

# Great gatsby: the immoral twenties

Literature, American Literature



The 1920s gained its nickname, The Roaring Twenties from its wild and carefree lifestyle. The extensive wealth of the time filled most nights with parties, dancing, crazy antics, and illegal alcohol. F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, encompassed all of the aspects listed above. Not only did the book express the exciting side of the Twenties, it also expressed lack of morality of the time. According to *The Great Gatsby*, this lack of morality stemmed from the focus on material items, drinking, and dreaming.

Everyone enjoys material things, whether they want a brand new car or even a phone; these items do not provide any necessity for survival, yet they make people's lives much easier, and even more productive. However, *The Great Gatsby* expresses how those amenities stem the immorality present within the Roaring Twenties. Dan Cody, a wealthy business man, lived five wonderful years with Gatsby at his side. It might have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died... He (Gatsby) never understood the legal device used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye" (Fitzgerald 100). Gatsby did not care about the money, he enjoyed his new life with Dan, but Ella's envy drove her to throw away any ethics, and take the life of an innocent man. Gatsby, a seemingly moral character, used his understanding of other's materialism to attract Daisy.

He threw extravagant, wild and obscene parties at a mansion he bought " so that Daisy would be just across the bay" (Fitzgerald 78). Daisy and Gatsby loved each other five years ago, but now Daisy had a husband, Tom Buchanan; interfering by trying to renew past feelings would have been construed as adulterous. These immoralities were fueled by materialism

alone, mixed with any other sources proved more than destructive. Alcohol mixed with materialism leads to a grave ending.

However, within *The Great Gatsby* alcohol alone fuelled many instances of immorality. Tom Buchanan, always a wonderful spectacle of immorality, hosts a party at his and his mistress' apartment where the guests immediately inebriate themselves. During their drunken stupor, Myrtle, the mistress, mentions Daisy's name where by " Making a short deft movement Tom Buchanan broke her nose with an open hand" (Fitzgerald 36) and immediately quieted her.

Not only did Tom shorten his temper with the alcohol, he also resorted to violence to receive what he wished. At Gatsby's parties, one could expect mass chaos. " Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out there on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand" (Fitzgerald 62). The constant state of inebriation at the mansion caused many immoral incidents. These incidents by Tom and the partygoers stemmed from the alcohol because when in a stupor to the same degree, one loses any ability to produce ethical decisions.

Many people view dreaming as a way to achieve new heights however, goal setting prevails when trying to reach said heights. In fact, Fitzgerald portrays dreaming as a conduit for immorality. Gatsby cried with indigence at Nick " Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can! " (Fitzgerald 110). This sort of dreaming led Gatsby to discard his ethics, which resulted with his death He first committed adultery because of his ideals, which in turn angered Tom, a

man who must not be taken lightly due to his obvious lack of regard for any morals.

Myrtle fantasized that she obtained riches when she spent time with Tom; she believed that such treatment should have occurred naturally. As soon as she met up with Tom “ she bought a copy of Town Tattle and a moving picture magazine, and in the stations drug-store some cold cream and a small flask of perfume” (Fitzgerald 26), in a desperate attempt of living her dream. Her dream stemmed from immoral ways; Tom had lots of money, and was willing to spend it on Myrtle, yet only for his own adulterous motives.

Dreams stem the worst kind of immoralities because the best intentions can lead to the worst outcomes, so many dreamers do not realize their mistakes. The Roaring Twenties, according to Fitzgerald lacked morals stemming from high aspirations, materialism and liquor. While morality may seem easily discernable many people still act immorally. These bases of impurities still exist today, and stem the same results. For the betterment of the public, one should be careful in what they do; many other examples provide bases for immorality.