

The Great Gatsby

First Person Narration: Nick Carraway

- Shapes the story that we read, including our understanding of Gatsby. He is seen to be trying to stay objective and non-judgemental about things that are going on around him.
 - Retrospective account of the summer of 1922. Nick has returned to the mid-West of America and is reflecting on his time in New York.
 - The chronology is scrambled- the truth gradually emerges about Gatsby's history and character.
 - There is a shift from Nick's observing life to participating in it.
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Themes

The USA in the '20s: Women started to express autonomy (flappers), increased personal freedoms (hedonism), government corruption, high consumer debt, high culture flourished, Jazz Age, seizing the moment to forget about WWI, urbanisation, industrialisation, high wages, consumerism, disillusionment (humanity losing its way), moral confusion (great material wealth but with spiritual impoverishment), the Prohibition (bootlegging)

Why was Gatsby great: Nick's use of language elevates Gatsby, Gatsby tried to control time, Irony in the word "great", free from carelessness (like Tom and Daisy), hypocrisy (of the Prohibition)

How does his voice convey moral authority (honesty, caution, tolerance, wariness of snap judgements): Nick's voice is cold and rational so the reader could infer and expect that his point of view would be quite objective

How are readers presented with Nick's duality as a narrator and character in the opening chapters:

Character Analysis

Daisy: In general she could be described as being very shallow and won't care for absolutely anyone. She bows down to the traditional values regarding gender identity and accepts them as is ("I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool- that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."), leading to how she's easily manipulated emotionally by men (Gatsby and Tom) because she feels that she has to listen to them. Because she knows how she's been dominated, she had a glimpse into the megalomaniac side of mankind

"That's true." She hesitated. "Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything." Evidently she had reason to be. I waited but she didn't say any more"

Tom: Tom is an embodiment of the American Dream because he is so wealthy. His inner self is quite spiritually empty and Nick thinks that he's looking for something. "I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game." He, like Daisy, doesn't care about anyone and when they sense that they created a disturbance of some sort, they run away from the scene "they smashed up things and creatures and then

retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness”. Unlike Daisy, Tom was the obvious antagonist of the story because he kept aggressively attacking Gatsby in the open. “I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn’t far wrong.”

Gatsby: Jay Gatsby wants to fit in with the upper class so he throws extravagant parties (for attracting Daisy) and doing favours for Nick to kind of impress him. “The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o’clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby’s, with innumerable receptacles to contain it.” He’s a criminal but he keeps things as non-suspicious as possible. His existence is for his lost love, Daisy, and his pursue of Daisy led to his death “what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams”

Nick: He’s a down to earth person who at first in the storyline appears to be withdrawn from things going on around him, then he started participating in events occurring in his surroundings and in the end reverts back to holding a withdrawn attitude towards life, although this time, it’s an informed decision ““I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart”. This is basically the whole picture of Nick’s role in the novel, a commentator that participated in the “game show” he’s hosting.

Book Review

“The Great Gatsby is your neighbor you’re best friends with until you find out he’s a drug dealer. It charms you with some of the most elegant English prose ever published, making it difficult to discuss the novel without the urge to stammer awestruck about its beauty. It would be evidence enough to argue that F. Scott Fitzgerald was superhuman, if it wasn’t for the fact that we know he also wrote *This Side of Paradise*.

But despite its magic, the rhetoric is just that, and it is a cruel facade. Behind the stunning glitter lies a story with all the discontent and intensity of the early Metallica albums. At its heart, *The Great Gatsby* throws the very nature of our desires into a harsh, shocking light. There may never be a character who so epitomizes tragically misplaced devotion as Jay Gatsby, and Daisy, his devotee, plays her part with perfect, innocent malevolence. Gatsby’s competition, Tom Buchanan, stands aside watching, taunting and provoking with piercing vocal jabs and the constant boast of his enviable physique. The three jostle for position in an epic love triangle that lays waste to countless innocent victims, as well as both Eggs of Long Island. Every jab, hook, and uppercut is relayed by the instantly likable narrator Nick Carraway, seemingly the only voice of reason amongst all the chaos. But when those boats are finally borne back ceaselessly by the current, no one is left afloat. It is an ethical massacre, and Fitzgerald spares no lives; there is perhaps not a single character of any significance worthy even of a Sportsmanship Award from the Boys and Girls Club.

In a word, *The Great Gatsby* is about deception; Fitzgerald tints our glasses rosy with gorgeous prose and a narrator you want so much to trust, but leaves the lenses just translucent enough for us to see that Gatsby is getting the same treatment. And if Gatsby represents the truth of the American Dream, it means trouble for us all. Consider it the most pleasant insult you’ll ever receive.”

I agree with the book review nominated above because it describes the intent of Fitzgerald in writing "The Great Gatsby", the historic context, as well as the plot of the novel quite concisely and clearly. The review used plot analysis skills well, it used language eloquently

It's interesting how the book review believe that "The Great Gatsby" is kind of depicting an illusion (the American Dream) inside another apparent illusion (Nick's perspective). Nick starts off stating that he will remain objective even though he had gone through the arguable and disillusioned pursue of the American Dream by whatever means necessary. However it is gradually revealed that he himself have some moral flaws that the other characters have to face, like condescension, sarcasm etc. This in the end left the reader wondering if Nick really did cough up the real story.

Secondly, the author of the book review described the 1920s culture which set up a stage and backdrop that ensures that "The Great Gatsby" stays plausible enough for people to believe in it. This is a good attempt at covering many of the major scenes in the novel, however the author could elaborate more.

The author of this book review used languages well to describe the intricate details (eg how both men love Daisy and fighting over her) present in the plot of "The Great Gatsby". I agree with the point the author made that the underlying subplot of the novel is the sinister reactions the various characters are throwing at each other (Tom, Gatsby, Daisy always yelling and confronting each other). The author then comments on what the final culmination of various problems came in the form of the death of Gatsby and everyone leaving New York.

The book review was overall a quite a good analysis of "The Greta Gatsby". It is decent because it covered most of its central themes and events, as well as some historical context.

Book Reviews Key Ideas

- Illusion within another illusion.
- Hope leads to dreams and dreams often lead to our downfall.
- Love triangle between Gatsby, Tom and Daisy leads to a high body count scenario.
- False sense of accomplishment (in slowing down time?) for Jay Gatsby.
- Readers lacking sympathy for characters in "The Great Gatsby"
- Nick's involvement in the action as the novel progresses.
- Rhythmic style of writing in the novel

10 Facts about Fitzgerald

- 1) Fitzgerald had been in the US Army during World War I himself and had to part from Ginerva King, who refused to marry him because he wasn't rich: A comparison between Gatsby and Daisy's relationship.
- 2) Fitzgerald's drinking addiction led to him featuring alcohol-related topics such as the Prohibition in his writings (heavy drinking in The Great Gatsby)
- 3) Fitzgerald had a hard time naming The Great Gatsby
- 4) The prologue of The Great Gatsby is actually credited to another character in one of Fitzgerald's novels, "This Side of Paradise"

- 5) Fitzgerald only sold 25000 copies of the Great Gatsby during his lifetime.
- 6) Gatsby moved to New York in 1922 and witnessed the clash between old money and the nouveau riche on Long Island
- 7) Free copies of The Great Gatsby were distributed to soldiers serving in the US Army in World War II and led to the novel's popularity.
- 8) A silent film was made in 1926 but it was lost (only the posters and trailer remains)
- 9) He died in 1940 from a heart attack, which was probably caused by his alcoholism.
- 10) Fitzgerald rewrote some parts of The Great Gatsby to suit the initial cover art.

Proverbs 21:17- He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Leonardo DiCaprio Stimulus Response

Jay Gatsby wasn't born empty, but his pursue for the acceptance of him into the upper class (maybe the foul dust Nick was alluding to) led to him being superficial and a show off from time to time. He did truly love Daisy, but once he had Daisy, "his list of enchanted objects had diminished by one (the green light)". Gatsby's perceived value of Daisy's love had depreciated. He keeps trying to prove that he's the alpha male (compared to Tom Buchanan) and the love triangle morphed into a game of "capture the flag"

Other people's opinions: *Gatsby's love for Daisy is masked by his pursue of money and pleasure as well as his pursue to enter the upper class*

Green Light Stimulus Response

Gatsby's perception of the green light was far more detailed than that of the reader because only he at this point in time have any knowledge and connection with Daisy Buchanan. Since the reader is limited to the point of view of Nick Carraway, our point of view is somewhat confined. We see the green light to be eerie but Gatsby sees it as natural, hypnotic, enchanted and conveying envy. The light is green because green is a colour that signifies growth and this in turn implies rebirth, rebirth of Gatsby's and Daisy's relationship, perhaps.

Valley of Ashes Stimulus Response

The Great Gatsby depict a society which exists in a state of confusion and moral chaos by paralleling the messy and filthy Valley of Ashes with the human race. "The motor road hastily joins the railroad" implied that everything is done in a haphazard and fast paced style in the Valley of Ashes. The ashes signify the death of all that's good of humanity, perhaps drained soulless by the pursuit of the American Dream. Alone in this baffling wasteland, Doctor Eckleburg (God) watches on the morally dissolute events that occurs around Tom, Daisy and Myrtle

Key Scene Analysis

Novel: Published in 1926 by Francis Scott Fitzgerald, American classic, include themes like the American Dream, Prohibition or Disillusionment of Humanity

Film: think about the modern audience, how future audiences will rely on it for the sole reference for the novel when there's no more novels

1) 2 marks for effectively introducing both texts in full, 2 marks for identifying and briefly explaining two reasons why the text may be difficult to translate into film.

The Great Gatsby is considered by many to be the supreme American novel, focussed in disproving the American Dream and drawing attention to the fact that humanity would lose its way for its pursuit. As with many such novels, it's been transcribed and adapted into a film. The most recent adaptation, "The Great Gatsby" (2013, directed by Luhrmann), was a rich aural and visual medium for the original novel. The whole plot had a new interpretation, however the basic plot followed that of the novel. It's no easy task for any classic to be adapted into film, as if the film didn't stay true to the novel's storyline or is poorly adapted, people will not go and see it and it will flop. Everyone will also complain to the producers, if that's the case, for ruining perhaps the greatest novels ever and Luhrmann will be rejected by the film company next time he has an idea for a film. The cost of producing "The Great Gatsby" is also a factor to be considered. In order to compliment the novel by translating into a great visual medium, lots of special effects and filming techniques have to be used to achieve the desired conveyance of meaning to the audience. The film went over the initial budget and could be said to be the greatest gambit in Luhrmann's directing career.

2) 1 mark for identifying a symbol or motif. 2 marks for correctly identifying and explaining how a literary device can convey an idea or a concern within the text, whilst using metalanguage and evidence from the text to support answer.

A prominent symbol in the scene in which the Valley of Ashes was introduced would be the billboard with Doctor Eckleburg's eyes. The eyes was introduced by the narrator Nick Carraway to the reader when he first frequented the Valley of Ashes with Tom to see his mistress, Myrtle Wilson, who lives there. It is widely identified as being the eyes of God that oversees the disillusioned mess that is the Valley of Ashes (arguably humanity too, if in pursuit of the American Dream). Humanity may also be interpreted as God's abandoned practice, just as how Doctor Eckleburg: "sunk down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away." However, in the film, this fact wasn't revealed as subtly as Nick Carraway just gave it all away by stating that the big eyes on the billboard are like those of God. Wilson is a victim that got caught up in the ugly mess that is the love scheme between Myrtle, Tom, Daisy and Gatsby and he remarked that although Myrtle may succeed in fooling him, she may not fool God, as God is always watching what everyone's doing: "Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night. "God sees everything," repeated Wilson." In the judgment of the main characters, Nick present the most opinions, however the presence of Doctor Eckleburg would mean that Nick wouldn't be the only judge, instead, he's the sideline umpire whilst God would be the silent chair referee.

3) 2 marks for identifying and correctly explaining how Luhrmann has created new and enhanced meaning by using this symbol on screen. 1 mark for appropriate metalanguage and evidence from the film (Mis-en-scene, characterisation, filming techniques)

Luhrmann had put an actual depiction of Doctor Eckleburg's billboard forward to the scene. His spectacles are rusty, not yellow (still conveying the thought of decay), but there's an additional quality of the eyes following everything. When the billboard is present in a scene, it is never portrayed at an angle, always directly staring back at the audience and into the drama that is

happening before it. This gives it a otherworldly quality and the viewer could better understand as well as perceive Fitzgerald's purpose for the billboard as a kind of observer.

Whenever a significant event (eg Myrtle's death, her infidelity to her husband revealed) occurred in The Valley of Ashes, the film adaptation of The Great Gatsby had a special effect where the camera angle zooms into the billboard with the eyes half staring straight back at the audience and half staring at the incident. This contributed to the symbolism that Doctor Eckleburg (God)'s ever vigilant in seeing the filth in human nature.

4) Key Aspect 1: Colour schemes used for characters of different origins.

As a general trend, the richer characters' colour palette consists of whites, blacks and blues, which is the traditional colour for people or objects that are considered high-ended. Daisy wore white as a sign of her status of an ingénue whilst Tom and Gatsby wore navy and black for their supposed heaviness or maturity. On the other hand, the poorer characters' surroundings are in grey (Valley of Ashes) and red (Myrtle), which is a colour considered to be gaudy and cheap. Myrtle was made to look like someone rich, but who isn't (symbolism of red=fiery (the spirit to get into the upper class)). The Valley of Ashes was grey because it represents the looming death and soullessness of society. The film made good use of this distinguishing motif to create a sense of "wealth apartheid" between the haves and the have nots of the novel. One con to the diversity of colour is that it may distract the audience from the plot.

Key aspect 2: Nick said that the eyes of Doctor Eckleburg are like the eyes of God

This really destroyed the artistic value of the original novel as this fact wasn't revealed as abruptly and obviously as with the film version. The plot device was revealed at the very end of the novel in an ominous manner, where a distraught and grieving Wilson looked out of his window and says "God sees everything.", where upon the reader would suddenly connect the events involving the billboard and instantly interpret it that way. A good reason for Nick to give this major plot device away is for clarity of the plot itself. Nick's comment would guide people who have a lesser understanding (or who have lesser literary sophistication) of the novel to the idea.

Analysing Key Passages

Observe and respond to the author' view and values, characterisation, relationships, events, narrative perspective, setting/context, writing techniques (symbolism).

Weather as a motif/symbol in "The Great Gatsby"

"But it's so hot," insisted Daisy, on the verge of tears, "and everything's so confused. Let's all go to town!": Just before Tom and Gatsby's confrontation at the Plaza Hotel, it was the hottest day of the year, signifying the heat and tension between the three characters (Tom, Daisy and Gatsby)

"We straggled down quickly through the rain": At Gatsby's funeral, rain was pouring down, which is an obvious use of cliché weather. The rain in this case signifies the misery Gatsby was in when he died, due to how he can't detain Daisy.

"Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.": Gatsby and Daisy's first date in five years starts off slightly shaky and awkward (rain makes people awkward by wetting their clothes etc) but as the date progresses, the weather apparently turned good too (sunshine).

Key Scene Analysis: Dinner Party at the Buchanan's

Author's views and values: Fitzgerald wants to comment on the superficiality of the upper class and the society (in pursue of the American Dream) as a whole.

Characteristics, relationships, events: Tom was shown to be animalistic and merciless and his affair with Myrtle was vaguely expressed through the phone calls, Tom and Daisy were depicted as unreliable characters and Jordan was hinted to fancy Nick (and have similar personalities, keeping out of others' affairs). There's a sense of distrust between the characters (Tom: pessimistic, Daisy: cynical, Jordan: skeptical)

Narrative perspective: Nick thinks that Daisy was very superficial and gossiping. He takes the Buchanan's words with a pinch of salt, as he doesn't believe that their words are sincere. Nick was used as a foreshadowing device as he knows what will happen (he is looking back on his time at West Egg after he moved back to the Mid-West in disgust)

Setting/Context: This scene is set at the Buchanan's place, where Nick was invited for his visit (Tom may have invited him to show off his wealth)

Writing techniques/symbolism: The alluded fifth guest was a clever technique to indicate Tom's unfaithfulness.

Essay Preliminary Plans

Contention: The reader is left disillusioned with the American Dream after “The Great Gatsby”

1: Fitzgerald identifies that the American Dream is a lie based on decent moral grounds

2: During his assessment of the American Dream, Fitzgerald reveals how the American Dream had lost its way and could easily corrupt the human soul

3: Fitzgerald's message delivered through “The Great Gatsby” could be to avoid superficial ideals that judge success by what is on your outside (wealth, looks etc) rather than what's on your inside.