

Douglass and gatsby: similarities and differences

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



After reading, *The Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass*, by Frederick Douglass and *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, it is clear both main characters had to deal with escaping the circles they were born into.

Douglass was born into a life of slavery and wasn't given an option to live a free life.

He had many obstacles to overcome before he was able to be happy with the life he was living. Gatsby also had many obstacles to overcome until he would be content with his life. He was raised into a life of poverty and had to work for his dream of becoming a successful, wealthy man. Although Douglass and Gatsby are very different from each other, they both are forced to go through the struggles of breaking free from the lives they were born into.

Even though both Douglass and Gatsby had obstacles to overcome, the issues Douglass faced seemed to be more of a struggle. Douglass was separated from his mother at a very young age and was forced into working as a slave as soon as he was of age. Over the years when he was a slave, he was passed around several times to different slave owners. There were some owners he had that were not so bad but others were just downright awful. As the years went by and he got older, Douglass would end up learning how to read and write, and started to realize he wanted to do more with his life. He knew he could be more than a slave and dreamt for a life where he and his fellow prisoners could live freely. As he started to realize he wanted to change his life, the obstacles he faced, started to become harder. Douglass ended up being rented to a man named Edward Covey, who had acquired a

very high reputation for breaking young slaves, and this reputation was of immense value to him (Douglass 50).

Douglass went on to watch his friends and family members get beat up and there was nothing he could do about it. Douglass and a couple other slaves planned to escape but someone rats on them and they all end up going to jail. After Douglass gets relocated again, he starts working in Baltimore for a company that does ship caulking. Eventually he ends up running away and he moves to Massachusetts and marries a free woman name Anna Murray. Gatsby had in some ways, a similar struggle to Douglass. Instead, he was born into a life of poverty, relying on his parents who were trying to making ends meet as farmers. As a child he grew up with nothing. As he got older he realized this wasn't the life he wanted, he was desperate to break free from the only life he'd known.

From a young age, Gatsby knew he wanted to be a wealthy, educated man. He went to college for a short amount of time but ended up dropping out because he didn't want to pay for school. Additionally, the idea of having to work for his tuition as a janitor embarrassed him. Gatsby didn't just want a better life, he knew he was destined to make something of himself. He ended up meeting a man named Dan Cody, who was a very wealthy man, and Cody took him under his wing and showed Gatsby how he could be successful. Cody ended up passing away and after his death, Gatsby dedicated his life to becoming wealthy, by any means necessary. He got involved with organized crime by trading in stolen items and distributing illegal alcohol, going to

whatever lengths to achieve the life he so dreamed himself of achieving. Both men were brought up into a life they desperately wanted to get out of. Their upbringing pushed them towards the path to change their respective situations. While at face value slavery and poverty seem vastly different, there is still freedom being taken away in each experience from their respective perspectives, whether it be financial or literal freedom. For Gatsby, his upbringing as a poor kid from the Midwest makes him crave to possess his parents could not. From a young age he was a dreamer and believed that with just enough cash he could make his life what he wanted it to be. This drove him away from his impoverished family towards a better life.

On the other hand, Douglass, born into slavery, had a much harder path towards assuming the life he wanted to live. Like Gatsby, he was brought into a life that was not of his choosing. Unlike Gatsby, his however involved a life of being deemed as less of a human. Douglass learned through his experiences witnessing firsthand the dehumanization of slaves like himself. He writes about a particular time when his master berated his own wife after she had taught a slave the alphabet. In the slavemaster's eyes, this was unacceptable. In Douglass' however, it turned into motivation to change his destiny. In turn, both men had Each man began living their lives striving to be more than what they started out as.

In the face of adversary, each man craved what they could not have. Early on for Gatsby, this drive was fueled by his thirst for success and fortune but later turned to love. His focus sharply shifted from making himself attain the

American Dream to stopping at no lengths to try to win Daisy's heart.

Douglass' goal didn't have as drastic of a shift but each time he faced a setback, whether it be witnessing his fellow slaves being whipped or being told he wasn't allowed to be educated, his experiences lit a fire within him to break free from the enslaved life he knew. He wanted this to make something of himself and to enable him to make a difference in the lives of others.