

Adam Cohen

English Essay #4

"Gatsby's Dream"

Jay Gatsby, the central character of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* symbolizes the American dream. The American dream offers faith in the possibility of a better life. Its attendant illusion is the belief that material wealth alone can bring that dream to fruition. Through Gatsby, Fitzgerald brings together both these ideas. Jay Gatsby thinks money is the answer to anything he encounters. He has the best of everything. The fanciest car, the largest house, and the finest clothes. Jay has everything except the object he most desires, Daisy. Gatsby believes he can win Daisy over with wealth, that he could achieve the ideal she stood for through his material possessions.

One look at Gatsby's past and it could be seen that he was destined to get ahead in life. Mr. Gatz told Nick, "Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something. Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that. He told me I et like a hog once and I beat him for it" (182). Gatsby's determination to gain a large bankroll is a huge part of the American dream. He believes that once he achieved his financial goal it would lead to a better life.

In America the car is one of the greatest status symbols. Gatsby's gorgeous machine is one of the most majestic cars created. Nick's comments on the vehicle describe its luster, "...and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes...Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of leather conservatory we started towards town" (68). The use of the symbolic automobile can be seen as a demonstration of how an ideal based on materialism alone can be destructive. This was the fatal car which kills Myrtle Wilson and indirectly leads to Gatsby's death.

Appearance is another important factor toward Gatsby's dream. In his quest to win Daisy's heart Gatsby chooses to wear his best outfit. "...the front door opened nervously and Gatsby in a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold colored tie hurried in" (89). Silver and gold are the colors of wealth, Gatsby's sartorial splendor is as lavish as any of the other items he owns. Gatsby's shirts are more than just garments towards Gatsby. They are some of the many fascinating objects he possesses that were created by money. These shirts contribute towards Gatsby's vision of the American dream, that his money and belongings will create happiness for him.

Another major object of Gatsby's dream was his incredible house. Jay states to Nick and Daisy, "My house looks well, doesn't it? See how the whole front of it catches the light" (95). Jay gave Nick and Daisy the grand tour of his house showing of all of his worldly possessions. Room after room, everything was shown and mentioned. At the sight of his piles and piles of shirts Daisy broke down. "They're such beautiful shirts, it makes me sad because I've never seen such--such beautiful shirts before" (98). Jay Gatsby's ideals were parallel to the typical American dream. He wants to claim his objective by the use of his assets. He thinks that his money will give him happiness in life through love and his personal belongings.

Even the richest man in the world can't have everything. Material wealth could provide many things for Jay Gatsby but not the thing he most desired. Although his wealth drew Daisy closer to him, he never truly could have possessed her heart. He demanded Daisy to state that she had never loved Tom Buchanan. "Oh, you want too much!" she cried to Gatsby, "I love you now--isn't that enough? I can't help what's past. I did love him once--but I loved you too." (139-140). Jay's true love still remained with her uncaring husband, Tom. Jay Gatsby's dream was smashed when he found out that even all of his assets weren't enough to woo Daisy to him.

Jay Gatsby's belief in the American dream keep him from realizing reality. He believes that if he worked hard enough and made enough money that he could have

anything. He wants to perceive the world as a place where sufficient wealth would enable him to recapture and recreate the past he desired with Daisy. Gatsby began planning for his dream when he was young. This can be seen from his journal he wrote as a young man which was discovered by Mr. Gatz. His attempt to accomplish his dream with cars and shirts could not have been successful. The American dream cannot be accomplished, money is just one factor towards happiness in this world.