

## The Great Gatsby: A Full Spectrum of Character

Throughout Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, there seems to be a broad spectrum of moral and social views demonstrated by various characters. At one end, is Tom, a man who attacks Gatsby's sense of propriety and legitimacy, while thinking nothing of running roughshod over the lives of those around him. A direct opposite of Tom's nature is Gatsby, who displays great generosity and caring, yet will stop at nothing to achieve his dream of running off with Daisy. Also, in the middle of this, are various characters who seem to sway back and forth in their stands as convenient. This range of personalities lends itself well to a uniquely subtle interplay between their characters

At first glance, *The Great Gatsby* is merely a classic American tragedy, portraying the story of a man's obsession with a fantasy, and his resulting downfall. However, Fitzgerald seems to weave much more than that into the intricate web of emotional interactions he creates for the reader. One interesting element is the concepts of greatness each has. For Daisy, it lies in material wealth, and in the comfort and security associated with it. Daisy seems to be easily impressed by material success, as when she is touring Gatsby's mansion and seems deeply moved by his collection of fine, tailored shirts. It would seem that Tom's relative wealth, also, had at one time impressed her enough to win her in marriage. In contrast to that, Gatsby seems to not care a bit about money itself, but rather only about the possibility that it can win over Daisy. In fact, Gatsby's extreme generosity gives the reader the impression that Gatsby would otherwise have never even worked at attaining wealth had it not been for Daisy. For

Gatsby, the only thing of real importance was his pursuit of Daisy. It would seem that these elements are combined, too in the character Myrtle. Myrtle is, as Daisy, impressed with Tom's wealth and appearance, but, like Jay Gatsby, is stuck in a fantastic, idealized perception of her object of affection. Even when abused and trampled over by Tom, Myrtle continues to adore him, just as Gatsby continues to dote upon Daisy after being obviously rejected by her. As far as ethical considerations, Gatsby tends to prove himself a sincere and caring person, while Daisy and Tom just destroy the lives of two people and then leave town to escape the consequences of their actions. Between the cold ruthlessness of Tom, and the tenderness of Gatsby, there are also characters who appear to fit somewhere in between on this scale. Jordan, while appearing to be a nice, respectable lady, is seen in several instances as an accused in cheating and is tends to bend the rules when it suits her, such as during a game, or during her relationship with Nick. Jordan seems to be a standard of

semi-corruption, of naked self-interest, that the other characters on the extremes of the scale of moral and social considerations can be measured.

Thus, *The Great Gatsby* presents an extremely interesting set of moral imagery.

It can be said, then, that one of Fitzgerald's main talents, as shown in the novel, is in showing various levels of moral and emotional development in characters, and juxtaposing them. Perhaps it is this element that distinguishes *The Great Gatsby* from many other novels with similar elements.

