

Megan Jawor

Morris

English 10

3 May 2016

The Great Gatsby - Who is he?

An Oxford man - A German spy - A murderer - An impressive party thrower - A bootlegger - A charmer - He is full of the good, the bad, and the Great - Gatsby is his name. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the main character, Jay Gatsby, is a particularly contradicting character throughout the course of the story. He is portrayed as a good and bad character due to his mysterious, but elegant ways. In the story, Gatsby is trying to achieve his dream of becoming a wealthier human being to win over his true love, Daisy, who was born into wealth and married one of her kind, who is known as Tom Buchanan. Gatsby not only suffers from self conflicts, but also conflicts with other characters in the book. Nick, the narrator, is highly fond of Mr. Gatsby when meeting him at one of his parties; however, that quickly alters as he gets to know the real Gatsby. As the story progresses, the audience learns about different sides of Gatsby's character. Gatsby played the role of both a good and bad character during the book; Not only was he a bootlegger and a liar, but contrarily, he was protective of and generous to those he loved.

The "Great" Gatsby may not have been as "great" as he seems. Gatsby inherited the majority of his money through bootlegging. The only way that he became "great" was through the selling of illegal alcohol. Because this time period was called "the roaring twenties," dancing, drinking, and music became extremely popular from the beginning of the decade. Gatsby threw

parties every weekend in his colossal mansion. These were the biggest and most popular parties in which everyone attended during this time. This was also during the period of prohibition of alcohol, so Gatsby used illegal alcohol to provide for the guests at his parties. Although Gatsby was a criminal, many of the characters in the story admired Gatsby and thought he was a very calm, collected person. This allowed the audience to see a different side of Gatsby; this side is neither admired nor respected by the readers because he did not earn his money the right way. He rather gained dollar bills by selling illegal alcohol and breaking the law. Just as Tom said, “She’s not leaving me! Certainly not for a common swindler who’d have to steal the ring he put on her finger...You’re one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfsheim” (Fitzgerald 133). This proves that Gatsby is a criminal, who in some opinion’s, doesn’t deserve to have a good life or spend it with the girl of his dreams, Daisy. Along with bootlegging, Gatsby is also a liar when it comes to his past.

Gatsby stumbled upon countless numbers of lies about his past and who he was. For example, he was dishonest about being a bootlegger and how he actually earned his money. When Gatsby and Tom fought over Daisy, Tom exposed, “I can’t speak about what happened five years ago because I didn’t know Daisy then - but all the rest of that’s a God damned lie” (131). Tom knows that Gatsby is not the real deal and that he persistently spits out lies as if they were sunflower seeds. Gatsby continues to lie about himself and his past as a way to recreate himself and to fully become Gatsby - not Gatz. This is true because of his extreme desire to conquer poverty and become rich. Gatsby finds pleasure in telling stories about his experiences at Oxford and his other supposed “accomplishments.” He merely forgets to include the details about how he rose to the top through the world of bootlegging and his obsession with Daisy. The

author reveals that Gatsby's stories are less than credible, which is proved throughout the course of the novel. Why would a rich and powerful man like Gatsby drift away from the path of truth? The answer is shame. Gatsby is shameful by the methods he used to attain wealth and he allows rumors to continue to spread from person to person, including the fake man himself. Gatsby's lies and deceptions let the reader see the real Gatsby, who is ashamed of himself for the ways he gained the things that he so explicitly shows off. Even though Gatsby is viewed as a criminal and a pathological liar, he can also be a protective, charming gentleman to his loved ones.

Gatsby was extremely protective of his one and only love, Daisy. An example of this in the book was when Daisy killed Myrtle with Gatsby's car, but Gatsby took the blame for it. Nick was steady to believe what had actually happened; he eventually came to the conclusion that it was his cousin, Daisy - not Gatsby, who had murdered Mrs. Wilson.

"Well, I tried to swing the wheel-"

"Was Daisy driving?"

"Yes, but of course I'll say I was" (143). In this conversation between Nick and Gatsby, it proves how much Gatsby loves Daisy and how he doesn't want her to get into any trouble. This was selfless of Gatsby - not something his greedy character would usually do. He really loved Daisy and wanted her to be safe; however, Gatsby didn't trust her husband, Tom. After the accident, Gatsby thought that Tom would give Daisy a hard time because of the unpleasantness that occurred that afternoon. Gatsby caringly decided to wait for them to go to bed just to make sure Tom wouldn't lay a hand on her.

Nick suggested to Gatsby, "You'd better come home and get some sleep."

“I want to wait here till Daisy goes to bed. Good night, old sport” (145). Gatsby staying outside of Daisy’s house and watching over her shows that he would do anything to keep her safe. In addition to being a protective man, Gatsby also proved his generosity for the duration of the story.

Mr. Gatsby was an exceptionally generous character from the beginning of the book up until the end. Once he became wealthy, he opened up his mansion to anyone who wished to attend his extravagant parties on the weekends. He also allowed them to spend the night in his home after the parties took place. Not to mention the fact that Gatsby was kind enough to let a man, who goes by the name of Klipspringer, live in his house. Another thing that stood out to the audience was when the book showed Gatsby’s openhandedness, by purchasing a new house for his father. His father stated, “He come out to see me two years ago and bought me the house I live in now” (172). Gatsby proved his kindness and lavishness through sharing his money and house with others in need. When he first came in contact with Nick at one of his parties, Nick described his smile as “rare - with a quality of eternal reassurance in it.” In only Gatsby’s smile, it had a profound effect on people. Imagine the impact his character as a whole had on everyone. Nobody really knew Gatsby; they just knew that he’d possessed new money and lived in West Egg. When Nick met him, he felt that he had known him his whole life. Gatsby pleaded, “If you want anything just ask for it, old sport” (48). Gatsby understood Nick like nobody else had before. He was very kind to Nick and agreed to provide him with anything he’d asked for. Gatsby was an honorable character who was willing to distribute his wealth to the people who needed it or who he felt deserved it.

Jay Gatsby was depicted as being both a good and bad character in *The Great Gatsby* because of his deceptive, but charming personality. It was astonishing to see Gatsby's character adapt to different situations and change throughout the course of the story. The way in which Fitzgerald wrote about Gatsby affected how the readers portrayed him as a character and it revealed many weaknesses and strengths within him. He was a character that the audience learned to love and hate. Good, bad, repeat - it was a ceaseless cycle of flaws and perfections. Because of the different sides that Gatsby shows during the novel, everyone wonders the same thing. Who is Gatsby...really? Gatsby is the epitome of a perfectly flawed human being.