

*The Great Gatsby* is a short novel written by Scott F. Fitzgerald that explores different ideas including the American Dream, wealth, and socioeconomic status. The novel centres on Jay Gatsby, the eponymous character of the book, and his many qualities as a person, whether it be a strength or a flaw. Gatsby is a great man in the sense that his character is an exaggerated display of conventional human attributes, such as the capacity for hope and ambition, the inclination towards idealistic obsession, mindfulness of socioeconomic status, and materialism. Gatsby lived a grand life, from his humble beginnings until his death, and the story of his character is evidently a dramatisation of human life.

Aspiration and determination are traits that Gatsby carries to an extensive degree, alluding to the idea of Jay Gatsby being a great man. What makes Gatsby distinct from the other characters in the novel is his remarkable confidence in the attainment of his ambitions, whereas others have a tendency to be more cynical and hedonistic than anything. Gatsby persistently chased after this dream he had constructed: the dream of being with Daisy, being part of the upper class, and being recognised as someone great, to the point where his determination itself was what made Nick, the narrator of the novel, see him as a great man. Perseverance, especially to the extent that Gatsby exhibits, is a respectable attribute that a multitude of individuals strive to replicate in their daily lives, which is why the audience can interpret these features of Gatsby as an inspiration. A quote that highlights Gatsby's remarkable capacity for hope reads, "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us." Through the usage of symbolism, the quote demonstrates that despite the impracticality of certain aspirations, Gatsby exerts himself in the pursuit of them. In a broad manner, the green light symbolises an unattainable dream, displayed by the part of the quote that mentions that the ideal future "recedes before us", but in spite of that Gatsby still believed in the promise of his dreams. Gatsby's undeniable optimism is what gives him a positive connection to the audience, in addition is what makes him astonishingly great.

Contrasting his admirable attributes, Gatsby also represents humanity's fault of idealism and disillusionment by means of embodying it in its great, magnified state. Gatsby's optimism relating to his steadfastness in reaching his goals are less about having a good mindset, and more about profound denial. There are multiple instances throughout the novel where Gatsby plainly displays his belief in a perfect illusion--a flawless past filled with nothing but love and joy--along with his dissatisfaction when finally reuniting with Daisy after 5 years. Gatsby's optimism and idealism are two sides of the same coin, the latter fueling the former; if Gatsby was not so confident in the definite recreation of his past to the point of near-delusion, then his hope and ambition would not nearly be as intense as it is. A quote that can attest to Gatsby's idealism is a specific excerpt from chapter 6, illustrating Gatsby and Daisy's relationship with each other 5 years ago, that states: "Now it was a cool night with that mysterious excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year. The quiet lights in the houses were humming out into the darkness and there was a stir and bustle among the stars." Fitzgerald has utilised the technique of imagery to convey Gatsby's idealised perception of the past. Gatsby paints a romantic night-time scene under a starry sky, and even mentions the "mysterious excitement" of the setting, establishing a sort of magical atmosphere. To Gatsby, the way he had imagined Daisy in this scene is almost incomparable to when he had reunited with her 5 years later, having faced confused dissatisfaction when Daisy had not remained the same as he had remembered her. Nick even expresses

in his narration that “there must have been moments [...] where Daisy tumbled short of his dreams”. Not only can the audience relate to longing for a perfect future, but Gatsby displaying idealism through a grand romantic narrative also feeds into the idea that Gatsby is a great man.

Materialism and class status are two concepts that Gatsby is plainly conscious of, leading to Gatsby endeavouring to become a man of wealth and integrating himself into the upper class. Materialism runs through people of all classes, including the lower class, and likewise Gatsby is a victim of this. Gatsby puts worth into money and socioeconomic status, and believes that the pursuit of Daisy requires him to flaunt lavish possessions and properties as well as a high class status. For that reason, Gatsby proceeds to build this great reputation for himself, and, in accordance with his aforementioned aptitude for determination, manages to attain that goal. Despite that, Gatsby is wary of his status as “new money”, seeing as people from Gatsby’s time recognised wealthy people who did not inherit their money as somehow ingenuine. This insecurity manifested itself into Gatsby compensating it with what could ostensibly be seen as the charisma and charm of an affluent man, alongside the habit of calling people “old sport” any chance he is given. In spite of the prestigious prospect of Gatsby’s greatness regarding his wealth and status, there was also a great tragedy that came along with it. All the wealth and socioeconomic class that Gatsby represents culminates in the scene where Daisy runs over Myrtle, killing her instantly. When the officer in the scene asks questions about the car that killed Myrtle, a man steps up and says “It was a yellow car. [...] big yellow car. New.” The reason Fitzgerald has emphasized the colour of the car is because the colour yellow symbolises not only wealth, but the consequences that come with it. It symbolises the cruelty towards people who were born from humble beginnings, such as Myrtle and Gatsby. The yellow car may have symbolised Gatsby’s wealth, but it also symbolises his downfall and imminent death seeing as it was the catalyst that led towards it. The average person can associate themselves with the desire for wealth, but Gatsby changed his position in the socioeconomic hierarchy and amassed fortune because he strongly believed in its value and the idea that it would heighten his own worth. This notion specifically highlights the greatness of Gatsby.

Gatsby’s death marked the end of his story, and it is apparent that the majority of his life was one grandiose gesture to secure a perfect future that resembled what he imagined was his impeccable past. Gatsby’s romanticised viewpoint of the time he met Daisy led to the desire to restore that supposed state of his life, provoking hope and ambition within Gatsby, and he pursued this dream by means of making a name for himself until he became a man of prosperity. From his actions to his thoughts, Gatsby did not settle for the adequacy of mundane living and instead reached further than he could manage, which is exactly what makes Gatsby great.