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Allegory in *The Great Gatsby*

The Great Gatsby, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, utilizes parallels, figurative language, and inescapable tragedy in his story to lead his audience, Americans in the 1920s, to curate a story of the lively and colorful time of the jazz age in New York while also incorporating elements personal to himself. The fate of James Gatz and Myrtle Wilson reveal that the American Dream is often chased after, but if you were not born into it, the likelihood of you obtaining it is little to none. Both James and Myrtle instead are forced to face their own American reality of unequal treatment between social classes, trying to fit in with those who look down on you, and tragically dying at the end of it all.

In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald creates the allegory for social class by highlighting the insurmountable barriers between social classes, and furthermore how wealth, privilege, and class distinctions shape the lives and relationships of the characters. Nick iterates this sentiment by stating, "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money..." pg 179. The main character, Nick Carraway makes a good point when speaking to another wealthy character, Jordan Baker, about Tom and Daisy Buchanan escaping their problems without any repercussions. Unlike Jay and Myrtle, Tom and Daisy both had ruined the lives of two people, who originally belonged to a lower socioeconomic class and ran away from their problems without looking back and leaving any time for regret. Meanwhile, Jay and Myrtle were killed due to either Tom and Daisy's lies or bad decisions.

Another common factor that Jay and Myrtle share was their desire to be included and considered as one of those "high caliber Americans" who have everything they could ever want and need. Both characters attempted to merge themselves with those who looked down upon them up to the day they passed away. A *Gatsby* quote in chapter 7 on page 118 writes, "I'm right across from you". This quote emphasizes Gatsby's desire to be on the same level as his richer counterparts, in this case Tom Buchanan. On pg 31 Myrtle

expresses, "It's just a crazy old thing, I just slip it on sometimes when I don't care what I look like." This quote reveals that Myrtle is meaning to appear aloof or careless about a dress that she truly values. Both Myrtle and Gatsby prove that they had a dream of living that upper class lifestyle and appearing equal to those who view themselves as superior to them. Feelings such as these contribute to a sentiment that many Americans or less fortunate individuals share towards those they envy.

The terrible tragedy that occurred in *The Great Gatsby* was the death of three characters who were seen as less than within the book. More specifically Gatsby and Myrtle, who both were killed due to accidents or actions influenced by the upper class characters. Fitzgerald further expands on this by writing, "A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden." on pg 162. Fitzgerald writes this in relation to Gatsby's murder following Tom Buchanan misleading his killer and afterwards sending him to Gatsby's mansion. A quote following Myrtle Wilson's death on pg 143 reads, "Well, first Daisy turned away from the woman toward the other car, and then she lost her nerve and turned back." This quote specifies which upper class character, Daisy, actually hit Myrtle and ended her life. Daisy's hysteria over her relationships being disrupted ended Myrtle's life.

While the reasoning behind the likelihood of obtaining the American Dream is little to none, especially if you weren't born into it makes a strong case, there is another perspective suggesting that Gatsby did eventually reach the American Dream and died tragically afterwards. This claim suggests that Fitzgerald had no intentions in creating an allegory for social class in America and was simply creating a rags to riches story. As Nick Carraway recalls his neighbor's routine during the summer he states, "On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains." on pg 39. Though it is true that Gatsby now possesses a tremendous amount of wealth, possibly even more than Tom and Daisy, in his own eyes he has not yet reached the American Dream. For Gatsby, the American Dream is creating a new life with Daisy and receiving approval from those who believe themselves to be superior to himself. In the book, Gatsby never truly achieved this dream, instead he faced challenge after challenge and eventually died at the hands of those same people he wanted to prove himself to.

The fates of James Gatz and Myrtle Wilson highlight the harsh reality that the American Dream is often unattainable for those not born into privilege, as they struggle with class inequality, societal rejection, and ultimately meet tragic ends. Unfortunately, these same issues between the social classes still stand today. A recent event resulting in the murder of the United Healthcare CEO displays how continuous inconsiderate decisions made by those with the power to do so can end in demise. Unlike in *The Great Gatsby*, the ignorant wealthy man faced his consequences, but a death is a death regardless of who dies. Overall, the tragic outcomes in both *The Great Gatsby* and real-life events show that inequality still exists, and the consequences of this unfairness can be deadly for anyone.