
The Subject Of Wealth In 'The Diamond As Big As The Ritz' By F. Scott Fitzgerald

From the Era of the Roaring 20s and Great depression F. Scott Fitzgerald was an aspiring author that wrote about the image of the American Dreams going from rags to riches. Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on September 4, 1896. Beginning his early writing from school newspaper he discovered his talent. In 1919 Fitzgerald worked with an editor at Scribner to publish his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. This motivated him to a new profession in writing. Selling plenty of short stories to popular markets immediately making Fitzgerald a young celebrity. Fitzgerald became an icon of the 1920s, synonymous with both the carefree wealth of the Jazz Age, personified by his masterpiece *The Great Gatsby* (1925), as well as the disaffected American abroad of the Lost Generation, epitomized by his earlier novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920). In the 30s during the great depressions Fitzgerald ended up in Hollywood doing side jobs like screenplays just to get by. F Scott Fitzgerald died believing himself to be a failure. However, by 1960 he had achieved a secure place among America's most enduring writers.

Often the literature of a certain period demonstrates the primary features, characteristic aspects, and themes of that era, as well as the general population of that time. The novella 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' that was written by the famous F. Scott Fitzgerald is one of these instances, as it demonstrates the attitudes of the people towards wealth and financial prosperity of different social groups in the middle of the 1900s. Apart from wealth, there is a broad variety of subjects that are thoroughly discussed by the author in a form of a social satire in 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz', for example, religion, young age, and independence. On the other hand, financial wealth is the theme that can be traced throughout the novella on every page, shaping the impression of the reader regarding the society of that time. In 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz', the citizens of the United States are portrayed as a nation that is excessively preoccupied with financial and material goods to a garish, disparaging, and dishonorable extent. Moreover, wealth is idolized more than religious convictions, as the diamonds and golden goods are worshiped more than a god by certain individuals. In the name of wealth, men are prepared to sin without thinking about consequences, committing horrific crimes including and facing conviction. In addition, the society of that time regards these actions as being necessary and a direct consequence of successful endeavors and social stability. The damaging outcomes of the preoccupation of the general population with wealth are rather apparent in the end of 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz'. As F. Scott Fitzgerald clearly demonstrates, financial riches can serve as prison and not the means towards freedom and independence for the reason that the constant search for more wealth degrades undervalues the lives of the individuals in the long run.

The main character of the novella is John T. Unger, who aims the attention of the readers towards the life of a foreigner in the world of financial and material riches and, essentially, the Washington Estate in general. On the example of John T. Unger, the reader experiences a feeling that the attempts to escape from the world where wealth is worshiped as a religion can be difficult and even impossible. Braddock, one of the primary antagonists in 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz', represents the whole society of that time, who sees the material fortunes as the main objectives of the life of any individual, attempting to hold John T. Unger as a prisoner

of the material values. In addition, Braddock can serve as a demonstration of adverse effects of wealth on the American society of that time, because he blindly follows the path towards enrichment and experiences no remorse about all the horrible things that he has done to achieve the never-ending goal of more riches. As the author writes, "This is the golf course," [Braddock] continued, as they strolled along the velvet winter grass. "It's all a green, you see—no fairway, no rough, no hazards", demonstrating that Braddock might have a distorted sense of reality because of living in a society that is driven by financial wealth. No path should in life be flawless, as the obstacles shape the strengths of character and cultivate the ethically and morally right decisions. Furthermore, F. Scott Fitzgerald puts an emphasis about wealth because for many decades and even centuries, religion convictions played a substantial role in guiding the nation towards the light and the morally right course of action in almost all spheres of life.

On the other hand, as soon as wealth and financial rewards started to gain the power in the society, the consequences were devastating for the nation in general. Without any doubts, financial stability has been always a stepping stone in the life of every individual not only in the United States but all over the world even now. However, as F. Scott Fitzgerald demonstrates in 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' and his other works, for example, 'The Great Gatsby', in the beginning of the 1900s the gold rush prevailed among the citizens of the country, dividing the general population into rather separate social groups. From the point of view of the antagonists of the story, the author demonstrates the ways, in which the obsession with financial wealth will most likely result in the most horrible development of the situation as it is possible, as well as the social and moral imprisonment of an individual due to the excessive obsession with material treasures and the position in the society. For example, he writes the following: "John saw that the upholstery consisted of a thousand minute and exquisite tapestries of silk, woven with jewels and embroideries, and set upon a background of cloth of gold. The two armchair seats in which the boys luxuriated were covered with stuff that resembled duvetyne but seemed woven in numberless colors of the ends of ostrich feathers", which only portrays the material essence of the household and not the moral sides of character of its owner.

In conclusion, a point can be made that F. Scott Fitzgerald explores the subject of wealth in 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' from several points of view. From the religious standpoint, the author of the novella creates parallels from the obsession with financial riches to the religious convictions and even mythical beliefs of the general population. In addition, 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' demonstrates the awareness of the author of the ways, in which excessive pursue of wealth changes the perception of the individuals, their character, and their goals in life. In this novella, F. Scott Fitzgerald aims the attention of the readers towards not only the general attitude of the American citizens towards financial rewards, but the details of the life that comes because of this pursuit of material treasures. With the help of the demonstration of the unnecessary material goods, the author shows that the real values were lost among this social group. Without any doubts, the financial position is important even now almost a century later; on the other hand, wealth should not be a focal point in life of any individual, which is the message that the novella 'The Diamond as Big as the Ritz' by F. Scott Fitzgerald transcribes even in the modern day all over the world.