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Social Status and Individual Identity

A Study of Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald’s ‘The Great Gatsby’

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Abstract

literature, Francis Scott Fitzgerald was a well-known American novelist and short story writer of the Roaring Twenties. They depict a lack of morality, lack of principles, and an internal moral dilemma among American youth during World War I. Economic growth in the United States was out of control during the Roaring Twenties. Aristocrats' extravagant banquets and fashionable attire inspired a new generation of wealthy businessmen. Greed and hypocrisy have taken over the individualism and moral ideals of the typical American in the 1920s.

In "The Great Gatsby," every character's desire to rise to a position of social prominence overshadows their uniqueness. Because of his romantic feelings for Daisy, Jay Gatsby, the main character, becomes more and more obsessed with the opulent lifestyle of the wealthy upper classes. In order to rekindle his relationship with Daisy, Gatsby uses his fortune from bootlegging to live an extravagant lifestyle. All his splendour, though, is dwarfed by his wife's aristocratic spouse, Tom Buchanan. A mistress for Myrtle Wilson is a way for her to escape her awful life and for Tom it is just another status symbol. It's the upper class's whims and fancies that Myrtle entertains. As a result, the deaths of Gatsby and Myrtle have little effect on Daisy and Tom's marriage, which is mostly a financial arrangement.

Keywords: It was a time of upheaval and euphoria for the American upper class, as well as for the rest of the world's young.

Introduction:

Individuals' self-esteem and self-identity have always been subordinated because of their ethnicity, gender, or wealth. When it comes to society's social expectations, this is true even in advanced cultures where individuals are always striving to meet them. American society's moral code suffered greatly during the Roaring Twenties due to its pursuit of excessive material wealth. The American goal of creating a society in which all citizens were treated equally and had equal access to opportunity had failed.

Americans of the roaring twenties will recognise Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald as an American novelist. He incorporates the shattered American ideal, marital strife, and the society's flimsy moral code. To put it another way, his focus is on the darkest corners of society.

During the "Roaring Twenties," "The Great Gatsby" is set in New York City. After being smitten with Daisy and her elegant lifestyle, Jay Gatsby sets out to establish himself as a wealthy aristocrat. Gatsby's naivete and gullibility collide with society's class order.

Objective:

'The Great Gatsby' seems to be a love story between two stars, Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan, but it is a powerful statement on the racial divide in our society. The novel's protagonists' fates are decided by the novel's class system.

Studying Fitzgerald's novel, "The Great Gatsby," the paper's major goal is to understand how socioeconomic status affects an individual's identity.

America in 1920's:

Equality for all men, or the American Dream, is the foundation of America's culture. People came to the United States in search of the American ideal, which is that anybody can achieve if they work hard and have a clear goal in mind. The glitz and hedonism of the Roaring Twenties are vividly depicted in Fitzgerald's writings, which include themes of American ideals. Other than that, he focuses on a darker aspect of the American ideal, which he says leads to mindless ambition and the use of bootlegging to get money. He was not swayed by the wealth of the moment, but he was aware of the disparity between the rich and the poor and predicted the future of the United States.

Jay Gatsby's Dreams and Ambitions:

American fears of the 1920s are depicted in "The Great Gatsby" by Fitzgerald. The ancient aristocracy, the newly wealthy, and the poor are all represented by the two imaginary towns of East Egg and West Egg, as well as the Valley of Ashes.

Daisy, the love interest of Jay Gatsby, marries Tom Buchanan when Gatsby enlists in the military during World War I. A few years later, Gatsby becomes engaged in bootlegging and purports to be an Oxford-educated man. Since moving to West Egg (across the bay from Daisy's House on East Egg) from East Egg, he has hosted lavish parties in the hope that Daisy may attend one. Gatsby tries to get Nick Carraway, the cousin of Daisy's best friend Jordan Baker, to set up a meeting between him and Daisy. She goes on to describe to Nick how, after receiving a letter from Gatsby, Daisy intended to call off her wedding to Tom, but drank wine the night before and ended up marrying him. Nick and Daisy's visit to Gatsby's West Egg house causes Daisy to burst into tears of joy. Daisy seemed to have been overcome by the wealth of Gatsby and was unable to control her feelings. It is shown later in Nick's narrative that even Gatsby's love for Daisy is increased sub-consciously as a result of his drive for a high social standing and a luxurious way of life.

He then added, "Her voice has a lot of money in it."

It was over. Prior to this, I had no idea what you were talking about. The tinkling of it, the cymbals' song of it, the endless fascination that rose and fell in it—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it.

The golden girl, the king's daughter, lives in a white mansion above the sky (7.105-6)

For Gatsby, Daisy represents riches, elegance, and nobility; he refers to her as the "golden girl" and uses money as a metaphor to describe her voice. For all his years in the past, he saw Daisy's love as the only thing that mattered to him. Gatsby believes that Daisy's feelings for him haven't waned over time and that she was only forced to marry Tom because of the circumstances. As a result of this realisation, Gatsby is left disappointed and disheartened by the fact that Daisy's love is not enough to satisfy him. Even in an economically prosperous country, there is still a widening wealth difference between the old nobility and those who have lately come into their own. Daisy is unable to make a decision when challenged with Gatsby and Tom, and she ends up choosing neither of them. She was infatuated with him. Her position and royalty would be at risk if she were to be with Gatsby. In this contact between them, the class system of society overpowers even fundamental human feelings.

Marriage and Social Security:

East Egg is home to a number of well-to-do families, including the Buchanans. Tom, a young guy with a strong body and a racial outlook, is an aggressive and combative individual.

"It's a great book, and I think everyone should read it. Essentially, if we don't keep an eye out, the white race will be completely obliterated, according to this theory. It's all a matter of scientific fact." (1.78)

A book Tom has been reading recently claims that the white race is superior to all other races and must preserve its dominance over society, which Tom discusses. Because of their low social status, he maintains control over his mistress Myrtle Wilson and even her husband, George Wilson.

While Tom is having an adulterous affair with a working-class lady, Daisy chooses to ignore it because she believes that being a fool is the ideal role for a woman. To keep up with the upper-class social expectations, Daisy pretends to be disappointed and unsure about her future with Tom. Upon injuring Daisy's finger, she refers to him as a "hulking beast of a guy." For the sake of societal stability, Daisy sacrifices her originality for the sake of her husband's devotion and pleasure. Daisy's life seems idyllic on the surface, but the monotony of her existence drives her to seek solace in Gatsby.

Exploitation of Working Class:

A working-class neighbourhood halfway between Manhattan and the East and West Egg suburbs, Myrtle is the wife of George, owner of a garage in the "valley of ashes." She lives in a Manhattan flat with Tom and imitates upper-class women's behaviours. Since Tom's catholic wife refuses to divorce him, she feels that he is unable to marry her. On hearing that his wife is not a catholic from Nick, she incites him. He gets upset and attacks her when she refers to him as her first name in front of his legally married wife. Even though he knows she's his wife, Tom treats Myrtle like just another one of his possessions. To him, aristocracy has a higher social standing than working class, so she's not even allowed to call herself Myrtle. Tom is terrified of losing his grip on Myrtle and Daisy, and his anxiety grows as he

realises he may be losing it. His relationship with Myrtle is little more than a show of his egotistical and domineering nature. As a result, he fears that he has lost all of his authority

However long it takes Daisy to admit her genuine love for Gatsby, Tom refuses to give in to the strain in their marriage. By dismissing his relationship with Myrtle, Tom pretends to be in love with Daisy.

"What's more, Daisy is one of my favourites. Occasionally, I go on a wild escapade, but I always return, and in my heart, I always adore her." (7.251-252)

He convinces Daisy that he doesn't care about his "sprees," since he intends to return after they're done. Tom's entire priority is maintaining his social status, and he cares more about his marriage and mistress than anything else.

Death of Myrtle:

After the turmoil, Tom boasts that Gatsby couldn't win him back and hands Daisy the keys to his vehicle so she may accompany him on his trip. To save herself, Myrtle leaps into the path of oncoming traffic, attempting to stop the vehicle. Gatsby assures Nick that he would take the blame and protect Daisy, who was driving the car.

There is no way for Gatsby to repair his connection with Daisy while he is still in a golden dream. As far as the repercussions go, he doesn't give a second thought to them.

Nick is shocked by Jordan Baker's carefree, devil-may-care attitude after Myrtle's sad death. How can Jordan not be affected by the death of a person?

The next night, "You didn't treat me very well."

Was it even relevant at the time? (8.49-53)

In this scene, Nick recognises that the old money group is cold, reckless, and nasty, and that Gatsby is the only one who can save him from them.

Death of Gatsby:

Upon learning that George Wilson is the one who murdered Myrtle, Wilson decides to kill Gatsby in order to exact vengeance. The Buchanan family then relocates to France, where they want to stay for the rest of their lives.

In order to prevent a crime scene, drug lord Meyer Wolfsheim does not attend Gatsby's burial. It is impossible to maintain a strong friendship with Gatsby after he has passed away, even for Wolfsheim. People are just disposable to Wolfsheim, as he explains in his explanation.

"Any involvement in the death of a guy bothers me, and I avoid it at all costs. I maintain my distance. When I was a young guy it was different—if a buddy of mine died, no matter how, I remained with them until the end.

You may think that's sappy but I mean it—to the bitter end....

Our friendship should be shown while a person is still living, rather than after he has passed away "he made a suggestion. "My own guideline after that is to just let things be." (9.95-99)

Conclusion:

In Jordan Baker's words, "there are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy, and the fatigued," the core of the class conflicts in society is summarised. A society is divided into three groups: those who chased their aspirations, those who are still chasing their dreams, and the people from the valley of ashes, who are constantly busy suggesting exploitation of physical labour or enslavement, respectively.

When Gatsby and Myrtle die, it becomes clear that Tom and Daisy will not be held responsible for their deaths. Instead, they may hide in their money and let others deal with the aftermath.

This couple was sloppily behaved. They destroyed things and beings and then sank back into their money or the enormous carelessness or whatever held them together, leaving others to clean up the damage they had left behind (9.146)

Tom and Daisy are protected from the consequences of their actions by their wealth, whilst others must suffer and even die to achieve their goals. Despite his riches and grandeur, Gatsby couldn't live up to his ambitions; he flaunted his fortune to become a member of society only to be abandoned and left with an empty heart at the end of his life. Myrtle had always dreamed of living a rich lifestyle, but she didn't know it was impossible. Consequently, we might infer that social standing has an impact on one's uniqueness.

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