

## The Great Gatsby Essay

James Baldwin looked upon reality and illusion through the eyes of a great author.

He saw that all authors live in reality, while everyone else lives in a sense of illusion, or not

knowing the whole truth. He shows us that the author must question everything, breaking

down the illusions that are set up by people and by our society. Baldwin shows that

normal people don't question everything, and therefore are fooled by illusions many times.

In *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald suggests many things about illusion and reality. I think

that the strongest thing Fitzgerald suggests is that you create your own illusion, and with

this illusion, you shape the person that you are. All of the rich people in this book have

some sort of illusion surrounding their persona, but Gatsby has the greatest of all illusions

surrounding him.

Gatsby is presented as living the charmed life, with plenty of friends, no problems,

and an honest man. In the end his whole illusion unravels and we find that he has plenty of

problems, is very crooked and dishonest, and has no true friends. He longs for companionship with Daisy, and still can never have that. Gatsby's illusion

surrounding

him is totally shattered in this book, partly through the actions of Tom who feels that he

must discredit his name. Tom, however discredits name to draw Daisy away from him when he finds that Gatsby has become interested in Daisy. When Tom confronts

Gatsby,

and begins to crumble his illusion, Gatsby is as cool and confident as he always is.

Tom's voice, incredulous and insulting: I told you I went there [Oxford]," said Gatsby.

"I heard you, but I would like to know when."

"It was in nineteen-nineteen. I only stayed for five months."

Tom glanced around to see if we mirrored his disbelief. (136)

This passage shows that even Gatsby has bought into the illusion that he has created for

himself. It is as if he has thought out the answer for every question about his past, so that

he can come off as being distinguished and honest.

It would be hard to read *The Great Gatsby* without analyzing if the narrator, Nick

Carroway falls into the illusion of Gatsby. With little hesitation I would say that Nick

does fall into the illusion set up. From the first few chapters of the book we see how

everyone swoons over Gatsby, and is in utter disbelief that Nick does not know the great

and all powerful Gatsby. Nick reacts to what everyone tells him about Gatsby in a calm

way, as the objective narrator that he is. "Well, they say he's a nephew or a cousin of

Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from... I'm scared of him. I'd

hate to have to get anything on me."(37) At this point, Nick has seen Gatsby for a total of about 10 seconds, has never spoken to him, or even really seen him. Because of Gatsby's illusion, people must make up wild stories and guess about his past. Catherine (Myrtle's Sister) has drawn these conclusions about Gatsby, which I feel is just what He would of wanted; total mystery and illusion about his past. He wants to keep his past a secret, and set everyone up to see that he is living a great life, everyone adores him, and has no problems. This is all well and fine until his illusion crumbles and in turn brings the demise of Daisy and Toms relationship, and his death. Because Gatsby set up this fallacy, Myrtle was killed, Wilson was killed, Gatsby was killed, and Myrtle's and Toms relationship was killed.

The reality of the whole Gatsby situation, is that he is a crooked business man, a no good person, a cheat and a liar. Gatsby made his money in underhanded schemes, illegal activities, and the hurting of many people. This was all done for one reason, The love of his life, who could not accept him because he was not rich enough.

Fitzgerald definitely does not condemn illusion, in fact, without the illusion that he creates around Gatsby, this book would not be half the book it is. Fitzgerald is trying to tell us through this book that we should not fall for the mirage that people want us to believe in. I definitely feel that Fitzgerald looks down upon illusions, as if he wants people to stop pretending what they are not and what they will never be. The author definitely feels that there is a place in our lives for illusion. Illusion brings us out of the harsh, dry, despair that we live in on a daily basis. Being a hard-nosed realist may be okay for some people, but in my life I need a little mystery, illusion, and having things being more than meets the eye. The Illusions main purpose is to add vitality to the monotonous way of life we live in.

In my opinion, fantasies are totally different than illusions. Fantasies are something that you like to see, while illusions are things that fool you that you usually do not like. The whole persona of Gatsby was an illusion, which may have looked like he was living the fantasy life, but when his whole illusion crumbled, it was obvious that everyone did not like to be fooled by him. Daisy has the fantasy that her marriage is doing all right, although she obviously knows that it is falling apart. Daisy creates this fantasy because she wants to believe it. When Tom's mistress calls him, Daisy goes out into the yard and gives a lame speech about "a bird on the lawn that... must be a nightingale come

over on  
the Canard or White Star Line... It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?"(20) Her fantasy  
makes it  
possible for her to ignore the obvious signs that her marriage is falling apart,  
and because  
she believes in this and created this, it is a fantasy.

Illusions serves a great purpose in this novel, although this is good or bad,  
it is  
hard to decide. Definitely the illusions are looked down upon Gatsby, but they  
help  
present the hubbub and wonder about Gatsby. The illusions are nothing more than  
mirages, they make you have a false sense of sufficiency, which can be a very bad  
thing  
when the bottom of your illusion drops out on you, and you are left with nothing  
but lies.