

AP Q3 Rewrite

Prompt: One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in a novel or a drama struggles to free himself or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.

A key element of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is a struggle for power. As the plot unfolds, individual characters build complex relationships with the concept. In particular, we see Nick Carraway elaborate on the power of Jay Gatsby as if enraptured by it while himself possessing a unique form of influence. We also witness the balance and interplay of power between Tom and Daisy Buchanan. But most importantly, we are drawn to the immense wealth of Jay Gatsby. Fitzgerald uses all of these forms of power to communicate the downsides of a materialistic lifestyle, and more broadly, the detrimental nature of a pursuit for more power.

The narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, is an example of one such character uniquely positioned in terms of power. Living among wealthy mansions on Long Island, he doesn't possess wealth, the traditional indicator of power. After all, the positioning of his house next to the opulence of Gatsby's estate emphasizes its small size and austerity. However, Nick does possess the power of connecting Gatsby with Daisy through his familial connection. Through Nick, Fitzgerald is able to communicate a certain irony; an incredibly wealthy man seeks to gain the power of love through a character who lacks the immense power he already possesses. This implies that true power and importance lies not in wealth but in other forms, contributing to Fitzgerald's message regarding the futility of materialism. Nick having something Gatsby desperately wants disrupts our image that material wealth is all-powerful, causing us to readjust our assumptions to understand Fitzgerald's view that materialism isn't as good as it seems.

The great lengths Gatsby goes to win Daisy over brings her husband, Tom Buchanan, into the discussion. Gatsby was struggling for power over Daisy's feelings, and thus directly competing with Tom. The tensions that run high manifest themselves most clearly when the characters gather in a Manhattan penthouse, where Tom confronts Gatsby about his pursuit of power over his wife. This acts as a catalyst for a chain of events that lead to the death of Myrtle, Tom's mistress, and ultimately Gatsby himself by Myrtle's grieving husband. To complicate matters, Daisy also seems to be struggling to rid herself of the power Tom has over her; she realizes her feelings for Gatsby, further infuriating Tom and setting the stage for tragedy.

Fitzgerald, through putting so many characters and events in relation to this power struggle, emphasizes and conveys its ultimate futility and detrimental nature. This is evidenced by Gatsby's attempt to secure more power causing him to lose everything, including his life. Tom's attempt to assert power over his wife led to the loss of his mistress. Through these events, Fitzgerald builds on the detrimental nature of power struggles by introducing the notion that in addition to harming others, seeking more power leads to a net loss where nobody gains.

This view is further emphasized through the character of Jay Gatsby himself. He was caught up in a struggle for the power of the past. All of his efforts in the novel were geared to realize the power of youth and bring back a past when he and Daisy were together. It was what

drove him to the extremes by beseeching Daisy to confess her love for him, why he bought the mansion and hosted extravagant parties, and what got him killed. Through the character of Gatsby, Fitzgerald further emphasizes that although the wealthy are satisfied with their material needs, a hunger for more power is severely detrimental. After all, by putting a character of such unimaginable wealth through the trials and tribulations of love, the ultimate suffering and desolation is far more remarkable and apparent. This is best captured by Nick's description of the sparse gathering at Gatsby's funeral. In life, he had parties entertaining hundreds. After a struggle for power over a woman, he was left with an empty house with only a few stragglers to send him off.

In conclusion, Fitzgerald uses the characters of Nick Carraway, Tom and Daisy Buchanan, and Jay Gatsby to communicate the insignificance of wealth and the destructive nature of power struggles. It didn't leave a happy ending for readers to enjoy, making us wonder if we ourselves are trapped in a damaging struggle for power. Fitzgerald teaches us to be happy with what we have; if even a man with the house of our dreams can fall because of a hunger for power, so can any of us.