

Window into the
ingenuity of f scott
fitzgerald essay
sample



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The plot of a novel is the narrative and thematic development of the story- that is, we see what happens and in turn what these events mean. The English novelist E. M. Forster, author of *A Room with a View* (1908) and *Howards End* (1910), referred to the plot as a “ narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. ” By this statement he meant that the plot is a series of events that depend on one another and not a sequence of unrelated episodes.

F. Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *The Great Gatsby* exemplifies E. M. Forester’s principle on plot. To the lackadaisical reader, the plot of *The Great Gatsby* might seem to be a large and confusing jigsaw puzzle, lacking both in continuity and sequence. But what the untrained reader does not take note of is that F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his literary genius, has organized his plot in a way such that he is not only using the plot as a literary tool to broaden his narrative but also to further the development of his theme by craftily retaining information and systemizing his narrative in a very unique way.

We see this unique technique of his applied throughout *The Great Gatsby*, where he has organized the narrative in such an exemplary way that every event and occurrence has a specific reason for being placed in a distinctive position in the novel. F. Scott Fitzgerald following closely along these lines, places arguably the most important event in Gatsby’s life in such a appropriate place in the novel that he is able to further develop the theme of the novel and also simultaneously allow his readers to better understand the intricacies of the character of Jay Gatsby.

Gatsby's decision to make Daisy the "incarnation" of his dream is established unusually well past the midpoint of the novel, but it is used so cleverly by Fitzgerald to craftily and subtly develop the overall theme of his literary masterpiece. Like most of the nineteenth century authors such as Herman Melville and Walt Whitman, F. Scott Fitzgerald also wrote *The Great Gatsby* with the idea of representing American society and in this regard he recognized a continuous clash between the reality of life in the United States and a mythic vision of what it might be.

This notion is repeated throughout *The Great Gatsby*. Up to this point in the novel, Fitzgerald has given only subtle hints to his broad theme about the American Dream, but with the revelation of Gatsby's decision to make Daisy the incarnation of his dream, Fitzgerald is suddenly able to reveal his true thoughts for a short while and this gives the reader an amazing insight into what Fitzgerald wants the reader to understand and grasp from his novel.

At the end of chapter six, Fitzgerald presents the reader with two conflicting views, one of Daisy being the "incarnation" (117) and the other of Gatsby's dream, however still stressing the fact that "You can't repeat the past" (116). While the reader can accurately assume that Daisy is the obsession and fixation of Gatsby, by stating the obvious Fitzgerald is also able to establish his thoughts of the American Dream. For this Fitzgerald uses Daisy to represent the deepest seductive powers of the American Dream as well as its greatest dangers.

Gatsby made Daisy the "incarnation" (117) of his dream "five years before" (117) the current chronology of the story and from that point, Gatsby has

humanized an abstract idea of society and has made his conquest of it his sole priority in life. But instead of placing this flashback earlier on in the narrative where it would have allowed the reader to better understand the events of the novel, Fitzgerald dramatically chose to situate the flashback after he lets us know that, “ Daisy tumbled short of his [Gatsby’s] dreams- not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. (101).

Fitzgerald does this intentionally to show that even though pursuing the dream-or the woman, ultimately led to Gatsby’s untimely death, and whatever the outcome – the undertaking was still worth the risk. To Fitzgerald this was necessary, as this pursuit was essential for the exceptional man who wished to fully realize his character. Fitzgerald shows this crucial flashback just as Gatsby’s dream starts to unravel and his “ incarnation” slowly moves past his grasp like an illusion drifting away in the wind.

Although Gatsby’s heedless pursuit ultimately was doomed and affirmed that “ You can’t repeat the past” (117) and it also made him the quintessential American hero. Gatsby’s nature to “ beat on, boats against the current” (152) led to his ultimate failure but animated his existence – a quality absent in modern society. Through his awkward placement of the flashback, Fitzgerald is still able to give the readers a window into the behavior and character of Jay Gatsby.

Through the analysis of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald can be aptly described as the master of narrative control. By allowing the truth about

Gatsby to emerge slowly Fitzgerald is able to drive the novel forward by clouding Gatsby in a veil of uncertainty and vagueness. But as the reader progresses through the story, Fitzgerald depicts Gatsby as a bizarre combination of an elegant, valiant and powerful man and on the other hand a love-struck youth. The placement of this flashback in this particular spot only shows the deep division in Gatsby's character.

Preceding this particular flashback, Fitzgerald introduces Gatsby by his powerful and rich reputation and at the same time shows his poor background and true love for Daisy. But following the flashback, Fitzgerald gives the reader definitive proof of Gatsby's criminal dealings, his immense corruption and his unstoppable drive to win the "incarnation" (117) of his dream. By placing this flashback scene in the middle of both these extremes, Fitzgerald brings out that at the heart of Gatsby's character is the conviction that his love can rescue Daisy from a bad marriage and redeem his own life, which has been sliding further into corruption.

As Fitzgerald correctly describes, "He [Gatsby] talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself." (117). Gatsby has more or less created his own character but the persona of Jay Gatsby is nothing but a masterful illusion begotten from James Gatz's talent for self-invention. Fitzgerald interjects this scene into his literary masterpiece mainly to show the humanistic side of Gatsby. Daisy represents Gatsby's dream but she is also a representation of the need for Gatsby to find himself.

His willingness to commit himself totally to his vision of a bright future makes his death tragic. Fitzgerald masterfully uses this scene and the position that he has it placed in, to show not only that Gatsby but also that the American society is in a transitional period. Behind Gatsby was a powerful force of optimism, vivacity and individualism but in order to try to attain the “incarnation” of his dream, he had to sacrifice everything including himself, so much so in the end he achieves nothing but instead is hit head over heels with failure!

In *Aspects of the Novel*, the British novelist E. M. Forester says, “Yes-oh dear, yes-the novel tells a story.” Plot definitely is a crucial element in all works of fiction, and F. Scott Fitzgerald must be applauded for his exceptional use of it. Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* is the potter, and the plot is his clay; he is able to mould it into any shape or form and allows it to represent many different aspects such as theme and characterization and eventually models it in such a way that he is able to create a masterpiece.