
Stratification By Social Class In Fitzgerald's "Great Gatsby"

The Great Gatsby is a true classic written by F. Scott Fitzgerald and published in the year 1925. It serves as a piece of history for American fiction, this novel is filled with triumph and tragedy, noted for the extraordinary way its author captures a cross-section of American society. Though the book was published in 1925 it highlights the post war and the jazz era. It featured people from all classes and the novel shows themes such as American dream, love, wealth, memory and past, isolation, dissatisfaction, morality, gender, education, and society and class. The main characters in this novel are Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway, Daisy Buchan, and Tom Buchan. The novel also highlights the corruption that takes place in the form of bootlegging or the illegal activity of smuggling alcohol. What we must also know is that all the tax legislation were beneficial mostly for the wealthy. Speaking of being beneficial, the 1920's was generally a boom in the economy and profits were as high as 76 percent. Naturally with the increase in profits and wealth gave a rise to people being more materialistic. Amongst other issues we see immigrants being the other issue as mentioned by Tom. The thing that makes this novel a favorite amongst many is the he is able to analyze the society of which he was also a part of.

Fitzgerald introduces distinct groups, and as the novel progresses each group ends up in a disaster. Exiting the play, each group reminds us of how wonderful the really world is. The distinct social groups are the old money, new money, and no money. The first group to be attacked is the rich, he places all the rich in one group would be a mistake, for the rest of the society the rich seem to be unified by their money. The characters who represent the old money are, Buchannan's and Jordan Baker, they are born in families which have been rich for many generations and hence are classified as the "old money". The old moneyed, don't have to work as the wealth is inherited by them, they dislike the fact that a person like Gatsby has attained greater amount of wealth. For the old moneyed the see things like refinement or being well polished as something that comes with being rich for generations.

This can be true, think of the regular guests at Gatsby's parties, they drink his liquor eat his food dance and yet have never met the host. After his death the regular guests became strangely very busy, as soon as Gatsby could not be of any use for them. As the author Fitzgerald has shown they live in the moment and look after their own concerns.

Continuing on the idea of using the less flamboyant and less moneyed people to convey strong messages, we have Nick. Although Nick comes from an equally rich family he turns out to be a well principled man, this is more than what Tom displays himself to be. Moving further into the novel we come to the settings, the setting is associated with illustrating their superior ways of living. We the east and the west Egg, East Egg is where all the wealthier and the old money stay. Though Gatsby is rich he lives on West Egg. As mentioned earlier for the old moneyed they see all these factors as a negative in Gatsby, due to their believes that he comes from a lower class and is hence not as refined as them. Hence a social divide is seen amongst those who live in West Egg and those who live in East Egg.

Moving on, we see how Gatsby was brought up in the country side and after the war, he has moved like many others to be part of the accelerated modernization in cities, all leading to a

comfortable life. This is when the portrayal of the American dream can be seen, it is seen through Jay Gatsby who is later own associated with the new moneyed. His wealth is achieved through the perseverance of the American dream. Coming back to the main intent in this essay, socioeconomic class is a solid factor when it comes to dividing people. This is seen through the relationship of Tom and his mistress Myrtle Wilson (a woman who belongs to the working class). How do we see these differences in the two groups? It is the through the eyes of Nick Carraway.

Moving away from the question we see the two totally different needs of wealth. The first is Jay Gatsby's need for wealth, for him it is something he can use to get something he really wants, and that is Daisy. Gatsby makes several attempts at showing of his wealth to establish himself at the same level as Daisy. We then have the wealth or the old moneyed who use their status as a sign of refinement and an achievement, as seen by the point mentioned in earlier paragraphs. Moving back to the separation in society, the whole idea of the two Eggs as intended by Fitzgerald is to show a divided society.

Fitzgerald has an eye for detail, and in Great Gatsby he does not fail to show a harsh picture he sees around him. As we now know the 1920's boasted of a great economy after the war. Fitzgerald manages to capture all the craziness and all the extravagant parties hosted by Gatsby like people in real life. The text comes to an end with Gatsby dying and the great stock market crash, putting many people like Gatsby in really life on the streets while the old moneyed pull through. Although this is not show in the text it is pretty obvious, the lavish life of the new moneyed can't sustain the great depression with their needs. The end all so shows that the American dream is really according to Fitzgerald. Hence it is true that Gatsby is the personification of the American dream.

To conclude Fitzgerald shows the significance of social class and status, along with its depth, as there is more than what we can assume. No matter how hard one tries to separate themselves from the past, stratification by social class is very hard, if not impossible to escape.