

BAND 5
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04.

The idea that tragic figures are men with fatal flaws can be said to be true, as showcased by the examples of Shakespeare's *Richard the Second* and F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, with each of the eponymous characters taking the role of the tragic figure. Richard is shown to possess the hamartia, a fatal flaw described in Aristotle's *poetics*, through his selfish want of the lands of Lancaster, Bullingbrook's by right of Primogeniture. Even when warned as to the consequences, Richard ignores them, even though he would lose "a thousand well disposed hearts". Jay Gatsby, the tragic figure in *The Great Gatsby*, shows his fatal flaw to be the inability to change and remain staunch in his belief that he was the most important in the outcome. Even when the love of his life had moved on and he was told he couldn't relive his moments with her anew, he said "Can't repeat the past? Why, of course you can!" These two characters are both unable to accept change that does not occur in their favor and in doing so make their opposing number able to exploit them to the downfall of the tragic figure.

Richard the Second shows himself to be a selfish man early on in the text, when he seizes the lands of Lancaster that, upon the death of John of Gaunt, should be bestowed upon Henry Bullingbrook. By stating "We seize into our hands, his plate, his goods, his money and his lands," Richard shows a lack of care for others, as well as a need to keep himself appearing powerful despite breaking laws that made him King, as York says how "How are you King but by fair sequence and succession?" York focuses on how Richard only became King in a "fair" manner, in an unbiased decision that followed the law and kept the peace. Now, by seizing land not rightfully his, Richard goes against this fairness, demonstrating a selfish need to satisfy himself over others, since his "Coffers have grown light" from his own frivolous spending. Furthermore, the King shows a lack of judgement and foresight regarding his decision making, as he changes his mind several times in Act 1 scene 1 and Act 1 scene 3, where first he tells Bullingbrook and Thomas Mowbray to duel and let God choose the victor, before then "Throw[ing] his gage," to show that the trial by combat must stop, and then banishing them. He then changes his mind regarding the judgement once again, rescinding four of the years that Bullingbrook was to spend banished. This mercurial nature shows that the King is unable to remain focused on his goals and what he wants to be done, as when he reduces the sentence of Bullingbrook he gives the reason of his uncle's unhappiness, and so has "plucked four away". The usage of "plucked" presents it as a minor dealing, but to Bullingbrook it is a moment of immense power shown by Richard, as "Four lagging winters and four wanton springs end in a word; such is the breath of Kings". Bulkingbrooks language here shows the true meaning behind Richard's words, as he has made it an easier punishment on him, especially with the failing health of his father. Therefore, given the lack of remaining behind a single decision and his apparent lack of understanding of the magnitude of his actions, it is justified to say that Richard is a selfish man, with several fatal flaws.

However, Richard does later show that he is not purely a selfish character and is able to empathise with

You should distinguish between selfishness and other flaws. ✓ sharp point.

A Sophisticated into (AO1)

AO1 Flaw + explanatory + relevant example

it would be good to explain in what sense these actions prove false

what are the consequences?

03- context

extensive analysis

AO1- literature expression

(SP)

gr

Good link sentence → show maintained focus on q.

others, once he is deposed and he is placed in a similar situation. Richard's return to England does not initially show this, with him cursing the names of Bushy and Bagot, as well as entreating the Earth to fight by the rightful king, but upon being informed of their demises, he seems to lose the regal bearing and become a relatable character, most notably by how he compares himself as a king to another man. He says that he still "Tastes grief, feels sorrow, needs friends." This revealing of his true nature allows the audience to more easily understand Richard, even though he may still be disliked for his actions, but we are able to understand and sympathise with his current plight. Furthermore, Richard continues on with this, creating a lexical field of death and sadness. He does this by saying how "Come, let us sit upon the ground and speak of graves, of worms, of epitaphs." This triplet shows how Richard has lapsed into a state of depression and despair, no longer focusing on how to salvage the situation, but instead looking to death as a way out of his suffering. Through this, whilst also demonstrating his sorrow, we sympathise with his plight as it is an outpouring of human emotion and therefore can be understood, as opposed to his aloofness earlier in the play. This character development shows that Richard, whilst initially a selfish character with few redeeming features that allowed the audience to sympathise with or applaud, is now more understandable and human.

A01-
critical
vocabulary

✓ An excellent counter-argument

The character of Jay Gatsby can also be ^{seen as} shown to be a selfish and flawed character in the novel *The Great Gatsby*, through his relentless pursuit of Daisy despite there being a large period of time where they had not met or communicated, and she had moved on from him. Gatsby relentlessly pursues the "green light" at the end of the pontoon outside the Buchanan's residence, and bears no thought to how he harms those around him or anything else. The "green" is of particular importance here for Gatsby, as it classically represents the colour of envy, one of the seven deadly sins of man, as well as the colour of paper money, the dollar. This association ^{of envy} shows that Gatsby is possessed by his want of Daisy so much that this is his fixation and addiction, and the link to money shows how he feels that if he amasses enough wealth, he can buy anything, including Daisy, back into his life. Furthermore, Gatsby ignores that Daisy has had a child since their last meeting, and although she does not appear much in the novel, she still shows how much everything has moved on from last Gatsby saw Daisy, and further demonstrates the futility of his dream to reunite with Daisy. The fixation of Gatsby with Daisy was not the only one to dominate his life, however. He became fixated on becoming exactly like Dan Cody when he was employed by him, shown by the pictures in the bedroom and the adoption of the mannerism "old sport." This shows Gatsby to be lacking in substance as he is unable to create his own character to enter a social class above his own, and so felt he had to change who he was to fit it and to succeed, including changing his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby. This lack of substance within Gatsby, further illustrated by "the colossal vitality of his dream", shows how he is a flawed character unable to accept reality and to be able to develop further, and instead is shown to be selfish, and justifying the view in question. ^{that basic flaws are}

✓ lacking
affliction
rational
support

A02-
detailed
analysis
of
literary
techniques

A05-
Argument
develops
with
relevant
detail

However, through the narration of Nick Carraway we are shown that although Gatsby is a flawed character, he is a product of the society and has some redeeming features that many lack. Nick presents Gatsby initially as a product of "everything I despised", showing that although Nick hates what made Gatsby appear in such a manner, he is not solely to blame for the development. This is best shown through the valley of ashes, and how men are described as "a swarm of ants climbing up the hill and

A05-
relevant
counter

inaccurate quote

is I don't think this
the best evidence
better to argue that
he merely will
nothing for, they
so

obscuring their activities with a cloud of ash." The idea of them being a swarm shows that they are not qualified as people and instead are collectively associated with one another, as well how they hide behind the ashes that characterise their surroundings, demonstrates the dehumanisation of the society and the lack of care for those not of a certain class. It is therefore entirely reasonable for Gatsby to wish to climb the social hierarchy, and develop from nothing to owning the mansion in West Egg and being near infamous "You simply must know Gatsby." The fact that he is able to come from nothing is admirable and shows that the society that *The Great Gatsby* is set in is more flawed and selfish than Gatsby, a product of it.

Overall, it is justified to say that tragic figures are selfish men with fatal flaws, as the two tragic figures of Richard the Second and Jay Gatsby both are consumed in a selfish pursuit of their needs and wants.

Conclusion not sufficiently detailed.

has
positive
character
traits
(optimism
etc).

