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Allegory in *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, one of the greatest American writers, is a novel about the American Dream in 1925, in the middle of the Roaring 20s. Fitzgerald wanted to write a novel regarding the Jazz Age while incorporating elements of his life, to an audience of Americans in the 1920s, who were all chasing their own American Dream. In *The Great Gatsby*, the fates of characters Tom and Gatsby reflect two sides of the American Dream, and American Society as a whole. While Tom Buchanan, with his inherited generational wealth, gets to live on with Daisy and live his American Dream, Jay Gatsby, the hardworking millionaire who gained his wealth from the ground up, loses his American Dream with Daisy, and is subsequently killed. The fates of these characters reflect the arguable reality of privilege in American society dictating much of what one's life can amount to. While F. Scott Fitzgerald does portray Gatsby as living a very lavish life at the beginning of the novel, and Tom starts to lose everything near the beginning of the end of the novel, the conclusions of both of these characters show a divided vision for American society regarding old money wealth vs. new money wealth, and high-class vs. low-class disparities due to Gatsby's death, Tom's unpunished infidelity, and Daisy's choice.

Gatsby's death reflects American Society and the American dream concerning wealth. On Page 180, Nick thinks, "I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it". This quote from Nick shows a reflection of the hard work many Americans endure to try to reach their personal American Dream, which can simply be ripped away from them at any point, unfairly. This is especially true regarding Gatsby's life, with his upbringing as a poor man who worked tirelessly to achieve his wealth, through legitimate and illegitimate means. On page 120, Nick thinks, "That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money--that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal's song of it..." This quote reflects Nick's understanding of Gatsby's drive for money and power, and

also how it ties into Gatsby's drive for Daisy as well. These two quotes from Nick describe how Gatsby's main drive in life, and in everything he did, was for money, power, and security, which is reflective of his personal American Dream.

Tom's unpunished infidelity reflects how people from higher classes have arguably more power and fewer limits in American society. On Page 178, Tom tells Nick, "He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn't told him who owned the car." This means that even though Gatsby owned the car, Tom told Wilson about it knowing that Myrtle was dead due to Tom's infidelity and actions, and Tom got off scot-free. A lesser example of his high-class privilege presents itself on Page 68. "Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man's eyes. "Right you are," agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. "Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!", Fitzgerald writes, displaying how Gatsby's perceived wealth and high class influenced the policeman's perception of Gatsby. These two situations show high-class privilege in different situations, showing that high-class privilege and fewer higher-class limits were present in society, in more ways than one.

Daisy's choice to stay with Tom after everything that happened reflects American society, especially the American Dream, concerning Gatsby's and Tom's dreams. On page 132, Daisy says, "I did love him once -- but I loved you too." This quote shows that Daisy isn't ready to give up her financially secure life with Tom, Which reflects Tom's wealthy, legitimate, and secure upbringing vs. Gatsby's illegitimate, new money lifestyle. With the departure of Daisy after Myrtle's death, Gatsby's American Dream is essentially over, with his love leaving. On the other hand, Tom gets to live his American Dream with no repercussions from Myrtle's death, and with his wife and kids. This, tied with Gatsby's later death, paints a picture of differing fates with an old money upbringing vs. a new money lifestyle. Overall, the disparity between the fates of Tom and Gatsby portrays a divided vision of American society and the American Dream.

While the tragic end of Gatsby, and the escape Tom receives reflect the disparity between old money and new money class, many may argue that Gatsby's extravagant life from his new money isn't enough to show a large disparity between old money and new money. Gatsby lived an extravagant life after his money accrument, as shown on page 39. "In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whispering and the champagne and the stars," Fitzgerald writes, showing the extravagance of Gatsby's parties. However, after Gatsby's death, nobody came to his funeral, as shown on page 174. "The minister glanced several times at his watch, so I took him aside and asked him to wait for half an hour. But it wasn't any use.

Nobody came,” Fitzgerald writes. Gatsby died sad and alone, and nobody came to his funeral, which can only show a short life of extravagance with a painful and unimportant end, compared to Tom’s escape and life with his wife, and with his American Dream.

Gatsby’s lavish life in *The Great Gatsby* is a facade, and it shows a direct difference between Gatsby’s life, and Tom’s life, which reflects an underlying difference in American society between old money and new money, and high-class and low-class, along with the challenging pursuit of the American Dream, shown by Gatsby’s death, Tom’s unpunished infidelity, and Daisy’s choice. The problems presented in *The Great Gatsby* are extremely relevant today, as differences between social classes are more prevalent now than ever before. The top 1% controls a third of the wealth in the United States, while the top 10% controls a majority. This is a bigger disparity than the disparity shown in *The Great Gatsby*, as social class issues haven’t been solved. As time goes on, a person’s upbringing and attainable opportunities from birth have more and more decided whether that person’s American Dream is attainable. However, due to recent events, including the murder of UHC CEO Brian Thompson, and the support received by the killer, it’s clear that many low-middle-class people have found an issue in this disparity, and have decided to try and take it into their own hands, which could lead to a massive change in the content of this issue in the future.