

The character of Mrs. Sommers as depicted in Kate Chopin's, 'A Pair of Silk Stockings'...

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Characters in the stories we have read so far this semester have been faced with a multitude of problems, emotions and impulses to work through. It seems that from three stories the characters carry out very different actions, but they all have an underlying bond, selfishness and the desire to be something there not. It also seems that they are judged in the eyes of the narrator, as either succeeding or failing due to the way they carried themselves throughout the story.

In the short story, *A Pair of Silk Stockings*, by Kate Chopin, the main character, Mrs. Sommers, after finding fifteen dollars plans to do things with it for her kids, and her family. However, this all changed after buying a pair of expensive silk stockings for herself. She just totally forgets about all the nice things she was going to do with the money for her kids, for instance buy them new clothes for once in their lives. Once she put those silk stockings on, she received a small taste of the good life, and the greed and selfishness set in. She wanted more of it. So, she goes off and treats herself to things of a higher class, deep down knowing that she didn't belong where she was, for example, in the theater or going to a nice restaurant for lunch. At the end it seems that she has no recollection of her life before this day had begun. She was so wrapped up in assuming the identity of a wealthy person under false pretenses. The way that the narrator was telling the story, the main character Mrs. Sommers, both

Succeeds and fails at the same time. She succeeds in the sense of fooling people and also herself into believing that she is a member of the upper

class, at the same time failing in her responsibilities to her family of being a responsible mother.

In the second story, we read by Kate Chopin, *Regret*, the main character, Mamzelle Aurelie, has a selfishness to her, that to me was a somewhat a good kind of selfishness, unlike Mrs. Sommers. She was a strong woman who never really had a man in her life, probably because she had her own ways of doing things and didn't want a man telling her how to live her life. I believe that this is the reason she turned down the proposal, of marriage, earlier on in her life. When faced with the unexpected task of caring for Odile's children, she unwillingly accepted it. After spending the two weeks with the children she grew attached to them, and was greatly saddened by their departure. In realizing this she has herself a good cry, regretting never getting married, and having children of her own. After fifty years of never regretting her decision to not marry in her life she is suddenly haunted with the notion of what could have been, for her. It seems to me, that she succeeds in the eyes of the narrator, in realizing her mistake to not marry.

In the story *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, there are two characters faced with very different situations, and handle them very differently, but still possess the underlying theme of selfishness.

The first is Daisy Buchanan. She is the cousin of Nick. During her Youth, she fell in love with Jay Gatsby, but broke off her attachment with him after the Great War because he was poor. This is the prime example of her selfishness. Her selfishness drives her to deprive herself of love, with Gatsby,

because I believe that she really loved him to some extent. She subsequently became the symbol of everything that Gatsby desired; yet she is little more than a symbol. Daisy is insubstantial and vapid, a careless woman who uses her frail demeanor as an excuse for immaturity. Later in the story she kills Myrtle Wilson, hitting her while driving Jay Gatsby's car. Gatsby takes the blame for this incident and is even killed, by George, Myrtle's husband, because he loves her so much, and her selfishness didn't let her confess to what she had done. I feel that she is a huge failure in the way the narrator explains her. She chooses the easy way out in almost everything she does.

The other selfish character in *The Great Gatsby* is Jordan Baker. She is a longtime friend of Daisy. Jordan Baker is a professional golfer, whose reputation has been tarnished by accusations of cheating in a tournament by kicking the ball to her advantage. This rite here is a good incentive to her selfishness. She has no respect for the rules of the game and doesn't care who she hurts or steps on, on her way to the top. Her cynical, icy demeanor draws the attention of Nick Carraway, who becomes momentarily infatuated with her. Yet she rejects him when she believes that he is as corrupt and decadent as she is. This shows that she can dish the selfishness out but can't take it. It is my belief that she, Jordan Baker, is another big failure in the tone of the narrator. Not only for what she had done, but Nick Carraway is the narrator, and she rejected him.

All the characters I have spoken about have handled their problems in different ways, but all possess the underlying thesis of selfishness. Some

have more sever cases of it than others. And in one case it is a good side of selfishness. Either way they learned something for the experiences that they faced.