

Choose a novel or short story in which an element of mystery plays an important p...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In a novel, one element which -nearly- everyone enjoys is that of mystery. Being presented with something of a mysterious nature often entices the reader into thought over a certain aspect of the novel; the reader's intrigue and excitement growing as the mystery develops and eventually culminates into resolution. Although, it could be said that the best mystery is one that is unsolved and instead leaves the reader in a state of continual thought and wonder, pondering over the question that the novel has prompted.

In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald has successfully created elements of mystery which serve to increase the reader's overall enjoyment of the words on the page. The first mysterious entity which is revealed is the character of Jay Gatsby. He is first mentioned in the very early stages of the book whilst Nick is introducing himself to the reader as a man who "represented everything for which I have unaffected scorn". Then, he is said to be a "gift for hope", possessing a unique "romantic readiness".

And yet beyond a paragraph on Gatsby, there is nothing more from Nick on the subject for quite a while. 'Gatsby?' demanded Daisy. 'What Gatsby?' This line is a further development of the mystery surrounding Gatsby; he is clearly an important man within the novel, having received significant mentionings before including the title of the novel itself. By this point I was quite eager to eventually meet this Gatsby and was served by a very intriguing first sighting of him as "he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way" as he stood at the bottom of his garden, staring across the water.

As is clear, this is not a particularly normal way in which a man will stand and so I was possessed with an even greater curiosity toward this illusive character who promptly vanished from Nick's -therefore my- eyes, leaving us " alone in the unquiet darkness". A short time later in the novel, after an invitation from Gatsby, Nick is invited to one of his nearly famous parties in which there is a large amount of speculation as to who he actually is. Some say a German Spy, " a nephew of Kaiser Willhelm's" while others claim that " he killed a man".

However, there is a slight certainty that he served with the American Army during the First World War. The scene of the party is also very important in that it is there Gatsby is first met and introduced. He comes across as an exceedingly polite and rare man, indeed Fitzgerald spends a paragraph describing Gatsby's almost enchanting smile as one which " concentrated on you with an irresistable prejudice in your favour. ". However, this meeting and the subsequent event of Gatsby receiving a mysterious phonecall only served to increase the mystery surrounding this apparently charming, yet -in some circles- sinister man.

Gatsby continues to be gradually revealed throughout the chapters VI and VII, his childhood being brought to light in chapter VI while his criminal past and dealings meets the reader's gaze in chapter VII. However, Gatsby is by far most revealed in his meeting with Daisy in Chapter V. By this time, I was fully acquainted with Gatsby's past with Daisy and so had some degree of knowledge and insight into the character but it was this key scene which was the most revealing.

Before meeting Daisy for the first time in five years, Gatsby is “ pale as death... hands like weights in his pockets. ” It is at that moment, during that chapter that the Gatsby who’s life is consumed by dreams, illusion and his obsession for Daisy is truly bared. He is shown to be a man who seems to reject the current state of the American Dream in favour of something much more personal and spiritual. All his possessions, parties and servants are only for the purpose of impressing the object of his obsession.

He quickly loses all care and concern for them when he realises Daisy will never be truly with him. Through Gatsby, Fitzgerald has most poignantly represented how the American Dream has corrupted lives. At first, Daisy did not wish to be with Gatsby as he was a man of little money, little possessions and so forced Gatsby to turn to crime and corruption to satisfy her. This shows how the American Dream is not spiritual, but twisted to something commercial and material which extends its corrupting influence to all people.

It is through the build up and eventual resolution of the mystery surrounding Gatsby that I gained a great deal of enjoyment from the book, I was prompted to think more not only about the character of Gatsby but what he has been chosen by Fitzgerald to represent. “ and anyone would have said they were conspiring together. ” Set at the end of Chapter VII, this single line is the source of a great deal of mystery and speculation. At the end of the book, the question of “ How did Wilson know where to find Gatsby? ” is raised.

There is no definitive mentioning of this fact anywhere in the book, only a single line. Looking at the novel, it is very clear that everything within it has

been carefully selected and has a definite meaning - each sentence is necessary for the novel to progress in story and ideas. I believe that the quoted line plus the fact that Daisy and Tom quickly 'escaped the scene' immediately after Gatsby's death with no form of contact is a very clear sign that the apparent 'conspiring' was the conspiracy of Gatsby's death.

This small line is perhaps the most mysterious element within the book as it is not expanded on, no explanation is given therefore it is up to the reader to decide. If this were true, it would certainly fit the overall theme of the book that the American Dream is corrupted and does corrupt. Daisy clearly felt something for Gatsby at one time but perhaps, during the five years away from Gatsby, she became corrupted to a greater degree by the influences surrounding her. It is almost like Gatsby was an influence upon her which would stand a chance at dispelling the materialism within her.

And yet, even five years prior to the events of the novel, she was already assimilated into the world of cars, clothes and large houses which prompted her to reject her chance at true happiness for a life of hidden emotions and an abusive, racist, adulterous husband. It was through this unsolved mystery that my enjoyment of the novel was most increased as I pondered and explored in a bemused fashion the various things which one may deduce from a single line and the events surrounding it.

Clearly from the above, it is correct for me to say that the mystery which was placed by Fitzgerald in the novel has greatly contributed to my enjoyment, understanding and overall appreciation of the novel itself. The mystery included in the novel led to me exploring the character of Gatsby in greater

detail, his dreams, illusions, hopes and his life as an apparent victim. The mystery prompted me to explore the themes of the novel and to think upon how they have affected the characters and also how they affect people today as we live in our material-obsessed world.