

Is nick carraway a reliable narrator? essay sample

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



In the beginning of the book, *The Great Gatsby*, Nick could be described as the main character but as the book goes on Nick is having more of a secondary role, instead of the primary role which he was supposed to be. *The Great Gatsby* is shown through the eyes of one man. We as the readers don't know whether or not whatever Nick says is correct or true. A good narrator doesn't judge people but Nick does this a lot. We see how he changes at different points in the book. He undergoes changes that discredit his ability to be truthful and not biased in his narration. He is not always rational and objective, since he is a human. All this shows how Nick becomes an unreliable narrator. Nick is not always rational and objective: in chapter 3 of the book, we can clearly see that Nick is drunk. He loses his senses when Tom invites him to see his mistress in their apartment. We all know that a person who is drunk cannot give an articulate and cohesive answer, when he is the state of being drunk. He has exchanged his morality for a bottle of scotch. We don't know if whatever he says during this period in time is accurate. Even when he goes to Gatsby party he is clearly drunk and he doesn't even recognize the host. His words are stammered and blurry because of his present state.

At this point in time we don't know if the descriptions and the conversations that went on during this party are true. This makes him an unreliable narrator. Coupled with the facts that Nick becomes unreliable when he is drunk, we can also see that he undergoes changes at different parts in the novel making him an unreliable narrator. Nick undergoes serious periodical changes in the novel. At first glance, Nick finds Gatsby very mysterious and wants to know more about him. This quest to know about this man he finds

mysterious can cloud his thoughts, he could have exaggerated Gatsby's mysteriousness so that we the readers would agree and want to read more about the book. Fitzgerald creates suspense for the readers because humans are anxious and would want to read and find more about this man the narrator calls mysterious. Then after he gets to know Gatsby he says, " He represented everything for which I have unaffected scorned" (Fitzgerald, page 7), he also says he hates him.

Then at the middle and towards the end of the novel he finds out what makes this man (Gatsby) mysterious and this makes Nick interested and he is able to relate to him because they both want something; one has achieved it and one is still working to get there. These sudden changes in the sequence of the book distort and affect the way the reader (us) see Gatsby. We can't say for sure that Gatsby attitude and behavioral changes is true, when we already have distorted view of Gatsby. We begin to see clearly that Nick is enticed by Gatsby's lifestyle which also shows that he is exchanging his morality (bad or good) for wealth. From being irrational and not objective to undergoing changes we can also see that Nick is also judgmental about people, this tells us his opinions and not what is actually true making him an unreliable narrator. Nick says, " I'm inclined to reserve all judgments" (Fitzgerald, page 1) but this is all false because he spends most of the time in the book judging people, like when he says " Tom is crude, Daisy is shallow, " Jordan is dishonest", " and George is spiritless".

All these shows that he isn't fit for the part of a narrator. Nick also spends most of his judgment on the man he admires Gatsby. They go from

admiration to disapproval really quick, like when he says "Gatsby ... represented everything for which I had unaffected scorn (Fitzgerald, page 7)", "There was something gorgeous about him (Fitzgerald, page 7)". This approval of Gatsby allows Nick to overlook some faults that he sees with Gatsby like when Gatsby says he is from San Francisco which isn't in the Middle West, Nick overlooks this and lets Gatsby think he believes this event though this is false. Nick overlooking Gatsby's character shows that he has been influenced with the glittering life that Gatsby has to offer. Nick, who was a Good Samaritan from a respectable family, has changed his lifestyle to suit that of the people of the West Egg. He exchanges his morality for wealth. He knows that if he keeps his morality intact, he won't be able to achieve the American dream. This also shows that the American dream is broken, because Nick isn't working as hard as he used to before he met Gatsby.

He judges people, he changes over the course of the novel, and he is not rational and objective in his thoughts, all these points to one thing only, that he is a dishonest man because he continually practices differently than what he preaches. This and many more makes him very unreliable and is not fit for the role of the narrator, proving my thesis that Nick isn't a reliable source. Nick is seen constantly judging people, being irrational and not objective, and he changes several times in the novel, all these and many more combined together prove that Nick is not a reliable narrator. The Great Gatsby being shown through the eyes of one man isn't ideal. Nick is not a good and reliable character for many reasons stated above. Nick is a human, and it is in our nature to make mistakes, but Nick is seen making the same mistakes over and over again. We are meant to move on and learn from our mistakes.

but due to the glittering and attractive life of losing your morality and enjoying life as it come that Gatsby shows nick, makes him continue to live in the life of lose morality and money, makes nick continually dwelling in the past and making the same mistakes time after time. Work cited:

Internet source:

Abbot, Neal. " The Reliability of Nick Carraway: Part One." A Word Fitly Spoken. 9 Oct. 2012. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. Book source:

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. England: Penguin, 2006. Print.