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## Introducing the Great American Dream in 'Death of a Salesman American Dream'

The American dream can be defined as "a happy way of living that can be achieved by anyone by working hard and becoming successful". The vigorous journey of the pursuit of the American Dream can be achieved by any individual who is willing to invest their time, resources and energy in accomplishing their goals. This investment will bring forth both financial and social success and heighten the status of those individuals. However, at any time the dream can be destroyed by greed, and the pursuit of gaining material possessions while neglecting their own emotions and the well being of others. In the novels *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, both authors illustrate and critique the reality of the American Dream. Mainly through the protagonist Jay Gatsby and Willy Loman, they are perceived to be ignorant in believing that in order to be completely happy in life you must be successful, wealthy and popular. Several characters in both literatures are blinded by the pursuit of their futile American Dream, contrary to their class, gender and values, their behaviours and decisions leave them with a false perception of this lifestyle, which ultimately leads to their downfall. It is established throughout both novels that social status and wealth influences and moulds the characters.

Each character believes that in order to achieve the American dream and to be completely happy and successful they must be apart of the upper class. In *The Great Gatsby*, there are three distinct separation of social class. East Egg reflects a higher class society where the people are inherently wealthy, also considered 'old money', the people of West Egg are wealthy as well but have only become rich recently, often referred to 'new money', and the Valley of Ashes is inhabited by the lower class. Myrtle Wilson, who represents the low and ignorant class, lives in the Valley of Ashes, she despises her life and is unhappy with the lack of money and status her husband brings her. She idolises the city and upper class where she sees money and glamour as she desperately wants to become a sophisticated, wealthy women. Myrtle, for a short period of time, is able to break the social barriers of society but must put up a facade to do so. "I told that boy about the ice." Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time'. Myrtle acts like a snob and criticizes the lower class despite the fact that she herself is of lower class. She presumes that if she marries Tom, and buys expensive items for their apartment she will be able to advance her social ranking and truly be content with life. She puts all of her hopes into material items and the idealism that she can be apart of the upper class. Likewise, Willy Loman is a middle-low class businessman, he presumes that any man who is good looking, well-liked and charismatic deserves success and wealth.

Over the course of his lifetime, he is disillusioned by the impossible measures of his dream. He fails to achieve the financial success promised, but still rather buy into the dream meticulously that he ignores the substantial things around him. "Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead". Willy truly believes that in order to prosper in life you must earn the respect of others and they will help carry you through life. Willy was a failure as he tried desperately to climb out of his social class. As a result, he not only loses grasp on reality but also loses his mind. While pursuing success Willy hopes it will bring his family security. Both Myrtle and Willy's

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determination to live up to their American Dream and too seek material possessions and happiness only take their lives. As Myrtle is hit by Gatsby's car while running onto the street to confront Tom and Willy takes his own life in order to get his family his life insurance money. This establishes that the American Dream, while a powerful vehicle of aspiration, can turn a person into a commodity whose sole value is financial worth. The American Dream drives a force between men and women, as it gives power to men and oppresses women. Daisy Buchanan is a superficial, shallow woman who is accustomed to a certain lifestyle, certain types of people, and has an obsession with the stability of 'old money'. She was challenged by Gatsby to take a chance on 'new money' but quickly. Her life was driven by materialism and was threatened by the decline in social class.

Although her husband Tom has affairs with plenty of women, she is loyal to him only due to the fact that he can provide for her and help her maintain her role in the upper class. 'I hope she'll be a fool, that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool'. Daisy is ignorant and selfish, she herself acts like a beautiful, naive fool to maintain her place in society and wants her daughter to live a similar life. If her daughter is a fool - like all the women of this time, she will be blind to the infidelity and be imperceptive to whether or not true love exists. However, unlike Daisy, Linda Loman is a sympathetic woman who spends her days caring for her family. Similarly to the era of the 1920's, in the 1940's women were also seen as below men. The lady of the house has no say and is meant to tend for the children and her husband, while the man was meant to go to work and provide for the family. Linda supports Willy and his dream no matter how unrealistic they are. 'Biff, dear, if you don't have any feeling for him, then you don't have any feeling for me.' Although Willy treats her poorly and is always undermining her authority, Linda continues to be loyal, never questions him and always defends him. Linda is blinded into believing the only way her sons were to be successful is by becoming businessmen like Willy. She is fully aware and supportive of Willy's unfulfilled life and meaningless aspirations, in hopes she will achieve her own American Dream of having a complete, happy family. Although Daisy and Linda have completely different characteristics, they are both oppressed by the men in their lives. They both use their husbands as their main and only support and are greatly dependant on them, which ultimately leads to their absolute lowest point in life. Daisy, in every aspect is perfect and exudes beauty and charm, but she is careless with people's lives, as she lets Gatsby take blame for Myrtle's death.

Instead of living a life that would truly make her happy she refuses Gatsby's love for wealth, power and status and loses him, and must continue to live an unhappy life with Tom. Linda, who never worked a day in her life loses her husband and must now take care and support herself and her children. Daisy and Linda are the only characters with true power as they are the only ones with the opportunity to change things yet choose not to. Establishing how the American Dream may look a certain way but it genuinely is not what it seems. When trying to obtain the American Dream many forget the importance of moral values. Before gaining his wealth and success, Jay Gatsby was poor, lower-classman and for this Daisy left and did not want to wait for him to get rich. Gatsby was willing to do whatever was necessary to prosper in life and never considered whether his actions were morally justified. Gatsby committed serious crimes such as bootlegging and did not conduct business ethically, for he was involved with men such as Meyer Wolfsheim who so called "fixed the world series". He gained a considerable amount of money, became apart of the upper class, and would throw lavish parties every night. "Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York - every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves". The fruits symbolize the moral depletion of the people who attend Gatsby's parties, they come in fresh and pure but by

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the end of the night they are so drunk and have made so many bad decisions that they have leave feeling empty. Gatsby had a relentless desire to become wealthy and win back Daisy and in order to do so he had to pay the price in morals.

Ones behaviour and values are derived from their parents. Biff Loman was influenced by his father who established a poor standard of morality. "The next thing i know I'm in the office I took his fountain pen". Since high school Biff had a tendency to steal, this now stands in the way of him finding an actual job. Willy never punished Biff for steal when he was younger, instead he encouraged him. The pen is a metaphor of Biff's American dream as he is unable to obtain it because it does not belong to him. Conclusively, Gatsby and Biffs lack of morals fails them both. Gatsby does not get Daisy and ultimatley dies, while Biff. They are both so desperate to attain their American Dream that they lack any morality and ethics.

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