Great Gatsby And Jazz Times Essay, Research Paper

In his Jazz Age novel, The Great Gatsby, Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald portrays

society as snobs who bask in the wealth of the age. The novel was written in the

heart of the Jazz Age and depicts it flawlessly. After World War I, many

companies that had been making war supplies returned to creating their unique

products. (ELCO) ?The Jazz Age was a time of prosperity, but also a time of

many downfalls. It was an era of change ? a time when people began to do what

they wanted to do instead of following social norms.? (ELCO) This caused

industry to "boom", and the economy accelerated with frightening

speed. Some people became very wealthy, and in Fitzgerald’s novel, these are the

people of the "eggs", especially East Egg. However, some people,

although not poor, were certainly what they would have considered middle class,

and there was a huge gap between the two classes. (UWAC) One of the main causes

of extreme wealth in the Jazz Age was the accessibility of credit. During the

war people saved every penny. After the war was over, and the economy rushed

into a higher level, everyone started spending extravagantly. Credit was

convenient, accessible, and widely used. (UWAC) Fitzgerald’s main example of

extreme wealth was Gatsby himself. The reader sees that much of Gatsby’s wealth,

like the rest of the worldly community, is spent frivolously. Income disparity

was a characteristic that followed closely with extreme wealth. The difference

between the classes at this time was significant. As Daisy realizes the

difference between herself and Gatsby, her former lover, she is overwhelmed with

grief. Although she, as well as Nick, was of the middle class, her outpouring of

emotion displays to the reader the differences in the wealth of the two classes.

Gatsby, who believed that he was comfortable, felt uneasiness at the sight of

Daisy’s tears. Despite the fact that many people believe that money can make you

happy, Gatsby realizes that his fortune will not win Daisy?s hand. He begins

to re-evaluate all of his possessions by the amount of importance that his true

love puts on them. (http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/1148/index.html)

Income disparity as well as extreme wealth was common in the Jazz Age. After

World War I, the economy grew and the people, in general, prospered. Primarily

Gatsby displays extreme wealth. Income disparity is shown through Gatsby’s

relationships with Nick and Daisy. (ELCO) Another aspect in which the novel

depicts the Jazz Age is the reference to the American Dream. ?Gatsby, like Tom

and Daisy, "goes East" to pursue his dream, perhaps the American Dream

but, unlike them, becomes a victim and fails in his vision.? (UWAC) ?His

dream, the novel suggests, is also that of America, with its emphasis on the

inherent goodness within nature, on healthy living, youth, vitality, romance, a

magnanimous openness to life itself, a dream of the East which has been dreamed

up in the West.? (UWAC) Gatsby pursues the green light, the want for natural

possessions, and eventually is destroyed. Daisy is the one who lures Gatsby into

this drive for material. This can be seen as the possible future for America

herself, which is depicted, through the actions of Gatsby. Gatsby is the perfect

example of America in the jazz age. America just like Gatsby failed to look at

their westward destiny and focused on the limelight of the east.

UWAC (University of Wales Associate College) http://io.newi.ac.uk/rdover/between/gatsby.htm

Numerous pages from this site including Art, Literature, Movies, Fashion http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/1148/index.html

ELCO (Eastern Lebanon County School) http://www.iu13.k12.pa.us/elco/Academics/Social\_Studies/Care/ITTP\_2/roaring.html