
Multilayered Analysis of the Great Gatsby by F. S. Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby Critical Analysis

With many English theories created throughout literature, The Great Gatsby consists of many, including existentialism, Jungian analysis, and Marxist criticism. Each of these theories are exhibited throughout the novel several times. The theories connected to the book represent different things that help us understand the characters and the scenarios more.

The Great Gatsby is about Nick Carraway, who is the narrator, and his encounters with Jay Gatsby, who is in love with his cousin Daisy. Nick moves to New York City and works on Wall Street. He moves to the West Egg, where he lives in a little house in between two huge mansions, one being Gatsby's. Daisy lives in the East Egg with her husband, Tom Buchanan, and their daughter. Tom has been unfaithful to Daisy for a majority of their marriage and is currently having an affair with Myrtle, who is also married. Gatsby throws many extravagant parties at his house in hopes of Daisy attending one. Gatsby acquaints himself with Nick and asks him to set up a meeting between him and Daisy, which Nick agrees to. Although at first it was awkward, Gatsby and Daisy eventually rekindle their romance and start to see each other again. Later on in the novel, Tom starts to catch on to the fact that there is something between Daisy and Gatsby, so he gets them, along with Nick and Jordan, to go out to into town together. Daisy and Gatsby go in one car, and the others go in another. While they are out, Tom starts interrogating Gatsby and telling everyone all the things he discovered about Gatsby, including the fact that he's a bootlegger. Daisy gets distressed and upset, and it is decided to go home. On the drive back, Daisy is behind the wheel and ends up hitting Myrtle, who ran out in the street and in front of the car, thinking that the person driving was Tom. Gatsby ended up taking the blame for it, and in the end, things don't end in his favor. Gatsby believes that Daisy will still leave Tom for him, so he waits for her to call. George, Myrtle's husband, wants to find the person who killed his wife and hears from Tom that Gatsby was the one driving. George goes to Gatsby's mansion and shoots Gatsby before shooting himself.

Starting with existentialism, one of the applications of this theory is for man to take responsibility for everything they do. This is shown in the novel when Gatsby decides that he wants to be rich in order to give Daisy everything she needs, wants, and more. He took responsibility of his future. The theory also applies when George decided to go to Gatsby's house and kill him before killing himself because George was making taking responsibility of what happened to his wife. Another application is "what people reproach us with is not, after all,

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our pessimism, but the sternness of our optimism." Daisy is almost always optimistic throughout the novel, even though her marriage with Tom is struggling. Nick is also the same way, except his struggles are different from Daisy's. After Daisy hits Myrtle with the car and talks to Tom about it, she is hit with reality, which applies to the "what man needs is to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself" of existentialism. She realizes that her relationship with Gatsby is not how she expected it to be and that she needs to stay away from him; she believes that Tom will protect and take care of her.

Continuing with the theories, Jungian analysis can also be applied with *The Great Gatsby*. For example, the personal unconscious is seen the night before Daisy gets married to Tom. Before that night, she had pushed Gatsby to the back of her mind while she was with Tom. When she receives the letter from Gatsby the night before her wedding, she becomes an emotional wreck and suddenly the memories and feelings she had for Gatsby rushed to her and overwhelmed her. The collective unconscious is also seen in the novel between Gatsby and Daisy because, supposedly, it was love at first sight for them. The shadow is exhibited through Gatsby. He has a dark side that he never shows around Daisy; it is mostly seen when he is on the phone for a "business" call and when he gets any negative feeling about things happening to Daisy and his relationship with her. Gatsby also is an example of the persona because not a lot of people know who he is and what his backstory is; therefore, there are a lot of rumors about him, giving him a variety of public images.

Another literature theory seen in *The Great Gatsby* is the Marxist criticism because the rich are in control of everything. The class system is demonstrated through Gatsby when he tells Nick about the reason he decided to have money. Knowing that he did not have the money to support and care for Daisy's needs and wants, he decided that he would do whatever it took to get rich. One can see capitalism through Myrtle and Daisy because they both want expensive things because of the "status" that it gives them.

In conclusion, many literature theories can be applied and found in *The Great Gatsby*, including existentialism, Jungian analysis, and Marxist criticism. These theories helped us comprehend the characters and events throughout the novel more without being so obvious. Without these theories applied, one might not have been able to reason why some things happened the way that they did.

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