

Death of a salesman and gatsby

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



Stories can be told in many ways while still saying the same thing. Some are plays, some are novels, some are poems. Two such examples of stories which make similar statements in opposite modes of telling are those of a salesman's death and a man named Gatsby. Death of a Salesman is more confined to reality than The Great Gatsby in its strangeness of characters and in the structure in which the story is formed.

The characters, such as Gatsby and Daisy, of The Great Gatsby are unrealistic ideas of themselves which easily fall apart or disappear entirely. Near the start of the novel, Gatsby vanished, leaving Nick alone in the unquiet darkness (Fitzgerald 21). Just before this, he'd been trembling as though he felt that he might stop existing altogether, foreshadowing the near future of himself. Gatsby acted like little more than an apparition, the ghost of long-forgotten idea, shimmering in and out of space and time. Later, when he finally gets close to his goal, he suddenly changes and glows (Fitzgerald 89). Gatsby goes through another sudden change in who he is much like when he named himself Gatsby in the first place. Gatsby chooses a different persona to take his place whenever he sees fit. These machinations, eventually, fall apart. Gatsby dies, and Daisy, his supposed love who said she loved him, left and left no address (Fitzgerald 164). Both Gatsby and Daisy entirely disappeared, leaving just a trace in the memories of those who knew them, and not even much of a trace of who they really were.

The characters of Death of a Salesman, unlike those of The Great Gatsby, are grounded in reality and Willy's psychosis is the only thing that makes events seem unrealistic. When Willy plays a game of cards with Charley, he says

that he's getting awfully tired and uses the name Ben instead of Charley with Charley asking if he was just called Ben (Miller 44). That may have sounded a bit convoluted as it was meant to be. Willy does not quite know what is really happening and what is not while Charley is fully lucid. Willy tries to fix the situation by saying that Charley reminded [him] of [his] brother Ben (Miller 45). They try to continue playing and talking but Willy keeps getting distracted by his brother who isn't there until Charley is fed up and leaves. Charley does not have time for his delusional friend; he would like to continue to live in the real world. When Willy talks to Ben, who still is not there, again, and Linda comes along, she asks, did you have some cheese (Miller 52). While Willey is off in his fantasy, his wife is thinking of something so mundane as a dairy product. She is not worrying about a hardly real brother walking into a jungle, and later coming out rich, just whether or not her husband ate cheese. When Willy loses his job, he talks about how he once averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions in 1928 (Miller 82). His boss tries to get Willey back to reality and tell him he never did that but Willy would not listen. Willy stays in his far-off version of reality while everyone else stays earthbound.

The Great Gatsby is written in a loose manner which makes the story less constrained to the real world. The narrator uses broad statements about times, such as talking about his younger and more vulnerable years (Fitzgerald 1) in the beginning, instead of starting at any specific point in time. He is not placed at specific moments, just ideas of, and allusions to, moments. Nick is unconcerned with when things happened so much as that they did. He also does not stay entirely consistent with how he tells the

story. In the beginning, he almost entirely just describes things happening along with metaphors for those things. Later, he starts to add himself to the story he tells, giving himself opinions of everything and words for him to speak. He only starts to voice opinions when Gatsby thinks he has achieved his goal, and then just to tell Gatsby that he is acting like a little boy (Fitzgerald 88). The addition of such opinions adds bias to the story, making it even less bound to any truth of reality than before. This story is all in the past tense, meaning it relies on memory to be told. Nick can say that he remembers that whole story (Fitzgerald 163) but people are often more sure about such things than they should be, thinking they remember more than they do.

Death of a Salesman is written in a way that makes it deeply confined to reality. This story is a play, written with specific stage directions for how everyone should speak and where everything should be. One such stage direction, at the very beginning, talks of towering, angular shapes (Miller 11). Such strict geometry is something that anchors things down to Earth even more clearly than the geometry of curved spacetime that literally holds things in place on Earth. The fact that this story is a play, in itself, also helps hold it to reality. The characters are all meant to be played by real people on a physical stage. They are not meant to stay as words on a page; they are meant to come alive in the real world. This may have happened with *The Great Gatsby* in its becoming a movie but that story had to be adapted to that form; it was not written like that. *Death of a Salesman* is in the present tense, not relying on any memory to be told. Everything that happens is

considered to be happening right now even though Willy may see things a bit differently than that.

Death of a Salesman and The Great Gatsby are two stories told in highly different ways that exemplify how different the stories are. They may both deal with death, The American Dream, and the recreation of the self but the stories get these themes across through perpendicular means. In the end, it does not matter how real a story is, especially a story of morals and ideals. Such a story simply needs to get its point across to you however the author deems necessary.