

Internal and external
lives of characters in
the great gatsby vs.
the valley of a...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For characters in *The Great Gatsby*, rendering delusive illusions of one's self may be fundamental to climbing social hierarchy, but compromising the tension between their painted picture and concealed canvas may be internally agonizing. From the instance of the enigmatic relationship of the Buchanan's, to Gatsby's antagonizing conflict with his past and Nick Carraway's judgements, the internal and external concepts these characters carry can be compared to something as significant as the deteriorating climate of the Valley of Ashes versus the opulent lifestyle of the East Egg.

When reviewing the exclusive relationship of the Buchanan's, it becomes transparent that Daisy reconditions herself to adapt to the proliferating needs of a wealthy woman accompanying the roaring twenties. A woman who once gazed at her spouse with "unfathomable delight" appears locked into the relationship by her monetary greed for Tom Buchanan's extravagant "pomp and circumstances" whilst experiencing little emotional intimacy towards her spouse. The conflict exists between Tom and Daisy's marital ties in the public eye, versus suggestions of underlying neglect and desperation experienced by both characters throughout the novel. The fast paced "young and rich and wild" life Tom and Daisy live together is, at first, venerated by Carraway's narration; exhibiting the romantic visionaries of many youth in the twenties. This delusive misconception fools many, but remains a fairy-tale fable through Fitzgerald's illustration of Tom's marital infidelity. Acknowledging Tom and Myrtle's relationship with "tense gaiety", Daisy is clearly aware of the chronic extramarital affairs her husband busies himself in but remains blinded by her intemperance for his wealth.

Furthermore, Daisy gratifies Tom's power and his desire for egotistic

superiority. After his marriage is challenged and masculine dominance begins to collapse, he is chagrined at the fact that he could simply “let Mr Nobody from Nowhere”, meaning Gatsby, embezzle his wife. This may, in fact, suggest that the relationship’s superficial appearance deviates strongly from the internal tension that both characters face – similar to the comparison of the “fashionable” East Egg; where white palaces “glitter along the water” versus the “desolate” Valley of Ashes.

An unparalleled depiction of the contrasting internal and external lives of characters in *The Great Gatsby* is Jay Gatsby himself. His “overwhelming self-absorption” leads to a powering desire of living a fictional fantasy. Once a son of “unsuccessful farm people”, he alters the image of his past to then becoming the “son of some wealthy people in the Middle West”. Perhaps, significant childhood occurrences were a reason behind this; creating an emotional hollow towards his bloodline which led to the “Platonic conception” of himself to suppress impoverished memories of the past. Conclusively, becoming a wealthy businessman possessing endless “beautiful shirts” is a conflicting external concept that contrasts significantly from Gatsby’s true past and his roots that he conceals from the public eye in an attempt to climb social hierarchy – but, ultimately failing after Daisy’s dismal rejection as he failed to meet her standards. Similarly, the same differences that lie between Gatsby’s internal and external lives also appear in the contrast between the Valley of Ashes, where the uninhibited pursuit for wealth is pure fantasy, and the East Egg, where “marble steps” support the weight of the lonely millionaires.

Nick Carraway and his supposed “inclined judgements” differ significantly from his outlying observations of the decaying social and moral concepts through Fitzgerald’s illustrations. Carraway blatantly narrates happenings of the crumbling society through instances such as labelling Tom and Daisy as “careless people” and Jordan as “incurably dishonest”. Collectively, these instances result in an image of Nick that challenge his external portrait as an innocent narrator throughout the novel and metaphorical comparison of him being “an absolute rose”. This can be compared to the supposed “lavish” lifestyles that characters from the East Egg live in, which conceal the true struggles and desperations characters live in just like those experienced in the Valley of Ashes. Furthermore, Nick’s contrasting values are exemplified when Jordan questions his validity: “I thought you were an honest, straightforward person”, meaning how Nick shaped himself to appear compared to his surfacing truth causes conflicting attitudes which eventually lead to the fall of his relationships with characters in the novel.

The differences that lie in the Valley of Ashes and East Egg can evidently be used to compare the contrasting concepts of the internal and external lives of characters in *The Great Gatsby*, in instances such as the unresolvable marital issues of Tom and Daisy Buchanan’s relationship versus the picture perfect family life they live in the public eye, along with the ways in which Gatsby challenges his past and Nick’s validity when compared to his judgements throughout the novel. When collectively contrasted, it can be concluded that there is more to the external lives of characters living real-life opulence, for they are simply painted to be picture perfect for those that stand outside closed doors.