

# Social warfare

Business



The novel *The Great Gatsby*, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, explores the differences between two social classes; the old wealth and the new wealth through the eyes of Nick Caraway. Nick depicts the old wealth through the use of the Buchanan's, who are well versed in social constructs. However they lack compassion and heart.

On the other hand, Gatsby is a self made man who is over the top and lacks social manners, but rich in passion. An examination of the interactions between Gatsby and the Buchanan's reveal the constant power struggle between the old and new rich during the 1920's. This struggle does not involve money, but social warfare. Fitzgerald highlights the differences in their social classes through Tom's derogatory words and action. Revolted at Gatsby's inability to understand the subtleness of when the Sloane's truly did not want to invite Gatsby to dinner, Tom states, " My God, I believe the man's coming," (103). Tom's tone is of a condescending nature, one in which he thinks himself superior to Gatsby.

His words of " My God" show his shock from Gatsby's acceptance. Not only does Tom's statement illustrate how he is disgusted by Gatsby's actions, but also Tom reveals that he must knock Gatsby down in order to maintain his superior reputation. Similarly, Tom shames Gatsby for wearing " a pink suit" even despite the fact that he is " an oxford man" (122). By directing this at Gatsby as an insult, Tom is ridiculing the fact that Gatsby is wild and goes against traditional values. The inclusion of the word " pink" is actually an attack on Gatsby's social position.

During the 1920's, pink was seen as a color worn by the middle class, not of the upper class. Tom is bewildered by the fact that Gatsby can be part of a similar social hierarchy as himself; he is "incredulous" to this idea (122). It is important to note the juxtaposition of "Oxford" and "pink" which exemplifies the fact that Tom cannot treat Gatsby as an equal because he refuses to accept Gatsby on a similar social class. This continual probing is seen as an action that is trying to undermine Gatsby's current social position. When Tom attends one of Gatsby's parties, Nick pays close attention to him and notices how "Tom's arrogant eyes roamed the crowd" (104).

Tom's sense of exaggerating his own power around Gatsby is very apparent to Nick, which extends on Tom's belief of being the "dominant race" (13). This ideal not only pertains to whites in general, but specifically to people of old wealth. It does not go unnoticed throughout the novel that these criticisms towards Gatsby demonstrate the clash between the old and new wealth. The final confrontation between the old and new wealth further illustrates the attacks made by both sides. The argument is situated around Daisy, Tom's wife.

Daisy symbolizes what each man wants, power and reputation. Gatsby fires at Tom claiming that " (Daisy) never loved" him for the " five years" they were married (130-131). Gatsby deliberately chooses the word " never" to exaggerate the fact that Tom and Daisy's relationship is a lie. This is a direct assault on Tom's reputation because without his wife he would be ruined. After this attack, Nick takes notice of Tom " grop(ing) unsuccessfully for the paternal note" of maintaining control over Daisy (131). Searching blindly for <https://assignbuster.com/social-warfare/>

this voice of authority helps in illustrating the effect Gatsby's words have on Tom, who is seen to be nothing in his current state.

When Gatsby is told of Daisy being in love with him, Tom "savagely" claims, "even that's a lie" (132). The term "savagely" reveals the cruel nature behind Tom's statement in attempt to hurt Gatsby. Tom's statement seems to "bite physically into Gatsby", which produces an image of a lethal wound on Gatsby. This gaping wound is seen as the scars of their battle, both men are slowly becoming degraded by their dispute. However, the power is again flipped between the two.

When Tom finds out Daisy is going away he screams, "She's not leaving me!" (133). The syntax of this statement creates a rather abrupt and declaratory feeling for the audience, which reveals how anxious he is that Daisy will part ways with him for Gatsby. Tom does not want to lose her. The passion in his words creates help the audience understand the dynamic struggle for Daisy that is occurring between the two men. The final position of power situates itself within the grasp of Tom, who states, "Go on.

He won't annoy you." (135). Again, the way Fitzgerald crafts these sentences is important because by having smaller sentences put together Tom has a more authoritative voice. His first sentence actually uses the imperative tense that in essence is a command. Followed by his second sentence that reveals Tom's superiority over Gatsby, because now he can say what he will do.

Tom demeans the love between Daisy and Gatsby as a final blow to their relationship by describing it as "presumptuous little flirtation" (135). Tom is

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claiming that Gatsby is too bold in flirting with Daisy, that he is not warranted to do this. The back and fourth between these two men symbolize the constant thirst for power by the upper class. The interactions between Gatsby and the Buchanans sheds light on the difficulty in switching social classes during the 1920's due to people like the Buchanan's, who want a rigid construct and are not open minded to allow change. By having Tom Buchannan against his fight with Gatsby, Fitzgerald is illustrating the harsh reality of the American Dream. That it is unrealistic and only open to those who have an incumbent advantage of wealth.