

Introduction:

- ☐ Do I give the titles of my texts and the names of my authors?
- ☐ Do I briefly explain what each story is about and introduce the main characters I'll discuss in my essay?
- ☐ Do I explain where and when the book is set?
- ☐ Do I end my introduction with my claim?
- ☐ Do I give historical context or definitions if necessary?

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Exhibition Introduction -Noa Meshorer

In literature the topic of sexuality has always been addressed, even if it has been implicit. These portrayals then influence the way people live, perceive, and imagine human sexual identity. In the book *Critical Theory: A User Friendly Guide* by Lois Tyson, it is said that comprehensive sexuality is still a taboo literary topic. Not many professors and writers introduce these topics into their work. Instead of clearly talking about sexuality, writers prefer this notion of silence, where an elucidated issue is represented (Tyson 318). For instance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), taking place in the 1920s', amidst the Roaring Twenties, in the fictional town of West Egg, offers a view on the "American dream" through the narration of Nick Carraway, the main protagonist of the book. Nick's neighbor Jay Gatsby, a wealthy and mysterious young man, is additionally a protagonist of the book. This culturally prominent novel is an example of a text where the author implicitly regards characters' sexual identity. The plot follows a heteronormative society, meaning that heterosexuality is promoted as the normal sexual orientation amongst the people in the novel. It is defined by a lifestyle that distinctly separates the role of men and women and maintains the ideology that heterosexuality is the sole sexual orientation. However, through this heterosexual plot, can be found a homoerotic subtext. Likewise, Tennessee Williams' play, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), follows the female protagonist Blanche Dubois, who after unrevealed experiences in the past finds herself in New Orleans alongside her sister Stella Kowalski and her brutal brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski. In the play, Tennessee Williams speaks of violence, trauma, and identity but also explores the societal stigmas of women's sexuality, in a culture where gender norms are imposed. Tennessee Williams and F. Scott Fitzgerald use the characterization of their protagonists' sexuality, both implicitly and explicitly, to explore how people express unfulfilled sexual desires. Both of the protagonists are suppressed by the society they live in because of their sexuality and choose to silence themselves in order to avoid further rejection. Consequently, they both are barricaded by a false identity. However, while Tennessee

Williams addresses the issue of Blanche's use of sex to avoid her trust issues, F. Scott Fitzgerald insinuates that Nick Carraway camouflages his true sexual identity by the means of denial.

Title: On the Move: Setting as Representation of Socioeconomic Status in the *The Great Gatsby*

Everyone wants to live the American dream, but what is the American dream? According to a recent video in *The New York Times*, the American dream is the idea that "No matter what your background is, no matter what country you're from, or income background you come from, you can work hard and get what you want" (Harris). In *The Great Gatsby*, we see many versions of the American dream, but one message runs through each fantasy: those who attain the "American Dream" are free to move as they desire. Wealth brings mobility. **Whether cruising in Tom's yellow convertible, partying in the East Egg, or struggling to make a sale in the Valley of the Ashes, the characters' ability to move freely within their settings represent their positions in society. While it may seem initially that Jay Gatsby's house is symbolic of his success, it evolves to represent his inability to move across class boundaries. Like Myrtle, he is destined to live and die in a fixed position while the more established and wealthy characters, such as Daisy, Tom, and Jordan are constantly on the move.** They may inhabit beautiful homes and cars wherever they are but it is their freedom to escape their settings that make them truly powerful.

Title: *The Laramie Project*: Western Pastoral

Amy L. Tigner

Laramie, Wyoming: the name has a mythic quality. It is a town out of a Western, complete with outlaws and sheriffs; but Laramie is also a sleepy small town where ordinary people raise their children. For many Americans, Wyoming is a place more imagined than experienced. They cannot say exactly where it is on the map but nevertheless have a stereotypical idea of Wyoming, based on Western movies and paperbacks. Theatre director Moises Kaufman and his New York-based company Tectonic Theatre Project (TIP) were drawn to Laramie soon after the crime against Shepard was committed. When the company arrived in the town, they had only a vague idea what they were going to write and eventually produce. After some 200 interviews with various townspeople and more than six separate trips to Laramie, TIP created a play taken from the actual words of the interviewees.' The work chronicles the story of Matthew Shepard's death but significantly does not stage it, does not represent Shepard as a character. TIP did not call it *The Matthew Shepard Story*, but rather *The Laramie Project*'; it is after all really the story of the small town of Laramie and what happened there.

Yet as much as Laramie represents innocence impossible in a metropolis. Laramie also represents mythological or historical violence - the violence of the Western. The story illustrates the sublimated fear of homosexuality inherent in typical Western homo-social relationships and the potential violence associated with such fear. Such a sensational death perpetuates the image of Laramie as the Wild West and Matt as the

Western heroic yet tragic figure.