

Example of an analysis of the novel the great gatsby research paper

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



On the surface, the novel *The Great Gatsby* tells of a desperate love that a man has for a woman. However, beneath the surface is a smorgasbord of sociological issues well intertwined and fused which characterized the corruption of what should have become an era of great opportunity to reach for the American dream. At a time when anyone, regardless of the social background, could become wealthy, people drenched themselves with the pleasure brought about by a new sense of materialism. What could have been a great love story, both sweet and passionate, ended up in a tragedy for a man who only yearned to be with the woman he loves, and the disillusionment of those who dreamed of happiness and individualism. Told through the eyes of Nick Carraway, the novel was interspersed with powerful symbolisms that invited the readers' own interpretation. Set in the summer of 1925 after World War I, Americans saw an incredible increase in national wealth that gave rise to the "new wealth." Jay Gatsby, the protagonist, was described as a mysterious, wealthy young man who lived in an ostentatious mansion in West Egg. No one knew where he came from and how he became wealthy, but people from both the "old wealth" and the newly rich industrialists and speculators attended his lavish weekly parties. When Nick met him at one of his famous parties, he was seen standing on the lawn with his arms stretched out towards the dark water, as if reaching for the green light that is both distant and faint. Through Jordan Baker, Nick found out that Gatsby was once and still is in love with Daisy, his once removed cousin who lived at a house in the East Egg where the green light was. The green light, based on how Gatsby was trying to reach for it despite its distance and how minute it was, showed the desperation and longing he

had for Daisy's love. Daisy was already married to someone extremely rich when he came back after the war. Despite being moneyed at that time, he was not born in an aristocratic family like the man Daisy married. No matter how much wealth he was able to amass from illegal activities, he would never be able to have Daisy the way he wanted to, and this was what the distant, faint green light represented. Echoing Daisy's words about her daughter after she gave birth, " I hope she'll be a fool - that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald p. 16), Gatsby could only hope that Daisy also be a beautiful little fool that would leave her husband and come to him. However, even he himself was not convinced that that would happen, and his continuous pining for her was just as nonsensical as his illegal deeds all in the name of money and his twisted belief that it would be enough to bring him his love. Like a fool that Daisy was to remain married to an infidel man, Gatsby was also a fool for desperately loving a person he unknowingly reduced as easily impressed by money. In the end, the paragon of perfection that he made his single goal in life proved short of his idea and cowardly left him after he died.

Largely influenced by money, the characters in the story were also described to have lived lives with twisted morality. Daisy cheated her husband Tom Buchanan with Gatsby, but Tom himself had been cheating on Daisy with Myrtle, a married woman who lived in the Valley of Ashes. Tom was not ashamed of his infidelity and even flaunted it to Nick, while Daisy when she had an affair with Gatsby also did the same which struck as an act of retaliation. Myrtle, whose husband loved her so much despite being hurt from her infidelity, was ambitious and wanted to better herself. She hoped to

achieve it by hanging on to Tom, but Tom was only after her to satisfy his sexual pleasure. This was clearly illustrated when Tom broke her nose after he slapped her when she taunted him about Daisy. The infidelity in the story showed the decay of society's sense of family and marriage, as it was not exclusive to the rich but the poor as well. This strengthened how money corrupted the ideals of the Americans, which was "emblematised by sexual infidelity" (Churchwell). Apart from infidelity, this scenario also illustrates the issue of inequality that encouraged acts of violence against women. After Myrtle's nose got broken, Tom tried to smoothen things out by buying her the puppy that she wanted. Tom was the powerful force because of his money who enslaved Myrtle due to her desire for money and the material things that it can provide, and for this she was rendered powerless despite the abuse. This inequality was also present when Tom told George Wilson that it was Gatsby who killed Myrtle, and claimed that he was telling the truth. He has always treated Gatsby as an alien in the society of the rich, and his "telling the truth" was more of a display that he was more believable than Gatsby because he was from the "old wealth" (Crocker & Kusch p. 30). When he balked at Daisy having an affair with Gatsby while he himself had been in more than one throughout the course of his marriage was also another proof of Tom's claim at supremacy because of his wealth. Clearly, Tom and his status of "old wealth" gave him the freedom and the power to control which was also encouraged by a society easily impressed by money. The control and power that money brought was prevalent among all the "old wealth" who looked down on the "new wealth." Admittedly, despite living in opulence, a distinction was clearly described between these two groups.

While the “ new wealth” lived in an ostentatious manner devoid of taste and class, the “ old wealth” were set apart by their elegance and subtlety. However, the aristocracy at the time was characterized by their hollow and shallow personality. As Nick’s father had taught him, “ a sense of fundamental decencies is parceled out unequally at birth” (p. 4), the “ old wealth” in the story seemed to have exhibited less “ fundamental decencies” with the way they bullied the “ new wealth” and the poor, with Tom referring to Gatsby as a “ nobody from nowhere” (Fitzgerald p. 1), and how they retreated behind their money when they did wrong. Like the puppy Tom bought for Myrtle, Daisy let Gatsby take the blame for hitting Myrtle when it was her who was driving the car. She chose Tom over Gatsby, and when Gatsby was killed, she and Tom moved without leaving any return address. Behind all the tragedy that befell Myrtle, George, and Gatsby was the reality that a great divide in the society was created by money. Although this was already made clear between the “ old wealth” and the “ new wealth,” the divide between the poor and the wealthy was also described by geography. The Valley of Ashes was situated between the West Egg and New York City, and it was named so because it was where industrial ashes were being dumped. The existence of such place and the people living there solidified the social and moral decay of America as while the wealthy continued to gorge themselves with their wealth, the poor in the Valley lived with desolation over the bleakness of their lives. Like the moral corruption that has gripped the wealthy, the poor was also afflicted with the same moral dilemma. Myrtle got involved with a married man, while George accepted and lived with it in silence knowing that he would not be able to give the

opulence that Myrtle desired. The failure of the American dream has encompassed the poor and the rich of America, with everything centered on money.

Through it all, the great tragedy of the story was the fall of Gatsby. Despite his ill-gotten wealth, he was the only character in the novel who had the courage to realize his dreams despite the twisted motivation. Gatsby was likened to God, as he was able to create his own identity. He “sprang from his Platonic conception of himself” (Fitzgerald p. 76), always has that smile which shows his character and charisma that appears to be a crucial part for the role that he created for himself. For Nick, Gatsby was “worth the whole damn bunch put together” (Fitzgerald p. 45), a man possessed by love but victimised by the corrupted society that he bravely entered in his quest for love. Clark refers to the novel’s title as an “oxymoron, a clumsy surname for someone great.” Gatsby was a strong presence with his character and resolve, but like the great magician Houdini, he just vanished. It could be attributed to the fact that unlike the rest of the wealthy society, Gatsby was still untouched and unspoiled by the decay that has pervaded the society, with his “count of enchanted objects” such as the green light that burns all night at the end of Daisy’s dock, and the way he trembled as he stretched out his arms like he was trying to touch the green light that signifies Daisy. He was a romantic whose dream for a girl was corrupted by money and dishonesty, that until the end, despite his loss, he still carried to his death. Like the American dream, which was supposed to be a pursuit of happiness and individualism, disintegrated in favor of the pursuit of wealth, Gatsby’s dream was a broken promise that came to an end.

Works Cited

Churhcwell, Sarah. "The Great Gatsby and the American Dream."

theguardian.com 25 May

2012. The Guardian. Web. 13 Dec. 2014.

Clark, Roy Peter. "What Writers can Learn from a Close Reading of The Great Gatsby."

poynter.org 6 Jun. 2013. Poynter. Web. 13 Dec. 2014.

Crocker, John & Celena Kusch. "Race and Class Identity in The Great Gatsby and Passing."

USC Upstate Undergraduate Research Journal. Pp. 26-31. Web. 13 Dec. 2014.

[https://www.uscupstate.](https://www.uscupstate.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Undergraduate_Research/Reseach_Journal/006_ARTICLE5_2009.pdf)

[edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Undergraduate_Research/Reseach_Journal/006_ARTICLE5_2009.pdf](https://www.uscupstate.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Undergraduate_Research/Reseach_Journal/006_ARTICLE5_2009.pdf).