

**F. Scott Fitzgerald**, in full **Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald**, (born September 24, 1896, St. Paul, [Minnesota](#), U.S.—died December 21, 1940, Hollywood, California), American short-story writer and novelist famous for his depictions of the [Jazz Age](#) (the 1920s), his most brilliant [novel](#) being [The Great Gatsby](#) (1925). His private life, with his wife, [Zelda](#), in both [America](#) and France, became almost as celebrated as his novels.

Who Was F. Scott Fitzgerald?

Fitzgerald was the only son of an unsuccessful, aristocratic father and an energetic, provincial mother. Half the time he thought of himself as the heir of his father's tradition, which included the author of "[The Star-Spangled Banner](#)," [Francis Scott Key](#), after whom he was named, and half the time as "straight 1850 potato-famine Irish." As a result he had typically ambivalent American feelings about American life, which seemed to him at once vulgar and dazzlingly promising.

He returned to Princeton the next fall, but he had now lost all the positions he [coveted](#), and in November 1917 he left to join the army. In July 1918, while he was stationed near [Montgomery, Alabama](#), he met [Zelda Sayre](#), the daughter of an Alabama Supreme Court judge. They fell deeply in love, and, as soon as he could, Fitzgerald headed for [New York](#) determined to achieve instant success and to marry Zelda. What he achieved was an advertising job at \$90 a month. Zelda broke their engagement, and, after an epic

drunk, Fitzgerald retired to St. Paul, Minnesota, to rewrite for the second time a novel he had begun at Princeton. In the spring of 1920 it was published, he married Zelda, and

Like other national literatures, American [literature](#) was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent—colonies from which a few hardy souls tentatively [ventured](#) westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the 19th century this nation extended southward to the [Gulf of Mexico](#), northward to the 49th parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the 19th century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world—its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations that inevitably it became involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and [East Asia](#). Meanwhile, the rise of [science](#) and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All these factors in the development of the United States molded the literature of the country.