

# The great gatsby, the american dream



“ Gatsby is said to be not quite credible for Gatsby, divided between power and dream, comes to inevitability to stand for America itself.

” This statement is true, but only from the viewpoint that its basic premise is correct. Gatsby isn’t credible as a character if he comes to stand “ for America itself”, true, but I believe that Gatsby represents the American Dream. James Gatz is America. Jay Gatsby is the reincarnation of the idealism of the early pioneers. This is because Gatsby, like the Dream, stems from an idealist’s ‘ platonic self-conception’. When the Dutch pioneers first saw America, they saw “ a fresh green breast of the new world .

.. face to face ..

. with something commensurate to [their] capacity for wonder. “. This New World was huge and full of possibilities for the pioneers - this is the same way James Gatz sees the world through his 17-year old eyes. This New World, however, was so full of possibilities that their path must be cautiously plotted to achieve maximum fulfilment from the new Continent. And so, the American Dream is born.

Success and pleasure in a classless society are its primary components. History repeats itself with James Gatz (as history is wont to do) as he meticulously carves his life out of the edifice of endless possibility his young mind perceives ahead of him. The carving takes the shape of Jay Gatsby, and Gatz is well pleased. The carving, and the platonic self-conception, is complete to the smallest detail. The primary flaw, leading to its destruction, in the American Dream is that one stipulation to its actualisation is money.

Money breeds success, but it also breeds contempt. This breeds class distinction, materialism, and carelessness – the antithesis of the Dream's conception. This 'foul dust' floating in the wake of the Great Dream is what aids in its own, and Gatsby's, destruction. The Dream creates a careless society that is only out for personal gratification, by any means necessary. This means that the 'dream' is only achieved by the few, whilst the many suffer for it.

But this 'dream' they achieve is warped, insubstantial and it makes the lives of those who attain it purposeless. This is because, once you achieve a goal it loses its 'special something' that made you chase it all along. This huge anticlimax after achieving man's last 'Great Dream' jades the world for those who attain it so much, that they delight in the failure of those who fall short of the dream and are instantaneously consumed by the fires of materialism. The conflagration has taken the Rich to, long ago, but they do not realise it because their money protects them from the heat of crisis and high emotion. But in this world of careless egotists, one shining example stands out.

Jay Gatsby – Idealism and the American Dream incarnate. But he too is destroyed by the carelessness brought by the 'Dream' and by his own meticulous nature. Just as the American Dream is dependent on money, Gatsby is dependent on a careless person. He "wed his unutterable visions to [Daisy's] perishable breath.

". Daisy was needed for Jay Gatsby to be completely achieved, and that destroys Gatsby and Gatz. To get Daisy, Gatsby must compromise himself

and his morals to become rich to steal her from her husband. Money has the same effect on Gatsby as it did the Dream, and consequences begin to float in the wake of his Dream. The tragedy is that Gatsby cannot see these repercussions because of his incredible focus, his idealism keeps him firmly blinkered to the harsh consequences for actually trying to achieve the impossible.

His misplaced love for Daisy slowly destroys everything he has built up; sure he gets rich, but he never gets happy, as it is all an expensive act. By trying to gain Daisy's hand in marriage after his return from the war, Gatsby flies in the face of the established rich and as soon as trouble looms, they close ranks and Gatsby is left alone to face the music that their self-serving machinations will play for him. In the case of Gatsby's, and Gatz's, death it is ironic that he is destroyed by a man whose life has been destroyed by the distorted Dream that Gatsby represents. With a helping hand from Tom to divert blame from them, Wilson seeks out Gatsby and kills him. Obviously in this case James Gatz is destroyed by Gatsby's death, but this is a metaphor for the true state of society in America as Fitzgerald saw it.

Through the death of the Dream, the land suffers as well. Gatsby is a credible character because he grows from the mind of a great idealist and is ultimately destroyed by that selfsame idealism. If he is not plausible, neither is the dream, and that is a fact that people are not willing to accept, that is why the statement, and its underlying premise, is untrue. His death is a symbol for all to see that America is slowly dying by auto-asphyxiation, the more they pervert the dream, the closer their country comes to collapse. Yet as it was in *The Great Gatsby*, all those consumed by materialism cannot see

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it until it is too late, if at all, and that is the collapse Fitzgerald was talking about, the complete surrender of humanity to the almighty buck.