Illusion And Reality In Gatsby Essay, Research Paper

In The Great Gatsby, the confusion between reality and illusion is prominent within the key characters; Fitzgerald portrays this confusion though Gatsby’s obsession with Daisy, Nick’s idealism, and Myrtle’s dreams of success. Each of these characters possesses a flaw that causes their disillusion and their inevitable downfall.

Gatsby’s downfall begins with his love for Daisy. Knowing that he could not marry her because of her opposition to the difference in their social status, Gatsby was driven to seek wealth so that he could reach her economic standards. Once he acquired this money, he intentionally moved across the bay from Daisy; from here, he could see a green light that glowed near her home. This light, a romantic object worshiped from afar, represented Daisy, and the goals he wished to attain. “Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay.” (Fitzgerald, Scott. The Great Gatsby. 76) Thus, Gatsby began to throw extravagant parties, hoping that she would attend. When this dream didn’t happen, Gatsby casually asks if anyone knows her. Soon, he meets Nick Carraway, a cousin of Daisy, who agrees to set up a meeting between the estranged lovers. “He wants to know if you’ll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and let him come over.” (77) His dream is essentially hopeless Gatsby invests an unfathomable amount of energy chasing something that will only remain a memory in the past. Gatsby is trapped by the fantasy of his dream he wanted more then he could ever have. Gatsby chased his fantasy of romance, yet failed to realize that love had evaded him he can’t live in the past, and no amount of money or wealth could change that. The dream is halted by Gatsby as he realizes that Daisy will never reach his standards; the reality of Daisy could not live up to the dream Gatsby created. Gatsby’s flaw is his inability to think outside of the dream.

While Gatsby guides his life by his dream, Nick is able to separate romance from reality. Although Nick has this capability, his haughty and ideal dream of America clouds his own judgement. Due to his vision of a perfect America, Nick tends to judge people; he judges, for example, Jordan Baker. Nick’s reaction to both the dream and the illusion causes his inability to separate Jordan Baker from the society which infects her. He can only leave her behind and go his way to the West his ideal dream of America includes his dream of the East and the Middle West. Since he comes from the West, his vision of America is based upon his Western morals. The dream he holds of the East is simply an illusion that eventually disappears after he learns the reality of the situation.

Myrtle’s illusion, however, encompasses the American dream of success she desires wealth and prestige, and her solution is Tom. She fails to realize, however, that Tom is simply meeting his own needs, and will never be able to assist Myrtle in her quest for power. Myrtle lives in a fantasy world, which is held together by her dreams and her thirst for prestige; her flaw is her failure to observe the world and those around her.

The Great Gatsby is a novel that is filled with dreamers and their flaws; Gatsby’s hopelessness, Nick’s idealism, and Myrtle’s dream of success. Due to the poor judgement of the characters, these dreams became illusions and ultimately lead to their downfall.