

Comparison of 'absolution' and 'the great gatsby'



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' A comparative analysis of ' Absolution' and chapter one of ' The Great Gatsby' with emphasis on F. Scott Fitzgerald's style and the role of chapter one as an introduction to themes and characters' The short story ' Absolution' begins by focusing on the Priest character, and Fitzgerald explains a few unusual factors about him which helps to characterize the Priest, " he was unable to attain a complete mystical union with the Lord" This launches the religious theme which is throughout the text as well as tells an important anecdote about the Priest. However ' The Great Gatsby' opens with a long introduction in view of the narrator Nick, depicting his lifestyle and how he came to live at West Egg.

There is some similarity to be found, seeing as both begin with a presentation of the first character. In the short story ' Absolution' there are a number of binary oppositions, such as the religious views of the Priest and father, or the idea of religion and youth but clearly the main contrast would be the father and son, and how the young boy Rudolph's prime sources of authority are mainly his father, and God. This can relate to the beginning of chapter one in the ' Great Gatsby' the narrator begins by quoting advice his father gave to him about the strong division of advantages of the higher classes, showing Nick's patriarchal respect. Nick also says that he and his father have in fact ' always been unusually communicative in a reserved way' and it is later revealed in ' Absolution' that Rudolph's father Carl who is aggressive, strict and cold was in fact, ' proud of Rudolph in his heart' which can reflect Fitzgerald's view on the significance of healthy family dynamics, however the mother figure is hardly presented in ' Absolution' the only mention of her is when the father is being abusive to Rudolph, and she does

not interfere with the violence, instead after, attempts to 'to touch his neck with witch-hazel' he replies by making 'a hasty, choking toilet' this shows how he devalues the mother figure, which again could mirror Fitzgerald's view of family relationships. The USA is presented differently in each story, Nick describes the division between West Egg and East Egg, "Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water", the use of 'glittered' suggests the elegance and glamour of this area, whereas in 'Absolution' the USA is presented as a Christian nation as there is a strong religious presence.

The idea of identity is explored early on in both 'Absolution' and 'The Great Gatsby'. The main identity issue is of Rudolph, who has created an alter ego named 'Blatchford Sarnemington' and when he half closes his eyes, he feels that Blatchford has dominance over him and he acts like a different person. This make believe character seems to be an escape route from his problems and worries, most noticeably from his father and religion. The identity of the Priest is also of importance due to the fact, that he is unhappy with his own selfhood. The distractions and fascinations of the world outside the Church seem to let him be sidetracked, "Swede girls along the path by his window" and the 'desperately sweet' smell of toilet soap are examples of this.

Fitzgerald wanted to portray the idea of the Priest being slightly distant from the world, and how he wishes to be someone else, this is emphasized by his bizarre talk of parties and amusement parks, later on in the story. The father Carl, also has an indistinct issue with his identity, as he is shown to give 'mystical worship' to the railroad executive James J. Hill, this can relate to Nick's preliminary relationship with Gatsby, for whom he feels an admiration

for. In chapter one of 'The Great Gatsby', Nick describes Tom's appearance as supposed to his intellect, "the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward" he is described as the typical alpha male, "the enormous power of that body" Tom's described forcefulness and hostility could relate to Carl Miller's violent attitude, and how they both have some sense of authority.

Fitzgerald's styles and techniques are conveyed in both stories. He seems to repeat the use of light in imagery and description. In 'Absolution' he describes the boys eyes as 'lit with gleaming points of cobalt light' Fitzgerald also incorporates it into descriptions of scenes, such as 'the ellow lights shone inside and the nickel taps...were gleaming' and 'the boy sat down in a patch of sunshine' Comparably, Fitzgerald uses the same technique when describing the scene towards the end of the first chapter, "the silhouette of a moving cat across the moonlight" The idea of describing the light can add emphasis on the scene as well as setting an attractive image in the readers mind. Colour symbolism is also a central technique, for example, Nick draws the readers attention to 'a single green light, minute and far away' and how Gatsby is somehow reaching out towards it, the colour green can be associated with some type of desire or jealousy, and the fact that Gatsby seems to be stretching out towards the light can refer to his longings, for Daisy in particular. Then abruptly Nick is 'alone again in the unquiet darkness' which strongly contrast with the striking image beforehand.