

LESSON:

Color Symbolism

Goals: Students will...

- ...recognize color symbolism
- ...interpret it within *The Great Gatsby*
- ...make self-created examples

Presentation – recognizing color symbolism

2 minutes each color (~15 minutes)

1. Before class starts, write the name of various colors on a board. (Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, grey...)
2. Color-by-color, ask students what they feel each color can represent. Write elicited examples under each word.

NOTICE: Symbols can vary from person to person. For example, the color red may represent love to one person, but can represent anger to another.

Practice – interpret the color symbolism used within *The Great Gatsby*

25-30 minutes

1. Hand out the *Color Symbolism* worksheet, then divide the room into pairs or groups.
2. Give students 15 minutes to fill in answers, and allow students to search through thegreatgatsbytour.com if needed. (Check on each group as the activity occurs.)
3. Once time has run out, let each group share one of their own answers.
4. After, the students can turn over their papers and see a detailed, complete list of how colors were used within the novel.
5. As a class, discuss the following questions:
 - What is the color green associated with within the novel?
Wealth/opportunity
 - What is the color yellow associated with within the novel? *“New Money”*
 - What is the color gold associated with within the novel? *Wealth and “Old-Money”*
 - What is the relationship, or difference, between yellow and gold? *Yellow is used as an inference to “cheap gold” – or “appearance over substance”*
 - What is the color white associated with within the novel? *White traditionally symbolizes those morally unblemished and denotes nobility. However, those wearing white in the novel are not noble, and are immoral and deceptive.*

Production – make self-created examples

(15+ minutes, until class finishes)

1. Return to the board, which began the class began with.
2. Tell students they will now choose colors and word associations, and make example symbols to exemplify the pairings. This can be done alone, in groups, or in pairs.

examples:
yellow + happiness = the sun, which can be described as energetic and invigorating.
blue + calm = the ocean on a calm day.
3. After 5-10 minutes, the teacher will go color-by-color, and elicit examples that were created until the class ends.

Color Symbolism within *The Great Gatsby*

Directions

Part 1: Give examples of how color is used within *The Great Gatsby*.

Green:

Yellow:

Gold:

White:

Part 2:

Discuss as a class:

- What is the color green associated with within the novel?
- What is the color yellow associated with within the novel?
- What is the color gold associated with within the novel?
- What is the relationship, or difference, between yellow and gold?
- What is the color white associated with within the novel?

Green

- The inside of Gatsby's car has green leather.
- The flashing green light at the end of the dock at Daisy's home.
- Daisy mentions handing out green cards to the people she meets.
- The car that kills Myrtle is falsely described as "light green" to the police.
- Nick imagines that the Dutch – who first colonized modern-day New York City - saw much opportunity upon seeing the green land that everyone now sits upon.

Yellow

- The women attending Gatsby's party, who are excited to meet with Jordan, both wear yellow dresses.
- The station wagon that commutes people to Gatsby's parties from the local train station is yellow.
- The building Myrtle lives in is yellow.
- Gatsby's band plays yellow cocktail music.
- Myrtle's body lies under a yellow light as Tom discovers her death.
- Gatsby passes away as the trees are "yellowing".

Gold

- The covers of Nick's books on banking and credit are gold.
- Tom and Daisy's home has brilliant gold features.
- Gatsby's food at his parties is described as looking golden.
- Jordan's skin is described as golden.
- Daisy admires the golden features in Gatsby's home with extra delight.
- Daisy carries a golden pencil to write with.
- Gatsby wears a gold tie when meeting with Daisy at Nick's home for tea.

White

- East Egg homes are described as white.
- Daisy's home is white.
- Daisy and Jordan wear white clothing when first introduced.
- Tom is aggressively racist and obsessed with the "white" race.
- The puppy Tom buys for Myrtle has "surprisingly white feet".
- Myrtle describes meeting first Tom while he was wearing a white shirt.
- Nick wears white flannels when he first goes to Gatsby's home.
- Nick describes the financial district as a white chasm.
- Daisy was wearing white, and driving a white car, when she first met Gatsby, before World War 1.
- Gatsby wears white to meet Daisy for tea.
- Daisy dresses her daughter in white to meet Gatsby,

The symbols of wealth that surround Daisy

The green light on her dock

The color green

The color gold

The tingle of her voice – “her voice sounds like momney”

Production

Divide the class into groups and give each team either paper or a dry-erase board.

Write a word on the board, and give teams 3-5 minutes to draw a symbol is associated with the word.

Have students choose a national, cultural, or religious symbol. They will explain what the symbol means to them, and then explain what the symbol may mean to others.

Paragraphs will be collected and read anonymously, then the class will “grade” the paper together. (A,B,C,D,F).

Alternative: Divide the class into groups once everyone has finished writing their paragraphs. Each group will choose their favorite paragraph, and read them to the class. Then, the class will choose their favorite.

Transition to metaphors

Presentation:

Draw a cake. Underneath it, write, “A cake is a symbol for birthdays.”

Under that, write: “METAPHOR: I am like a cake because....” And give students the opportunity to compare themselves to cake.

Explain that symbols are related to ideas, but metaphors add comparison.

Practice:

Production:

Ask students to write down the names of five people they know. Then, have students make one metaphor for each person.

Draw the following symbols on a board for the class to discuss upon entering: a heart, a peace symbol, a dollar sign, an infinity symbol, an "X". Elicit what the various symbols represent to the students, and ask if they use them.

Gatsby's mansion – grandness and emptiness, a symbol of his love for Daisy

The Valley of Ashes – moral and social decay as the wealthy pursue their greed. Also, the plight of the poor who lose their vitality from their lifestyles. The divide between the rich and poor.

The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg – To George, they represent God staring down and judging East Coast society. However, to Nick who sees it simply as another detail, this becomes a symbol for people's ability to invest meaning into objects that does not actually exist.

The green light – Gatsby's hope and dream, general hope, his ability to let the past haunt him,