Great Gatsby Essay, Research Paper

The Great, Great Gatsby Experience

The Great Gatsby, a novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, is about the American Dream, and the downfall of those who attempt to reach its illusionary goals. The attempt to capture the American Dream is central to many novels. This dream is different for different people, but in The Great Gatsby, for Jay, the dream is that through wealth and power, one can acquire happiness. To get this happiness Jay must reach into the past and relive an old dream and in order to do this he must have wealth and power.

Jay Gatsby, the central figure of the story, is one character that longs for the past. For example, he devotes most of his adult life trying to recapture it and, finally, dies in its pursuit. In the past, Jay had a love affair with the affluent Daisy. Knowing he could not marry her because of the difference in their social status, he leaves her to amass wealth to reach her economic standards. In addition, once he acquires this wealth, he moves near to Daisy, “Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay (83),” and throws extravagant parties, hoping by chance she might show up at one of them. Furthermore, he himself, does not attend his parties but watches them from a distance. When this dream doesn’t happen, he asks around casually if anyone knows her. Soon he meets Nick Carraway, a cousin of Daisy, who agrees to set up a meeting, “He wants to know…if you’ll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over (83).” Gatsby’s personal dream symbolizes the larger American Dream where all have the opportunity to get what they want.

Later, as we see in the Plaza Hotel, Jay still believes that Daisy loves him. For example, Gatsby is convinced of this as is shown when he takes the blame for Myrtle’s death. “Was Daisy driving?” “Yes…but of course I’ll say I was.” (151) In addition, he also watches and protects Daisy as she returns home. “How long are you going to wait?” “All night if necessary.” (152) Jay cannot accept that the past is gone and done with. Jay is sure that he can capture his dream with wealth and influence. Furthermore, Mr. Gatsby believes that he acted for a good beyond his personal interest and that should guarantee success. Nick attempts to show Jay the folly of his dream, but Jay innocently replies to Nick’s assertion that the past cannot be relived by saying, “Yes you can, old sport.” This shows the confidence that Jay has in fulfilling his American Dream. For Jay, his American Dream is not material possessions, although it may seem that way. He only comes into riches so that he can fulfill his true American Dream, Daisy.

Gatsby doesn’t rest until his American Dream is finally fulfilled. However, it never comes about and he ends up paying the ultimate price for it. The idea of the American Dream still holds true in today’s time, be it wealth, love, or fame. But one thing never changes about the American Dream; everyone desires something in life, and everyone, somehow, strives to get it. Gatsby is a prime example of pursuing the American Dream.