

"great gatsby" green light

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



GREEN LIGHT

Symbolism, the appropriation of an object or word to represent an abstract idea of quality, is used in literature in order to communicate a deeper meaning and facilitate weaving the thematic intricacies of the plot with one another. In the highly acclaimed novel, *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, symbols are mentioned frequently to provide insight, such as the omniscient eyes of Dr. Tj Eckleberg, the mysterious Valley of Ashes, and the glowing green light Gatsby finds himself mesmerized with.

The green light Gatsby reaches out for at the end of Daisy's east egg dock represents his hopes and dreams, and is symbolic of Daisy as his ultimate key to success, not only romantically, but monetarily and socially, exemplifying the theme of the American Dream and its deterioration throughout the novel.

In order to fully understand the significance of the green light in relation to Gatsby's version of the American Dream, it is important to note the first of his three desires involving Daisy, romantic success.

When Gatsby first met Daisy Buchannan in her hometown of Louisville, he was James Gatz, a young military officer leaving to fight in World War I. He fell in love with her aura of sophistication, of luxury, grace, charm and beauty, and consequently, lied to her about his background of poverty to convince her he was worthy of her. And still, when he goes to fight in the war, Daisy marries Tom, who is rich and powerful, everything Gatsby hopes for himself in the future. Gatsby, through various means is able to afford a

luxurious West Egg nouveaux rich lifestyle, living in a mansion across from Daisy's own in East Egg.

Gatsby longingly reaches out for the green light he sees on her dock miles away. " But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone- he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward-and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock." Nick states, observing Gatsby's yearning to be closer to the light, and accordingly, to Daisy. (pg 21) Gatsby wants, more than anything, for him and Daisy to restore the affair they had in 1917, and to be happy with one another again.

His future lies in the recreation of his past with Daisy, and the light represents the massive distance between their relationship now and their relationship now. Gatsby perceives Daisy with an idealistic perfection that she is unable to live up to, and pursues her with such passion that he sees nothing else. As the novel progresses, Gatsby's dream of Daisy leaving her husband for him disintegrates, revealing the fickle nature of love and his incompleteness of the American Dream. Gatsby's dream is ruined by the unworthiness of its object, just as Fitzgerald sees the crumble of the American Dream in the 1920's, as America's individualism becomes corrupted by greediness and materialism.

Further evidence of the deterioration of the American dream is shown through the measures Gatsby takes to become rich, the last of which is

being with Daisy, who comes from old money. Gatsby views wealth as the solution to his problems- he was born into the lower class and is nothing compared to the social stature of his love, Daisy. Gatsby pursues money through shady schemes, through bootlegging and drug ventures, and reinvents himself so much that he becomes a new person, Jay Gatsby, and is disconnected from his past as James Gatz. Gatsby's corrupt dream of wealth is motivated by his never-ending, incorruptible love for Daisy, who he believes will choose him when he is wealthy enough to deserve her. Daisy chose the security of money over true love with Gatsby, so he made himself rich.

His mansion, the symbol of " new money," is across the bay from her house, a symbol of " old money." The green light represents both Gatsby's dream of recreating his past with Daisy and the corrupt American Dream of extreme wealth. " If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay," said Gatsby. " You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock." (pg 92) Now that Gatsby and Daisy have been reunited, the green light has disappeared, as Gatsby thinks he has achieved his dream of having Daisy again. When he shows her his collection of English silk shirts, Daisy starts crying, realizing she could have had a rich lifestyle if she had chosen Gatsby after all. Daisy was the representation of status and wealth. The green color of the light also connects to the green color of the wealth Gatsby has longed for his entire life. Towards the end of the novel, it is revealed that money, class, and social status are the true reasons why Gatsby pursues Daisy in the first place. Gatsby's failure shows the incessant corruption and materialism that prevails over hard work, integrity, and real

love- ignoring the real significance of the American Dream in favor of wealth and riches.

The last thing Gatsby craves to complete his success is the social status he achieves by being with Daisy. James Gatz, as Gatsby was born, lived in North Dakota with a poor family in 1890. Gatsby takes advantage of society by making a fortune from bootlegging, thanks to his association with various con artists, especially Meyer Wolfsheim who is, as Gatsby later tells Nick, "the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919." With the vast income he was able to accrue, Gatsby purchased a mansion in West Egg of Long Island, home to the nouveau riche, or new rich, across the bay from the old-money East Egg, where Daisy Buchanan, her husband Tom and their three-year-old daughter lived. The green light for Gatsby is symbolic of the physical and emotional distance between him and Daisy, and how because of their different social classes they will never be together. "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And then one fine morning— So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Nick concludes. In saying this, he notices the tendency of humans to both transcend and recreate their pasts. However, he shows they are unable to move from the past. Gatsby tried so much to reform his life, to make himself the perfect man for Daisy, but in the end he would never be the same social class as her. She would always choose money and social status over the true love she would have found with Gatsby. Although he never lost his passion and optimism while he sought for her, Gatsby spent all his energy and life

focusing on attaining a goal that continued to move farther away. The green light in this case characterized the struggles of the American dream and how it has deteriorated throughout the novel.

Without the symbol of the green light at the end of Daisy's East Egg dock brought up throughout the novel, the reader would never get a glimpse into Gatsby's longing, his hopes and dreams, or the reality of his love for Daisy. As Americans have given different meanings to their own American dream, Gatsby idealizes Daisy as the epitome of perfection, something she does not possess nor deserve. Daisy is very money-oriented and vapid, and so is unworthy of being held in such high esteem by Gatsby, just as the American Dream is ruined by the materialism present in society at the time. The American Dream was initially about individualism, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the novel, dishonesty and greed have corrupted this ideal, and that is shown through the life of Gatsby, who's dream to be with Daisy is ruined by the differences in social and economic statuses between them, and the rampant materialism that is her life. As the novel proceeds, and as Gatsby's American Dream vanishes from sight, so does the green light at the end of Daisy's East Egg dock that he so avidly longed for.