and Philosophers*. This image of the flapper was further popularized by Hollywood actresses like Mary Pickford, Clara Bow and Jane Fonda. It is interesting to note that Fitzgerald who flourished as a writer in the twenties, with his collection of short stories and two successful novels, *This Side of*



Img 4. Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)  
Image of the Flapper in Sunday Evening Post

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

*Paradise* (1920) and *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922) also played an important part in creating iconic symbols for the decade of Twenties.

The boom of the Twenties however was short lived. The Great Depression hit the world in 1929 and the glitter of the Roaring twenties was replaced with misery, deprivation and misfortune. The decade of the 1930s began with one-fourth of the wage earning mass being rendered unemployed. People lost their houses, several banks closed down, and with no money to spend, people stopped buying. Thus the consumer economy received an unexpected halt. The federal government of Herbert Hoover hardly took any substantial steps to manage the situation and American people felt the need for a different government. In 1933 Franklin D Roosevelt was elected the 32<sup>nd</sup> President of America. Although his government acted swiftly to respond to the present crisis, the era continued to be associated with joblessness, paucity of money and a general sense of gloom. Other than this the decade of thirties was marked with several natural disasters that adversely affected the lives of the people. Some of the states of America witnessed one of the worst droughts. Huge dust storms – referred to as ‘Dust Bowls’ – carried fertile soil away leaving the land barren, this compelled millions of people to abandon their farms now unfit for farming<sup>3</sup>.

This contrasting atmosphere left people disillusioned and disenchanted. Those who lived and enjoyed the boom of the twenties found it difficult to adjust themselves with the disorienting thirties. It is this

*“Of course all life is a  
process of breaking*

*down...”*

*Fitzgerald, “The*

*Crack-up”*

aspect of American reality that seems to get reflected through Fitzgerald’s seemingly autobiographical ‘Crack-Up’ essays.

I

The first essay of the series is titled “The Crack-Up”. In this essay Fitzgerald establishes the atmosphere of gloom and depression that makes it difficult for him to live and write, the way he did earlier. This he describes as the ‘Crack-Up’. This inability to resume the old vigor towards his life and work that compels Fitzgerald –

supposedly the narrator of the essays – to cast an insightful view on his own life. This forms the ground for all the three essays.

<sup>3</sup> Reference taken from [www.history.com](http://www.history.com) and [www.history1900s.about.com](http://www.history1900s.about.com)

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

The first essay begins with a discussion of two kinds of blows that destroy an individual's life. One that comes from outside and the other that comes from within. The former seems to affect life immediately, whereas the latter cannot be felt 'until it is too late to do anything about it' (Fitzgerald 1).

To understand the nature and cause of these blows the narrator takes a plunge into his past and gives his readers an account of his twenties, a time when Fitzgerald was both young and successful. This was the time when "life was something you dominated if you were any good" (Fitzgerald 1) and a career as a writer was nothing short of a "romantic business" (Fitzgerald 1). Although things became complicated with progressing years yet his view towards life remained positive and deterministic. He believed in the need to struggle against the "sense of futility of effort" (Fitzgerald 1), and nurtured a will to "succeed" in the face of inevitable failure. Fitzgerald states that he continued with this approach to life for as long as seventeen years, with a determination that, "Up to forty-nine it'll be all right" (Fitzgerald 2). However, things didn't go according to his plan and he 'suddenly' realized that he had "prematurely cracked", his nervous reflexes were giving away and the reason probably was, "too much anger and too many tears" (Fitzgerald 2). It is pertinent at this point to understand the significance of this realization. These essays, though published in 1936, are clearly a result of a well nurtured disappointment and dissatisfaction. One evident reason for this was Fitzgerald's own deteriorating physical and financial conditions that affected him from the latter half of 1920s and became a major issue in the 1930s. This is evident from the very statement, "not long before, I had sat in the office of a great doctor and listened to a grave sentence" (Fitzgerald 2). Reading the essays, especially the first one, vis-à-vis the socio-political and economical aspects of the twenties and thirties, seem to suggest that this 'sudden realization' can also be a devastating effect of being caught between the contrasting realities of the roaring Twenties and miserable Thirties. The sudden change that the American society as well as the rest of the world was forced to undergo post 1929 – The Great Depression - in order to accept a difficult and constricted living, might have surely accelerated, if not solely caused the feeling of depression and desolation.

In an attempt to further elucidate his situation Fitzgerald explains that, a little while before he realized that he was 'cracked' he felt a strong urge to "be absolutely alone" (Fitzgerald 2) and thus arranged for a detachment from most of the world and managed to sought out a "certain insulation from ordinary cares" (Fitzgerald 2)". During this period of detachment he realized that it was "not an unhappy time" (Fitzgerald 2) and that the alienation made him feel better. It is this realization that ironically "cracked-up" his mind. The fact that he felt better by alienating himself from the world he

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

was familiar with, the people he had some kind of relation with, made him aware of the intense crisis in which his mind was caught in and this knowledge *cracked* him up. A retrospective view of his life that he takes after the being aware of his present situation revealed that “for a long time I had not liked people and things, but only followed the rickety pretence of liking” (Fitzgerald 2). Even his love for those who were close to him was nothing but an “attempt to love” (Fitzgerald 2). In other words, his behavior towards his acquaintances, friends and loved ones was not what he wanted to do but what he *thought* he should do. This knowledge about his own self made him bitter about things like “sound of the radio, the advertisement in the magazine, the screech of tracks. . .” (Fitzgerald 2-3) and he could only manage to barely look at a certain things like Katherine Hepburn’s image on the screen and old friends provided he saw them only once a year.

By the end of 1920s Fitzgerald began suffering from a sense of dejection and insecurity. His health was deteriorating, he had no money, his works were not being accepted and his wife’s condition was worsening. To add to this was the great change of social order that the financial crisis of 1929 ushered in for the decade of thirties. This made it impossible for him to continue writing the way he did. As Donaldson correctly points out that, by the 1930s, Fitzgerald was unable to, “infuse his fiction with the emotional power he had once commanded” (Donaldson. 2002.148). Thus he tried writing essays that reflected his current state of mind. Reading these essays vis-à-vis the socio-economical and political atmosphere of thirties seem to suggest that they possessed a unique emotional power that, made them echo the mood that dominated the contemporary American society in particular and several other societies of the world in general. Consequently the Crack-Up articles cease to be self confessional pieces that reasoned his inability to spin stories like before. They rather become an experimental attempt by the author to introduce a new kind of narrative – in terms of both form and content – that was best suited for the socio-political and cultural aspects of thirties.

### II

Though all these three essays appeared separately they are

*“I wanted to put a lament  
in my record, without even  
the background of the  
Euganean Hills to give it  
color. There weren’t any  
Euganean Hills that I  
could see.”*

*Fitzgerald “Pasting it  
Together” –*

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

more or less an integral part of one single narrative that describes Fitzgerald's response to his own problems and a fast changing world. Thus when read separately they don't communicate the meaning they originally intended to. If the first essay talks about the sudden realization of the 'break' or the crack-up with the author's nervous reflexes, then in this second one he makes an attempt to understand the specific incidents that caused him to become a "cracked plate, the kind that wonders whether it is worth preserving" (Fitzgerald 4). He accepts the fact that self-revealing narratives are accepted and appreciated only if they hint towards a positive and optimistic tone. However his revelations of his 'self' were devoid of any such silver linings. It is important at this point to acknowledge that this was the modernist era and Fitzgerald was a modernist author. Thus the fact that he, (through his introspective essays) tries to make sense of the world around him and finds no solace in any possible safe haven, only makes his essay more modernist in its approach. This text like several other modernist texts was not just experimental and individualistic in its form as well as content – but also reflected a sense of pessimism with the present situation. It is this pessimistic view of the contemporary world, the gloom, the alienation, the sense of futility and defeat that characterizes this text, makes it an interesting relic of the Modernist era.

The second essay attempts to understand the nature of the blows that caused his present condition. The first blow was losing Princeton's 'Triangle Club' and several other significant offices - thereby losing the chance to win medals and prizes for his college - due to an illness like malaria which also forced him to eventually drop back a class. This loss directed Fitzgerald's life towards literature, but it took away his chance to be an authoritative figure. The other blow - the more serious one was "tragic loves doomed for lack of money" (Fitzgerald 5). For as long as sixteen years he on the one hand hated the rich on the other strived to earn money so that he could share some of their "mobility and grace" (Fitzgerald 5). For a few years Fitzgerald sailed smoothly. His stories and write ups were published in magazines and he could manage to maintain his lifestyle. Things however, got difficult with progressing years and then suddenly, "nothing was quite as good" (Fitzgerald 5). The specter of discouragement, that did not affect him as a young man, now haunted him. As he grew older, the impact of the blows received earlier in life, made themselves apparent. His self-confidence began to wane and any trivial everyday activity made him aware of the gloom.

In this essay Fitzgerald makes a statement that transcends this gloom of his, and by extension his entire 'crack-up' narrative from being a personal experience of depression to narratives that resonated the dominant emotion of probably an entire generation that witnessed their way of life

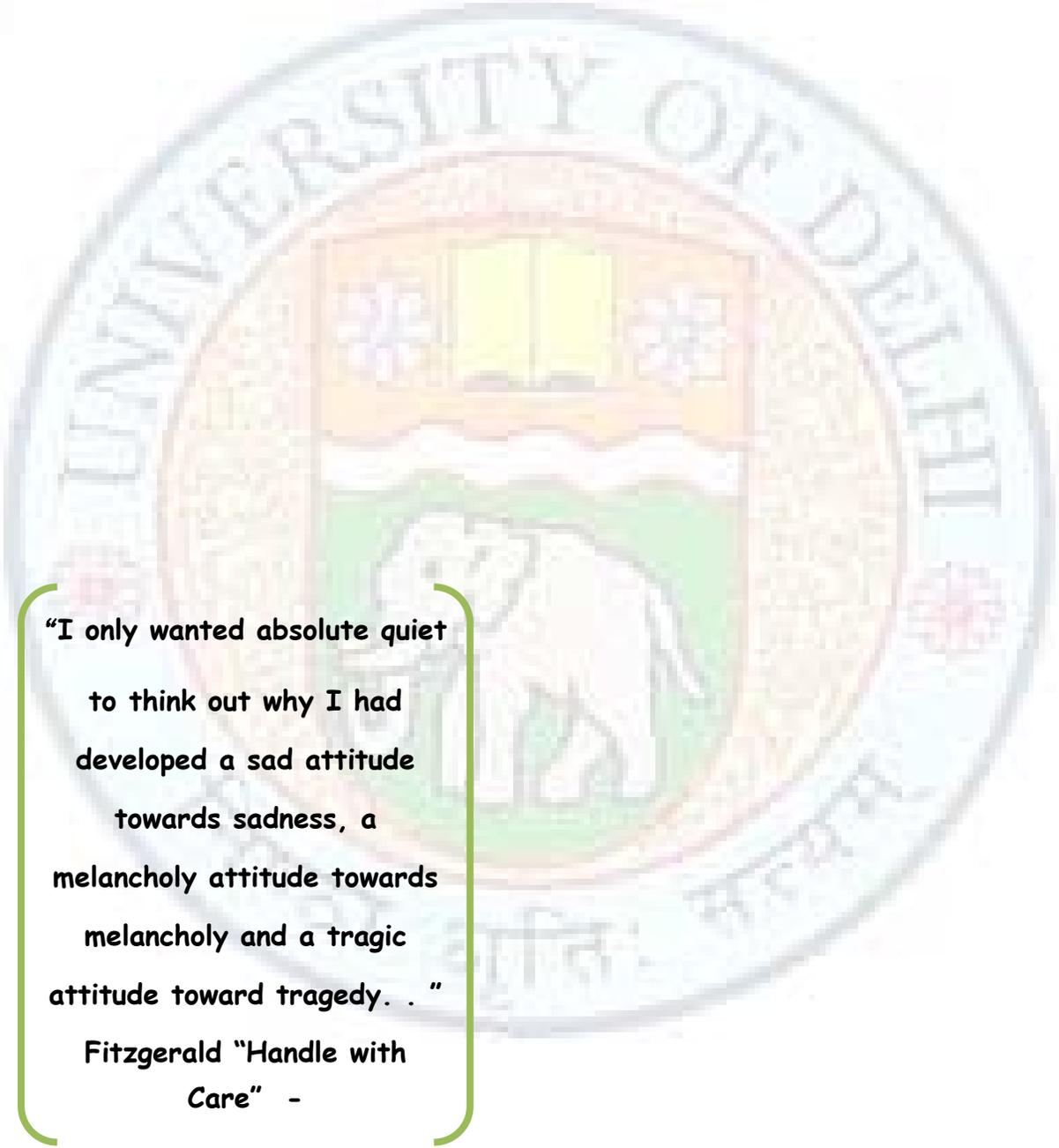
## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

being replaced by another. Fitzgerald talks about the booming film industry and recounts his despair of being witness to the novel – which in his maturity was “the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another” (Fitzgerald 5) – being rendered subordinate by the “mechanical and communal art” of moving pictures. For Fitzgerald, movies projected nothing but, “the most obvious of emotions” (Fitzgerald 5). This defeat of the written word was for Fitzgerald the defeat of his own ideals on which he constructed his matured life. To powerlessly witness his cosmos being taken over by a “grosser power” (Fitzgerald 6), was nothing short of a nightmare that eventually made him lose his nervous reflexes and become a ‘cracked plate’. This experience is not just a personal experience faced by Fitzgerald ‘the person’, but a universal phenomenon that adversely affected more than a few who were caught in the same matrix. One realizes at this point that Fitzgerald, probably like many others of his generation, “affirms his faith repeatedly in an older simpler America” (Fusell. 1952.291) thus his expression of dissatisfaction with the change of *his* ‘simpler’ America into a more commercial materialistic entity endowed with ‘grosser powers’ can be seen as “an archeology of American desire” (Breitwieser. 2000.359).

As he reached a stage of silence he recognized that, with a more mechanical and more materialistic world order gradually being established, there is a need to reassess the way he lived his past life. In order to survive in this new world one must change accordingly. He found that for a long time he had depended on numerous people for intellectual, aesthetic and personal support and thus he doubted the presence of his own identity, “there was not an ‘I’ any more” (Fitzgerald 6). Barbara Tapa Lupack in “Following of a Grail”, studies that Fitzgerald was fascinated with Arthurian myths like “wasteland” and “quest for grail”. His works often manifest an interesting “quest for heroism” and ‘personal chivalric code’ (Lupack 328) that continued even when his own life was sunk in several personal tragedies. The second essay of the crack-up series too ends with a sense of quest to find the point from where his sense of identity began to trickle off his being.

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

If the first essay discloses the crisis and the second attempts to suggest the several possible reasons for the same, then the third tries to suggest ways to survive that crisis. The essay titled as “Handle With Care” takes on an interesting tone of social sarcasm that casts a slight satirical shade over the troubled contemporary society that was compelling people to be selfish and materialistic.



**“I only wanted absolute quiet  
to think out why I had  
developed a sad attitude  
towards sadness, a  
melancholy attitude towards  
melancholy and a tragic  
attitude toward tragedy. . .”  
Fitzgerald “Handle with  
Care” -**

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

In order to find one's own self, there was a need for an absolute break. We are told that those who survived such a situation, did so only by taking a "clean break". He is aware that this survival strategy of taking a break is different from escaping as in this case, "the past cease to exist" (Fitzgerald 7) and there is no coming back. Since he could no longer live the way he did earlier, he decides to take the break. He decides to continue being a writer but he would no more be the kind, compassionate and helpful person he used to be. The world it seems had no place for such a creature. It is here that the essay takes a sarcastic turn and in a straight simple narrative describes the process he undergoes in order to attune himself with a world order that is more materialistic and utilitarian than the previous one. The fact that he wants to stop being a person and be *only* writer seems to suggest the disillusionment that several individuals like Fitzgerald felt with the advent of Great Depression and the miserable thirties. Rest of the essay is an account of several changes he tries to make in his personality to fit the new changed world. He first throws away all those letters that were sent to him asking some kind of help or assistance. Next he tirelessly tries to work on his smile and voice that will make him similar to a "beady eyed men" (Fitzgerald. 8) who did not care whether the world tumbled into chaos if it spared their houses". In the end we are told that he indeed becomes the 'non-person' writer who is ready to lick's the hand that throws him a bone with "enough meat on it" (Fitzgerald. 9). Fitzgerald's personal crisis as well as the burden of making sense of a world that was disorienting and breaking down had such an ironical impact on the authors mind that he was compelled to look back at the past not as a peaceful haven to lament but as a self-delusional and 'unnatural' thing that in comparison made the present circumstances more tragic. It is at this point that the apparently self-expressionistic and self-confessional essay revealed itself to be a chronicle of an entire generation who like Fitzgerald, 'cracked', when the booming bubble of the roaring twenties burst with the sharp and everlasting pinch of the Great Depression of 1929.

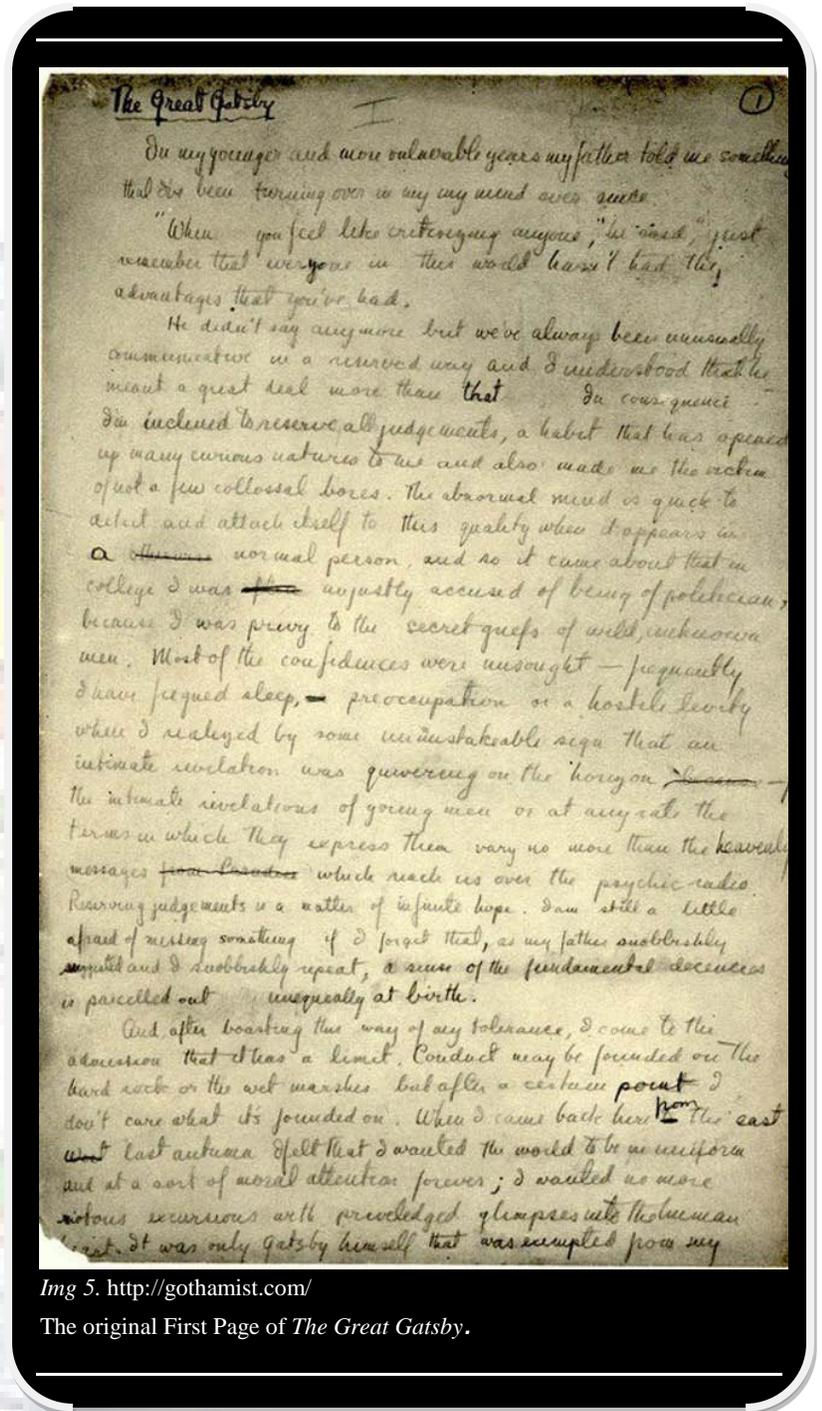
*"My recent experience parallels the wave of despair that swept the nation when the Boom was over"  
Fitzgerald "Handle With Care"*

### IV

The Crack-Up essays thus can be seen as an important milestone not just in the life of Francis Scott Fitzgerald but also in the history of America and several American people who

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

belonged to Fitzgerald's generation. Donaldson records a few of the positive response to the essay that includes Fitzgerald's friends Margarete Turnbull and Mary Hanm who said, "your story is a mental snapshot of rather universal experience" (Donaldson. 2002.172) and John V A Weaver, another writer associated with the Jazz Age who responded by saying, that the first two essays were disturbing to him because "they described exactly what had happened to him" (Donaldson. 1980.179) Interestingly when *Crack-Up* emerged as a book, several critics praised it for its "honesty" (Donaldson. 1980.178). Critics have often observed that after writing the Crack-Up articles, Fitzgerald tried to follow this new avatar of 'writer only' and thus created Monroe Stahr the objective Hollywood producer from his last novel *The Love of The Last Tycoon*. However as A Bannerjee observes in "A Move Towards Maturity: Scott's Fitzgerald's *The Crack-Up*" "before the writer in him could fully accomplish the task, the man in him was overtaken by life" (55).



Img 5. <http://gothamist.com/>

The original First Page of *The Great Gatsby*.

### Crack-Up Summary

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

“The Crack-Up” is a three-part autobiographical essay by Fitzgerald that describes the mental breakdown that he suffers after a certain point of time in his life. His three essays are an attempt to, understand as well explain his mental condition, then identify the several causes, and finally discuss the changes he makes in his own self in order to survive the depressing phase of the ‘Crack-Up’.

The first essay begins with an account of two kinds of blows that affect a person’s life. One that impacts immediately and the other that makes its impact felt only when it too late. It is these blows that define a man’s life. He gives a brief account of his youth and writes that things were fine when he was young. It was easy to deal with the problems of life. However as years progressed Fitzgerald realizes that he had “prematurely cracked” (Fitzgerald 2), that is, due to “too much anger” and “too many tears” his nervous reflexes were giving away and he felt that he was ‘cracked’. This realization came with a sense of alienation and loneliness. He confesses that except a few things like Katherine Hepburn’s image on screen, children up to a certain age and doctors he could not stand anything or anyone. The essay ends with an excerpt of an interview he had with one of his critics who, in order to lift the spirits of Fitzgerald tries to tell him about the problems and challenges she faced in her life and how she managed to overcome them. However Fitzgerald informs his readers that though he was impressed with her vitality but unfortunately could borrow none of her energy.

The second essay titled as “Pasting it Together” begins with a realization that his narratives of self-revelation are different from others as they do not end on any positive note. In this essay Fitzgerald gives an account of the reasons that caused his mind to face such a breakdown. The first blow as Fitzgerald himself accepts was his loss of the Triangle Club and other offices (and eventually also a year) in Princeton University due to an illness; the second blow was the tragic love story “doomed for lack of money”. Along with these personal defeats, Fitzgerald had to face the plight of witnessing a new world order replacing the older one. To see the novel being replaced by the movies was obsessively painful for Fitzgerald. All these experiences together compelled his mind to get fatally disturbed and thereby “Crack-Up”. Fitzgerald in the course of the essay realizes that for a longtime he had depended on various people for intellectual, aesthetic and personal support and assistance. This created was a crisis in his concept of self and identity, as he felt, “there was not an “I”

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

anymore". The essay ends with a sense of quest that Fitzgerald undertakes in order to find his sense of individuality and identity which he believed once existed.

The third essay "Handle with Care" gives an account of the consequences that Fitzgerald's life and personality undergoes due to the 'Crack-Up'. In order to survive Fitzgerald realized the need to have a 'clean break'. This clean break as makes the past cease to exist and thus, he decides to continue being an author but he would no more be a person. The rest of the essay is an account of how Fitzgerald gets himself ready to become the 'writer only' who cares for nothing but his own profits. There is a detailed description of how he works on his voice and smile that will make this new persona of his, more effective and believable. The essay ends with a sarcastic comment that tells the reader that as he imbibes this new personality he becomes someone who is materialistic and opportunist to such an extent that he can "even lick your hand" if you throw him a bone with enough meat on it.

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## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

### Glossary

Breakage: The act of breaking

Mustered: To call (troops) together, as for inspection; To call forth; summon up

Unsympathetic: Not characterized by, feeling, or showing sympathy

Equanimity: To be or have calmness

Ascribable : To attribute to a specified cause, source, or origin;

To assign as a quality or characteristic

Inscrutable : (Adj) mysterious

Inalienable : That cannot be transferred to another or others

Sorrento : A town of southern Italy on the **Sorrento** Peninsula, separating the Bay of Naples from the Gulf of Salerno

Snubbed : rebuff, ignore, or spurn disdainfully

Suffice : Be enough or adequate

Hilt : The handle of a weapon or tool, especially a sword, dagger, or knife

Rickety : Likely to break or fall apart; shaky

Pretense : The act of pretending; a false appearance or action intended to deceive.

Contemptuous : Manifesting or feeling contempt; scornful

Catharsis : (Noun) (Source: Ancient Greek) Purification of the spirit through art.

Vaguest : *adj.* **vagu·er, vagu·est.** Not clearly expressed; inexplicit.

Porches : A covered platform, usually having a separate roof, at an entrance to a building

Katherine Hepburn : (May 12, 1907 – June 29, 2003) was an American actress of film, stage and television.

Miriam Hopkins : (October 18, 1902 – October 9, 1972) was an American actress known for her versatility in a wide variety of roles.

Append : To add as a supplement, accessory, or appendix; subjoin: *to append a note to a letter.*

Grand Canyon : It is a steep-sided canyon carved by the Colorado River in the United States in the state of Arizona.

Euganean Hills : These are a group of hills of volcanic origin that rise to heights of 300 to 600 Meters from the Padovan-Venetian plain a few km south of Padua. They are known for their scenic beauty.

Vacuous : Devoid of matter; empty; Lacking intelligence; stupid

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

Princeton :	It is a private Ivy League research university in Princeton, New Jersey. It was founded in 1746
<i>droit du seigneur</i> :	The supposed right of a feudal lord to have sexual relations with a vassal's bride on her wedding night.
Tritest :	<i>adj. of trite.</i> Lacking power to evoke interest through overuse or repetition; hackneyed.
Morass :	An area of low-lying, soggy ground
Platitude:	A banal remark or statement, especially one expressed as if it were original or significant
Unscrupulous :	Devoid of scruples; oblivious to or contemptuous of what is right or honorable.
Vitality :	The capacity to live, grow, or develop
Asceticism :	The principles and practices of an ascetic; extreme self-denial and austerity
Lenin :	<b>Vladimir Ilyich Lenin</b> was a Russian communist revolutionary, politician and political theorist. He was born on 10 April 1870. He served as the leader of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1917, and then concurrently as Premier of the Soviet Union from 1922, until his death.
Proletariat:	The class of industrial wage earners who, possessing neither capital nor production means, must earn their living by selling their labor.
Self-immolation :	Refers to killing oneself as a sacrifice. While usage since the 1960s has typically referred only to setting oneself on fire
Rhinestone:	A colorless artificial gem of paste or glass, often with facets that sparkle in imitation of a diamond.
Counterfeit :	To make a copy of, usually with the intent to defraud
Irretrievable:	Difficult or impossible to retrieve or recover
Exuberant:	Full of unrestrained enthusiasm or joy.
Conjurer-	One that performs magic tricks; a magician
Levity:	Lightness of manner or speech, especially when inappropriate; frivolity
Somber:	Dark; gloomy; Melancholy; dismal
Cave Canem:	Literal meaning: "beware the dog". (Source language Latin)

### Important Questions:-

## F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Crack Up

- Q1. Fitzgerald's "The Crack-Up" is an account of drastic consequences of a social change on the minds of contemporary individuals. Comment.
- Q2. Discuss Fitzgerald's "The Crack-Up" as writings of self-confession.
- Q3. Fitzgerald is a representative author of his time. Elucidate with examples from the text.
- Q4. Contrast the Roaring Twenties with the Great Depression of the Thirties.
- Q5. In the garb of being narratives of 'self-revelation' and 'self-confession', these essays successfully manifest the socio-economic and political upheaval of the contemporary time. Elaborate with relevant references from the text.

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring\\_Twenties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring_Twenties)

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[http://gothamist.com/2012/05/23/21\\_photos\\_of\\_new\\_york\\_city\\_in\\_1922.php#photo-1](http://gothamist.com/2012/05/23/21_photos_of_new_york_city_in_1922.php#photo-1)

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Crack-Up](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crack-Up)

### List of Visuals

**Image.1** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F.\\_Scott\\_Fitzgerald#mediaviewer/File:F\\_Scott\\_Fitzgerald\\_1921.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._Scott_Fitzgerald#mediaviewer/File:F_Scott_Fitzgerald_1921.jpg)

**Image.2** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F.\\_Scott\\_Fitzgerald#mediaviewer/File:Fitzgerald,\\_Saturday\\_evening\\_post.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F._Scott_Fitzgerald#mediaviewer/File:Fitzgerald,_Saturday_evening_post.png)

**Image3** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flapper#mediaviewer/File:Saturday\\_Evening\\_Post\\_cover\\_2-4-1922.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flapper#mediaviewer/File:Saturday_Evening_Post_cover_2-4-1922.jpg)

**Image.4** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Crack-Up#mediaviewer/File:FScottFitzgerald\\_TheCrackUp.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crack-Up#mediaviewer/File:FScottFitzgerald_TheCrackUp.jpg)

**Image5** [http://gothamist.com/2012/08/21/this\\_is\\_what\\_the\\_opposite\\_of\\_the\\_gr.php](http://gothamist.com/2012/08/21/this_is_what_the_opposite_of_the_gr.php)