

A novel in which there is a clear turning point is 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The novel chronicles the 'roaring twenties' in America; a time of extravagance, prosperity and decadence; a period when materialism, consumerism and capitalism were having a significant influence on people. We are guided through the novel by our narrator, Nick Carraway, as he recounts for us his experience with his mysterious neighbour, Mr. Jay Gatsby, during one memorable summer. Through Nick's flashbacks, we become witness to Gatsby's quest to win back his true love, Daisy Buchanan. The turning point in chapter 7 is key to the readers understanding of the text and through Gatsby's interaction with the world around him as well as the consequences of living in such an environment Fitzgerald allows us to gain a deeper appreciation of the novel as a whole, most notably our understanding of key themes such as the American Dream, 'Old Money vs 'New Money' and the carelessness of the rich.

On the hottest day of the summer, Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, Tom Buchanan, his wife Daisy and Jordan Baker all convene at the Buchanan's residence. During the awkward afternoon, Gatsby and Daisy cannot hide their secret love for one another. Complaining of her boredom, Daisy asks Gatsby if he wants to go into the city. Gatsby stares at her passionately and Tom becomes certain of their feelings for each other and is instantly aware of the affair they have been having. Itching for a confrontation, Tom seizes upon Daisy's suggestion that they should all go to New York together. The group take a suite at the Plaza Hotel where Tom begins his planned confrontation with Gatsby by mocking his habit of calling people "old sport." From this moment, Tom proceeds to chip away at Gatsby's dream, ultimately destroying his vision of the future with Daisy.

Tom begins the confrontation as the underdog with the fear of losing his wife, Daisy. During the visit to the Plaza Hotel, as Tom and Gatsby begin arguing, Tom begins to tear away the layer of Gatsby's extravagant persona, ridiculing him and the way he has achieved his money to gain the upper hand.

“‘An Oxford man!’ He was incredulous. ‘Like hell he is’”

With the aim of proving to Daisy that Gatsby is nothing less than “a common swindler” Tom starts his relentless attack. He is trying to demean Gatsby by rubbishing his past and highlighting to Daisy the contrast between what they are and what he is. This is a key theme to the novel 'Old Money VS New Money' and by highlighting this Tom hopes to win back Daisy from Gatsby's arms by proving that they are not the same and that Tom, the safety that he provides, is where Daisy belongs. Tom is 'Old Money', born with his riches he is elitist and arrogant while Gatsby is new money, poor at birth he has used the criminal underbelly of 1920's America to develop his wealth, he is energetic and hopeful. However Tom “picked him for a bootlegger the first time [he] saw him, and [he] wasn't far wrong.” This is crucial in the confrontation as Tom is proving

that Gatsby is a criminal and that all his wealth, all his riches were provided from the illegal selling of alcohol something 'Old Money' types like Tom and Daisy would never get involved with as it is against the aristocratic way. This is of great importance as it highlights that a class system, like those in Europe than many immigrants in 1920's America tried to escape in the hope of the American Dream, does exist and that America is not the idyllic world of equality where anyone can make it to the top that it is branded to be. Tom may be stupid, but his understanding of the class system and the insurmountable boundaries put in place to protect his Old Money privileges, has been ingrained in his mind from birth. Gatsby on the other hand has failed to see throughout the novel that he will never be accepted by 'Old Money' no matter how hard he tries, and that in turn Daisy will never be his.

As the confrontation between Gatsby and Tom develops, Gatsby's misguided faith in Daisy is stretched to its limit. In the Plaza Hotel, as Gatsby and Tom are arguing, Gatsby pushes Daisy to reject Tom and declare that she never loved him. But he does not get the reaction he hopes for:

“‘Oh, you want too much!’ she cried to Gatsby. ‘I love you now – isn’t that enough?...I did love him once – but I loved you too.’”

In order for Gatsby's dream to become reality and for his vision of the future with Daisy to materialise, he needs Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him. Such a declaration, in Gatsby's mind, will erase the years she spent with Tom and return them to that moment in Louisville 5 years ago when they first fell in love. But Daisy lacks the courage and the heart to do as Gatsby desires. Before they left for the Plaza, Daisy said to Gatsby, 'You always look so cool,' ultimately just falling short of declaring her love for him. The confrontation in the Plaza hotel is one that Daisy had hoped to avoid and it exposes her as a weak, gutless person, who never truly had any intention of leaving Tom and the security of Old Money. Daisy's rejection of Gatsby conveys the theme of the carelessness of the rich. Daisy has treated Gatsby like a possession and, when Tom reveals Gatsby's true self, she discards Gatsby like an old dress. This is indicative of the rich at the time, and represents the decay of society in 1920's America. They leave a trail of waste and destruction, they are careless and in the end they maintain their wealth and status. The theme of Old Money and New Money is also explored here. Tom's elitist manner only escalates as Daisy 'draws further and further into herself'. He knows that Daisy will never leave him for a 'Mr Nobody from Nowhere'. Daisy who Gatsby is madly in love with is ultimately the cause of his downfall, Gatsby refuses to see any bad in Daisy, he fails to see that she will never leave him and that his dream is doomed to fail from the start. When Daisy declares of Tom that she 'did love him once', Gatsby's dream is over. His unattainable dream can be perpetually linked to the American Dream, a further theme of the novel. Daisy's lack of courage and down right carelessness ultimately lead to the death of Gatsby, Wilson and Myrtle yet the rich (Tom and

Daisy) continue on with their lives as if nothing has happened. The reader is left with a bad taste in their mouth as Daisy in particular takes no responsibility for her actions.

Even when it is clear to the reader that Tom has won the confrontation at the Plaza Hotel, and it is clear Gatsby's dream is dead, Gatsby himself refuses to give up hope. As the confrontation draws to a close Gatsby and Daisy leave together in the car, though it is evident that this will be the last time they are together.

“Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes that this presumptuous little flirtation is over”

To the reader, to Tom and to Nick it is clear that Gatsby's dream is well and truly dead, yet Gatsby himself refuses to accept this. Gatsby needed Daisy to say that she never loved Tom, he believed that she would say it and that he and her could be together, but in the end she never delivered and the final nail in the coffin of Gatsby's dream was laid. This is significant in relation to one of the key themes of the novel, the American Dream, as it highlights the fact that the pure American dream that Gatsby believed in, is not obtainable and that it has been replaced with a lesser more corrupt capitalist dream. Later in chapter 7 “Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table.... anybody would have said they were conspiring together.”, conspiring to escape New York City and start afresh. Again highlighting the carelessness of the rich and the selfishness of Daisy who is going to let Gatsby take the blame for the death of Myrtle Wilson. Of course this conspiring is unknown to Gatsby who still believes wholeheartedly that Daisy will call him to make arrangements so they can leave New York together and start afresh. He refuses to believe otherwise and ultimately it is Gatsby's “gift of infinite hope” that results in him not giving up on his dream until the very end. He is committed to his pure dream of happiness with Daisy which shows right until his death.

In conclusion, ‘The Great Gatsby’, by F.Scott Fitzgerald, is a timeless novel which captures the essence of life in 1920's New York. The turning point in chapter seven is vital to our understanding of the novel as a whole as it allows us to understand the novel's key themes. We recognise the impossibility of the American Dream and we appreciate the hopelessness of Gatsby's dream in the face of Old Money and against the utter carelessness of the rich. Fitzgerald's message is still relevant today. A class system still exists and dreamers such as Gatsby, full of hope and optimism, are often stifled by the trappings of class and status. But it is important that people like Gatsby continue to strive to break down social barriers and chase dreams bigger than life itself as it is people such as him who inspire and motivate and, ultimately, achieve.