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Jay Gatsby: Shattered Dreams

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a tragic tale of love distorted by obsession. Finding himself in the city of New York, Jay Gatsby is a loyal and devoted man who is willing to cross oceans and build mansions for his one true love. His belief in realistic ideals and his perseverance greatly influence all the decisions he makes and ultimately direct the course of his life. Although his intentions are true, he sometimes has a crude way of getting his point across. When he makes his ideals heard, his actions are wasted on a thoughtless and shallow society. It is also Gatsby's ideals that blind him to reality.

When he first meets Daisy Buchanan, Gatsby has "committed himself to the following of a grail" (156). With extreme dedication, he stops at nothing to win her love back, after years of separation. Everything he has done, up to this point, has been directed toward winning Daisy's favor and having her back in his life. The greatest example of this dedication is the mansion he has constructed, "a colossal affair by any standard...with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (9). Once a "penniless young man without a past" (156), he transforms himself into a self-made millionaire and builds an extravagant mansion, all for the love of Daisy Buchanan. He also strategically places the

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mansion across the lake from Daisy's house. From his window, Gatsby can see the blue colored lights of her house.

Starting from the first day that he meets her, Gatsby does everything within his power to please Daisy. Nothing has changed for Gatsby as far as his feelings for Daisy are concerned, even though it has been five years since their first meeting, and despite the fact that she has married Tom Buchanan. He "revalue[s] everything in his house according to the amount of response it [draws] from her well loved eyes" (96). Inevitably, the two of them draw closer, but this in no way deters Gatsby from trying to make Daisy happy. He even terminates the employment of most of his servants because Daisy is afraid that they will begin gossiping about the afternoons she shares with Gatsby. "The whole caravansary [falls] in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes." (120)

His loyalty to his dream is Gatsby's most noble characteristic. Although it seems to be too idealistic, Gatsby "[throws] himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that [drifts] his way." (101) His entire existence revolves around his dream; recapturing Daisy's heart, taking her away from Tom and living happily ever after in his mansion he built with her approval in mind.

Sadly enough for Gatsby, devotion is not the driving force that propels life in New York. Society is based on money and power, not faith and love. Daisy and Tom "[smash] up things and creatures and then [retreat] back into their money or their vast

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carelessness." (187) Even Gatsby finds himself forced to earn his money through illegal activities and gambling. He sees nothing wrong with these activities because they are part of his dream to have the resources to maintain his lifestyle the way he has become accustomed. Tom overlooks Daisy's time with Gatsby as a "presumptuous little

flirtation," (142), not the true love Gatsby hoped it would be. One could wonder if Daisy is worth the adoration Gatsby bestows on her. He truly loves her, but her shallow, materialistic nature must have "tumbled short of his dreams" (101) at some point.

Gatsby is totally in the dark to the reality of society. He has built up his own dream world so perfectly that he can never accept the fact that Daisy is never going to leave Tom for him. This blindness leads to his ironic death. While he is trying to protect Daisy, Gatsby is killed by Wilson, who is avenging the death of his wife Myrtle. Wilson does this in a fit of rage, after he discovers Gatsby was the one to run his wife over in the street and leave her for dead. Gatsby dies from a gunshot and floats face down in the middle of his marble pool until his butler discovers his body. For almost five years, his idealism and his perseverance kept him, and his dream, alive. But sadly enough, he had no way of knowing that these very traits would also kill him. "His dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him." (189)