

Setting and characterization to explore the major themes assignment

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In this essay, I will analyze how the writer uses setting and horizontally to explore the major themes in the novel, which are also the essential issues that arise in the particular social context of his time. Fitzgerald sets the story in his contemporary society, an era known as the Roaring Twenties when the post-war America was experiencing an unprecedented financial boom.

Despite the economic prosperity of the upper class, Fitzgerald criticizes the moral decay of the Americans such as the prevalent superficiality and materialism in *The Great Gatsby*.

When Myrtle Wilson reappears after her first encounter with Nick, Fitzgerald writes ‘ Multi he influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change’. The writer reveals Myrtle superficiality through her dependence on appearance to seek confidence. As Myrtle recounts how she was impressed by Tom’s “ dress suit and patent leather shoes” and cheats on her husband only because she can be better provided with Tom, Fitzgerald shows the materialistic nature of Myrtle, who chooses appearance over personality, wealth over loyalty. Another character that is depicted as shallow and materialistic is Daisy Buchanan.

Her luxurious lifestyle is shown by her ; white dress” and “ white roadster where the color white connotes a sense of royalty. To support herself financially, she marries Tom ‘ With more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before” even though she loves Gatsby. Degenerate thus reveals Daisy’s materialism as she treats her marriage as a means of obtain greater wealth and denies her true emotion. However, when she reunites with Gatsby, she is amazed by his shirts and says “ It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such – such beautiful shirts before. Her shallowness is shown <https://assignbuster.com/setting-and-characterization-to-explore-the-major-themes-assignment/>

or her emotion is easily affected by materials like shirts. Her love for either Gatsby or Tom is also doubtful as she hesitates between the two out of consideration that which can provide her a rich, classy life. Using the first person narrative, Fitzgerald criticizes the moral decay and worship of materialism in his contemporary society through Nick's voice. After Myrtle's death, Daisy leaves Gatsby to take the blame and flees with Tom. Nick calls the Buchanan couple "careless people" who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast airlessness. Fitzgerald shows his own contempt towards those who think money can fix everything and take no responsibility for their acts through Nick's disapproval of Tom and Daisy, the typical of that kind. In addition, Fitzgerald examines the changes in gender roles in the sass America, as well as the challenges women faced in gaining emancipation as a result of socio-historical changes. The post-war setting highlights an increasing social status of women because more of them joined workforce while many men went to fight at the front line in World War I.

Also, the 19th amendment to the US constitution passed in 1920 guarantees all American Women the right to vote. These two changes are reflected as emancipation Of women in The Great Gatsby through characters like Myrtle and Jordan Baker. However, in his novel, Fitzgerald still describes the female characters mostly submissive and inferior to men in one way or another. This little discrepancy between real life and literature shows both the social changes and the writer's own opinion. Fitzgerald sheds light on emancipation of women in the 1 sass through Myrtle, who cheats on her husband in order to seek her own pleasure.

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This rebellious nature of Myrtle reflects the changing role of women in the society as she challenges conservative values for her own interests. Women became more independent in the sass America and more confident about their own pursuit of freedom and happiness. Such energy can also be seen in Fitzgerald description about Myrtle, “ an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smoldering. ” The phrase “ perceptible vitality’ depicts Myrtle’s liveliness that can easily felt by people around her, while “ smoldering” connotes a sense of ever-lasting warmth about her personality.

Fitzgerald also depicted her as a determined, clear-minded woman when she claimed, “ I’ve got to make a list of all the things I’ve got to get. ” She is the only female character in the novel who dares to chase after what she wants, unlike Daisy who gave up Gatsby when Tom appeared with greater wealth and ability to afford her luxurious life. As a professional golfer, Jordan Baker is the only female character who has her own career. However, through Nick’s voice, Fitzgerald reveals the society’s doubtful attitude towards women’s success rather than recognition when he writes “ I (Nick) heard some story of her too, a critical, unpleasant story. As the words “ critical” and “ unpleasant’ connote negative attitudes towards Jordan Baker, Fitzgerald shows the bias towards women even whey they were trying to achieve certain kind of independence such as pursuing a professional career. Furthermore, when Nick comments on Cordon’s cheating in her first game, “ Dishonesty in a woman is a thing that you can never blame belly”, it ultimately shows the society lower expectation of women and hence a subservient role that they were expected to play.

This is different from the real trend in the 1920s America society where women's achievement was more recognized and their individual rights were also addressed. In fact, female characters in *The Great Gatsby* are mostly submissive and dependent on males. For example, when Nick first visits Daisy, Fitzgerald describes her and Jordan as "anchored balloons." This simile shows the hollowness of the two women and how they are empty-minded just like a balloon. Worse than the purposeless drifting like a balloon, they are "anchored" and not able to leave according to their own will.

This shows a loss of freedom of these two women. Fitzgerald also writes 'they were both in white'. As the color white connotes weakness and paleness, it shows the incapability of the women to take control of their own lives. The motif of white is used throughout the novel to reinforce the idea of weakness of these women. To conclude, even though Fitzgerald holds different views on women's role in the society, *The Great Gatsby* still remains largely consistent with his life experience in his contemporary times.