

Fourth Grade / Novel

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The great Gatsby (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

Lecture 10

Symbolism in The Great Gatsby

Gatsby's Mansion

Gatsby's grand and lavish mansion symbolizes his high lifestyle. It also shows the inner conflict of Gatsby and foreshadows his loneliness hidden behind his lavish estate. It also symbolizes his unbound love for Daisy. Gatsby uses his new money to buy the grand house, thinking it is similar to the house of the old money taken away from him. Though he progresses a lot in life, ironically his luxurious lifestyle does not bring satisfaction to him. It rather seems a falsifying dream. In fact, he struggles to reach at this position to win Daisy back.

The Green Light

The green light pops up many times in the novel and represents Gatsby's dream and hope. It also represents everything that haunts him and takes him to the past. It also signifies the green stuff (money), his memories with Daisy and the gap between his past and his present. He deliberately chooses the house in a direction from where he can have the enchanting sight of green light. He loves to

stand at the dock to stare at that green light which represents his innermost desire to revive his past. He is hopeful that one day he will win the lost moments. The artificial green light also stands for his artificial and unrealistic aims in life.

The Eyes of T. J. Eckleberg

Another symbol we see in the novel is the eyes of T. J. Eckleberg. These are faded bespectacled eyes printed on the billboard over the 'valley of ashes'. The eyes represent the commercialism which is the backbone of the American dream. It is clear from the fact of how Gatsby earns a lot of wealth to get Daisy back in life. These eyes also represent the hollowness and solidity in Gatsby's eyes, for despite having all the glitters in life, his eyes reflect emptiness. To George Wilson, they are the eyes of God that watch over every segment of the society. To Nick, they represent the waste of past which sticks around, though, vanished.

The Valley of Ashes

The valley of ashes is a symbolic place in the novel that first appears in chapter two. Nick goes there to search for his mistress. It is a place between East and West Egg created by dumping the industrial waste. It represents how morality and social code of conduct are dropped out of the industrial society. It also depicts the miserable plight of people like George Wilson who live among the ashes without ambition. This is a highly effective symbol that represents the divide between the poor and the rich class in the society of that time and even the present.

East and West Eggs

East and West Eggs are two fictional villages Fitzgerald has created to represent the different ideas of the new rich and the old rich. East Egg represents the old rich. Tom and Daisy belong to East Egg. It represents the people, who are born rich and are considered classy, with an arrogant stance toward West Egg. West Egg stands for newly rich people like Gatsby. It is the world of those who make their own fortune and are not rich by birth. East symbolizes corruption, whereas West symbolizes goodness.

Daisy

The name Daisy is also symbolic. A daisy is a flower with white petals and a yellow center. Universally of white color represents purity, chastity, and innocence whereas yellow stands for corruption. Similarly, Daisy appears to be innocent and pure, but her heart is filled with lust, carelessness, and corruption. She lets Gatsby believe that she will leave Tom for him, but later it is found that money is the most important thing for her.

Green Color

Just like the Green Light, Green color runs throughout the novel. It universally represents vitality, wealth and growth. In the novel, green stands for Gatsby's hope and short life. It symbolizes the bulk of wealth which Gatsby earns to win Daisy back in life. It is the symbol of death too, as Michalis describes the car that kills Myrtle as a green light, though, it is a yellow car. The green light thus

represents the false status of dream and hope that win nothing for Gatsby.

blue, and chauffer's uniform is also blue. While white color is a symbol of purity, in the novel it symbolizes immorality. Gatsby, Daisy, and Jordan wear white, but none of them is a morally ideal character. The valley of ashes is grey symbolizing hopelessness, or filthy side of the society.

Cars

Cars in the novel symbolize the display of vanity. The rich and complex description of Gatsby's car is an epitome of ostentation and excess. It describes the dominance of commercialism how wealth is the center of attraction for the society. The car of the drunk man is also symbolic, as he runs his car off the road and breaks the wheel. It represents the careless attitude and ignorance of the rich society.

Clock / Time

The clock in the novel symbolizes the passage of time that has passed and the moments Gatsby wants back. He wins the high living standards to rewind the clock to the times, change what happened between him and Daisy. In chapter five "the defunct masterpiece clock" represents that Gatsby is still living in the past with Daisy, while Daisy has moved on. The end of the novel also signifies the value of time and the dilemma faced by humans; the more we try to escape from the past, the more we get close to it.

