

Time as a theme in the great gatsby essay

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



The Great Gatsby can be considered as a form of novelized social commentary that delves into the life of Jay Gatsby, an eccentric millionaire with an unhealthy obsession with Daisy Buchanan. There are three distinct characteristics of Gatsby that can be considered his defining traits yet are the source of inevitable downfall. These traits are as follows: his obsession with the past, his unwillingness to see the problems of the present, and his desire to achieve a future no matter the cost.

In essence, it can be seen that in his pursuit of what he thinks is his “ideal” love, Gatsby is, in fact, pursuing nothing more than a false idea that he has placed on a pedestal. As such, the main thematic element of the novel is the critique of the excesses of society during the early 1920s, which is done by exposing the various negative qualities seen by the author during this era. The embodiment of these negative aspects comes in the form of Gatsby and his life, which in the end is seen as hollow and empty, just as the morals and values of the characters seen in the novel.

Gatsby’s obsession with the past can be summed up by the following quote: “If it was not for the mist, we could see your home across the bay. You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.” This quote refers to the house of Daisy that is situated on the river directly across from Gatsby’s home. His obsession with the past is reflected in his unwillingness to give up what he thinks is his “ideal love.”

His actions related to throwing elaborate parties, illegal bootlegging activities, and even asking Daisy to cheat on her husband and be with him are all extensions of his obsession with his past relationship with Daisy and

how he believes that they are meant to be together. What must be understood is that despite Gatsby being killed by a bullet, in the end, he would have inevitably been arrested by the authorities as a direct result of his illegal activities.

His fortune was built upon illegally transporting liquor, with numerous people being aware of his activities. As such, his obsession was one of the contributing factors behind his downfall. He refused to move on, to find someone else, and to go for another woman that would have suited his lifestyle more. Instead, he hung on as tight as he could to his ideal, and, like the fool that he was, died as a direct result of such actions.

The reluctance of Gatsby to understand today's issues can be seen in the following quote, which surmises the way he lived his life: " Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther."

What must be understood is that in the case of Gatsby, he seldom examined the immediate impact of his actions and mental state and instead focused the entirety of his time on thoughts related to Daisy. The cost of his parties, the legality of his acquired fortune, and the problems he was having in keeping his activities a secret were all secondary concerns in the face of his obsessive desire to have a woman that was not his.

The culmination of his unwillingness to see the problems of the present is seen when he took the blame for the car accident that killed Myrtle when it

was, in fact, Daisy that was behind the wheel of the car. The fact that he might have been arrested, incarcerated for life or even killed did not seem to occur to him. From a certain perspective, he was blind to such potential futures and instead obsessively focused on the one thing that was most valuable to him, namely Daisy.

The following quote best describes the essence of Gatsby as an individual that relentlessly pursued his desired future no matter the price: “ The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God . and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception, he was faithful to the end.”

From this quote, we see that Gatsby’s ego, his desire to make something of himself and to be better than what he was no matter the means was driving force behind him achieving his fortune through illegal means. His vision of the future involved being rich and being married to Daisy.

It is due to this that he single-mindedly pursued his goal to the extent that he became rich, bought a home across from Daisy’s, and continued to throw lavish parties to entice her to come. However, based on the other two personality traits that have been elaborated on already, his desire was ultimately self-destructive, leading him to live a hollow and empty existence with no real friends, as seen in the case of his funeral.