Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*The Great Gatsby* Chapters 2 and 3: Emerging symbols and motifs

Literally, the “Valley of Ashes” is the area in between the wealthy “Eggs” and Manhattan. It is “an industrial wasteland covered in ashes and soot.” According to Nick, New York City represents all the “mystery and beauty in the world,” and the “Eggs” belong to the wealthy people who have either inherited their money or have gotten rich off the booming economy of the Roaring Twenties. The Valley of Ashes seems to be a dismal and often overlooked area, and home to some of the middle and working class people such as Myrtle and Wilson.

1. “This is a Valley of Ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which seems to obscure their operations from your sight.”

**In the above quotation, underline the adjectives that seem to have negative or bleak connotations.**

**What do you notice about the mention of color or the absence of color?**

“But above the gray land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckelburg. The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but instead, form a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose.”

How does this quotation about the billboard for the eye doctor compare to or complement the quotation above? What different kinds of adjectives are used here? Mention of color?

**Discuss:**

**What are some things that we associate with eyes? With glasses?**

**How would you describe the difference between what we see and what we perceive?**

**What does the description of the billboard and its location suggest that the doctor’s eyes are doing?**

When we first meet Nick, he tells us that his father often said, “Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had. He says this has made him “inclined to reserve all judgments,” that **“reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope”**

**Although Nick has been narrating rather objectively, what are some examples of things that he experiences and observes that we, as readers, are most likely judging?**

**List some examples from the following parts of the text. What do these observations reveal about some of these characters?**

1. **Nick’s trip to the city with Tom (including the party in the apartment)**
2. **The behavior of many of the guests at Gatsby’s parties**
3. **Nick’s description of his encounters and conversations with Jordan Baker, from the last two full pages of the chapter.**

**Nick concludes by saying, “Everyone suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.” How do we feel about this claim?**

**What would you say is one of your strongest virtues?**