

# The great gatsby: gatsby's illusion of himself

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F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is considered a novel that embodies America in the 1920s. In it, the narrator, Nick Carraway, helps his neighbor Jay Gatsby reunite with Daisy Buchanan, with whom he has been in love with since 5 years before, during World War I. The affair between the two fails, however, and ends in Gatsby being shot and killed. The reason that this was inevitable is that Gatsby created a fantasy so thoroughly that he became part of it, and he fell with it when reality came crashing down.

The basis of all of this is Gatsby's obsession with Daisy and with meeting her. He did not want to deal with the reality that confronted him upon returning from the war. Fortunately, he had "an extraordinary gift, a romantic readiness," and he found in Daisy someone to focus this on. She is perfection to him, something for which he can strive, so he puts all of his energy into finding her again. He uses his inherited money to travel around the country, searching; when he runs out, he goes into the drug business, then oil, then liquor. He clips out articles about Daisy from every newspaper he can find; he buys a huge, romantic house that he hopes will merit her approval. The parties that he throws every night in hopes that she will come become almost

famous for

their extravagance and the variety of people that come.

A result of this is that Gatsby creates an illusion around himself,

also. His past is shrouded in mystery and speculation: some favorites of the party-goers' theories on why he is so free and generous with his resources are

that he once killed a man and that he was a German spy during the war. He does

nothing to discourage these rumours; rather, he often adds to them. He lets people believe that he was an Oxford man and that his money was inherited from

his father, when in fact he only attended Oxford for a short time and his money

all came from outside his family. Jay Gatsby is not even his real name, but part

of the illusion of his identity; his real name is James Gatz.

This involved deception does result in a meeting with Daisy. After years of staring at the green light at the end of her dock like a symbol of all of his yearning, he arranges for a meeting at Nick's house. Gatsby of course tries to

make it perfect, hiring men to cut Nick's lawn and decorate his house with flowers, and "unexpectedly" showing up after Daisy's arrival. At this first reunion Gatsby is childishly nervous and embarrassed. He has decorated his house

with lights, and he takes her on a tour of it. When later she does come to one of his parties and he detects that she is not enjoying herself, he discontinues them.

Gatsby, however, cannot plan for reality. While he and Daisy are driving in his car, Daisy accidentally hits Myrtle Wilson, a woman who lives above a service station in New York. Her husband, George, thinking that Gatsby was driving, comes and shoots him in the pool. This, however, is merely symbolic of reality crashing down on what Gatsby had created. Firstly, his fantasy could not have ever worked because Daisy is not perfect. She is instead more like her husband, Tom: reckless and spontaneous. In fact, Daisy was probably planning on leaving with Tom anyway. He had suspected her and Gatsby's affair and found out about his bootlegging operation. This darker side of him is what primarily destroyed her illusion about Gatsby. He, on the other hand, probably still believed in her to the end; the knowledge that Daisy was leaving with Tom would have had devastating effects perhaps equal to even his murder.

This hopefulness was the basis of what made Gatsby great and why the novel was so representative of the 1920s. The American attitude was one of hopes

and

dreams and the illusions created fromt hem. And oftentimes the meeting

with

reality had tragic consequences as it did with Gatsby.

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