

How does fitzgerald
make you feel
sympathetic towards
gatsby essay



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Throughout the Novel, Fitzgerald builds up and embellishes the character of Jay Gatsby (James Gatz) in the reader's minds so intricately it can be interpreted in many different ways. Many would say that in the novel Fitzgerald is creating sympathy for Gatsby in order to create a strong emotional response when eventually Gatsby is 'rejected' by Daisy, and then later the next day killed. Fitzgerald accumulates this sympathy throughout the novel through both the circumstances that loom over the characters and their lives as well as pin-point events in the novel itself.

One way in which Fitzgerald provokes sympathy for Gatsby is through Gatsby's past and his journey to nouveau-riche status. Firstly, and more obviously, is Gatsby's impoverished past, which in itself generates respect and sympathy for Gatsby, but also, in Gatsby's contempt for his roots, many would say Fitzgerald is portraying Gatsby as arrogant and narcissistic however i would interpret this attitude as more of a motivation of the highest degree for a better life. Which by the end of the novel, in hindsight, makes you want to cry for Gatsby's character, and the 'destruction' of his life by his own self-consuming love for Daisy.

Another key thread in Gatsby's past is his history with Daisy, and the circumstances to which he lost her. A more detailed view of Gatsby's past relationship with Daisy is first revealed with Jordan's narrative. Gatsby is described as a soldier, sitting with Daisy, looking at Daisy 'in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime', this, to me anyway, shows Gatsby as a tender and affectionate man, this detail becomes key, which i will come to next. Daisy promises to wait for Gatsby when he leaves in 1917, however, by 1919, Daisy is engaged to Tom, with Gatsby still at war.

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This is a huge betrayal of Gatsby's trust and love, and furthermore, with the portrayal of Gatsby as tender and affectionate toward Daisy, more sympathy is felt towards Gatsby. This accumulating sympathy, drawn up by Gatsby and Daisy's relationship continues to be exploited by Fitzgerald, as the reader realises that it is entirely possible that everything Gatsby has done in his life since then, is purely to lure, and have Daisy, once more. His parties, the purchase of the west-egg mansion, his change of name, his ' language' has all manifested to attract and accommodate Daisy whom Gatsby now looks up to.

It nears obsession, which I'm sure some may find pathetic but i imagine the majority of readers find this motivation and self-consuming love for Daisy endearing as well as tragic. What becomes even more tragic about this is that his expectations surpass the reality of Daisy's life, the awkwardness of Tom and Pammy's presence her aversion to Gatsby's self-manifested lifestyle and his parties with which he intended to impress her, hence, in reality Gatsby fails to impress Daisy with much that he has done for her.

Gatsby's yearning for Daisy (The Green Light) is mentioned in the novel by Nick's narrative, he says " Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us... ". This naivety which runs throughout the novel creates a lot of compassion towards Gatsby. As well as these more generally applied vehicles of sympathy, there are many more pin-point events which when viewed accumulatively, generate a significant amount of sympathy.

The first of these events i would like to come to is when Nick views Gatsby reaching out for the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. The fact that he is literally reaching out, trying to grasp the light, shows us his sheer desperation to have Daisy back, even after she's broken his heart. This moment shows us before we've even got to know Gatsby, his vulnerability and awkwardness, that he can't just invite her around. Both of these traits shown here, generate a significant amount of intrigue and sympathy toward Gatsby's character before he's fully introduced in the novel.

The other key event in the novel i would like to mention is the reuniting of Gatsby & Daisy when they meet again for the first time. Throughout this 'scene' in the book, Gatsby is presented as a very awkward character which is in huge juxtaposition with the character previously displayed by Fitzgerald. I feel this scene as an even rather than a general plot-line, is the most significant time at which the reader is encouraged to feel sympathetic towards Gatsby.

On (re)arriving at the front door, he is soaked by the rain with his hands in his pockets, this is the moment at which the tone is set for the events to come, Gatsby is presented as an awkward, unfortunate character here and the reader at this presentation of Gatsby despairs at the disaster that has occurred. The events continue much as they begun, with Gatsby knocking the clock over and catching it, a symbol perhaps to indicate his desperation to literally 'catch time', to reclaim what he lost. Furthermore, the action of him knocking the clock over is awkward in itself.

With this episode, the extravagant character of Gatsby is toppled to reveal his tenderness once more in the present form rather than through narratives of the past, furthermore, the failure of the events which Gatsby had been planning ever since he lost Daisy to Gatsby generates a huge amount of sympathy for Gatsby and the realisation that the reality of the circumstances in which he is reintroduced to daisy does not live up to his dreams, and after everything that Gatsby has done to make these dreams manifest, the reader cannot help but sympathise with Gatsby.

Overall, Fitzgerald, through narrating Gatsby's tragic past, as well as presenting Gatsby in tragic or awkward circumstances in the present, manages to build a strong idea of the character of Gatsby in the reader's mind, so strong in fact that at times the reader can empathise as well as sympathise with Gatsby.