

THE IMPACT THAT A DETESTABLE PUBLIC HAS
ON FITZGERALD'S PERSPECTIVE OF
THE JAZZ AGE

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TITLE: The Impact that a Detestable Public has on Fitzgerald's Perspective of the Jazz Age

THESIS: In The Great Gatsby, there are numerous examples of Fitzgerald's illustration of the Jazz Age, such as illegal doings, cars and bad drivers, and the affairs.

OUTLINE:

I. Illegal Doings

- A. The accumulation of Gatsby's wealth
- B. Meyer Wolfshiem
- C. Con men and the Valley of Ashes

II. Cars and Bad Drivers

- A. Cars give careless people chances
 - 1. Jordan Baker
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B. Parties

- C. The Yellow Car

III. The Affairs

- A. Gatsby and Daisy
- B. Tom and Myrtle

In 1919, F. Scott Fitzgerald formulates a piece of work, This Side of Paradise. Many people consider this publication to be the commencement of the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald composes another book, Tales of the Jazz Age. So, he greatly influences this time of irresponsible misconduct, and in turn this period sways his opinion of the Jazz Age. The parties that Fitzgerald attends stand as the models for The Great Gatsby. In The Great Gatsby, there are numerous examples of Fitzgerald's illustration of the Jazz Age, such as illegal doings, cars and bad drivers, and the affairs.

Three cases of illegal acts deserve priority in The Great Gatsby and are commonly seen throughout the Jazz Age. First and most important is Gatsby's acquisition of wealth. His dream starts out innocently enough. He wants to impress Daisy. Gatsby doesn't feel that his past is suitable to tell people about. Gatsby is actually born to poor farmers in North Dakota, but he assumes that it is inadequate. "His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people--his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was the son of God--a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that--and he must be about His Father's Business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty." (p. 104) Gatsby changes his name and conveys a false story about his previous years. Gatsby lets it be understood that he is the "son of some wealthy people in the middle-west--all dead now." (p. 69) He has an education from Oxford.

Gatsby also mentions, when his family is dead, "After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe--Paris, Venice, Rome--collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that happened to me long ago." (p. 70) Although Gatsby gives his story to Nick, several rumors spread among his party guests, as to his obtainment of wealth. People say he is a bootlegger, because that is how many people gain wealth during the Jazz Age. Gatsby never admits to Nick the fact of his illegal source of income. Gatsby does say he is into drugstores on the side, but he involves himself in "handling stolen securities" over the counter also. One man that "helps" Gatsby attain his belongings is Meyer Wolfshiem. The foundation for Wolfshiem's business is bootlegging, gambling, and other illegal methods for acquiring money. Fitzgerald bases Wolfshiem on a gambler and racketeer, by the name of Arnold Rothstein. Rothstein presumably fixes the 1919 World Series, just like Wolfshiem, and neither of them have been caught. Wolfshiem is too smart for anyone to snare and nobody could find Rothstein guilty. Nick asks about Wolfshiem's association with Gatsby, "Did you start him in business?" Wolfshiem claims, "Start him! I made him. I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw right away he was a fine appearing gentlemanly young man and when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good." (p. 179) This is obviously unjust, because Wolfshiem is into unlawful undertakings. Wolfshiem offers a "connection" to Nick. Then, Gatsby informs

Wolfshiem, "This is just a friend. I told you we'd talk about that some other time." (p. 75) The third representative of corrupt money-making is when the con men emerge at the valley of ashes. The valley is, in reality, a swamp consisting of ashes, trash, and waste. Fitzgerald describes, "This is a valley of ashes--a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens, where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air." (p. 27) Con men arrive by railroad to cheat people. Dr. T. J. Eckleburg does his best to monitor the valley like a father, but that's not enough. Dr. Eckleburg peers over the valley from his billboard with mammoth, blue eyes, never moving. In conclusion, The Great Gatsby presents people with wrong intentions as the backbone for its setting.

A few obvious themes of cars and bad drivers are very apparent in Fitzgerald's classic about the Jazz Age, The Great Gatsby. The cars give careless fools a chance to drive out of control, run around wildly at parties, and leave lives to rot in their paths. There are three dullards, who are very reckless. One psychopath is Jordan Baker. While driving with Nick, Jordan nearly runs into some workmen. Nick complains, "You're a rotten drive, either you ought to be more careful or you oughtn't to drive at all." (p. 63) Jordan maintains that her driving is cautious, but Nick retorts that she isn't. Jordan retaliates, "Well, other people are. They'll keep out of my way. It takes two to make an accident." (p.

63) Nick reckons about what would take place, if Jordan encounters someone as careless as herself. Jordan replies, "I hope I never will. I hate careless people. That's why I like you." (p. 63) Another blockhead, Owl Eyes, actually demonstrates what can happen when a negligent, who is drunk, gets in the driver's seat. Owl Eyes accelerates his automobile into a ditch and a wheel pops off. This stuns Owl Eyes as he insists that he lacks in knowledge about mechanics. He also concurs, "I know very little about driving--next to nothing." (p. 59) Nick comments that Owl Eyes shouldn't be driving at night then. Owl Eyes explains, "But I wasn't even trying." (p. 59) It turns out that somebody else is the driver. That imbecile asks, "Did we run outa gas?" (p. 59) People tell him the wheel came off. He looks upward as if the wheel came from the sky. He then wants to know where to get gas. People tell him, again, the wheel is off, so he considers putting the car in reverse. Nick shouts, "But the wheel's off!" (p. 60) The lumox replies, "No harm in trying." (p. 60) The third half-wit is none other than Daisy. Daisy is controlling Gatsby's yellow car, also known as "death car." As Daisy and Gatsby approach George Wilson's Garage, Myrtle Wilson, George's wife, rushes out to the car. She is under the impression that her lover, Tom, is driving the car. Daisy rumbles over Myrtle and keeps on driving. Daisy doesn't stop at all to see the result of her thoughtlessness. The other evil cars involve themselves in is going to and from Gatsby's parties. Gatsby sends his own vehicles around to retrieve people, who are up to no

good. One example of the bad part of Gatsby's party and cars is Owl Eye's mishap. Another sample of devilry at Gatsby's carnivals is when Tom and Daisy arrive in their automobiles. Gatsby lures Daisy away from Tom. Tom shows his negative feeling for Gatsby when he imposes, "Who is this Gatsby anyhow? Some big bootlegger?" Tom is also critical of the celebrities at Gatsby's bashes, "We don't go around very much. In fact I was just thinking I don't know a soul here." (p. 111) This situation leads to the blow up between Tom and Gatsby in New York City awhile afterwards. They debate on the subject of whether Daisy ever loves Tom. "Your wife doesn't love you. She's never loved you. She loves me." (p. 137) Tom shoots back, "You must be crazy!" (p. 137) "I told you what's been going on. Going on for five years--and you didn't know," Gatsby discloses. (p. 138) In the course of things, Tom convinces everyone that Daisy and his relationship will be alright from now on. Gatsby comprehends this, but doesn't totally believe it. Tom is confident, so he lets Gatsby and Daisy go home together. Tom ensures Daisy, "Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes his presumptuous little flirtation is over." (p. 142) This incident provokes the doom for three people. The initial slaughter is when Daisy flattens Myrtle in the yellow car. The fact that the demolition machine is yellow is important, because the crusher is Gatsby's. Myrtle thinks Tom is the driver, because she sees Tom in the operator's seat on the way to New York City. "In one of the windows over the garage the curtains had been moved aside a little and Myrtle Wilson was peering down at the

car." (p. 131) The thing that Myrtle doesn't know is that Gatsby and Daisy are in the yellow car on the way back from the city. So, Myrtle attempts to run out into the road and stop her lover, Tom. Daisy obliterates Myrtle. The next two downfalls derive themselves from Myrtle's death. Some time after his wife's death, George Wilson sets off on his mission to hunt down the homicidal maniac. George utters something that's very interesting about his wife's affair and then her catastrophe, while observing Dr. Eckleburg's billboard. "I spoke to her. I told her she might fool me but she couldn't fool God. I took her to the window--and I said 'God knows what you've been doing. You may fool me but you can't fool God!' God sees everything." (p. 167) This quest takes George to Tom and Daisy's home. Now, Tom tells Wilson that Gatsby is the driver of the yellow car, because everyone but Nick, Gatsby, and Daisy thinks Gatsby is the motorist. Daisy actually is the engineer, but she will not confess to the crime. Gatsby takes the blame for Daisy. Nick inquires, "How the devil did it happen?" (p. 151) Gatsby reveals, "Well, I tried to swing the wheel--" (p. 151) Nick unscrambles the truth. "Was Daisy driving?" (p. 151) "Yes, but of course I'll say I was. You see, when we left New York she was very nervous and she thought it would steady her to drive--and this woman rushed out at us just as we were passing a car coming the other way." (p. 151) So, after Wilson get the false information from Tom, he goes to the owner of the yellow car, Gatsby. While using his swimming pool, Gatsby is pondering over the fate of yesterday's events. Wilson sneaks up on

Gatsby, while Gatsby has no idea what is about to occur. Wilson shoots Gatsby and in turn executes himself. As an ultimate outcome of one person's careless driving in the yellow car, three victims lay to rest, and the holocaust of The Great Gatsby is complete.

As a frequent occurrence in the Jazz Age, affairs certainly play an important role in The Great Gatsby. One entanglement involves Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby and Daisy's hanky-panky is very deep and complicating. As a matter of fact, their romance begins five years ago, before World War I. Gatsby meets Daisy in her hometown of Louisville during the summer before Gatsby gets his call to go fight for Uncle Sam. Gatsby writes to Daisy and says they will get back together after the war. While at Oxford, he discovers that his love is the new bride of Tom Buchanan. When he makes it back to Louisville, Gatsby is living on the remains of his army money. "He stayed there a week, walking the streets where their footsteps had clicked together through the November night and revisiting the out-of-the-way places to which they had driven in her white car." (p. 160) Gatsby sees Daisy's magnificent home with all of it to behold. "He left feeling that if he had searched harder he might have found her--that he was leaving her behind." (p. 160) Gatsby leaves Louisville, sensing that he just let his dream slip away. Hope seems out of sight for Gatsby. Then, he comes across Meyer Wolfshiem. Wolfshiem gives the picture of Gatsby, down on his luck, "A young major just out of the army and covered over with medals he got in the war. He was so hard up he had to keep on

wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy some regular clothes. First time I saw him was when he come into Winebrenner's poolroom at Forty-third Street and asked for a job. He hadn't eat anything for a couple of days." (p. 179) Wolfshiem gets Gatsby going in his "honest" business. So, over the next few years, Gatsby accumulates a large fortune. He buys a fortress of a house on West Egg in New York. Gatsby's sole purpose for "earning" his wealth is to impress Daisy. Gatsby collects newspaper clippings of Daisy and her whereabouts during this time. He throws lavish parties, always hoping for Daisy to wander into one of them. This never happens. In the long run, Tom and Daisy are bound to move near Gatsby, and they do. Tom and Daisy settle down in the luxuriously attired East Egg, which is right across the bay from the West Egg. Now, Gatsby reaches the pinnacle of his journey to reclaim Daisy. A green light shines from the end of Daisy's dock across the bay to Gatsby's palace. Gatsby must realize this light, at the end of the tunnel, comes from Daisy's manor. Gatsby sails into some good luck during his odyssey. Nick Carraway, who is Daisy's second cousin once removed, takes up residence in the "shack" next to Gatsby's castle. On the way home from his visit with Tom and Daisy, Nick gets a glimpse of his new neighbor in the dark. Nick is going to say hello. "But I didn't call to him for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone--he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and as far as I was from him I could have sworn he was trembling." (p. 25 &26) Gatsby is reaching for a tiny

green light, which is at a good distance from him. Nick looks at the light, and he turns back to Gatsby. "When I looked once more for Gatsby, he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness." (p. 26) Gatsby's future is looking bright. Some number of days afterward, Jordan Baker tells Nick that Gatsby wants to reacquaint himself with Daisy. Nick phones Daisy to come over and have tea. "Don't bring Tom." (p. 88) "Who is 'Tom'?" Daisy questions curiously. (p. 88) So, Nick has Gatsby and Daisy over for a tea party. Gatsby sends a considerable amount of flowers to Nick's house and has his gardener mow Nick's lawn for the occasion. Gatsby finally has Daisy where he wants her. Gatsby is somewhat timid prior to the assembly. Gatsby glances through a magazine, gets up, and exclaims, "Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late!" (p. 90) Nick encourages Gatsby to remain calm. Eventually, Daisy arrives and Gatsby composes himself. "But there was a change in Gatsby that was simply confounding. He literally glowed; without a word or a gesture of exultation a new well-being radiated from him and filled the little room. 'Oh, hello, old sport' as if he hadn't seen me for years." (p. 94) Gatsby invites Nick and Daisy over to his goliath house for a look around. Daisy comes out of Nick's house and marvels over Gatsby's mansion, "That huge place there?" (p. 95) When Gatsby starts out five years ago, he is a poor boy. He comes face to face with Daisy, but cannot marry her for some reasons. One, he must serve his country in the war. Two, the unwritten rule is that rich girls don't marry poor boys. Daisy is a rich girl. Gatsby explains

to Tom, "She never loved you, do you hear? She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved anyone except me!" (p. 137) Daisy marries Tom, because Tom is a rich boy and sweeps her off her feet. Now that Gatsby is a rich boy, he thinks Daisy will come back to him. "I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before. She'll see." (p. 117) Gatsby wants to pull Daisy away from Tom, by getting Daisy to tell Tom she is never in love with him. Daisy is, in fact, in love with Tom, otherwise she would not be his spouse. Gatsby fails to relive the past. Gatsby's dream of sharing his life with Daisy starts out as innocently as the birth of a newborn baby, but Gatsby turns the dream into a dreadful ending. The war, Tom, and Gatsby, himself, shatter this Gargantuan idea. Now, the illicit love which starts and ends with a bad flavor is between Tom and Myrtle. These two lewd, moronic simpletons are truly meant for each other. Both of them have marriages with other people. Tom cheats on Daisy and Myrtle goes behind the back of poor, old George. Their story is pretty shortsighted, but it ends in tragedy. Tom is a big, husky, and hulking man, and Myrtle is a big, "thickish figure of a woman." "She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can." (p. 29) Tom and Myrtle also compliment each other well. Myrtle is flaky, and Tom has his arrogance, which fits nicely with his violent nature. While in New York City, Tom and Myrtle have a "quiet" party. They "discuss peacefully" whether Tom will allow Myrtle to say Daisy's

name. Myrtle shouts, "Daisy! Daisy! Daisy! I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai--" (p. 41) Tom silences Daisy by breaking her nose with a swift motion of his hand. Tom and Myrtle's short flirtation hits its peak and is almost over. Nick, Jordan, Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby all go to New York. On the way there, Tom, Nick, and Jordan stop for gas at George Wilson's Garage. Gatsby and Daisy are in the other car. Wilson informs Tom, "I've been here too long. I want to get away. My wife and I want to go west." (p. 130) This is a shock to Tom. George also mentions, "I just wised up to something funny the last two days. That's why I want to get away. That's why I been bothering you about the car." (p. 130) This visibly upsets Tom. The group meets in the city, and Gatsby gets everything out in the open. He "enlightens" Tom and lets Tom know that Daisy's love for Tom is never there. The fact is that Tom and Daisy always have their money to run back to when times are rough. So, they do love each other. Tom makes it clear that Daisy does love him. Everyone leaves, and as Daisy and Gatsby drive past Wilson's Garage, Myrtle gets in the way. Myrtle is run over, which leads to the annihilation of two other people. The murder of his girl devastates Tom, as he whines, "The God Damn coward! He didn't even stop his car." (p. 149) Some time after the desolation, Nick runs into Tom. Tom comments on the effect of Myrtle's death on him, "And if you think I didn't have my share of suffering--look here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard I sat down and cried like a baby. By

God it was awful--" (p. 187) Indeed, Nick expects a statement like this from Tom. He and Myrtle are the epitome of stupidity and irresponsibility. Both affairs add to the despicable image of the Jazz Age and in effect The Great Gatsby.

In The Great Gatsby, there are numerous examples of Fitzgerald's illustration of the Jazz Age, such as illegal doings, cars and bad drivers, and the affairs. With the picture F. Scott Fitzgerald paints of the Jazz Age, it is easy to interpret that this is a time of greed, recklessness, and poor emphasis of family values.