

# The great gatsby and macbeth essay sample

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An individual's ambition can be a crucial factor in aiding one to achieve their goals. However, one's obsessive desire to achieve their goals can have a series of destructive effects potentially leading to their demise. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, is a novel that depicts the consequences that relate to one's obstinate devotion to their goal. Characters in the novel strive to achieve their individual goals, however they become blinded by their ambition in the process. Jay Gatsby, the protagonist in *The Great Gatsby* is an ideal representation of an individual whose ambition lies in his love for a woman he had lost long ago, and how this ambition manipulates his actions which in return hold tragic consequences. *Macbeth*, a play written by William Shakespeare that takes place in the 11th century is an optimal depiction of the negative effects appertaining to one's ambition. Through protagonist Macbeth, Shakespeare is able to displays how the choices one makes based on their motive determines their overall fate. Character Macbeth is an ambitious warrior under the rule of King Duncan. He is confronted by the Weird Sisters; three witches with the supernatural ability to look into the seeds of time, and is told three prophecies. One of these prophecies states that he will be the new king of Scotland.

The possibility of being king intrigues Macbeth however it alters his thoughts and poisons his mind as he feels he must do whatever necessary to ensure the fulfillment of the prophecy. Both *The Great Gatsby* and *Macbeth* illustrate how ambition has the ability to affects one's actions and thought. As Gatsby's goal is to reclaim his lost love and Macbeth's intention is to become the new king of Scotland, they both set up their tragic fates in the process through their actions. Both characters fall victim to their ambition as they

become obsessed with their impending futures, destroy relationship, and face the consequences of their actions leading to their demise. In the pursuit to achieve their goals, Gatsby and Macbeth look to the future and allow it to shape their actions which in return aid destructive results. Jay Gatsby's obsession with the future comes through his affection for his lost love Daisy Buchanan. Daisy is a wealthy woman and was Gatsby's first true love.

However, due to of Gatsby's financial status at the time, Daisy was unable to marry him and instead married a wealthy polo player named Tom Buchanan. In the hopes of impressing Daisy, Gatsby invites her to one of his grand parties. Shortly after the party when all the guests including Daisy return home, Gatsby talks about the disastrous party and the unsuccessful attempt to impress Daisy with Nick Caraway; Gatsby's neighbor and good friend. Gatsby believes that in order to rekindle Daisy's passion and secure his future with her, he must call upon the past. Nick rebuts and states that it is impossible to recreate the past to which Gatsby declares, "' Can't repeat the past?' He cried incredulously. ' Why of course you can!'" (Fitzgerald, 110). Gatsby's ambition alters his thoughts and drives him to believe that in order to be with Daisy he must repeat his past with her. However, this is ironic because although Gatsby's mindset remains in his past with Daisy, Daisy has learned to move on with her life and has forgotten her past with Gatsby. Unable to realize this, Gatsby becomes a victim of his ambition as he is blinded by his aspiration and continues to cringe on to his history with Daisy in the attempt to merge his past with his future.

Another example that reveals Gatsby's obsessive desire for a better future can be expressed when he creates a new persona for himself. As a young man, Gatsby was originally known as James Gatz. Poor at the time, he was one day influenced by Dan Cody; a wealthy alcoholic who gave young Gatsby a taste of the wealthy life. Inspired, Gatsby was intent on creating a better future for himself. As Nick Caraway narrates the story of Gatsby and his relationship with Dan Cody, it is revealed that Gatsby was determined to change his life and live as Dan Cody did, and as a result, " he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen - year old boy would be likely to invent, and to his conception he was faithful to the end" (Fitzgerald, 98). Influenced by Dan Cody, Gatsby was determined to create a better future for himself. Embarrassed by his upbringing, he creates his own persona that symbolizes a better future. Through the use of symbolism, to young James Gatz, his alternate persona is a symbol that motivates him to start anew and shape his life the way he intends it to be.

However in the process of achieving his goal, Gatsby's ambition causes him to lose himself and forget who he truly is. Ultimately, Gatsby is blinded by his devotion to his goal as he believes must create an alternate version of himself to better his future. Similar to Gatsby, Macbeth displays his obsession with his future as he looks to the supernatural in order to attain answers regarding his fate. Macbeth's desire to obtain knowledge about his future can be related back to his encounter with the Weird Sisters. As he returns from battle, he is confronted by the witches who catch his attention as they speak of three prophecies. The witches tell Macbeth that he would soon be rewarded with the title Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and the

future king of Scotland. Macbeth. Although he questions the validity of the prophecies, Macbeth is curious to know more. Before he was able to question the witches any further they had vanished into thin air, to which restless Macbeth exaggerated out loud, " Stay you imperfect speakers. Tell me more. /By Finel's death, I know I am Thane of Glamis, /But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor live /A prosperous gentleman, and to be king / Stands not within my belief, / No more than to be Cawdor.

Say from whence /You owe me this strange intelligence" (Shakespeare, 1. 3. 68-74). Macbeth's curiosity feeds his desire to attain more knowledge about the prophecies and the use of irony aids in displaying his eagerness to know more about his future. Macbeth does not understand how he can be named Thane of Cawdor while the current Thane still lives. This is ironic because little does he know that the Thane had been removed of his title under the charge of treason and that Macbeth had been appointed the new Thane. The witches' prophecies alter Macbeth's thought as he begins to wonder if what the witches speak hold true. In return, Macbeth's curiosity drives his ambition and causes him to take actions that he believes will help him fulfill the witches' prophecies. An alternate example that demonstrates Macbeth's infatuation over his future can be displayed once he is named King of Scotland. As king, Macbeth is extremely paranoid as he fears others will come to know about the reality of his wrong doings since he was forced to murder the previous king in order to be appointed the new king. Therefore, he seeks a method that will ensure he is prepared for the future and what lies ahead. During a conversation with his wife Lady Macbeth, Macbeth explains his worries to her. His displays his obsession with the future as he

announces to her, " bedtime I will - to the weird sisters. /More shall they speak.

For now I am bent to know /By the worst means, the worst; for mine own good" (Shakespeare, 3. 4. 133-135). Macbeth's paranoia drives him to set up a meeting with the weird sisters as he is keen to learn more about his future.

The use of irony can be displayed as Macbeth ventures to the weird sisters for reassurance; however it is known that he is destined for death in the near future. The need to know his fate reveals Macbeth's obsession. Gatsby and Macbeth are both determined to create a better future for themselves as they are intent on doing whatever necessary to ensure the accomplishment of their goals. As a result of their ambition, they strive for a better future however they become obsessed and become unaware of their actions.

Gatsby and Macbeth's determination prevents them from having anything stand in their way, and this motivates them to destroy relationships that restrain them from achieving their goals. In the pursuit to be with Daisy, Gatsby is forced to sever his relationship with his parents. As Nick Caraway narrates Gatsby's past as well as his relationship with his parents, it is revealed that " his parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people - his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all" (Fitzgerald, 98).

Gatsby, being in love with Daisy was unable to marry her as a result of his poor financial status. Through the use of a flashback, Nick explains how Gatsby was unhappy knowing he was relatively poor with his parents and felt as if they were preventing him from achieving his goal. As a result,

Gatsby leaves his parents so that he may start his life over again this time free from any restraints. This reveals how Gatsby, guided by his ambition is willing to make rash decisions that affect his relationship even with his own parents as he chooses to isolate himself from others. Another example that displays Gatsby's nature to break relationships can be viewed during an argument between him and Tom Buchanan; Daisy's husband. The two get into a heated discussion over Daisy and who she truly loved. Tom roared at Gatsby stating how happy she was living with him, where to Gatsby rebutted, "'Your wife doesn't love you,' said Gatsby. 'She never loved you. She loves me'" (Fitzgerald, 130). Gatsby is intent on winning Daisy regardless of the fact that she is now married to Tom.

Gatsby wants nothing more than for Daisy to break off her relationship with Tom and admit that she has never loved him. This is ironic as Gatsby is certain Daisy only yearns for him, however in reality Daisy is happily married with Tom even though it appears she is not. The false hope Gatsby is given pushes him to want to be with Daisy, however his ambition continues to blind him from the. In brief, Gatsby feels that relationships act as barriers that prevent him from fully carrying out what is needed to attain his goal, and as a result he looks to eradicate any relationships that he feels stand in his way. Comparable to Gatsby, Macbeth's desire to be king causes him to take actions that require him to destroy his relationships with others. For example, Macbeth understands that in order for him to become king, he must commit the murder of the current king; King Duncan. The night of the murder, Macbeth prepares himself for the deed. Hesitant, Macbeth awaits on the midnight bell which signals him to enter Duncan's room as he lay asleep

and commit the crime. As he remains waiting, Macbeth attempts to motivate himself as he whispers “ I go, and it is done. The bell invites me. /Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell / That summons thee to heaven or to hell”

(Shakespeare, 2. 1. 62-64).

With the use of a metaphor, Macbeth foreshadows Duncan’s impending death as he compares the tower bell to a knell; a bell rung at funerals to announce an individual’s death. This reveals how Macbeth’s ambition and determination to become king allows him to destroy his well respected relationship with Duncan to the extent of murder. An additional example that exhibits Macbeth’s seamless ability to destroy relationships can be revealed through his relationship with Banquo; Macbeth’s close friend who fought alongside him during the battle, and his son Fleance. Now that Macbeth is king, he grows paranoid as he fears people may begin to suspect him for the Duncan’s murder. He grows suspicious of Banquo who worries that Macbeth managed to become king through foul means. In order to ensure there will be no problems, Macbeth hires two murderers to kill Banquo eliminating any risks. While speaking to the murderers, it is clear that Macbeth is willing to sacrifice his relationship with Banquo as he demands the murderers, “ To leave no rubs nor botches in the work. /Fleance his son that keeps him company, /Whose absence is no less material to me /Than his father’s, must embrace the fate” (Shakespeare, 3. 1. 136-139).

Macbeth’s growing paranoia causes him to take extreme measures. He explains to the murderers that he wants Banquo dead as well as his son Fleance. This is ironic however because Fleance manages to escape.



Macbeth's willingness to kill his good friend shows how his ambition towards becoming king will not let anything stand in his way. He is prepared to do whatever necessary to ensure his position as king remains. The decision to kill Banquo affects Macbeth as his conscience catches up with him while his guilt does not allow him to live. Gatsby and Macbeth are both ambitious characters as they do whatever is necessary in order to ensure the fulfillment of their goals. Both characters look to ruin any relationship they feel stand in the way of their goals, which in return leads to their state of solitude and emptiness. Gatsby and Macbeth both undergo a lot in their mission to accomplish their goals, however the actions they take, and the decisions they make on the way affects their ultimate outcome. Through Gatsby, an example that shows the negative outcome of his decisions can be portrayed through the car accident.

When Gatsby allows Daisy to drive his car as a kind gesture in the attempt to impress her, events take a turn for the worst as a woman rushes in front of Gatsby's car as Daisy is driving and is instantly killed. Panicked, Daisy and Gatsby drive off escaping the scene of the crime. After hearing the news of the accident, Nick decides to visit Gatsby. During their conversation together, paranoid Gatsby asks Nick, "Did you see any trouble on the road?" he asked after a minute. 'Yes.' He hesitated. 'Was she killed?' 'Yes' (Fitzgerald, 143). As Gatsby is driven to impress Daisy he makes the mistake of allowing her to drive his car. In the process, a woman is killed and now Gatsby is suspected for murder as his love for Daisy leads him to take the blame for the accident. Through the use of pathos, a sense of pity is felt towards Gatsby, who is now suspect to a murder he did not commit. As his

ambition and love for Daisy lead him to take the blame for her actions, Gatsby is now facing the consequence of his decision. Gatsby's love for Daisy makes him blind as he is unable to realize her true feelings and intentions. After the accident, George Wilson; the husband of the victim of the car accident, sets off to find Gatsby and acquire his revenge.

George Wilson arrives at Gatsby's house as he prepares himself for his evening swim. Wilson, deranged by his need to seek revenge aims his gun at Gatsby and kills him. The moment Nick is made aware of the tragic incident he rushes over to Gatsby's house where he describes the scene as " A faint barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way towards the drain at the other. [...] The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved slowly, tracing like the leg of transit, a thin red circle in the water" (Fitzgerald, 162). Through the use of a metaphor, the cluster of leaves is compared to Gatsby's death. As the revolving leaves depict the cycle of life, they reach the leg of transit, or in other words the end of the journey. Gatsby's ambition drives him to be with his love but ironically in the end, he pays the ultimate price as he dies before he is able to accomplish his goal. Similar to Gatsby, Macbeth faces tragic consequences that in return lead to his demise. Shortly after executing the plan to kill Banquo, Macbeth holds a state banquet and invites many royal guests.

Throughout the banquet, Macbeth is unable to let go of the guilt of killing his good friend. His poisoned mind begins to betray him as he starts to hallucinate and sees Banquo's ghost. Terrified, Macbeth cries, " Can such things be, /And overcome us - like a summer's cloud, /Without your special

wonder? You wake me strange /Even to the deposition that I owe, /And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks, /When mine is blanch'd with fear

(Shakespeare, 3. 4. 110-116). Macbeth's conscience causes his mind to deceive him into seeing the ghost of Banquo. The use of imagery is used to display Macbeth's confusion and terror. He is unable to understand as to how Banquo's cheeks are flushed with color making him appear alive when he is presumed to be dead. Meanwhile, the pale cheeks of Macbeth reveal his horror and disbelief. Macbeth's decision to kill Banquo now torments him as he is unable to live peacefully with a guilty conscience. Like Gatsby, Macbeth also faces the ultimate consequence of his actions, death. During a battle against Macbeth to overthrow him as king, he encounters Macduff; a brave soldier the witches told Macbeth to be aware of as he was the only one capable of ending his reign.

During his battle with Macduff, Macbeth realizes that he is losing and in that moment he understands that he has nothing left to live for. Accepting his fate, Macbeth declares, " Through Birnam Woods be come to Dunsanaine /And thou oppos'd of no women born / Yet I will try the last. Before my body /I throw my war like shield. Lay on, Macduff /And damned be him the first that cries ' Hold Enough!'" (Shakespeare, 5. 8. 30-34). Macbeth accepts the consequences he is about to face, however he refuses to go down without one last fight. The use of irony is present as Macbeth, who at first believes the witches' prophecies to be unrealistic, now sees them each come true before his own eyes. His ambition which drove him to take actions in order to achieve his goal to become king now holds consequences that escort Macbeth to his demise. In summary, Gatsby and Macbeth face the

ultimate consequence of their actions in the pursuit to achieve their goals. Both characters fall short of their aim and are killed as a result of their ambitious desires.

One's obsessive desire to fulfill a goal can have destructive results as portrayed through characters Jay Gatsby and Macbeth; given the fact that they become obsessed with their respective futures, are willing to destroy relationships that stand in the way of their fulfillment, and the fact that they both experience a similar fate as a result of their actions. As Gatsby cringes on to his past in attempt to better his future, and as Macbeth's displays a persistent desire to acquire knowledge about his fate, both characters reveal their infatuation for the future. Also, both characters displays their willingness to destroy relationships they believe restrain them from achieving their goals. Finally, both characters experience similar fates as their ambition leads them to experience their demise. To conclude, Gatsby and Macbeth's inability to control their ambition resulted in their deaths. Ambition is necessary to motivate one to achieve their goals, however not being able to control this aspiration and failure to ensure the right steps are preformed in the process can aid destructive results.