

Exploring the theme of social class within the novel 'the great gatsby' by f. sco...

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In 'The Great Gatsby' the first instance of social class is when we find out that Nick is privileged. 'haven't had all the advantages that you've had.' Nick is telling us about advice that his father had given him - from this we can clearly see that Nick is better off than some people. Nick also suggests that you are born into your class by saying 'decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth'. This shows us that at the time the book was written people didn't work their way up the social ladder and could not move through the classes very easily, instead they were born into and expected to stay in one class.

The next significant mention of class, in my opinion, is 'I wanted the world to be uniform ... I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses'. To me Nick is suggesting that he doesn't want people to be divided by class, but that he wants everyone to be together and equal. To others this foreshadows that inequality between classes will play a big part in the story because Nick is saying what he wanted and not what actually happened. We also see that Nick is unhappy with the class difference when he says 'well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre'.

This shows that Nick is unhappy with the split between classes because he is privileged but cannot afford to live in the posher area of New York. Further into the novel we see again that Nick doesn't like the class splits and how they have affected people. 'I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away'. Nick is not happy with the attitude and the way the upper classes behave. A reader may get the impression that he isn't wealthy himself and is

jealous of the rich or that he isn't as rich as most people and doesn't want to be because he is put off by the way that they come across.

Another significant mention of social class is in the conversation between Nick and Jordan Baker. ' I know somebody there'

' I don't know a single-'. From this I can see that the classes don't mix with one another because the people who live in East Egg – Daisy and Jordan – do not know many people from the West Egg; apart from Gatsby who is fairly well known anyway. This gives me a clear image of the way people in that time would have seen other classes – they knew that they shouldn't mix with one another and that they should keep the classes as separate as they could.

I can also tell that Tom thinks that he is at the top of society. ' he reads deep books with long words in them'. Daisy is saying that he enjoys reading books, but by saying that he reads books with long words in and can understand them shows that he is educated and so it above a lot of people in society. When Tom says ' It's up to us, who are the dominant race' it shows me that he thinks that the class of people of which he comes under is above everyone else. By describing himself as ' the dominant race' he is giving off the impression that he should have a lot of power and has the rights and ability to control everyone else.

Another key instance, in my opinion, is when Myrtle is mocking the lower classes. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time'. Myrtle is in lower class herself and when pretending to be upper class and mocking the

lower classes, I can see that the classes don't really like each other or get along. I can also tell that the classes do not have an understanding of each other as Myrtle doesn't know how to behave like a rich person. To some people this can also show that Myrtle doesn't like the rich people, her mocking the lower classes could be an indirect way of mocking the upper class (of which she doesn't fall under). We can also tell that the classes don't really mix and understand each other because when they are talking about West Egg, Daisy is 'offended' and 'failed to understand'. This clearly shows us that the upper class do not want to be associated with the lower classes and do not even attempt to understand them.

Further into the novel, chapter three opens with a description of Gatsby's parties. 'There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights...while his two motor boats...Rolls-Royce...And on Monday's eight servants'. This shows the reader that Gatsby is rich, and therefore could be considered part of the upper class. Nick is describing his neighbour showing that the people who live in West Egg can be part of the upper class because Gatsby is. Further into this chapter Gatsby is showing off his wealth at a party through the number of books he owns. "What do you think?" he demanded' after showing off his book shelf. Gatsby doesn't read the books he just has them there to show that he is wealthy and can afford to waste his money. To some readers this can also symbolise that education is dividing the new rich from the old rich. It shows us that education can now be a factor into getting into the upper class whereas before you were born into class and only got an education if you were part of a high class.

Further into the novel, chapter six, we find out that even before Daisy, Gatsby had thought that wealth was important. ' I suppose he'd had that name ready for a long time'. The name Jay Gatsby comes from a materialistic conception which means to be successful. This shows the reader that Gatsby had always wanted to be successful and make something of himself and that it wasn't Daisy that had caused him to want to be wealthy.

From chapter six we can also see that being born into a high class and an education were not the only ways to move up the social ladder to be part of a high class. ' drifted back to the Lake Superior and he was still searching for something to do. This quotation can show the reader that Gatsby is looking for a way other than an education to climb the social ladder because he leaves college and is searching for something else to do.

Tom looks down upon the newly rich and thinks that they are all bootleggers. ' some big bootlegger' This shows us that Tom is not happy with the way some people have earned their money. Again showing us that he thinks he is superior to others.