

Color imagery – the great gatsby

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Writers often use a variety of literary devices in their literature to relate to the themes of their stories. Imagery is just one of the many that are used to create the structure for the literary pieces. Imagery can be used to form images in the reader's mind, appealing to the human senses. F. Scott Fitzgerald, the mind behind the American Modernist novel *The Great Gatsby*, uses a specific form of this literary device, which is color imagery, to make a more meaningful visual experience for the reader.

Patterns of certain colors represent recurring themes in the story as a whole.

In *The Great Gatsby*, certain characters portray the significance of colors in the color theory. Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, and Jordan Baker's actions in the story prove this point through their actions and their words. Fitzgerald's story contains an aspect of wealth, and each character goes about it in his or her own way, connecting back to the imagery the author uses.

By examining the desire for power, material possession, dishonesty, and deception, it is clear that the colors yellow and gold are used to represent these themes.

Fitzgerald's color imagery is clear when yellow is used to describe situations of greed and the desire for power throughout the story. In *The Great Gatsby*, there are several characters who wish to have more, who are never satisfied with what they have. They become greedy, and their actions, as small as some are, help to prove this. Daisy Buchanan is Jay Gatsby's love interest in the story. However, it is known that she is married to Tom Buchanan, and that they have a child together. The narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, describes Tom as an aggressive, arrogant, self-absorbed, man.

His aggressiveness leads him to verbally and physically abuse Daisy. One may believe that the best situation would be for her to simply leave Tom in order for her to have a better life. The thing is that Daisy cannot get herself to do that because she craves power and wealth. Daisy is observed by Nick, and is described as being “ in white, her dress rippling and fluttering...” (8). When thinking of an actual daisy flower, it's known that a daisy has white petals with a yellow center. In the story, Mrs. Buchanan is in a white dress, exhibiting purity and innocence, but the yellow inside clearly shows she is full of nothing but greed.

She stays with Tom, an abusive husband, because she enjoys having a luxurious life. Daisy does indeed represent a daisy flower, with her true color, yellow, showing through her actions. Along with Daisy, George Wilson subtly shows a desire for more in the story. According to Nick, George is “ a blonde, spiritless man... and fairly handsome” (25). Mr. Wilson's hair is blonde, which ties with yellow in the story. When Tom Buchanan visits George in the Valley of Ashes, the first thing he says to Tom is, “ When are you going to sell me that car? ” (25).

George knows that Tom is a wealthy man, and although not being straightforward with it, George wants more than what he has with his dull life in the Valley of Ashes. His blonde hair shows that because the author's use of yellow shows the greed and the desire for power in the story. Fitzgerald applies his color imagery to *The Great Gatsby* in a very sophisticated way because he uses a single color to express multiple ideas. Not only do yellow and gold display a craving for more, but it also shows the material wealth

that someone can have. As discussed earlier, Tom Buchanan and Daisy Buchanan lead lives of great affluence.

They live in the East Egg, the more extravagant of the two Eggs, in Long Island, New York. As the narrator of the story observes the couple's beautiful mansion, he says it has a " front broken by a line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm, windy afternoon... (6). Nick's portrayal of the luxurious Buchanan home and life using gold shows how the author uses the color to represent material possession. While Nick Carraway spends time describing the Buchanans' affluence, his own material possession is also depicted.

Nick's love interest in the story is a woman named Jordan Baker. He spends a significant amount of time with her, and recounts what kind of stuff they do together. At one of Gatsby's great parties, Nick is with Jordan, when he says, " With Jordan's slender golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and sauntered the garden" (43). Nick has Jordan Baker's " golden arm" in his, which shows how he clearly sees her as some sort of righteous prize, a possession of his. The gold is used to make Jordan Nick's very own material possession.

That is how Fitzgerald expresses yellow and gold when relating to this theme. Misleading and being dishonest are two of the things that several characters do in The Great Gatsby to portray themselves as better, or just simply different. In this story, dishonesty and deception are expressed by the author. Many in the story wonder how Jay Gatsby became this extremely rich man. Mystery surrounds Mr. Gatsby, and it is learned that it is his purpose to

keep it a mystery. When he picks up Nick Carraway in his yellow Rolls-Royce he tells him some details about his origin.

However, Nick is immediately suspicious of what Mr. Gatsby is telling him in his yellow car. He tells Nick to be wary about what rumors he hears about Gatsby, and he tells him about Oxford and his status in the military. Gatsby seems to be trying very hard to create an image of himself that simply is not accurate. Gatsby is so full of deception that Nick somehow “ manages to restrain his incredulous laughter” (66). The narrator knows for a fact that something just does not add up, and this all happens in the luxurious yellow vehicle.

While in the car, Gatsby is dishonest to Nick for the first time. He may have shown “ evidence”, but Nick knows that Gatsby is deceiving him in a way. Another character close to the narrator also displays very misleading behavior. Not unlike Daisy Buchanan, Jordan Baker is described as having a delicate white dress, making her seem like a pristine, pure object. Nevertheless, Nick also observes Miss Baker’s “ autumn-leaf yellow hair” (17). The narrator learns that Jordan is not all that truthful when he realizes that she did not play fair in a gold tournament once.

Nick says, “ At her first big gold tournament there was a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round... she was incurably dishonest” (57-58). Her dishonesty ties back to the narrative description of her yellow hair. All in all, the author clearly displays yellow as a color of deception and fraud. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s use of color imagery in *The Great Gatsby* not only makes a clear picture in the reader’s mind, but it also helps

to relate to the broader themes of the whole story. He uses color patterns and attaches colors to certain images to craft a big idea using few words.

More specifically, the yellow and gold patterns portray the themes of greed, desire for power, material possession, and dishonesty. Daisy Buchanan wanting to keep her power despite having to stay with Tom, Nick's prize in Jordan Baker, and Gatsby's apparent deception all fall under the color yellow. This again shows Fitzgerald's multiple ideas under a single color. The many examples and patterns of one color are not coincidental, and that is why yellow and gold tie perfectly into the story in regards to representing themes and motifs in *The Great Gatsby*.