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The American Dream, According to *The Great Gatsby*

Investopedia defines the American Dream as “the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society in which upward mobility is possible for everyone.... believed to be achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work.” Although the American Dream can have different meanings for different people, it is generally viewed as a goal and being successful. In the novel *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, it is shown through Daisy and Gatsby’s relationship that although the American Dream may be within reach, it is sometimes not an attainable or wise goal.

The relationship between Daisy and Gatsby had seemed authentic at first. Gatsby describes his past relationship with Daisy as he and Nick are together. He talks about how Daisy “was in love with [Gatsby] too” and how Gatsby “sat with Daisy in his arms for a long, silent time” the afternoon before he had to travel overseas, as he “was a captain” in the first world war (150). Daisy and Gatsby’s relationship before Gatsby’s departure seemed to have been stable and authentic, as it shows they both cared for each other. Daisy and Gatsby spent time together before the departure, meaning Daisy wanted to spend as much time as she could before Gatsby left. At another point in time, as Nick and Jordan are conversing in New York, Jordan talks about Daisy and Gatsby’s past. She discusses how a police officer named Jay Gatsby was speaking

with Daisy. Jordan later points out that Daisy's mom did not approve of Jay Gatsby, as Daisy's mother "had found her packing her bag" to go off to New York and saying farewell to a soldier going overseas, but instead Daisy was "effectually prevented" and "didn't play around with the soldiers any more" (75). In her immediate desire to shape her life, she instead met someone else "in the middle of the spring with the arrival of Tom Buchanan" (151) in which that "February she was presumably engaged to" and married in the June of that year (75). Since Gatsby had moved away and was unable to be with Daisy, Daisy instead married Tom Buchanan for the money and love within reach, showing that she is a selfish person.

Leading up to Daisy and Gatsby's reunion after five years, Gatsby made numerous decisions he believed would help him get back in a relationship with Daisy. Gatsby had been anticipating reuniting with Daisy for a long time, as a lot of his major decisions were influenced by it. As Jordan and Nick converse, Jordan points out that "Gatsby [had] bought [his] house so that Daisy would be just across the bay" (78). Additionally, she points out that Gatsby would throw house parties "half [expecting] her to wander into one of his parties, some night" (79). Since Gatsby had long desired for a reunion with Daisy, it influenced him to live a life of luxury, wealth, and high social status, as he thought it would draw Daisy back to him. He had hoped that by displaying his wealth through throwing extravagant parties and living in a mansion, he would have a greater chance of winning back Daisy from Tom. Since Daisy was Gatsby's "American Dream," his wealthiness made it seem to him that this dream was within reach. Gatsby also tries to convince Tom that Daisy still loves him even though she is married with Tom. He convinces him by saying that Daisy "never loved [him]" and that "she only married [Tom] because [Gatsby] was poor and she was tired of waiting for [Gatsby]" (130). The fact that Gatsby tried to convince Tom that Daisy never loved him shows that he dedicated to getting back together with

Daisy, even if it means having to force Tom out of their relationship directly. His dedication shows that he is desperate to make his dream of marrying Daisy closer within his reach.

However, despite Daisy and Gatsby showing affection toward each other after their reunion, tensions arise between them due to the conflicting relationships, which makes Gatsby's dream less attainable. Daisy was still married with Tom at the time, and it would affect their family. Due to this, Daisy got emotional when all three of them were with each other, as she cries: "I did love [Gatsby] once – but I loved [Tom] too ... I can't say I never loved Tom" (132-133). Despite Daisy still showing affection toward Gatsby, she does not want to let go of her relationship with Tom. This results in her relationships with both Gatsby and Tom conflicting, as she has feelings for Gatsby, but does not want to abandon Tom. This conflict further makes Gatsby's dream of marrying Daisy harder to reach, as the likelihood for their relationship progressing decreases. However, later in the novel, after running over Myrtle and the death of Gatsby, Daisy and Tom take off with no way to contact them, with Daisy leaving Gatsby. As Nick and Tom meet up months later in New York, Tom sells his flat and complains to Nick about how awful it was to see a box of dog biscuits on the sideboard. Nick describes how Daisy and Tom were "careless people" who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money" (179). The carelessness of Daisy and Tom show how they relied on their money to avoid situations. Since Daisy had run off with Tom Buchanan and left Gatsby behind, it shows how Daisy was motivated by wealth and her desire to be in the higher-class. Daisy's motivations and carelessness blocks off Gatsby's access to his American Dream since he was not able to secure his relationship with Daisy.

Despite Gatsby's relationship with Daisy seeming possible to Gatsby after all he had done for her, in the end he was never able to make that happen. Marrying Daisy had meant

everything to Gatsby, and a lot of his actions were influenced by that desire. He felt that his desire to marry Daisy “must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it” (180). Although Daisy and Gatsby had once showed affection for each other and Gatsby’s actions would be influenced by his desire for a relationship with Daisy, in the end it did not end up working out for Gatsby. The relationship with Daisy was Gatsby’s American Dream, and it seemed reachable to him, but he was unable to reach it.

The relationship between Daisy and Gatsby had seemed stable at first. However, through the carelessness and selfishness of Daisy, their relationship ended up not working out. Gatsby desired to restart their relationship, while Daisy ended up choosing status. He had hoped through achieving a high social status that a relationship with Daisy, whom he viewed as his “American Dream,” would be possible, but in the end, he was unable to reach his dream and restart their relationship. Through the relationship between Daisy and Gatsby, it is shown that despite the American Dream being within reach, it is sometimes not an attainable goal.