The Great Gatsby 6 Essay, Research Paper

The Great Gatsby

The phenomenon that is The Great Gatsby has been universally classified throughout history as one of the most noteworthy novels ever written. While I myself haven t taken a tremendous liking to it, its sophistication is typical of such a well-known classic. Its various characters each symbolize their own unique views on real life, important yet intertwining nicely with the fictional plot of the story. Although it was written over seventy years ago, the moral values it displays have transcended (for better or worse) to this day.

Unlike many first-person novels, the narrator, Nick, did not act as the story s protagonist, although he did play a somewhat important role in its development. Nick moved east in search of a better life, pursuing an American Dream that he was still uncertain about. Upon his arrival, he met neighbor Jay Gatsby, who he learned was the one-time companion to his distant cousin, Daisy. He admired Gatsby, and would strive to be like him, not knowing the unethical means by which he attained his current status. Nick learned from a woman he d met named Jordan Baker about Gatsby s past, going off to fight in the war and losing much of the fortune he d once had. In the meanwhile, Daisy was stolen away by a man named Tom Buchanan, and they wed each other after Tom offered her a very expensive piece of jewelry. Tom had another admirer named Myrtle, however, and had an affair with her although both were married.

Gatsby still had feelings for Daisy upon his return from the battle, and used his newfound friendship with Nick as a vehicle to get back to Daisy and hopefully rekindle their relationship. One day when they were all together for a meal, Daisy rediscovered her love for Gatsby (or maybe his wealth), and they both decided to tell Tom of this. Of course this news wasn t taken lightly and Tom accused Gatsby of inciting trouble in his house. At the same time George, husband of Myrtle, realized his wife s infidelity and engaged in argument with her. Just when it seemed that everything was broken up, Daisy in her disgruntled state ran over Myrtle while driving Gatsby s car, instantly killing her. Tom, catching the tail end of the sequence, saw his dead mistress and instantly assumed it was Gatsby s doing. He informed George, who became so deranged and hell-bent on avenging his wife s death he proceeded to kill Gatsby, then commit suicide. Nick, a spectator to most of this, had kept amicable relationships with most of the people involved and agreed to set up Gatsby s funeral. Very few people attended, and Nick, tired of this eastern life, moved back west to where he d originated from.

If one was so inclined, they could delve into almost any character in the book and see just what that person represented in modern life. Perhaps that is one of the best characteristics of the novel. First and foremost, you have Jay Gatsby. Gatsby has one goal in mind and one goal only, capturing his ideal version of the American dream. There are several different aspects to this dream of his, but maybe the most important was the acceptance of other people. This is evident mostly in his quest to regain Daisy from Tom. Ironically, this acceptance ultimately never came to be, symbolized by the poor turnout at his funeral.

As for Nick, when he moved west he thought he had what it took to be a successful stock broker and live a comfortable, somewhat moralistic life. In summation, his goal wasn t much unlike that of Gatsby s; he also was in pursuit of this American dream. However, people such as Gatsby that Nick once felt personified this dream, in the end attained their success through only immoral and unjust methods. Essentially, these people led more to his corruption than his success, in the end causing him to move back to the where he d come from, the west. This east to west movement can symbolize the cycle that Nick went through, from his rise in hope and spirit to the events that caused the sun to set on his dream.

Tom and Daisy, although not as important as the two main characters, were indeed symbols of the corruption surrounding them. Tom s world revolved solely around material possessions; in a sense it was his universe and he was at the center of it. He used his money to get just about whatever he wanted, including Daisy while Gatsby had gone off to fight in WW1. And Daisy was a proverbial victim to this materialism; the second she saw that Gatsby had no more to offer her she moved on to Tom who easily won her over with jewelry. But it was Daisy who lost out in the end because of this fake love; she fell into the trap of Tom s immorality as he had an affair with another woman (Myrtle) right behind her back. It s easy to see why Tom was the antagonist in this story.

Not everyone was living quite as comfortably as the aforementioned people were, however. One example of this is George Wilson, husband of Myrtle. He struggled to make ends meet, and treated his wife with far more respect than Tom could ever aspire to offer her. However, this eventually was for naught as Myrtle s dishonesty quite possibly led to her own death, and strangely enough to George s and Gatsby s as well.

I found this book somewhat fascinating, but honestly it wasn t one of the best books I ve read over the course of the past 3 years. Simply put, I had difficulty relating to it s plot, characters, and very essence. Upon completing the book, I asked myself Am I the only person who thinks this plot is not feasible? Granted, the book was fictional and was not meant to be interpreted as a real life tale. However, I felt that the way all the characters were miraculously connected by everything from secret affairs to neighbors to distant cousins was a little too far-fetched, at least for my liking. Additionally, I wasn t absolutely taken by all the different subplots, as I ve always felt that a really good book will interest you without having to think about it all that much.

If you ask me, one of the main underlying themes was the prioritizing that each character had to do, just as every real life person must do. Tom prioritized material possessions such as money; Gatsby put his pursuit of Daisy and his American dream before anyone else; and Myrtle chose to exercise infidelity rather than loyalty. These are just a few of the many examples however, and in each case the characters decisions essentially paved the road to their future. To sum this all up, every person has a different agenda in life, with different priorities, and it is based on these priorities that you will get to where you are going to be.

All in all, even though the book might not have been for me, it was still an admirable piece of literature that I d recommend to others.