

Foreshadowing and Flashback

Two Writing Techniques That Make Fitzgerald A Great Writer by Jonathan Werne

" 'Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.' 'I hope I never will,' she [Jordan] answered. 'I hate careless people. That's why I like you.' " (Fitzgerald, pg. 63) Jordan is explaining to Nick how she is able to drive badly as long as everyone else drives carefully. This quote represents the writing technique of

foreshadowing, which is being used in one of its finest form. Fitzgerald is foreshadowing to chapter seven where Daisy kills Myrtle Wilson because of her reckless

driving. Fitzgerald uses foreshadowing to strengthen the plot of his book. In chapter

nine, Nick begins to recall the past and relive his old memories. His must relieve his

lingering thoughts of the past. During the chapter, Nick uses a flashback to tell about

Gatsby's funeral for the readers to know what happen the day Gatsby was shot.

Flashback

in The Great Gatsby also helps to give the reader background information about the characters. In The Great Gatsby, the structure of the novel is influenced by foreshadowing and flashback.

Fitzgerald utilizes foreshadowing to the best of its ability to help organize

the novel. "Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the pressure of

his head, whereupon he turned and caught it with trembling fingers and set it back in

place. 'I'm sorry about the clock,' he said. 'It's an old clock,' I told him idiotically." (Fitzgerald, pg. 92) This quote is the first use of foreshadowing which

is in chapter five. It pertains to all of the trouble Gatsby causes as he tries to win

Daisy back. The past is represented by the clock and how Gatsby wants to repeat it with

Daisy. (Eble, pg. 963) This quote foreshadows to the end of the novel when Nick is left

to tell the story of the dreamer whose dreams were corrupted.

(Eble, pg. 963) "they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and

let other people clean up the mess they had made." (Fitzgerald, pg. 188) In chapter

six, Fitzgerald focuses on the first moment of disillusionment which Gatsby has.

(Magill, pg. 90) " 'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you

can!' " (Fitzgerald, pg. 116) This quote is clearly foreshadowing almost the entire

book. It foreshadows Gatsby's attempts to woo Daisy for Tom and tries to make things

the way they were before he left for the army . It also alludes to the fact that he

must be rich and powerful to do that. Overall, it shows that he destroys himself trying

to get Daisy back from Tom Buchanan. In the beginning of chapter eight Fitzgerald foreshadows the death of Gatsby. "I couldn't sleep all night; a fog-horn was

groaning incessantly on the Sound, and I tossed half sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams. I heard a taxi go up Gatsby's drive and immediately I jumped out of bed and began to dress- I felt that I had something to tell him, something to warn him about and morning would be too late."

(Fitzgerald, pg.154) This quote definitely foreshadows the death of Gatsby. Fitzgerald also foreshadows Wilson's involvement when his wife died. " 'He murdered her.' 'It was an accident, George.' Wilson shook his head. His eyes narrowed and his mouth widened slightly with the ghost of superior 'Hm!' " (Fitzgerald, pg. 166) This quote clearly tells the readers that George is not going to let the person who he thinks killed his wife get away with it. Foreshadowing is sparingly displayed though out the novel and especially in the last chapters.

Flashback is used quite often in The Great Gatsby. Jordan begins to remember when she met Gatsby with Daisy for the first time and how they were in love. "One October day in nineteen- seventeen.....The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen....His name was Jay Gatsby and I didn't lay eyes on him again for over four years." (Fitzgerald, pg. 80) As the reader can clearly see, Jordan begins to narrate about the first and last time that she saw Gatsby with Daisy which was four years ago. In chapter eight, Nick flashes back to the night of Myrtle's death and begins to tell the story of what went on after her death. "Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before." (Fitzgerald, pg. 163) Nick tells the reader about how Wilson thought he had figured out who had killed his wife. Nick follows step by step as he walks all the way to Tom Buchanan's. Nick then describes Wilson killing Gatsby in the pool and then Wilson killing himself.

In chapter nine, another flashback is told by Nick. Nick recalls the night of Gatsby's death, and the next day, when all the policemen were at Gatsby's house. "After two years I remember the rest of that day, and that night and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby's front door." (Fitzgerald, pg.171) Nick then proceeds into another flashback where he is trying to get people to come to Gatsby's funeral. During this flashback Nick finally meets Gatsby's father, Mr. Gatz, who came to his son's funeral. "Next morning I sent the butler to New York with a letter to Wolfshiem which asked for information and urged him to come out on the next train. [for Gatsby's funeral]...When the butler brought

back

Wolfshiem's answer I began to have a feeling of defiance.....The third day that a telegram signed Henry C. Gatz arrived from a town in Minnesota...It was Gatsby's father." (Fitzgerald, pg. 175) In the last sentence of the novel the reader realizes the story is being told as seen through the eyes of a Dutch sailor which transports the reader into the past. (Magill, pg. 91) "Boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (Fitzgerald, pg. 189)

As one can see, the book came to life through the use of flashback and foreshadowing. These two main ingredients in this novel made it possible for the reader to be able to understand Gatsby the way Fitzgerald does. It also helps one to understand Gatsby's relentless pursuit of the American dream. These two elements of the novel were weaved into a great book that was read and adored by millions of readers and school students.

Works Cited

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