

What does the author suggest about the significance of truth and idealism in an individual's life?

The belief of the American Dream was one that spread during the 1920s. The idea is that if an individual works hard, they can go from rags to riches, and achieve great things. While this may seem like a great concept, individuals may start to idealize this dream. They start to believe that it is far better than it actually is. This may cause an individual to become so consumed in their hopes and ambitions that their expectations and idealistic view surpass what is actually achievable. They let their idealized version of reality take over the truth. Through the story of Jay Gatsby's life in *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the author suggests that if an individual is too idealistic, they will blind themselves from the truths of reality, pursuing unachievable dreams and eventually leading themselves to failure.

It is evident throughout the novel that Jay Gatsby is an idealistic individual who lets his idealism, override his sense of reality and truth. Gatsby is presented to be a very ambitious and idealistic character. He believes in the American dream, and his ability to achieve greatness, despite his humble beginnings. Even as a young boy, he craved success. He kept a book, recording a schedule he had created to ensure his success. His father, when showing Nick this book, says, "It just shows you... Jimmy was bound to get ahead... Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that." (pg 173). Gatsby's idealism is shown once again when he chooses to reinvent himself for the possibility of chasing the American dream. He "invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year old boy would be likely to invent..." (pg 98), and he "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself," (pg 98). This action further proves how Gatsby's has an idealistic worldview. Gatsby "was never quite still; there was always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand," (pg 64), a description which Fitzgerald uses to represent the idealistic Americans of the 1920s, who were forever restless, always hardworking, and endlessly full of hope. Gatsby's idealism hinders his ability to see and accept the truth

in his dream of winning back the woman he loves, Daisy, a dream that is close to impossible. He would stare at the “green light that burns at the end of [her] dock,” (pg 92), which represents his love for Daisy, and his desire to have her back. However, over the years Gatsby spends idealizing Daisy, he envisions her to be perfect. It is impossible for Daisy to not “tumble short of his dreams – not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything.” (pg 95). Daisy herself has a husband, a daughter, and a reputation that she is not willing to give up. Gatsby lets his hopes blind himself from the reality that Daisy will not come back to him. It is made clear that Jay Gatsby is an idealistic character, as shown through his hopes, ambition, and drive for success, which prevents him from seeing the truth of his dream of winning back Daisy.

Gatsby’s inability and denial to see the truth of his situation gives him false hope, and causes him to continue to pursue his unachievable dream. After Daisy and Tom attend one of Gatsby’s parties, Gatsby is left distraught, wishing that things would go back to how they were in the past. He acknowledges that things are different, but refuses to believe that he cannot make them go back to the way they were before. After all, his idealism allowed him to achieve so much. He is an example of the American Dream’s potential success, as he was able to go from a poor farm life to a lavish one in the West Egg. With this belief that he can achieve anything he works hard for, he believes that he can win Daisy as well. When Nick tells Gatsby that he cannot repeat the past, he denies this fact. “‘Can’t repeat the past?’ he cried[s] incredulously. ‘Why of course you can... I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before.’” (pg 110). This quote provides insight into how Gatsby truly believes that he can make Daisy love him just as she did before. His idealism has given him the hope to keep pursuing Daisy, even though the truth of the matter is that he cannot repeat the past. He believes so confidently in this, that he confronts Tom Buchanan, her husband. He tells Daisy to “Just tell him the truth – that you never loved him.” (pg 132). Despite Nick’s warning that he cannot win back Daisy, he continues to pursue the unachievable dream he

has envisioned. The truth of the matter is that Daisy Buchanan will not go back to Gatsby, but because of Gatsby's idealism, he does not stop his pursuit of her.

Gatsby's continuous pursuit of Daisy and his idealism eventually lead him to failure, not just in terms of gaining Daisy, but failure to lead a life that is best for him, and an honest life. Despite the tremendous effort that Gatsby put in to win back Daisy, he fails. This is clear when Tom Buchanan sends Daisy back with Gatsby in his car, saying that he "thinks that [Gatsby] realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over," (pg 135). After revealing that Gatsby is a bootlegger, Tom is sure that Daisy would not leave him for Gatsby. While the America Dream gives the perception that hard work will lead an individual to success, Gatsby's hard work does not pay off, as he fails to win back the woman he loved, even when his idealistic view told him otherwise. However, Daisy is not Gatsby's only failure in the process of pursuing the impossible dream he envisioned. Nick believes that the best thing that for Gatsby was to leave West Egg. Gatsby "wouldn't consider it. He couldn't possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope..." (pg 148). Even after it was made clear that Gatsby would not be able to win back Daisy, he still sacrifices his own wellbeing for her. He will not do what's best for him because he holds out on a false hope. He fails to do what will keep him safe because of his idealism. Gatsby also sacrifices his honesty and personal integrity, failing to be an honest man. Gatsby lies when he pretends to be somebody else, changing his name and identity due to his ambition. His desire for success led him to become a bootlegger, someone who profits off of the illegal sale of alcohol. He lies about his life, saying that he is the "son of some wealthy people in the Middle West," (pg 65), who all died, and that he was educated at Oxford. When he first met Daisy, "he let her believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself." (pg 149). These instances show that because of his idealistic hopes and dreams, Gatsby disregards truth and honesty. This failure to keep truth in mind plays a pivotal role in his other failures. Gatsby's idealism leads him to the failure to be an honest

and morally upright individual, and see the value in truth, which result in his failure in achieving his dream, and failure to do what's best for him.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, shows us how an individual's idealism leads them to failure if they continue to pursue unachievable dreams, and disregard truth and honesty. In the case of Jay Gatsby, his extensive idealism, his belief that things were better than they were in reality, prevented him from seeing the truth in his situation with Daisy, which led him to continue to pursue a dream that was unattainable. He fails to win back the woman he loves, and fails to live an honest and moral life. If an individual is too idealistic, they risk blinding themselves from the truth, and will end up failing. As Jay Gatsby's story has shown, in order to be successful, an individual must take into account truth while pursuing their dreams. To just be hopeful and ambitious is not enough. Contrary to the belief of the American Dream, hard work is not enough to get you from rags to riches. Both truth and idealism are needed to achieve the dreams you work for: idealism to give you hope, belief, and ambition, and truth to keep you within the bounds of reality.