

Money in the great gatsby

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



F. Scott Fitzgerald's powerful use of setting in *The Great Gatsby* solely defines an individual based off of living accommodations, lifestyle and, most importantly, location. Despite an individual's motives, level of financial success and reach toward high society, it is proven impossible to fully experience the top of the social strata unless born into the lifestyle.

Fitzgerald uses the city of New York and the east coast as a place of opportunity, where once wealth that all strive to have is earned, it can be flaunted in a number of ways. The people in New York who end in an unsuccessful attempt to catch wealth, end up in a place known as The Valley of Ashes.

The moral decay of the Valley of Ashes separates the two successful branches of New York, known as West Egg and East Egg. West Egg holds those who were fully able to make the wealth they once dreamed of a reality, no matter the circumstances and moral decisions made to reach the money. West Egg holds the new money. East Egg is home to those who inherited the money they have, the old money, never having experienced the hardships to obtain money. The physical divide of living locations, lifestyles, and accommodations show how truly unapproachable the prestige and fashionable lifestyle of the old money in East Egg is to obtain if having not been born into the highest social strata.

The East Coast acts as not only a symbol of economic success, but as a place where people can attempt to escape the bondage to the social strata one grew up in. Financial boundaries can be broken once welcomed into the bustling economy of the 1920's in New York. New York is described by Nick

as a place where, anything can happen, now that we've slid over this bridge,' I thought; ' anything at all'(Fitzgerald 69). In saying this the possibilities for financial prosperity are endless in a big city with a booming economy. No matter the geographic or financial background of a person, the place they come to make and earn themselves is full of opportunities for success if done correctly. There is also a change in societal views on where different people should stand in society. Nick says that he sees, a limousine pass [him], driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl,(69). In New York, where everything is fast paced and business is constantly changing, not only is the possibility of financial prosperity a potential reality, societal roles are no longer fixed and limited to white males. New York is a city for advancement, but the power and standing of old money cannot be overridden.

The two different halves of New York are East Egg and West Egg, holding very economically similar yet very different people of status. The people of West Egg have less experience with money and feel the need to flaunt it in gaudy extravagant ways. West Egg homes usually tend toward having less fashionable, bizarre taste with, tower[s] on one side, spanking new under a bed of ivy, and a marble swimming-pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden(5). The new money lifestyle lacks the status and connections to other people, so to compensate for a lack of connections and status, the largest houses are built with the most extravagant parties to catch the public eye and build a name for themselves. East Egg, meanwhile, holds those of old money, the more classy, traditional display of money, with houses that are, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion overlooking the

bay,(6). Those of East Egg do not feel the need to flaunt their money because the status everyone dreams of has already been built for them through family. The people of East Egg will never view those in West Egg as equals because of the immoral business dealings those of West Egg participate in to earn their wealth. Although the financial status of the two different people in these places may be the same, the social class levels will never change because of where they began on the social ladder.

While the economic growth of the nouveau riche is prominent, they will never exel to the class level of the old money because of the way money is acquired. One man who embodies this is, Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, [who] sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. ' He was a son of God' a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty, (98). Jay Gatsby came from God, or in other words, was created out of nothing. The economic growth of a person can not only lead to nicer material things, but also change in relationships and personality. The lifestyle of those in West Egg leads to nothing but a feeling of unfulfillment in having a lack of relationships with others. The missing relationships in life come from trying to impress the people at the top of the social ladder who will never truly accept the lifestyle they live.

The reach for great amounts of material wealth get put before all else, consuming all things, no matter the people and relationships that are broken along the way. The business and economic status of people in the world holds greater power than that in finding meaningful relationships. The place

where the people broken and stranded in the immoral business endeavors of those who enquire new money is known as The Valley of Ashes. The Valley of Ashes is described as, a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air, (23). This place represents all of the people who have been hurt and left behind by those on the hunt for wealth, still a relevant idea today. Not everyone can succeed in the attempt for the American Dream. Those who try, but are unsuccessful, are left to struggle financially, and left in the Valley of Ashes.

The setting alone shows how people can never fully experience the top of the social strata if that is not the place that they started. The place where an individual grows up plays a crucial role in the places that they will make it too. Despite one's efforts and ability to reach economic success, they will never be viewed in the same ways as those who inherited money. Those with new money will be degraded by those with old money because of the immoral ways they inherited money, the gaudy ways they decide to flaunt their money, and the attempt to build a relationship with the people with old money.

The Great Gatsby is representative of the social classes today and how being able to achieve the American Dream is just out of one's reach, no matter the effort made.