F. Scott Fitzgerald Biographical Information

# F. Scott Fitzgerald

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| **F. Scott Fitzgerald** | |
| [200px-Francis_Scott_Fitzgerald_1937_June_4_%281%29_%28photo_by_Carl_van_Vechten%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Francis_Scott_Fitzgerald_1937_June_4_(1)_(photo_by_Carl_van_Vechten).jpg)  F. Scott Fitzgerald, photographed by [Carl Van Vechten](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Van_Vechten) in 1937 | |
| **Born** | [September 24](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_24), [1896](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1896) [St. Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Paul%2C_Minnesota), [Minnesota](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minnesota), [USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **Died** | [December 21](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/December_21), [1940](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940) [Hollywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood%2C_California), [California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California), [USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |

**Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald** ([September 24](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_24), [1896](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1896) – [December 21](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/December_21), [1940](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940)) was an [Irish American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_American) [Jazz Age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jazz_Age) [novelist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novelist) and [short story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_story) writer. He is regarded as one of the greatest American writers of the [twentieth century](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twentieth_century). Fitzgerald was the self-styled spokesman of the "[Lost Generation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Generation)", Americans born in the [1890s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1890s) who came of age during [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I). He finished four novels, left a fifth unfinished, and wrote dozens of short stories that treat themes of youth, despair, and age.

## Biography

### Early years

Born in [St. Paul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Paul%2C_Minnesota), [Minnesota](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minnesota) to an upper-middle class [Roman Catholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) family, Fitzgerald was named for his distant and famous relative [Francis Scott Key](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Scott_Key), but was commonly known as 'Scott'. He spent 1898 – 1901 and 1903 – 1908 in [Buffalo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo%2C_New_York), [New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York), where his father worked for [Proctor & Gamble](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proctor_%26_Gamble). When Fitzgerald, Sr., was fired, the family moved back to Minnesota, where Fitzgerald attended [St. Paul Academy and Summit School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Paul_Academy_and_Summit_School) in St. Paul from 1908 – 1911. He then attended Newman School, a prep school in Hackensack, New Jersey, in 1911 – 1912. He entered [Princeton University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_University) in 1913 as a member of the Class of 1917 and became friends with the future critics and writers [Edmund Wilson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Wilson) (Class of 1916) and [John Peale Bishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Peale_Bishop) (Class of 1917). A mediocre student throughout his three-year career at the university, Fitzgerald dropped out in 1917 to enlist in the United States Army when America entered [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I).

Fearing he might die in the war, and determined to leave a literary legacy, Fitzgerald wrote a novel titled *The Romantic Egotist* while in officer training at [Camp Zachary Taylor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Zachary_Taylor) and [Camp Sheridan](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Camp_Sheridan&action=edit). When Fitzgerald submitted the novel to the publisher [Charles Scribner's Sons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Scribner%27s_Sons), the editor praised Fitzgerald but ultimately declined to publish. The war ended shortly after Fitzgerald's enlistment, and he was discharged without ever having been shipped to Europe. He frequently mentioned how much he regretted not fighting in the war.

### Marriage to Zelda Sayre

While at Camp Sheridan, Fitzgerald met [Zelda Sayre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zelda_Sayre) (1900 – 1948), the "top girl," in Fitzgerald's words, of [Montgomery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery%2C_Alabama), [Alabama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama) youth society. The two were engaged in 1919, and Fitzgerald moved into an apartment at 1395 Lexington Avenue in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) to try to lay a foundation for his life with Zelda. Working at an advertising firm and writing short stories, he was unable to convince Zelda that he would be able to support her, leading her to break off the engagement.

Fitzgerald returned to his parents' house in St. Paul to revise *The Romantic Egotist*. Recast as [*This Side of Paradise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Side_of_Paradise_%28novel%29), it was accepted by [Scribner's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Scribner%27s_Sons) in the fall of 1919, and Zelda and Scott resumed their engagement. The novel was published on [March 26](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_26), [1920](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920), and became one of the most popular books of the year, defining the [flapper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flapper) generation. The next week, Scott and Zelda were married in New York's [St. Patrick's Cathedral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Patrick%27s_Cathedral%2C_New_York). Their daughter and only child, [Frances Scott "Scottie" Fitzgerald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Scott_Fitzgerald), was born on [October 26](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_26), [1921](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1921).

### "The Jazz Age"

The 1920s proved the most influential decade of Fitzgerald's development. His second novel, [*The Beautiful and Damned*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beautiful_and_Damned), published in 1922, demonstrates an evolution beyond the comparatively immature [*This Side of Paradise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Side_of_Paradise). [*The Great Gatsby*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby), which many consider his masterpiece, was published in 1925. Fitzgerald made several excursions to Europe, notably [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris) and the [French Riviera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Riviera), and became friends with many members of the American expatriate community in Paris, notably [Ernest Hemingway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway).

Hemingway prefaced his chapters concerning Fitzgerald in [A Moveable Feast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Moveable_Feast) with this: "His talent was as natural as the pattern that was made by the dust on a butterfly's wings. At one time he understood it no more than the butterfly did and he did not know when it was brushed or marred. Later he became conscious of his damaged wings and their construction and he learned to think and could not fly any more because the love of flight was gone and he could only remember when it had been effortless."

Fitzgerald drew largely upon his wife’s intense personality in his writings, at times quoting direct segments of her personal diaries in his work. Zelda made mention of this in a 1922 mock review in the [*New York Tribune*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Tribune), saying that “[i]t seems to me that on one page I recognized a portion of an old diary of mine which mysteriously disappeared shortly after my marriage, and also scraps of letters which, though considerably edited, sound to me vaguely familiar. In fact, Mr. Fitzgerald—I believe that is how he spells his name—seems to believe that plagiarism begins at home" (*Zelda Fitzgerald: The Collected Writings*, 388).

Although Fitzgerald's passion lay in writing novels, they never sold well enough to support the opulent lifestyle that he and Zelda adopted as New York celebrities. To supplement his income, he turned to writing short stories for such magazines as the [Saturday Evening Post](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturday_Evening_Post), [Collier's Magazine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collier%27s_Magazine), and [Esquire magazine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esquire_magazine), and sold movie rights of his stories and novels to Hollywood studios. He was constantly in financial trouble and often required loans from his literary agent, [Harold Ober](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Ober), and his editor at [Scribner's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Scribner%27s_Sons), [Maxwell Perkins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxwell_Perkins).

Fitzgerald began working on his fourth novel during the late [1920s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920s) but was sidetracked by financial difficulties that necessitated his writing commercial short stories, and by the [schizophrenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schizophrenia) that struck [Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zelda_Sayre_Fitzgerald) in 1930. Her emotional health remained fragile for the rest of her life. In 1932, she was hospitalized in Baltimore, Maryland. Scott rented the "La Paix" estate in the suburb of Towson to work on his latest book, the story of the rise and fall of Dick Diver, a promising young psychiatrist, and his wife Nicole, who is also one of his patients. It was published in 1934 as [*Tender is the Night*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tender_is_the_Night). [[1]](http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmTender01.asp) Critics regard it as one of Fitzgerald's finest works.

### Hollywood years

Although he reportedly found movie work degrading, Fitzgerald was once again in dire financial straits, and spent the second half of the [1930s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1930s) in [Hollywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood), working on commercial short stories, scripts for [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) (including some unfilmed work on [*Gone With the Wind*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gone_With_the_Wind)), and his fifth and final novel, [*The Love of the Last Tycoon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Love_of_the_Last_Tycoon). Published posthumously as [*The Last Tycoon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Tycoon), it was based on the life of film executive [Irving Thalberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irving_Thalberg). Scott and Zelda became estranged; she continued living in mental institutions on the east coast, while he lived with his lover [Sheilah Graham](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sheilah_Graham&action=edit), a movie columnist, in [Hollywood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood). From 1939 until his death, Fitzgerald mocked himself as a Hollywood [hack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hack_writer) through the character of Pat Hobby in a sequence of 17 short stories, later collected as "[The Pat Hobby Stories](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pat_Hobby_Stories)."

Fitzgerald had clearly been an [alcoholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholic) since his college days, and he became notorious during the 1920s for his extraordinarily heavy drinking. This left him in poor health by the late 1930s. According to Zelda's biographer, Nancy Milford, Scott would also claim from time to time that he had contracted [tuberculosis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuberculosis), but she states plainly that this was usually a pretext to cover his drinking problems (Fitzgerald biographer Matthew J. Bruccoli, however, contends that Fitzgerald did in fact have recurring tuberculosis). However, Milford also reports that Fitzgerald biographer Arthur Mizener said that Scott did suffer a mild attack of tuberculosis in 1919, and in 1929 he had "what proved to be a tubercular hemorrhage". Given the extent of Scott's alcoholism, however, it is equally likely that the hemorrhage might have been caused by bleeding from [oesophageal varices](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oesophageal_varices) -- enlarged veins in the oesophagus that result from advanced liver disease. Ironically enough, it was most likely Fitzgerald's lifelong smoking habit, and not his drinking, that did the most to damage his health and bring on the heart problems that eventually killed him.

Fitzgerald suffered two heart attacks in late 1940. After the first, he was ordered by his doctor to avoid strenuous exertion and to obtain a first floor apartment, which he did by moving in with his lover, Sheilah Graham. On the night of [December 20](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/December_20), [1940](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940), he had his second heart attack; the next day, [December 21](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/December_21), while awaiting a visit from his doctor, Fitzgerald collapsed while clutching the mantelpiece in Graham's apartment and died at the age of 44.

Among the attendants at a visitation held at a funeral home in Hollywood was [Dorothy Parker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Parker), who reportedly cried and murmured "the poor son of a bitch," a line from [Jay Gatsby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Gatsby)'s funeral in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. His remains were then shipped to Maryland, where his funeral was attended by very few people. Zelda died in a fire at the Highland mental institution in [Asheville, North Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asheville%2C_North_Carolina), in 1948. The two were originally buried in [Rockville Union Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockville_Union_Cemetery), but with the permission and assistance of their only child, Frances "Scottie" Fitzgerald Lanahan Smith, the Women's Club of Rockville had their bodies moved to the family plot in [Saint Mary's Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Mary%27s_Cemetery_%28Maryland%29), in [Rockville, Maryland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockville%2C_Maryland).

Fitzgerald never completed [*The Love of the Last Tycoon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Love_of_the_Last_Tycoon). His notes for the novel were edited by his friend [Edmund Wilson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Wilson) and published in 1941 as *The Last Tycoon*. However, there is now critical agreement that Fitzgerald intended the title of the book to be *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, as is reflected in a new 1994 edition of the book, edited by Fitzgerald scholar [Matthew Bruccoli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Bruccoli) of the [University of South Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_South_Carolina_Columbia).

## Works

### Novels

* [*This Side of Paradise*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_Side_of_Paradise) (New York: Chas. Scribner & Son: 1920)
* [*The Beautiful and Damned*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Beautiful_and_Damned) (New York: Chas. Scribner & Son: 1922)
* [*The Great Gatsby*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Gatsby) (New York: Chas. Scribner & Son: 1925)
* [*Tender is the Night*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tender_is_the_Night) (New York: Chas. Scribner & Son: 1934)
* [*The Last Tycoon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Tycoon) – originally *The Love of the Last Tycoon* – (New York:Chas. Scribner & Sons, published posthumously)

### Other works

* [*The Princeton Tiger*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Princeton_Tiger&action=edit) (Humor Magazine, 1917)
* [*The Vegetable*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Vegetable&action=edit) (play, 1923)
* [*The Crack-Up*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Crack-Up&action=edit) (essays and stories, 1945)
* [*Winter Dreams*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Dreams) (Short Story)
* [*Babylon Revisited*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon_Revisited) (Short Story)
* [*Bernice Bobs Her Hair*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernice_Bobs_Her_Hair) (Short Story)
* [*The Vegetable or From President to Postman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Vegetable_or_From_President_to_Postman&action=edit) (play)