

# Compare the use of location and the environment in the great gatsby

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



Compare the use of location and the environment in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Go-Between*. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* are two novels set in very different places in the world, but both show how love between different classes is doomed to failure. The environment is used to depict the lives of the people around it, such as the opulence and decadence in East Egg, and a dull, lifeless place in the valley of ashes.

Both Fitzgerald and Hartley use the environment and location to show how the class system and the American dream have failed. Despite, 1920's America being seen as free, it is also seen as being morally corrupt, with parties celebrating sumptuousness. A key idea of *The Great Gatsby* is how despite the wonderful settings Gatsby and Myrtle (sometimes) live in; they are still no way near achieving the dream life the Buchanans have. Fitzgerald opens *The Great Gatsby* with his overriding point about the failure of the American dream.

This is symbolized with the stark contrast between East and West Egg; East Egg represents aristocracy, and leisure with the old money, while West Egg represents ostentation, garishness, and the flashy manners of the new money. Although separated by a small expanse of water, East Egg is the glitzier one with "white palaces", whilst Nick's own house in West Egg is described as a "small eyesore". The ironic description of "white palaces" is particularly important throughout the novel because the inhabitants of East Egg are anything but pure and innocent, highlighted by the Buchanan's and Jordan.

The difference between the fictitious places in New York and real locations is also partly interesting as in the ordinary world the east end is usually the poorer side, which suggests that Fitzgerald believes that it makes no difference either way. The Maudsley residence “Brandham Hall” in *The Great Gatsby* is depicted as the upper-middle class “Georgian mansion”, however the architectural style is described as “over-plain”. This is a criticism, by Hartley of the Maudsley’s lifestyle having little substance, much like the Buchanan’s and the manner in which their life is conducted. “Court Place”, the home of Leo’s is described as “ordinary”, with Marcus rather snobbishly presumes this to show grandeur, a further indication that the Maudsley’s are not a family to look up to. Leo’s home is much the same to him as Nick’s “small eyesore” is to him, loved by the inhabitant. The Valley of Ashes in *The Great Gatsby* is depicted as a soulless, “desolate” piece of land. Fitzgerald uses juxtaposition for irony, to depict the area as “a fantastic farm, where ashes grow like wheat. This emphasizes Fitzgerald’s point that the area is dead and will always be dead, as the crop that grows is already burnt out and worthless. The “ashes” are a metaphor for the people who live in the valley of ashes, as they have no hope of becoming anything, despite the hope of the American dream. “The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg” are the most haunting and resilient symbol in the novel, symbolizing the hopelessness in the novel for all the characters. Wilson’s perspective that the eyes are those of an omniscient God, could suggest that the billboard is a parody of God, as the people are still struggling to live.

The colour of “Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s” eyes are particularly poignant, with the combination of the “blue and gigantic” eyes with “enormous yellow

spectacles”, with the blue highlighting the sadness of the residents and the yellow almost mocking them, showing the bright, vibrant life the upper classes have. The billboard symbolizes the fallible American dream, in that it is old and decaying and the Valley is almost forgotten by the entrepreneurs. The American dream is about discovery, individualism and the pursuit of happiness.

The Great Gatsby shows that in the 1920’s the ‘ old money’ and relaxed social values have corrupted the dream, especially on the east coast, making the pursuit of happiness impossible for the “ gray men” of the Valley of Ashes. The Valley of Ashes is the only location in The Great Gatsby where hopelessness and decay is palpably obvious. The location of it is particularly poignant and important as it is situated between New York and both the Egg’s, which shows that the rich and the newly-rich have to pass through a place where the dream has failed and have to breath the “ powdery air”.

Furthermore, the metaphor evidently shows the ‘ powdery’ lifestyle that the people live in, where the life is not perfect in any way, which is why the objects and people are described as “ gray” a colour which is not dead and black, but slightly lighter, suggesting that they only have a small amount of life in them. Wilson’s garage could be seen as a failure of the American dream; a location where there is nothing worth anything and the place lacks hope of any sort, with Fitzgerald describing Wilson as “ spiritless”.

The description of the “ dust-covered wreck of a Ford” is a particularly sad one, because Ford was created to have a car for everyone in America, and despite Wilson owning a car, the derelict state give the impression that

perhaps the poor never had the potential to have cars and almost act like the rich, which could mean that Fitzgerald is saying the American dream is a false and unrealistic prospect for the vast majority of people. Unlike Wilson, Ted's farm in *The Go-Between* is full of life with "four horses", and the countryside "smell of manure".

The farm represents the happiness that the lower classes have in the 1900's, and reappears at the end of the cricket match. Unlike, Wilson there is still life and hope left in belongings; however Ted's suicide shows how the path reaches the same conclusion and could represent the failure of the class system, because although there is hope in areas, no inter-class marriages would be accepted. New York is a juxtaposition of the Valley, with its loud, garish, and slightly frightening demeanour. The party at Myrtle's apartment shows the failure of the American dream, with everyone getting drunk and having fights.

Fitzgerald has made Myrtle's apartment cramped and ugly with "tapestried furniture", which makes it easy to "stumble... over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles." Fitzgerald has evidently shows that Myrtle wishes to live the life of a affluent French princess, but one that lives in a materialistic way. He wants to show how Myrtle has always longed to be rich. The picture of a "hen sitting on a blurred rock" shows that the lifestyle that Myrtle has in the apartment is metaphorically close to her, yet she will never fully reach it.

The city of New York in *The Great Gatsby* is visited on many occasions in the novel and is depicted as wealthy and garish with its "movie stars", yet it

comes across as being anything, but happy. Fitzgerald describes it as “ the city rising up ... in white heaps and sugar lumps ... with a wish of non-olfactory (not smelling money)”. This metaphorical quote shows that New York is a place of short pleasure that dissolves too quickly. The “ white” is again used for irony, suggesting the deceit and impurity of Myrtle, Gatsby and Wolfsheim in New York.

The image of the “ facade of...a block of delicate pale light, beamed down into the park,” shows that there is actually very little hope in the city. In contrast, the “ atropa belladonna” plant the Leo discovers appears to be beautiful, as he admits that despite being poisonous he would “ have to look at it again”, but he soon realises that it is dangerous and poisonous as he destroys it, shortly before Marian and Ted’s affair becomes public. The “ belladonna” is a symbol of beauty, but with an underlying poison in the Maudsley family.

Gatsby’s house is similar to Myrtle’s apartment, in that everything seems out of place, as he shows off to his true love Daisy. The “ pile of shirts” that Gatsby owns in “ stripes ... in coral and apple green and...” represent the hope that Gatsby has for a life with Daisy despite really knowing that “ rich girls don’t marry poor boys”, because although he has a lot of wealth gathered rather suspiciously, he is no-way near the wealth of the ‘ old money’. The colours of the shirts are of great magnitude as they symbolize the innocence of Gatsby’s pursuit, as they are very pure colours.

However, the “ Marie Antoinette music rooms” could resemble the fate that Gatsby’s meets as despite the fact that Marie Antoinette was rich she was

guillotined in the French revolution, a fate not too dissimilar to that that Gatsby meets. Outside Gatsby's house is the most important symbol in the novel. The "green light on the dock" sums up both Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy and the American dream: doomed to failure. The American dream is shown failing right from the first second, when the Dutch settlers, saw the 'green breast' and attempted, but ultimately failed to possess it.

From an early age Gatsby's perseverance and hope in the face of adversity epitomises the American dream, but one that is still very much a dream. Overall, both *The Go-Between* and *The Great Gatsby* share similar themes and have almost identical conclusions, but the location in both symbolizes many different important themes such as possessions showing how important the person is, for example the "four candles" outside at the Buchanans house representing the pointless actions that the 'old' money have.

In the epilogue of *The Go-Between* Leo sees "the south-west prospect of the Hall" that was hidden from Leo's memory could represent new hope and optimism in the future, however the scene of the "drunken woman" and the image of "the Dutch sailors" and Gatsby on his "blue lawn" are almost ironic claiming that the American dream will never happen, despite all the life put into it. 1650 words 1588 words which means that there is no more than about 60 words available on: 1686 words.

We have now gone over the word limit by about 100 or so words, so we need to cut some parts down (get rid of waffle). Also we may need to add a sentence or so on GB and Marie A???. Finally we will probably need to have a

good think about the intro and conc. /More vale of ash. Unlikely to be pursued with word limit. /Gatsby's house Chapter 5(need study q's). In perhaps C4, although this may not be possible Definite Possible \* Perhaps the outhouses in GB. More GB stuff is needed so at least 1/3 of the word limit is likely to be on this \* Epilogue in GB. Gatsby's party \* The end: likely to be moved to the Conc. \* Marie Antoinette Incorporated as background for on eof ghe already done paragraphs. This will leave about 200 words for the Intro. And Conc. We may have to incorporate the end as part of the conclusion, which q. frankly isn't a bad idea. Use sparknotes for aide One point; the GB is likely to b e the worse of the two novels, and I would like slightly more information about some for the parts before I get the wrong impression (yeah I blame it on you Debbie Houghton).

AND we no longer have the GB for reference, but hopefully I will manage to cope (somehow, someway). We have about 1+1 weekends to finish it, therefore I hope to finish ASAP and checked as this will give me time to think over changes, but the quicker the better (and seeing as we're only likely to add a max of 4 paragraphs, I wouldn't panic too much. On the social class sheet the following things were put down (that I haven't of yet done): \* Buchanan's house \* Ted's farm (will do) Gatsby's parties (not sure if I will be able to get this in, but I will try) \* Gatsby's mansion (to some extent) Therefore I need to think about these ideas. We have approx. 13 days left, so only 2 weekends, BUT 1 Saturday we have Ding Dong and the other Orchestra Yet to complete \* Getting the word limit down \* Improving various phrasing (last weekend) \* Perhaps improving the intro \* We also have to do the summary grid for Dave for this Tuesday \* Impressive vocabulary



The word count now is at 1670, which I'm reasonably pleased with 4 a 1st draft as it is (only) 20 words or so over the upper limit which is OK. Good Luck in finishing it over the next 2 weeks Yours truly, Chris J Hosking xx 2nd draft: 1711 words, I will needd to get rid of 50 at least. All the changes have now pretty much been implemented, so its up to you (me) to get the word limit down. Good Luck Aim to prnit next Tuesday after we have a FINAL check.