

Essay on the stranger and the great gatsby essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Personal history as well as the backdrop of events surrounding that personal history are both significant to many works of prose other than fiction. In at least two works you have studied, discuss the use made of the interplay between personal history and the background within which that personal history occurred. In the texts *The Great Gatsby* by F. S. Fitzgerald and *The Outsider* by Albert Camus, the backdrop of events during the writing of the novels as well as the personal histories of the authors have noticeable effects. The themes and characters the texts are based on personal events of the author's lives. The setting of the novel in the 1920's directly influences the theme of the corruption of the American Dream, the theme of increased hedonism and moral degradation and the theme of social class and standing. World War 1 has just ended before the decade, and it was one of the bloodiest and most violent episodes in this nation's history.

Young people had sacrificed their lives for a war that had taken place on an entirely separate continent, and with many families losing fathers, sons, and husbands in the war, the entire society was submerged in disillusionment, skepticism, cultural experimentation, and hedonism, only seeking their own pleasure. During the 1920's, the country also experienced an unprecedented economic boom that allowed the values of materialism and ambition to take over the American mindset. With social mobility apparently possible for everyone during the 1920's, many Americans did try to involve themselves in "get-rich-quick" schemes that sometimes included illegal activities such as gambling and bootlegging. This influenced the themes of the novel by providing Fitzgerald with the inspiration to comment and critique these themes, in a form of a social commentary provided by the novel. The deaths

of all the characters involved in achieving the American Dream, Gatsby, Wilson and Myrtle, represent the inherent corruption of the dream itself due to the failure to obtain success through hard work and honest means. There is a very clear parallel between Fitzgerald and Gatsby, as can be seen through analysing the history of Fitzgerald.

Interpreting this using the psychoanalytical theory, it is possible that Fitzgerald intentionally modelled Gatsby after himself. Their similarities begin in their background. Scott Fitzgerald and Jay Gatsby are from middle class families and had the opportunity to attend two of the world's most prestigious universities, Oxford and Princeton, but failed to graduate from either of them. Both of them also attended the army, and left it without any remarkable success. Both had their strong opinions of alcohol. In the novel, Gatsby was portrayed as a strong anti- alcoholic, who never touched an alcoholic beverage, not even at his own parties. He acts this way because in his earlier life, Gatsby had to take care of a man who was drunk all the time, Dan Cody.

His experiences convinced Gatsby of the harmful effect alcohol has on the body. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald also has his share of experiences with alcohol. Fitzgerald was a heavy alcoholic through most of his life, but attempted abstinence later in his life. His experiences of withdrawal were probably the basis of Gatsby's choice to abstain from drinking. However, the most poignant similarity would be the relationship between Jay Gatsby and Daisy Fay, and it's parallel with the relationship of Fitzgerald and Zelda Sayre. As a woman, Zelda was well known for her mischievous, vivacious personality and

her physical beauty, traits that would follow her to her adulthood leading to her becoming the quintessential woman of the Jazz Age. His courtship of her was fraught with trouble due to her requirement that he satisfy her lavish and materialistic lifestyle. Zelda finally agreed to marry him after the publication of *This Side of Paradise* in 1920, causing him to become a literary sensation and a financial success.

In the same manner, Daisy Buchanan initially rejected Jay Gatsby for the very same reasons, and then later rejected him in favour of Tom Buchanan's greater social standing. A description of Daisy, "Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean towards her, an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming" belies the same personality that Zelda possessed, and indeed, one of Daisy's quotes, "beautiful little fool" can be attributed to Zelda. A deeper interpretation could be drawn of Daisy's negative portrayal, specifically towards the end of the novel. During the writing of the novel, their marriage was strained due to financial difficulty and an affair on Zelda's part. This resentment could have led to the crafting of Daisy, described as a "careless" person. The backdrop of events for *The Outsider* influenced the themes present in the novel, such as the themes of the Absurd and the theme of death. *The Outsider* was published in 1942, in the midst of World War 2. This was the largest war in history, on an unprecedented scale, and the amount of damage to lives and property was unimaginable. The harsh reality of such a war caused many writers, including Camus to regard life as meaningless, pointless or absurd.

This became a very important theme in *The Outsider*. The novel tells the story of an emotionally detached, amoral young man named Meursault. He does not cry at his mother's funeral, does not believe in God, and kills a man he barely knows without any discernible motive. For his crime, Meursault is deemed a threat to society and sentenced to death. When he comes to accept the "gentle indifference of the world," he finds peace with himself and with the society that persecutes him. The irrationality of his world complements the irrationality of our world, as Camus wished to depict it. The lack of logic, reason or sense in the novel can also be found in our world, even as we constantly attempt to bring order into the chaos in the same manner that the jury that judges Meursault to be guilty does this. The theme of death is also ever present in the novel, and is likely to be influenced by the carnage of World War 2 as well as Camus's own childhood. Shortly before his seventeenth birthday, he suffered a severe attack of tuberculosis. The severe illness deepened his awareness of death, and of the possibility that death could occur at any time.

The idea of death is ever present throughout the novel, in the beginning, the middle, the end and throughout the novel. *The Stranger* opens the announcement of the death of Meursault's mother; Salamano and his old dog are in a state of decay and are constant reminders of death; the protagonist murders an Arab, and is then sentenced to execution in the end of the novel. The centrality of death, as a concept, is perhaps Camus's way of forcing us to confront the continuum of varying attitudes on this universal, yet distinctly absurdist, theme. In *The Stranger*, death is inevitable and does

not lead to an afterlife. The novel concludes with the revelation that death is what makes all men - indeed all living creatures - equal. Everyone has to die, therefore no one man is privileged over any other man (or living being)