

# ‘the great gatsby’ and ‘sonnets from the portuguese.’ essay sample

[Life](#), [Love](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Love is a significantly powerful emotion which has the ability to positively transform a life, but also the ability to possess, and destroy lives. Many different concepts of love have been expressed in texts, throughout history, and have been influenced by divergent contextual values appropriate to the time, in which the text was written. Through the comparative study of the 1925 novel, 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 1845 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' HSC students are provided with varying concepts of love in dissimilar contexts through the use of narrative and poetic techniques, thus resulting in an enhanced appreciation of each text. The themes and values portrayed in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel 'The Great Gatsby' are appreciably influenced by various traditions and trends of the 'Roaring 20s' including modernism, consumerism and idealism based on the concept of the 'American Dream.'

Through the narration of an 'objective' young man Nick Caraway; 'The Great Gatsby' depicts the strong rejection of moral and spiritual values during the 1920s. Fitzgerald uses his characters to divulge an attitude, by portraying the characters as superficial and materialistic, hiding behind a veneer of beauty but lacking substance, as a reflection of society of the 1920s. Elizabeth Barrett Browning conveys love within her poetry which is viewed as pure, and transcendent. Barrett-Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' reject the traditional conventions of the Victorian Era. The sonnets, written during the courtship

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between Barrett Browning and Robert Browning, demonstrate Barrett

Browning's denunciation of the Patriarchal values of the time and portrays women with the ability to possess passionate emotions, rather than to exist only as objects of affection. An understanding of the contexts of each composer gives HSC students a greater appreciation of each text. "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways!"- Elizabeth Barrett Browning Love can only be fully consummated, when it remains uncorrupted from values such as superficial wordplay, physical infatuation and materialistic desires. Within Sonnet XIV, Elizabeth Barrett Browning expresses the conception that in order for love to be eternalised, it must be a genuine love that extends deeper than selfish needs or simple fascination.

Through the use of repetition of 'love's sake only,' Barrett Browning enforces the persona's need to be loved for her essential self, rather than for aspects which may be affected and changed over time. Barrett Browning uses words with spiritual connotations such as 'evermore' and 'eternity' in order to allow the responders to appreciate the purity of endless love. The use of first and second person within Sonnet XIV creates an intimate feeling of connection, with the persona's concept of not wanting a love based on temporary qualities. Through the use of direct speech, Barrett Browning expresses her objection to Browning loving her for 'her smile...her.... her way' as these are qualities which may be distorted over time. In contrast to Barrett Browning's expression of the imperativeness of unconditional love, F. Scott Fitzgerald utilises the narration of Nick Caraway to demonstrate Jay Gatsby's idealistic value of Daisy.

Nick Caraway observes, " It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy. It increased her value in his eyes." (Pg 149) ' Excitement' is an emotion that can be deteriorated by factors such as monotony and tedium, therefore Gatsby's love for Daisy is not purely genuine as it is based upon ephemeral qualities. Barrett Browning wishes her love not to be based upon ' a sense of pleasant ease on such a day' which can be compared to the excitement which constructs the love Gatsby feels for Daisy. Gatsby and Daisy's love for each other exists with foundation of egotistical values appropriate to the context of the 1920s. Through the use of the third person description of Daisy and Gatsby, the audience is given an objective view of their relationship.

This allows responders to understand that even though Gatsby believes he is genuinely in love with Daisy, his obsession extends little further than physical attraction and her modernistic value. F. Scott Fitzgerald reveals in the novel that love which is superficial is destined to be limited by time and the circumstantial, changing elements of life. Fitzgerald's dialogue implemented through Gatsby, ' She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me,' is used to represent Daisy's inability to love Gatsby whilst he was poor and away at war. Furthermore, this implies that Gatsby and Daisy's love is not the genuinely unconditional love referred to in Sonnet XIV by Barrett Browning. In the Sonnet XIV the enjambment used by Barrett Browning in order to create audible interest, ' love so wrought...May be unwrought so' conveys the idea that love, built upon a weak foundation, can be destroyed just as easily as it was formed.

This notion is portrayed also by Fitzgerald through the characterisation of Daisy. Fitzgerald depicts Daisy as completely in love when she is enlightened to Gatsby's wealth and power, but as she begins to discover Gatsby's unlawful dealings, her love for him disintegrates as she draws 'further and further into herself...' (pg 135) "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us." Elizabeth Barrett Browning directly conveys the purity of love which is based on loving a person for no other reason than for 'love's sake,' rather than conventional, convenient love expected of the Victorian era. Fitzgerald demonstrates the hopelessness of superficial love, and the empty desire of the 'American Dream.'

However, HSC students must be conscious, that despite the surface of Fitzgerald's novel, his intentions are not to glamorise the behaviours and attitudes of his particular context but rather to condemn the modernistic views of society of the 1920s, and to attempt to express the genuine love which is found in Barrett Browning's Sonnets, through the representation of his story and characters. Selfless love continues on through the ups and downs of life and even after death. In the Sonnet XLIXX Barrett-Browning uses a jubilant tone to convey the selfless ways she loves her fiancé. "I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life!" In this line Barrett Browning uses first person to intimately convey symbolism referring to every aspect of her life, thus inferring that she loves her fiancé with the entirety of her existence.

Also in this line Barrett Browning increases the intensity of the poem by adding emphasis of "all my life!" through the use of an exclamation mark, which allows the audience to understand her utter devotion to her lover. Similar to Barrett Browning's metaphor, Fitzgerald uses the simile "Her voice is full of money," (pg120) to symbolise Daisy's life and her desires. Fitzgerald's symbolic use of 'her voice' reveals that daisy isn't consumed by her love for Gatsby, but rather for her love of money and material objects. Barrett-Browning likens the purity of her love, with the wholesomeness of humans who carry out good deeds, without the desire to be praised or congratulated through the simile in Sonnet XLIX, "I love thee purely, as they turn from praise."

This simile demonstrates to HSC students the honour and selflessness of the persona's love. In contrast, Fitzgerald uses the dialogue of Gatsby "Just tell him- that you never loved him -and it's all wiped out forever," in order to demonstrate Gatsby's need for his love for Daisy to be validated by words and people hearing them. The breaking up of the dialogue implemented by Fitzgerald, allows the audience to perceive a sense of desperation within Gatsby's voice. Through the use of narrative techniques HSC student are able to comprehend that Gatsby's love is not built on purity, but rather on competition and his desperate desire to prove himself. "But love me for love's sake, that evermore

Thou may'st love on through love's eternity-" Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
The certainty expressed through Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnet XLIII, provides a contrast to her previous poems, in which many doubtful

connotations were present. This shows the growth of Barrett Browning's love over time, in comparison to the deterioration of Gatsby's love as time progresses. The anaphora of " I love thee" demonstrates the certainty in and affirmation of her genuine love towards her fiancé. The confidence displayed through the use of loving and emotive language allows the audience to recognise the persona's absolute devotion to her lover. Dissimilarly, the fidelity of Daisy and Gatsby's love is diminished due to each of their selfish needs.

Fitzgerald implements the dialogue of Daisy and the descriptive language of Nick Caraway "' I never loved him,' she said with perceptible resistance," (pg 133) in order to allow the responders to visualise the growing apprehension Daisy feels towards her love for Gatsby. " But with every word Daisy was drawing further and further into herself..." (pg 135) the third person observations provide HSC student with an objective view of the crumbling relationship between Gatsby and Daisy. Daisy's love is not selfless, as she eased her own anxiety and fear at the expense of the love she and Gatsby shared. Gatsby is so selfishly possessed by the desire of having Daisy as a fulfilment to his ' American Dream,' that he is blind to the purity of true love, which leads to the eventual destruction of his relationship with Daisy. " Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;

If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,  
Till she cry ' Lover, gold-hatted, high bouncing lover  
I must have you!"

-Thomas Parke d'Invilliers

'The Great Gatsby,' reveals selfish infatuation as, the love is focused upon what can be gained, whereas in Barrett Browning's sonnets, love revolves around what can be given, making it pure and selfless. Through the utilisation of narrative techniques, the selfish, tainted love, expressed through Fitzgerald's characters, reflect the hollowness of society during the 1920s, which in turn effectively enhances the audience's appreciation of the altruistic, unadulterated love which is eminent within Barrett Browning's poetry. Through the examination of F. Scott Fitzgerald's, 'The Great Gatsby' and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's, 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' and the contextual values of each text, HSC students are provided with an understanding of polar representations of true love, and this in turn significantly amplifies the appreciation of each text.