

# Literary analysis of the great gatsby



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Described by literal critics as the greatest work of Scott F. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* not only remains one of the greatest stories of all time but also opens insight into the intrigues of the real life situation during the “Roaring Twenties.” This book has been linked by many as the best symbol to the “Jazz Age” which is an era that was depicted by the emergence of class and great promises in the lives of Americans. The greatest literary strength of this Fitzgerald’s work is based on its capacity to present truth behind the twenties and the entrenchment of an atmosphere that have earned a place in the American literature. This powerful literary ability has been manifested in other works of Fitzgerald’s works that gives readers unforgettable experience on the characters and the events, as well as the ability to deeply analyze the problems of the American wealth and spirituality.

The analysis of the book reveals that whereas Fitzgerald has attempted to focus on a variety of themes, the question remains what is behind the green light? This Fitzgerald’s work is composed of symbolism that has made them the greatest literary works of all time. The underlying symbolism in *The Great Gatsby* is well presented and can be analyzed through deeper literary examination of quotes such as

“ I didn’t call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone – he stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling.

Involuntarily I glanced seaward – and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock.

When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.” (16)

This chapter therefore comes to an end with the symbol of the green light that is mysterious. The reader's first knowledge of the green light is depicted when Gatsby tries to reach out towards it, like he is worshipping it. As we progress, we discover that the green light is at the end of Daisy's dock and is a symbol of Gatsby dream and hope for the future. According to Millet (1), "Green is the color of promise, hope, and renewal – so it is fitting that Gatsby's dream of a future with Daisy be represented physically in the novel by this green light". Daisy is thus depicted as a symbol of wealth and power. The ensuing chapters of this book will analytically present the role of Daisy in the entire novel. Fitzgerald (115) proceeds to compare Gatsby green light to the green beast of the world. This demonstrates that even though Daisy is a symbol of power and wealth, there are underlying evil aspects that surround the beauty and comfort and envisaged by Gatsby.

Through a comparative analysis of Gatsby's dream to the explorer's discovery of America and the promise of a new continent (Millet, 1), Gatsby is demonstrated as one who feels contented with his newly acquired status. Complications arise as Gatsby dream seems to follow a tarnishing path because of his obsessions with the materials of this world, just like the Americans are fully obsessed by wealth. This fact is perhaps well illustrated by Millet (2) in stating that " However, Gatsby's dream is tarnished by his material possessions, much like America is now with our obsession with wealth. The means corrupt the end, and Gatsby's dream dies because of Daisy, Gatsby, and Tom's carelessness and superficiality, as does Gatsby for the same reasons".

Daisy as a character in *The Great Gatsby* is effectively used to represent the aspects of wealth, power and evil in the American society. At the end of the first chapter, we see the green light as a symbol of hope, promise and a better future and something that is worth worshipping. The beginning of the second chapter is marked by the description of the green light in opposite direction. “ Foul wasteland and valley of ashes (16) are used to describe the green light. According to ref “ This section of the novel can be interpreted as the foul, material-driven world that the main characters live in, and which helps to destroy Gatsby’s dream. The eyes of Dr. Eckleburg symbolize in this chapter advertising and materialism gone mad, one of the central themes of the plot”.

The primary focus of Gatsby that in the beginning of the novel was Daisy is portrayed as a shortcoming on his part. According to NovelGuide (2),

In spite of his success, Gatsby’s primary ideological shortcoming becomes evident as he makes Daisy Buchanan the sole focus of his belief in “ the orgasmic future” (189). His previously varied aspirations (evidenced, for example, by the book Gatsby’s father shows Nick detailing his son’s resolutions to improve himself) are sacrificed for Gatsby’s single-minded obsession with Daisy’s green light at the end of her dock. Even Gatsby realized the first time he kissed Daisy that once he “ forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God”

The psychoanalytic criticism of Gatsby character is well illustrated in the text by Tyson (1951) in stating that “ there must be something in our biological

make up as specie to explain this death work, this psychological and physical destruction.” This could explain the reason behind Gatsby’s desire of Daisy even if it the eventual consequence may be death.

The analysis of this extract entrenches the depiction of Daisy as not only a symbol of wealth and power but also the desire of Gatsby. Whereas Gatsby is fully obsessed by Daisy, she however, does not like Gatsby. This is demonstrated when she tells him that he reminds her of an advertisement. This statement goes further to confirm that Daisy only likes Gatsby for superficial illusions he represents; the role played by advertisements in our lives. The true American dream can only be revealed through a greater scale by advertisement. According to Millet (2), “ in advertising, eternal youth, wealth, and beauty are constantly emphasized, which goes along with Gatsby’s youthful dream of Daisy and explains why Fitzgerald never has to develop his characters”. When Gatsby met Daisy, his mind was a pure as that of God but can never be again after kissing Daisy. According to NovelGuide (2),

“ He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father’s business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.”

This depicts the intrigues behind Gatsby’s change of name. In addition to that, it is a depiction of religious imagery in chapter eight. “ Daisy is compared to the “ Holy Grail” and Gatsby’s dream is like a knight’s quest,

showing once again the dream's spiritual nature. Also in this chapter, we see Gatsby, after the car accident, looking over Daisy from her yard, trying to protect her" (Millet, 2)

As the plot unfolds, Daisy's characters also changes. The Daisy Gatsby met and fell in love with years ago is not the same anymore and the past cannot be duplicated in the present and the future. The spiritual quest by Gatsby therefore miserably fails in attempt to achieve something that is impossible. This fact is best presented by NovelGuide (1), in the analysis of this novel by stating that,

For the first time in his wildly successful career, however, Gatsby aspires to obtain that which is unattainable, at least to the degree which he desires. As the novel unfolds, Gatsby seems to realize that his idea and pursuit of Daisy is more rewarding than the actual attainment of her. Gatsby recognizes that — as he did with his own persona — he has created an ideal for Daisy to live up to. Although Gatsby remains fully committed to his aspirations up until his death, he struggles with the reality of when those aspirations for his American Dream are either achieved or, in Gatsby's case, proven inaccessible. As F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in 1924, while working on *The Great Gatsby*, " That's the whole burden of this novel — the loss of those illusions that give such color to the world so that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory"

Daisy is also demonstrated as an agent of corruption. The early explorers travelled thousands of miles in escape from corruption only to discover that their Daisy of desire – America – is also corrupt. The characters in *The Great*

Gatsby therefore travel in all directions in the search of wealth and materialistic life – abandoning their moral values and beliefs as they move to the east side. The eastern side is described as the valley of ashes where there is totally lack of human values and people are driven by the desire to achieve superficial illusions. The change of direction is used by Fitzgerald to depict the deterioration of American ideals and the erosion of personal ethics. It is also a demonstration to the extent at which our search for wealth and sophistication is impacting on the moral values of the society.

In conclusion, the central theme of this Scott F. Fitzgerald's great literal work is the demonstration of how America's culture of material wealth and sophistication desire has gone beyond the mere search for comfort in life to levels of worship. This intense desire ends up in disastrous consequences depicted by the flaws in life. It remains one of the greatest analytic literal works on the American society in the Roaring Twenties.