

Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This extract describes the first meeting of Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan, and we learn about their history. It is also the first meeting of Nick and Daisy Buchanan, Tom's wife. This is a significant passage as it initiates the idea of something sinister about apparent pureness and a "good dream". We learn that Tom and Nick "scarcely knew" each other, and that they went to New Haven college together. Tom and Daisy live in an "elaborate" and "cheerful" mansion on East Egg.

This shows that they have a stable home and money. The house is described as "cheerful", and we therefore assume Tom and Daisy will be cheerful also. When Nick first sees Tom he is "standing with his legs apart on the front porch". This gives an air of arrogance as he standing in a dominant pose when Nick arrives. It appears he wants to emerge in control from the first meeting with Nick.

It could also be interpreted as a protective pose, over his house and his wife. The language from the rest of this passage supports with the interpretation that Tom wants to exercise control over Nick, and that he is arrogant and proud of what he has achieved. He is described as having a "hard mouth" and "two arrogant eyes..."

established dominance over his face". Nick emphasises the physical. He is "leaning aggressively" and the implied meaning of this language is that he dominating and we get a sense of the kind of person Tom is emotionally as well as physically. His body is depicted as "cruel", supported later in the novel when he hits Myrtle, physically showing his strength and dominance over other characters. From the rest of the novel and descriptions of Gatsby,

we can see difference in Tom and Gatsby in the way they are illustrated by Fitzgerald. Tom is emphasised by the physical side and Gatsby's emphasis is on the spiritual.

This can be interpreted that Tom has no spirituality left because his dream is gone. Once a dream is achieved it cannot be regained and Tom's dream has been achieved. He has a wife, a beautiful mansion and money - his arrogance underlines the fact he has achieved this dream. However, unlike Gatsby who still believes dreams can be recaptured, Tom readily accepts that he has no dream left to attain.

Therefore, he controls the situation with his "cruel body". Tom exercises control over Nick, manipulating what he sees. He says, "I've got a nice place here". It is normally the visitor that would comment on the house. However, not only does this underline Tom's arrogance, it makes sure that Nick sees the house and notices how "nice" it is.

The language such as "turning me around by one arm", "He turned me around again, politely and abruptly" show he is controlling what Nick sees by physically making sure he is positioned to see them. We also meet Daisy, Tom's wife, in this section. The language used includes words such as "fragilely" and "fresh" which is reminiscent of the original American dream that the Dutch sailors see in the last stages of the book as "fresh" and full of hope. The colour white is also linked to Daisy, suggesting a pureness, which mirrors that of America for the Dutch Sailors. When we first read the section where Nick sees Daisy, she initially seems to be like similar pure

dream, as the language suggests purity, Daisy and Jordan appear “motionless”.

However, to completely contrast the appearance of them, the paragraph is full of images of movement, such as sea, wind imagery. For example, “rippled”, “rippling”, “fluttering”, “twisting”, and “blew”. This can suggest that Daisy, Tom and Jordan are not what they appear to be, that underneath the appearance, the surface, something is corrupted and mirrors the corruption of America we see elsewhere in the novel, such as Gatsby and Tom’s involvement with crime and the ideas of consumerism and a capitalist society of the 1920s, symbolised by the idea of God as a advertisement. Daisy and Tom are not what they seem, symbolised by the movement imagery underneath a paragraph where Daisy is described as a “stationary object”. The movement imagery surrounding the apparent motionless, pure Daisy can be described as “making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea”. The concept of a shadow suggests something darker, and links with the corruption - crime, materialism, and capitalism - planted underneath. We learn from the rest of the novel that this hint at something “not quite right” underneath the appearance of Daisy and Tom is well placed.

Both Tom and Daisy have secrets, and both are corrupted as they have both achieved their ‘dream’. Tom is having an affair with Myrtle, and Daisy’s supposed innocence is stained with a desire for money. Tom’s affair and his disregard of his marriage to Daisy can be symbolised by the wedding-cake mentioned in the passage where Nick comments “twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling”. The frosted wedding cake is now perceived as fake, despite representing something pure.

This is again, reminiscent of the Dutch sailors view of America, and the corruption of the original American dream to the modern, corrupted dream. There is evidence to suggest that Nick is taken in by deceptive view of pure and motionless people, such as Gatsby and Daisy. Nick continues to associate with them at various parties etc, and treats them as friends. He romanticises Gatsby throughout the novel, even when Gatsby is murdered and the corrupted underside comes into view. However, Nick is also does not believe every word spoken by Gatsby.

He does not believe he is educated at Oxford when Gatsby tells him, and Nick evens finds the un-cut books while at one of Gatsby's parties. It suggests Nick is fully aware of the fake-ness underneath the pure imagery, and is not taken in by it.