

"love conquers all": analyzing romance and relationships within the great gatsby

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



Love relationships consume a substantial portion of public attention, whether in regards to legitimate bonds, media exposure, or literary portrayal. In *The Great Gatsby*, a number of love relationships are introduced and explored, including the bonds between Myrtle and George Wilson, Daisy and Tom Buchanan, as well as Daisy and Jay Gatsby. Notably, however, few of these relationships seem to consist of any genuine substance, leaving the reader to question the truthfulness and the depth of affection within each couple. Relationships proposed in *The Great Gatsby* can be examined on the basis of passion, emotional intimacy, and commitment between partners in order to determine the convincingness (or lack thereof) of each pairing.

According to Merriam-Webster, passion can be defined as “strong romantic or sexual feelings” directed towards a cause or being. This type of feeling is overwhelmingly lacking in Myrtle and George Wilson’s relationship. George is a meek man, completely controlled by his wife, Myrtle. They have no children, and Myrtle is introduced in the narrative through her involvement with Tom Buchanan. Myrtle is cold towards and has little or no regard for her husband; the statement “She... walk[ed] through her husband as if he were a ghost” (Fitzgerald 25) illustrates how little heed Myrtle affords George. Mr. Wilson, however, does seem to care deeply for his wife, with his devotion to her particularly displayed through his grieving upon her demise (Fitzgerald 139-141).

In the Buchanan relationship, Tom is unfaithful to Daisy, and it is known that Tom has a long history of affairs. In spite of this past, readers do catch glimpses of devotion between Tom and his wife. Tom speaks “flushed with

his impassioned gibberish" (Fitzgerald 130), and fights to keep Daisy from leaving him for Gatsby. The couple does have a daughter, along with some past chemistry. Jordan remarks to Nick on one occasion that she saw Daisy with Tom in Santa Barbara when they had returned from their honeymoon, and remarks, " I thought I'd never seen a girl so mad about her husband... looking at him with unfathomable delight" (Fitzgerald 78). Daisy herself also claims that she did love Tom: "...I can't say I never loved Tom... It wouldn't be true" (Fitzgerald 133). The validity of Daisy's feelings could be called into question, nonetheless, based on recollections of Gatsby's: " she wanted her life shaped now, immediately? and the decision must be made by some force? of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality" (Fitzgerald 151) in regards to her reasons for marriage.

Daisy and Jay Gatsby are a passionate couple, and romantic encounters in both the past and present are revealed. Especially when glimpsing the early relationship between Daisy and Gatsby, we can see their desire on clear display: "[Gatsby] looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at" (Fitzgerald 76), and " sat with Daisy in his arms for a long, silent time" (Fitzgerald 150). Most convincing is when Gatsby related " they had never been closer in their month of love, nor communicated more profoundly one with another than when she brushed silent lips against his coat's shoulder or when he touched the end of her fingers, gently...." (Fitzgerald 150). Whatever the underlying motives for the relationship, it cannot be said that Daisy and Gatsby were not consumed with each other. Even in her home, with Tom in the next room, "...[Daisy] got

up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth" (Fitzgerald 116).

Emotional intimacy, referring to the sharing of personal matters, is another key component to any love relationship. With Myrtle and George, it is difficult to discern that any such connection exists. Myrtle is committing adulterous actions in violation of her marriage, while George, though he cares for his wife, is definitively submissive, consenting to his wife's dominance. Readers are not made privy to any sense of deeper connection between the two, aside from Myrtle's resentment of her husband and his lifestyle. George refuses also to listen to his wife when she tries to explain about the dog collar found in her drawer, showing a distinct failure to communicate between the couple (Fitzgerald 158).

Yet Daisy and Tom seem to have a sense of mutual understanding that transcends that of the other couplings. This connection is best described in the following terms: " Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table... He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own... They weren't happy... and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture..." (Fitzgerald 146). For all the adultery and lies, Daisy cannot leave Tom because of their learned intimacy, their comfortableness about each other, even after the ugly confrontation with Gatsby.

Though physical intimacy may not be problematic for Jay and Daisy, their relationship is not deeply rooted. In spite of Gatsby's infatuation with Daisy, their conversations remain shallow, revolving around Gatsby's worldly possessions and status, and little else. Daisy truly seems to have only monetary investment in the relationship, painting herself as materialistic, especially when she shows significant emotion regarding Gatsby's fine wardrobe: "They're such beautiful shirts... It makes me sad..." (Fitzgerald 93).

Finally, each Gatsby couple displays varying levels of commitment. Myrtle and George share a twelve year marriage? a fact that Myrtle grants little significance, content to carry on her infidelity with Tom Buchanan. George lives under Myrtle's rule. His commitment to her is shown through his meek willingness to appease. When he learns of his wife's affair, he is devastated by it, and ultimately this grief (paired with the loss of his wife) leads to his vengeance on Gatsby and to his own demise.

Tom and Daisy, though in a tumultuous relationship, do always return to one another, although one could argue that the reasoning for this tendency is based on the flaws of each individual (Tom's infidelity and Daisy's materialism). Tom, though repetitively unfaithful, does not wish for Daisy to leave him (Fitzgerald 131-136), while Daisy cannot deny to Gatsby that she loved Tom, and does not in fact leave Tom. Daisy's meal with Tom after the confrontation with Gatsby further solidifies the underlying commitment between the Buchanans, since despite the mistakes each is responsible for,

Daisy and Tom are able to reconcile and resume some semblance of normality in their household (Fitzgerald 146).

Daisy is far more committed to Tom than to Gatsby. Throughout the text, Daisy and Gatsby's relationship flourishes, so long as there are no directly opposing forces. Originally, Daisy marries Tom and gives up on Gatsby, looking for a more monetarily stable existence. History then repeats itself, when Daisy chooses to stay with Tom, abandoning Jay (Fitzgerald 150-152). This irony is best represented by Daisy's statement " I did love him once... but I loved you too" (Fitzgerald 133). Gatsby's eternal infatuation with Daisy shows his devotion to her, and even when Daisy won't abandon Tom, Gatsby remains outside Daisy's home to ensure her well-being (Fitzgerald 146).

Passion, emotional intimacy, and commitment are all components of genuine romantic entanglement. The Great Gatsby, as evidenced, shows the relationships between the Wilsons, the Buchanans, and Gatsby and Daisy. Most convincingly, the Buchanans show that love is not always a feeling, but sometimes an obligation; despite the tremendous flaws of both Daisy and Tom, a comfortable existence is still somehow resumed by the couple near the novel's end. Perhaps Fitzgerald explained love and its intricacies best when he said " there are all kinds of love in this world but never the same love twice"? leaving hope that greater love can be discovered, allowing the lesser to fall by the wayside.