

Corruption of the american dream

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



Corruption of the American Dream The American dream is an ideal that has been discreetly present since the beginning of American literature. Commonly, the dreamer aspires to rise from rags to riches, while accumulating such things as love, high status, wealth, and power. The early dream of acquiring western land has quickly and efficiently morphed into a vision of materialistic assets. In the past century, the American dream has increasingly focused on large houses, cars, and expensive gadgets as an indication of attaining success. Throughout the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald uses the West and East egg community to demonstrate how the dream has become corrupted by one's focus on wealth and material possessions. Jay Gatsby himself is a grand beholder of the besmirched dream. His American dream has become corrupted by the culture of wealth and opulence, both in which are greatly distributed within the East and West Egg community. Gatsby states, "Whenever you feel like criticizing any one," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." Gatsby speaks to Nick about his father and how he was fortunate enough to reach the American dream. As a man who started with nothing, Gatsby is the symbolic figure for the many Americans who strive to have an aspiring life and succeed Sellner¹ upon their desires. Gatsby, once a "nouveau riche" was greatly changed through the wealth he sought and the riches he produced. His original goal of earning Daisy's love was eventually absent. Her voice was "full of money...that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, and the cymbals' song in it" (127). Even Gatsby's thoughts of Daisy have been clouded by money. However, Gatsby is too late to realize that money is the only thing

her voice promises. There is no compassion in Daisy, just as there is none in cold, hard cash; therefore concluding that the American dream has become corrupted. Nick narrates, " His family was enormously wealthy — even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach — but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away was wealthy enough to do that" (23). As Nick speaks about Tom's family background, it can be decided that many Americans would search for this, whether it brings happiness or loneliness. Daisy and Tom's marriage is further proof of the collapse of the American dream. Although they belong to the elite of West Egg and have extreme wealth, they are mentally separated through their unhappiness. Tom is first described as " one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterwards savors of anti-climax" (11). Tom's wealth is the apex in his life, more riches and treasures could not bring the happiness that the American dream was originated around. They have traveled to France and drifted " here and there unrestfully wherever people were rich and played polo together" (11). Although Tom and Daisy have been secured for life through the safety of a bank, money cannot and will never buy them happiness. Nick states, " They smashed up things and creatures and Sellner² then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made" (188). Money has clouded people's judgments while wealth has been the ultimate downfall of the American dream. Fitzgerald uses the drifting and careless people of West Egg to represent the corruption that materialism can bring. Gatsby and the others are surrounded by this materialism and

discontent, which serves to tarnish his dream of success. His rags-to-riches dream turns into a dark nightmare that leads to his untimely downfall. His romantic idealism has not prepared him for the corrupt world in which he enters. Gatsby is surrounded by proof of the unhappiness that "success" can bring, as seen especially through Tom and Daisy. Their marriage is full of lies and deceit, and they are both searching for something greater than what they already have. Fitzgerald effectively offers a powerful critique of a materialistic society and the effects it can have on one's hopes and dreams.