**English Final**

Influence can be broadly defined as how one’s actions have the capacity to affect the overall behaviour of the people surrounding them. Although influence can be defined, it cannot be controlled or manipulated easily, as influence is fundamentally different and adverse for every single different being. The methods in which people influence others are varied, these can be intentional or unintentional actions that infiltrate through and influence the mind. The concept of influence is significantly illustrated in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s tragic novel, *The Great Gatsby*, and in Gus Van Sant’s critically acclaimed drama movie *Good Will Hunting*. *The Great Gatsby* follows the narrator, Nick Carraway; an average middle-class bondsman, as he explores life in the surrounds of New York City amid the 1920s post-war jazz era. Nick befriends his neighbour, self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby, who represents New Money within the Upper class. Throughout *The Great Gatsby* influence is heavily displayed by everyone and everything around Nick. In contrast, *Good Will Hunting* follows Will Hunting, a parolee working as a janitor at MIT struggling with poverty who is an intellectual genius. While working one night, Will easily solves a daringly impossible math equation, which ends with him meeting professor Lambeau, a highly regarded mathematician, who directs Will to see Sean, a community college therapist. A major theme throughout *Good Will Hunting* is how the people surrounding Will can influence his decisions, and how he can influence theirs. Both texts clearly demonstrate how drastically another person’s actions can influence an individual’s mind and overall course of their life. *The Great Gatsby* and *Good Will Hunting* position the audience to fully understand the greater impact of actions on others, for the better or worse. This is demonstrated through the use of technical writing about the three capitals–social, cultural, and economic–, the effects of outside influence, and the drive of self-belief and desire.

Throughout both texts, it is clearly illustrated how the three capitals–social, cultural, and economic–dictate how people act and influence–positively or negatively–other people. The 3 capitals are in essence what it takes to successfully move from one class to another. Social Capital refers to your connections and friends, cultural refers to education and style of dress, and finally economic relates to money and assets. Constantly throughout *The Great Gatsby,* the depiction of attitudes of the different classes is extremely immense. It is clearly demonstrated when Tom Buchanan denies the fact that Gatsby went to a prestigious university, “An Oxford man! Like Hell he is! He wears a pink suit.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925, PG 39) This exhibits that despite Gatsby having an enormous pool of wealth, that if he lacks even one capital–cultural– he is denied by the other members access to his desired upper class, preventing him from ever truly advancing. Further on Nick defines the actions of old money people as, “They were careless people, Tom and Daisy–they smashed up things and then retreated back into their money and let other people clean up the mess they had made.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925, PG 170). Nick can see the beguiled attitudes held by the upper class and how it influences their ignorant and snobbish attitudes towards people who are ‘less’ than them. Similarly, in *Good Will Hunting* Will is currently denied the right to advance in class–whether he wants to or not–as he severely lacks in having large connections in the upper-class society and any form of wealth. Despite this, it is possible that Will could achieve these if he so desired as described by his best friend Chuckie, “But you, you’re sittin’ on a winning lottery ticket and you’re too much of a pussy to cash it in.”. This curates how the Lower Class has influenced Will to believe that that’s where he belongs, holding him down, and preventing him from moving forward. Consequently, it is clear that an individual’s behaviours and beliefs are directly influenced by the three capitals which twist and turn their personalities depending on what class they are in.

Furthermore, both texts portray the ultimate effect other people have on themselves. In *The Great Gatsby,* outside influence is the direct reason behind Jay Gatsby working incredibly hard to amass an enormous wealth to be accepted into Upper-class society. This is represented by the continuous use of aesthetic features, such as the motif of the green light, best explained by Nick as, “Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925, PG 171) Throughout the entire novel, the green light is referred to as Gatsby’s dream of reuniting with Daisy as he is seen constantly staring and obsessing over it. It was further shown to be impossible to reach as the light was minute and distant, thus staying a dream, reinforcing the fact that despite his efforts, it was actually unattainable for him. Nick also quotes the green light himself, saying that “as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925, PG 138) Nick also realised the influence such a simplistic symbol could have on a person’s life. Fitzgerald purposely added this as it demonstrates how Gatsby’s influence on Nick leads him to understand the very symbols that influenced Gatsby. On the contrary, in *Good Will Hunting* outside influence is the driving force behind the eventual success of the characters’ lives. Throughout the text, it becomes known that Will was abused severely as a child and that Sean had lost his wife due to cancer. Constantly during the text, Will and Sean have heated arguments often bringing up sensitive topics such as relationships, “Who the fuck are you to lecture me about life? You fuckin’ burnout! Where’s your “soul-mate?!””. Evidently, throughout the text, Will and Sean end up influencing each other with Sean saying, “I just… figured its time I put my money back on the table, see what kind of cards I get” and Will writing. “Sean—If the Professor calls about that job, just tell him, “Sorry, I had to go see about a girl.””. In his letter to Sean, Will uses Sean’s own words saying that he had to go see about a girl, illustrating how others can influence people to quite literally go out and change their lives.

Lastly, both texts depict the utmost importance and effect of one’s own self-belief and desire on their overall outcome of their life. At the end of *Good Will Hunting*, Will finally has the mental strength to push himself to pursue his goal. The combination of self-desire and outside influence propelled him into taking the last step to ‘hit the road’, a powerful symbol used to exhibit how the combined effort got him to a better point in life and to follow his goals of pursuing a genuine romantic relationship with Skylar. This is displayed when Will uses the car that his friends bought him to start driving down a long empty motorway symbolising the long road ahead. Similarly, Daisy’s influence on Gatsby drove his desire to become ‘worthy of her’. Gatsby understood that “Her voice is full of money” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1925, PG 115), understanding that an Upper-class woman such as Daisy wouldn’t settle for someone who is lacking large economic capital, which in turn drove him to amass enormous wealth. His self-desire drove him to obtain his fortune to win over Daisy. Gatsby’s idea of success was not having a large fortune, moreover, it was a piece in the puzzle to reunite with Daisy, a fabled dream that stayed just that.

In conclusion, it is outrightly clear that influence is a powerful tool that affects the outcome of people’s lives. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel portrays the truth that our actions can change the outcome of people's lives, either positively or negatively. While Gatsby went on and generated a colossal amount of wealth, he fell short when it came to achieving his real dream of reuniting with Daisy, leaving the reader broken after his death. Illustrating that sometimes no matter how much others push them, and they push themselves, their journey will end before they ever reach their goal. In contrast, Gus Van Sant’s texts display the hope in influence. Will is shown driving off into the horizon, symbolising that no matter what background people come from, if they truly desire something, they are able to grow towards it and hopefully achieve it, reflecting the people around them. Overall, influence is defined as the capacity to influence others and themselves, with others taking what they find relatable into their own life, their dreams, and goals.

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