Great Gatsby 12 Essay, Research Paper

The Great Gatsby

There are many different types of people in this world. Apart from physical features, it is the characteristics of a person that makes him/her original. Nick Carraway the narrator of The Great Gatsby, has qualities which are the complete opposite of those of Tom Buchanan, his cousin-in-law. In the novel, the author, F. Scott Fitzgerald, uses the comparison between two cousins to show how their differing characteristics reflects the themes of morality and reality versus illusion.

One of Nick s Characteristics, that is incompatible with Toms is that Nick is cautious when speaking. On an occasion when Mr. Gatz said something that Nick disagreed with , Nick still hesitantly, agreed with him, as to not hurt an old man s feelings; as apparent by the following quote: If he lived, he would have been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He d of helped build up the country. That s true, I said, uncomfortably. (Pg. 164) Tom, who is at the other end of the rope, is very careless about what he says; he does not care if he hurts someone. At one time, he was very rude when paying only ten dollars to a dog seller on the street. Is it a boy or a girl? she asked delicately, That dog. That dog s a boy. (Dog-seller) It s a bitch, said Tom decisively. Here s your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it. (Pg. 28) This shows that Tom does not care if he hurts the feelings of the person to whom he speaks with. Nick s carefulness when speaking and Tom s Carelessness reveals a lot about their morality. It shows that Nick s morals are high he can not hurt an old man who had just lost his son; whereas Tom s morals are so low, that he hurts a poor stranger walking down the street, who is trying to make a living. The carefulness of speaking shows the theme of morality because it reflects respect for humanity. With the realization that the way one wants to be treated he or she treats the other person with the same respect.

Nick s carefulness when saying something reveals the fact that he makes good judgements. An example of his good judgements is when he said that Tom and Daisy were careless people because throughout the novel evidences can be found to support this statement. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy they smashed up thing and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (Pg. 180-1) Nick shows his good judgement of Tom and Daisy being careless people. On the contrary, Tom makes baseless judgements that are visible in the following quote. Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white. (Pg. 130) This quote reveals how Tom scorns the blacks for no apparent reason. Nick s reasonable judgements reflect reality, for he sees things as they really are. On the other hand, Tom s baseless judgements reflect the illusions in his world, for his judgements are what he only views to be right.

Nick and Tom s ability to make judgements reveal how good of judgements they make in their relationships. Nick is honest in his relationships. Before going back to the mid-west, he went and talked to Jordan about their relationship, as the following quote reveals:

There was one thing to be done before I left, and awkward, unpleasant thing that perhaps had better been left alone. But I wanted to leave things in order and not just trust that obliging and indifferent sea to sweep my refuse away I saw Jordan Baker and talked over and around what had happened to us together, and to us together, and what happened afterward to me. (Pg. 178)

This shows how Nick wants to be honest about how he feels towards Jordan. On the other hand, Tom is dishonest in relationships; not only was he cheating on his wife, but he also lied to his mistress, as the quote indicates- You see, cried Catherine Triumphantly. It s really his wife that is keeping them apart. She is a Catholic, and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie. (Pg. 34) Nick s honestly shows the amount of respect he has for people whereas Tom s dishonesty in relationships, unveils his lack of respect for other people. Their differing characteristics reveal how each of them treat their relationships. Thus, showing theme of morality.

Nick s honesty and Toms lack of it, set the foundation for their faithfulness. Since Nick has a strong foundation and is honest, he is thus, very faithful. His faithfulness is quite visible because he was one of the few people to attend Gatsby s Funeral. Nick and two others, were the only one s to attend the service. He also arranged the service. This shows how he was faithful to his Gatsby until the very end. On the other hand, he has a weak foundation, for he is dishonest and consequently is not faithful. An example of his unfaithfulness is that he was not present at his daughter Pammy s, birth. His faithfulness to his wife is visible in the following quote- Well, she (Pammy) was less then an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling (said Daisy) (Pg. 17) Tom not showing up to his daughter s birth shows how he has no moral value of family. Nick s faithfulness and Tom s unfaithfulness, indicates their morals. Nick has high moral, since he attended Gatsby s funeral; however, or the contrary, Tom s morals are low, since he was not present at his daughter s birth, not for Daisy s sake, and not for Pammy s sake. Therefore it shows how their foundation for their faithfulness reflects the theme of morality.

Nick s and Tom s faithfulness or lack of it, are the pillars that hold up their conscience. Since Nick has thick strong pillars, he, as a result, has a very strong conscience. His conscience makes him feel responsible for Gatsby s death, for he was the one that brought Gatsby and Daisy together. After Gatsby s death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes power of correction. (Pg. 178) This quote shows that Nick is feeling responsible for bringing the two together. On the contrary, since Tom s pillars are weak, his conscience is also that weak. Tom was very much responsible for Gatsby s death , for he lead the killer, Mr. Willison, to Gatsby. Even though he was in a tight situation to have stilled informed Gatsby about Mr. Wilson coming for him, however he did not. He did not ever feel barely guilty, as the following quote reveals:

Tom I inquire, What did you say to Wilson that afternoon? I told him the truth., he said, He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave and when I sent down ? that weren t in he tried to force this way upstairs. He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn t told him who owed the car. His hand was on the revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house- He broke off definitely. What if I did tell him (Gatsby)? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did Daisy

(Pg. 180)

This shows Tom did not feel any remorse for telling on Gatsby. The fact that Nick has a conscience and Tom does not seem to have a conscience gives more depth of morality of these characters. Nicks sensitive conscience proves that he is a clean-hearted person; whereas tom insensitive conscience proves that he is a selfish person. The theme of morality is shown through their conscience actions.

The characteristics of human beings, can say a lot about what kind of person they are. Both Nick and Tom have characteristics that are quite the opposite. In showing the differing characteristics of Nick and Tom, Fritzgerald portrays the themes of morality and reality versus illusion.