

The valley of ashes the great gatsby



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Unlike the other settings in the book, the valley of ashes is a picture of absolute desolation and poverty. It lacks a glamorous surface and lays fallow and grey halfway between West Egg and New York. Fitzgerald portrays this imagery by the use of “ Ashes grow like wheat” suggesting the growth of people who inhabit the valleys realisation of their broken dreams.

By the use of “ growth” Fitzgerald portrays how the ashes symbolise how the people of the valleys dreams are slowly fading away into ash, the longer they inhabit the valley. The valley of ashes symbolises the moral decay hidden by the beautiful facades of the Eggs, and suggests that beneath the ornamentation of West Egg and the mannered charm of East Egg lies the same ugliness as in the valley. The men who live there work at shoveling up the ashes.

In the novel the valley of ashes is described as, “ a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air” The valley of ashes resembles something lifeless and dark. It symbolises poverty and the moral decay hidden by the beauty of East Egg and West Egg. The people who live here basically have no prospects for future and nothing they can be proud of from their lives.

Fitzgerald symbolises this through the interior of Wilsons house “ The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust covered wreck of a ford” Fitzgerald portrays the imagery of an old, decaying car, which is a symbol of Wilson himself. This can be compared with the renowned poem by

T. S. Eliot “ The Hollow Men” as he illustrates “ Shape without form, shade without colour, paralysed force” here Eliot is illustrating how the men within his poem are motionless, lifeless.

He does this by the use of “ paralysed” symbolising the hollow men’s life, as they have no purpose, similarly as how Wilson is perceived by Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald also depicts the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg symbolise the loss of spiritual values in America. The billboard was erected to promote the business of an optometrist in Queens borough, the eyes symbolise the growing commercialism of America, life in America is all about making money, a lot of money as evidenced by the wealth of people like Tom Buchanan, a man’s success is measured in terms of how much money he is worth, not on what kind of person he may be morally.

The billboard, like the spiritual values of America, is neglected “ But his eyes, dimmed a little by many countless days, under sun and rain, brood on over the solemn dumping ground. ” The old-fashioned values of America, which Nick Carraway returns to reconnect with in the mid-West are completely absent from the East, God seems to have abandoned America, leaving only Dr. T. J. Eckleburg behind to stare down with his empty eyes on people who have abandoned their spiritual values in the quest to achieve material wealth.

These eyes are demonstrating how the “ American Dream” is non-existent for the most of the population in America, as they have been consumed by the valley, with the eyes overlooking the valley, just as the wealthy and the rest of the American society are doing. This can also be compared with “ The

Hollow Men” Eliot indicates that the place in which the Hollow Men inhabit is similarly overlooked by society “ The eyes are not here, There are no eyes here” here Eliot illustrates how they Hollow Men have been abandoned by everyone, as they are left to fend for themselves, much like the people who populate The Valley of Ashes.