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English 2

14 May 2015

Is Gatsby Great?

With shimmering décor, undeniably extravagant parties, and the ability to affect the characters he contacts, Jay Gatsby would seem to radiate physical and emotional “greatness.” “Greatness,” however, means more than the grand display of wealth. To describe someone or something as “great” would require the subject to have intensity and a high level of impact. Jay Gatsby’s presence in the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, displayed greatness with its influence on Nick’s perception and character conflicts during his lifetime, however he did not leave a lasting legacy.

Beginning, Gatsby’s emotional influences range from before the novel’s beginning to his death. Nick, in reflection, says, “an extraordinary gift for hope...I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again,” (2). Gatsby left an impression on Nick that changed Nick’s perspective on human emotion. For Nick, the magnitude of Gatsby’s hope set the highest level of intensity. After Gatsby’s death, Nick’s observances of the emotional influences stretched enough for the area of the story, the East, to haunt Nick. It became “distorted beyond [his] eyes’ power of correction,” (176) leading Nick back to his Western home. The narrator’s personal development is significant in the image of characters, yet Gatsby’s emotions on other characters led to greater conflict aside from Nick’s change in perception.

To continue, Tom, Daisy, and George Wilson also experienced Gatsby's influence. The conflict between characters escalates as Tom's growing suspicions about Gatsby's integrity results in a heated argument. This point illustrates one of the strongest encounters as Gatsby remarks that Daisy "never loved [Tom]," (132). The angst turns to George Wilson, who seeks revenge after his wife's death. Gatsby's figure caused revenge to rise in Wilson, which killed both the aforementioned characters on page 162. With human emotion as a sole aspect in the novel, Gatsby's influences are evident through character opposition. The opposition is examined in Gatsby taking away Tom and Wilson's significant others.

In contrast, Gatsby did not leave a strong enough impact to become memorable on a wide scale. His associations with people were not strong enough for the people to attend his funeral. Nick says, "no one was interested...with that intense personal interest to which everyone has some vague right at the end," (164). Gatsby was not remembered with grandeur impressions. "Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower," (174). Gatsby was only remembered in that concentrated area of New York and in Nick's mind. Gatsby's lasting "greatness" is questioned with this aspect.

To end, Gatsby's greatness is seen in human emotion and character development. Gatsby's impacts were of enormous magnitude in studying the change in relationships between characters. These strained relationships and emotions resulted in death—a grave occurrence to a human. However, Gatsby did not leave a wide-scale impact. After his death, the characters he most closely associated with deserted him. The "great" Gatsby was great in that he heavily impacted the main characters in the concentrated novel, yet he turned to nothing as a result of his own emotions and actions. (Words: 504)