

The great gatsby is a  
sordid tale of  
deception



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

If you were to take a quick look at the plot of the Great Gatsby and look at the themes it deals with I expect many people would agree with this view. Throughout the Great Gatsby there is murder, infidelity and lying and yet having read the novel and considered the story it tells I respond in a rather disagreeable way to this view. It seems to me that this view does not take into account what F. Scott Fitzgerald is trying to tell us about human beings, that we may have many faults but that most of us are just trying to do the right thing.

Having listened to Nick and seen his judgment of the various happenings within the novel it seems he has found justification for all these supposedly 'sordid' events. Firstly, what does sordid mean? As far as I can see, it is a word for dirty, unethical, degrading or morally unsound. This is not at all how I felt once I had read the Great Gatsby. If the novel had been of this nature I expect I would have reacted very differently to it, and found myself reading uneasily.

Yet I was caught up in the stories of all the characters life's and their emotions and feelings seemed to put to rest any 'dirty' feelings from what went on. So why do all these fundamentally wrong events seem so justified? It is because they are told through the eyes of Nick, our limited narrator. We learn about these events through his own judgemental eyes, and yet it is through Nick that we see the emotional connection between the events and the people that they involve. That is what validates the actions.

The way Nick speaks about the events is not in a harsh, sharp tone but in a mellifluous, flowing way which takes into accounts the characters emotions

and feelings. Although they are not real in any way, we can still feel a certain amount of sympathy for them, as they are suffering from the affects of events which occur everyday all over the world. The events may seem sordid to some people but the way they are written is beautiful. Nick himself also comes across as most disciplined and smart.

If he does not find much wrong in these proceedings then why should we? An obvious element of the novel which could be seen as sordid is the affairs conducted by Tom with Myrtle and Daisy with Gatsby. In the eyes of many people adultery is fundamentally wrong and yet when reading the book I somehow feel that they are justified. This is due to the way Nick tells us the story. He makes it clear that Tom and Daisy's marriage is a loveless one as well as making it clear that there is love to be found between them and their other partners.

Tom is clearly very fond of Myrtle as he says to Nick ' I want you to meet my girl'. He is not ashamed of her in anyway. Gatsby's love for Myrtle is made overwhelmingly clear and Nick portrays Gatsby as quite the romantic. We even feel sorry for Gatsby as he puts Daisy on such a pedestal that she ' tumbled short of his dreams' on many occasions and it is hard to blame him for his actions over a love which clearly takes over his entire being. This is shown clearly when the revelations Daisy loved Tom at one point as well as him ' bite physically into Gatsby'.

The tragic death of Myrtle may also seem rather sordid to some and yet Nick manages to put a positive spin on it. The fact that it was only an accident is clear as Myrtle ' rushed out into the dusk' which would have made it difficult

for any driver to see her even a sensible one. The death also provided a chance for Gatsby to become heroic as he takes the blame for the whole ordeal, When it becomes clear it was Daisy who was driving Gatsby only said ' of course I'll say I was'.

Suddenly the whole event seems rectified as Gatsby, the master of lies and deception, uses his ability to save the one he loves. The other death in the novel, that of its eponymous hero, which you would think Nick would find great wrong in since he appears to idolise Gatsby so much has some justification. Wilson, who I suppose in some peoples eyes, has the right to take the killer of his wife's life is shown to be rather mentally unstable with his ' incoherent muttering', ' groaning voice' and ' rhythm of his rocking'.

All these comments make us wonder if we can blame Wilson for killing Gatsby, if he could not control himself, taking any traces of sordidness away. When Gatsby died, so did his deception and lying. Throughout the book it is clear that Gatsby is not always telling the truth with his wild and truly unbelievable stories; that he was ' brought up in America but educated in Oxford' and that he received decoration ' from every allied government'.

His lying about where he came from and how he came to have such a position of wealth may seem sordid to some yet I personally find myself forgiving him as he came from such a lowly background. Is it any wonder that he felt the need to invent himself a whole new life when he came from ' shiftless and unsuccessful farm people' and at the whimsical age of 17 had the drive and courage to reinvent himself from James Gatz to the Jay Gatsby we see him as in most of the book. F. Scott Fitzgerald has created a

character who embodies the ' American dream' in that he knows what he wants and goes out and gets it.

He has to be admired for this and I find myself easily forgiving him and finding little wrong with his constant acts of self preservation. Everything Gatsby does seems to be an act, put on for show. For instance, his lavish parties which are full of people he does not know or care about. Some people would find these parties rather sordid as they are full of people revelling in the world of status and materialistic obsessions.

However, even these parties ' chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot' seem to be really rather harmless affairs, if a little superficial, and they do have one main goal to them. Gatsby actually puts these parties on with the main aim of attracting Daisy to his house. Everything Gatsby does is re-valued on the ' measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes'. This aim in the name of love gives the shallow parties deeper meaning and a good cause.